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AGAWAM

ADVERTISER NEWS

A TURLEY PUBLICATION | www.turley.com

October 26, 2023 | Vol. 45, No. 35 | \$1.00

www.agawamadvertisernews.turley.com

★ ELECTION 2023 ★

Mayoral candidates weigh in on town issues

Editor's Note: The following are questionnaires answered by the candidates for mayor. In addition to a few basic questions, they answered the following questions with short responses: 1. The high school project is one of the top things on residents' minds. What is your stance on the project and how will you make any chosen option affordable to taxpayers? 2. Do you support a full charter review and if yes, would you prioritize it and how would you execute one? 3. After the high school, what are the top three things you plan to prioritize if elected mayor? 4. The town hall is in need of a major facelift or complete replacement. Do you have any ideas on how you can achieve an improved town hall? 5. How will you foster more economic growth in the community?

Christopher Johnson



Christopher Johnson

Occupation: Attorney
High school: I support the high school project. I will support the most fiscally responsible option that meets the educational needs of our students. I believe the key to bringing the cost of the project down will be to focus on obtaining the maximum reimbursement from the Massachusetts School Building Authority. This will involve avoiding expenses, such as modular classrooms, for which the MSBA provides no reimbursement. I believe that the town should start to appropriate funds to our Capital Stabilization Account to offset the impact of the bond payments in the early years. During my original tenure as Mayor, I oversaw the last major school renovation/addition project in Agawam. The high school project will be the largest capital improvement project in the history of the town, but it represents an investment

in our children and our community. The quality of public education in a community is one of the most significant factors in determining home values in each community.

Charter review: I do not believe that we need a full charter review. Full charter review involves investigating potential other forms of local government, and fundamentally altering the way the town government operates. I believe Agawam has a great form of government that has worked well over the past 30 plus years. I believe that we should focus on updating certain provisions of the charter to make sure we remain current with the existing municipal statutory framework. This can be accomplished through City Council action followed by state legislative approval, with final approval at the ballot box.

Top priorities: The top three things

JOHNSON | page 15

Cecilia Calabrese



Cecilia Calabrese

Occupation:
High school: The new high school is necessary. We pay taxes, and we, as tax payers expect the best value for our money. We are faced with many options regarding the high school building. There is currently money on the table from the state for a new school if we go with the option to construct a new building while preserving some of the structural aspects of the existing façade. The renovation options that have been presented would be more costly and disruptive to the students, faculty, and staff. Building a new school will be the largest Capital improvement to Agawam that we have seen in our recent history. But I believe it to be the best value for taxpayers.

Charter review: Several years ago, I served with other Agawam residents on a non-partisan ad hoc Charter Review com-

mittee. We met regularly with the goal to propose a comprehensive modernization of our existing town Charter. The task was daunting. While I remain committed to Charter Review, there is a more manageable method of updating our Charter. One such measure is moving through the process right now by moving our Municipal Election Primary date from October to September. I anticipate that action to be complete in time for the next local election. As Mayor, I will continue to work on updating our Charter. I believe we can use an item-by-item process to review and modernize our Charter.

Top priorities: Affordability for our tax payers, cut waste, attract more businesses to Agawam. Through economic development we will bring more corporate tax payers to our town. More businesses mean more tax revenue, more jobs, and more op-

CALABRESE | page 15

City council to weigh \$2M borrowing for police station project

By Quinn Suomala
Staff Writer

AGAWAM – The Agawam City Council has been asked to borrow \$2 million to go toward the police station project.

This \$2 million was initially intended to come from ARPA funds. However, several other project costs went up more than anticipated and so the money had to go toward those.

Three such projects are the ones on Meadow Street, North Street and at May Hollow.

“We were hoping to and had originally planned on using \$2 million in ARPA money, but what’s happened is with the projects that we have in place now on Meadow Street and North Street...and also we have another covert, May Hollow, that is coming up in the spring, so we allocated our ARPA funds that we received for those infrastructure project,” Mayor William Sapelli said.

These projects had originally been planned for with ARPA

funds with the intention of leaving the \$2 million for the police station project, however, due to rising costs of business, material supply and labor, the anticipated costs for the projects increased substantially.

Additionally, those projects, according to Sapelli, have been expanded as they needed more land-taking.

“We are no longer able to take the \$2 million we thought we would have [for the police station] in addition to getting those three projects done; we need to put that \$2 million into those projects,” Sapelli said.

Due to this, the city council has been asked to borrow an additional \$2 million, on top of the more than \$11 million already borrowed for the police project.

“We were hoping we’d have that \$2 million to utilize doing police work so we wouldn’t have to borrow a 13 and change million dollars for the police station, we’d only borrow 11, but now we

PROJECT | page 15



Crews get going on the initial work to repair a culvert on North St. last Friday. The repair work is projected to last until sometime December.

TURLEY PHOTO BY GREGORY A. SCIBELLI

Residents to be without heavily traveled way

AGAWAM – Work began last week on a culvert on North St. The Agawam DPW advises motorists to avoid North Street for the next few months. Northern Construction was awarded the contract for the culvert replacement under the roadway. North St. will remain

open to the residents who live on that street. The DPW asks motorists to avoid North St. and seek alternate routes until the project completion which is expected to be mid-December.

North St. is a heavily-traveled road for people access-

ing neighborhoods in Feeding Hills, as well as a way to get to Westfield via North Westfield St.

Coming from Westfield and Feeding Hills, the road provides access to the other side of Agawam as well as points toward West Springfield.



★ ELECTION 2023 ★

School Committee Q&A

Editor's Note: The following are questionnaires answered by incumbent and challenging candidates for the Agawam School Committee. In addition to a few basic questions, they answered the following questions with short responses: 1. The high school project is the hot plate subject right now. What version of the project do you support and why? 2. Aside from the high school, what are the top two issues facing the school district at this time and how can you help address them? 3. Do you support MCAS testing? If not, what's a better way to assess student achievement? 4. With the pandemic conditions subsiding, how do you believe the schools are doing re-connecting with the community at-large? What can the schools do better in this area?

Note: Responses are shown in the order they were received.

Wendy Rua

(incumbent)

Years on committee: 12

Project version: I unequivocally support the construction of a new high school. While we have maintained our buildings with the utmost pride and due diligence, there is now a critical need to update our high school. We are in jeopardy of not meeting accreditation standards if we choose to ignore the necessary building updates including accessibility concerns, sprinkler systems, ventilation updates, insulation and more. Our science and technology needs are impressive as well. Contemplating how to do this while respecting the need to be fiscally responsible is not an easy task. There have been open forum meetings and transparency throughout the entire process. Please reach out if you have any direct questions.



Wendy Rua

Top issues: Truthfully, the high school build project is the top priority. That said, we are still recovering from the pandemic and need to be focusing on both the social emotional and the academic gaps that are evident. Supporting our teachers is how we can win big and carry the district forward. Let's give our teachers the tools, the technology, the time and the trust to do what we hired them to do-- teach. Continuing to hire, retain and develop our teachers will result in students who thrive. Let's not have them teach to a test, but to a child.

MCAS testing: I do not support MCAS testing and in the past have co-sponsored a resolution against standardized testing. Testing only tells a part of the story, but it should not be the sole indicator of a child's strengths or deficits. Many students do not test well. Remember the SAT? It was the mandatory indicator that meant you were college bound or not. Today, most colleges do not even look at SAT scores! Assessment and accountability should play a role. But creating and using a district-based model to assess students' growth and proficiency can be done in ways that would put the teacher back in the forefront of being able to get to know their students and adapt their classrooms in a personalized way that helps all students to thrive.

Community: We can always, always do better with community and family engagement! Our community is special and diverse. Our parents are compassionate and involved. We all want what is best for the children, but we may have different opinions of what that is and how we can get there. Open communication helps to foster respect for those

opinions and ultimately, helps us to move forward together. It used to be that Agawam was a town where we all knew each other. Today, many families are new and bring unique perspectives. While we should hold on tight to our traditions (Go Brownies!), we also need to keep talking to each other in order to build a better tomorrow.

Michael Perry

Years on committee: 2

Project version: Having attended most of the community forums to understand the current challenges and potential options, I support the new construction option. Other choices, including renovation or code upgrades only, will cost nearly as much as new construction without providing the benefits of a modern high school. I have toured the existing high school and not much has changed since I attended in the 90's, except everything is now 30 years older and more outdated. The new construction option provides a modern facility for our students and staff, includes a new, much-needed early childhood center, integrates the public library, leaves our recently-renovated athletic fields intact, and demonstrates our community's commitment to education.



Michael Perry

Top issues: Our students continue to show signs of academic losses suffered during school closures and disruptions during the pandemic. Over the past two years I have remained focused on directing attention to this issue through communication with school administrators. Our kids need the schools to place academic needs at the forefront and not allow social or political issues to distract from preparing them for success after high school. Staffing needs also continue to detract from optimal learning conditions and I will continue to support administrators through funding, policies and other measures which can attract the highest quality educators to our district and ensure our schools are fully staffed.

MCAS: MCAS testing is a high-stakes method of measuring academic proficiency with some unintended consequences. Primarily, it encourages "teaching to the test" which inhibits our talented educators from doing what they do best, which is to connect with students as individuals and help each achieve their highest potential. Standardized testing treats all students equally which simply doesn't reflect reality and can unfairly harm students who are otherwise performing well academically. Having a method by which student performance can be measured is a valuable tool, however, so I would encourage our state education board to immediately consider alternate options to MCAS testing.

Community: The Agawam Public Schools, under the leadership of Superintendent Hoffman, have done a good job of more meaningfully engaging the school community over the past three years and our district has ample resources in place to provide social and emotional support to students and staff in need. As we continue to distance ourselves from pandemic-era conditions, and with SEL support systems being well-established, I believe the district needs to focus significant attention on academic performance as we have an obligation to provide a high-quality education to all students and prepare them for life after school, whether that means going on to college, joining the military, or immediately entering the workforce in the trades or otherwise.

A.J. Christopher

(incumbent)

Years on committee: 2

Project version: I think it's an exciting and promising subject and certainly on the front burner but not really a "hot plate subject". The project committee is still exploring all scenarios and formalizing cost projections. To support any version over another at this juncture is not only premature but merely to provide a sound bite. Once all scenarios have been finalized along with the costs and state reimbursement rates, I will support the version that best represents the best interests of the school system, students, and residents of Agawam. What I do support is the need for an updated version of our high school whether that be new or renovated.



A.J. Christopher

Top issues: What's most concerning, facing all students, are outside distractions and stresses they face with social media and society. Students dealing with these levels of stressors and pressures don't begin and end at school, it permeates their entire daily events. This social media driven environment is such a relatively new issue that exploring ways to navigate through it and provide a stable and focused platform to learn and thrive in is our most important challenge. The other issue facing the school district is our test scoring and other measurements of student progress not improving at a quick pace.

MCAS: MCAS is the States testing tool for achievement standards. We are all measured and assessed on performance and achievement throughout our lives. Students are placed in an environment to prepare for these assessment comparisons. Test scores, grades, GPA ranks are all assessment tools that have been around for ages and have been adjusted as needed. Alternatives to MCAs are only recently being considered but nothing substantive has been considered by the State board of education. Until then we will ensure our students are prepared as well as they can be for these standardized tests.

Community: More accurately, pandemic conditions have subsided. Our school system and the community as a whole have come a long way in resuming social and personal interactions. School functions and sporting events are at full scale and very well attended by students and residents alike. Our school system will continue to provide support and assistance for students to be actively involved with each other and their community as we always have.

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★ ELECTION 2023 ★

Meet your School Committee candidates

Catherine McDougal

(challenger)

Political experience: Volunteer work on state and federal campaigns

High school: I support the new construction building option (1C). This option is the most cost-effective option because it does not require use of expensive modular classrooms, and it maximizes opportunities for reimbursement by MSBA. It also requires the least amount of time to build and will cause the least disruption to students.

Top issues: Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and outdated infrastructure. Students need to have healthy social/emotional skills to have opportunities for success after high school, and developing students' social and emotional competencies helps schools create safe learning environments that contribute to academic achievement for all. Outdated environmental systems mean temperatures aren't consistent or well controlled even in different areas of the same building. I would work with the Committee to apply for grant funding for the district to fund additional resources for SEL and help pay for upgrades to heating and cooling systems in our buildings so that kids can focus on their work, not the temperature.

MCAS: No. Massachusetts is now one of only 8 states that still require exit exams, down from a high of 26 states in the mid 90's. Federal law requires the use of standardized testing to assess achievement, but it does not require that these tests be used to determine whether a student may graduate. Massachusetts should permanently remove MCAS as a graduation requirement and explore a more equitable means for assessing student/district achievement without falling into the trap of teaching to the test.

Community: I commend our schools for their enthusiasm to re-connect with the community; doing everything from return to in-person learning to resuming athletic, music, theatre, and social events. At the same time, the pandemic is still very much with us. In our eagerness to return to normal and lift mitigation measures, we inadvertently isolate immune compromised members of our community who rely on those measures to safely engage with these events or access education. This is an opportunity for DESE to look at new long-term solutions, strategies, and supports for students who experience extended absence and to set new environmental standards to help keep kids and teachers healthy at school.



Catherine McDougal

able by the MSBA. It also includes a much needed new Early Childhood Center that Agawam desperately needs to educate and provide services to its littlest learners.

Top issues: No response

MCAS: MCAS testing measures a narrow range of academic achievement. What it does is narrow the curriculum and increase the amount of classroom time focused on test preparation and memorization. This test, in my opinion, doesn't measure all the indicators that make a quality school. Some of these qualities could include: family involvement and engagement, school culture, opportunities for learning and the resources to do so, teachers and administration and so on. All these and more contribute to student learning that cannot be measured in the MCAS testing.

Community: One of the things I have noticed being a community member is the effort to connect to the community through social media. It's a fact that people use social media as a mode to gather information, ask questions, and do research. The Agawam Public School Page on Facebook is a great resource to see some wonderful things that are happening in our schools. The newsletters and information the schools provide parents/caregivers through social media and school communication is also a means of connecting with the community. It's a fact that we have many dedicated and invested people working for the Agawam School System.

Shelley Reed

(incumbent)

Years on committee: 14

High School: It is still too early to determine what the exact cost would be to the tax payers of building a new high school vs renovating. Our current high school is seventy years old and is one of the oldest in the area. I would support the version of a new high school that includes an Early Childhood Center and that would be the least financial burden to our town. Both buildings are very outdated and do not meet our students' education needs. We have been applying to the MSBA for many years and now that we have been accepted, we need to explore every option as I think the opportunity for partial state reimbursement will not come around again for a very long time.

Top issues: Our biggest issue facing our district is the range of social and emotional academic needs of our students, especially after the pandemic. We are actively working to overcome these issues by assessing those needs and providing more programs and support to our staff and students. We also continue to assess the curriculum and provide the needed professional development to our staff to assist them in meeting the needs of all students.

We know that there is also a continued need for improvement in student achievement. Learning loss can be seen in students' rankings and abilities. Our superintendent and her staff are working to adjust instructional practices, review achievement data, study best practices, and address such things as absenteeism, inconsistent assessments, and other critical academic needs in our district.

MCAS: I do not support MCAS testing especially as a graduation requirement. I think too much learning time is spent on preparing/administering MCAS. I do not feel it is a good measure of student achievement as every child



Shelley Reed

learns differently and students present a variety of learning abilities and styles. MCAS testing also promotes unnecessary stress. Results of the test do not come out until the beginning of the next school year. It tells how many questions students got right/wrong but not their answers as to why they might have gotten it wrong. This makes it hard to provide the needed support to the student. Rather than standard testing, maybe test the students according to their abilities and performance throughout the year.

Community: We all know many things changed after the pandemic. Our schools are actively engaging in reconnecting with the community through parent collaboration, social media, volunteering, business partnerships, and involving students in community-based learning. Many students engage in learning experiences both in and out of the classroom.

Christopher Pass

(challenger)

High school: The high school project does seem to be a "hot plate" subject and the community at large feels differently on the matter. Thankfully there is an ongoing community forum, so I would encourage people to come out and take the opportunity to learn about the process, timeline and hear firsthand from the project consultants. As to what version of the project I support. I am still working through the data like most people. I plan to continue to gain a better understanding of all facets of the project and lean on those who have been tasked with helping us get to the finish line successfully.

Top issues: Being that I am a newcomer here, I believe that if elected I would be better suited to answer this question a year from now. As an outsider it tends to be convenient to point a finger at what's been done wrong, what needs improvement or what the key issues are. I believe having dialogues with the Superintendent, School Committee, Educators, additional staff, Parents, reviewing the statistics as well as other tangible information I will be able to gain better insight in to the heart of the matters. See, hear and understand what the issues are and work to resolve.

MCAS: Personally speaking I've never been a good "test taker", sitting in a room full of people with the pressure of knowing that the way I answer on this piece of paper will be the rubric for which my learning will be judged; well it's never really sat right with me. So with that being said, I don't believe this gives a true picture to learning as a whole. I know some students thrive on tests however each individual student learns differently and yet we ask them to test the same. At this moment I don't believe I can offer an alternative that can become the leading assessment to better review student achievements. However, I do believe there are other various strategies to truly assess a student's achievements. And for us to get there isn't going to happen overnight.

Community: Being that just recently my oldest son has entered the school system I don't believe I can speak to this retroactively on a personal level. However, from the little I have seen is the schools have done a good job re-connecting with the community. The unprecedented events surrounding the pandemic emphasized the need for more flexibility in the educational setting, including the integration of technology.



Christopher Pass

Dawn DeMatteo

(incumbent)

Years on committee: 4

Project version: The high school project is very important to all Agawam residents to become familiar with as it certainly does affect the community as a whole. I currently serve on the School Building Committee and have listened to all the options that have been thoroughly presented both at community forums and the committees' bi-weekly meetings. I feel option 1C is the best option moving forward as it offers the least disruptions to learning/activity. Other options require mobile classrooms that would cost the town millions of dollars that would not be reimburs-



Dawn DeMatteo

Schools & Youth

Resident enrolls at SUNY Delhi

DELHI, NY — Nicholas Cote is one of more than 1,100 students who enrolled at SUNY Delhi for the fall 2023 semester. Cote is pursuing a degree in Construction Management: Design and Building.

Agawam High School Class of 1973 celebrating 50th reunion

AGAWAM – The Agawam High School Class of 1973 will hold a celebratory weekend for their 50th Reunion.

On Friday, Nov. 10, there will be an informal social at Casa Di Lisa bistro, located at 801 Springfield St. Agawam from 5 to 8 p.m. It will be a cash bar and hors d'ourves. RSVPs are appreciated and walk-ins welcome.

On Saturday, Nov. 11, there will be a golf event held at the The Ranch Golf Club, 65 Sunnyside Rd, Southwick. If you like to golf, Contact Steve Richter Richo777@gmail.com for details and reg-

istration. Tee time is 10 a.m. and it will be played under scramble format.

Later, the main event will begin at 6 p.m., also at The Ranch with a social hour from 6 to 7 p.m. followed by dinner and entertainment. The cost is \$75 per person. Please RSVP and make checks out to AHS Class of 1973 or Venmo/Zelle to Paul Henault pwhenault@gmail.com. No tickets will be sold at the door.

For more information, please contact Susan Borgatti Meunier by email at smeutooz@comcast.net or call (413) 786-4789.

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Opinion

Guest Column



The questions keep coming

I continue to receive a number of questions each week. It's encouraging that there is so much interest in gardening even as this season is coming to an end. Here are the quandaries we have for this week:

Myrtle still has an abundance of green tomatoes left on the plants in her small gardening plot. "Are my tomatoes still OK to be outside? When I've picked them green in the past I remember putting them in a paper bag to ripen. Is that better than just leaving them on the counter? Mine are mostly cherries and I have quite a few! I looked online and it says to put them in a bag with an apple, but I don't recall using an apple the last time I did this. I sometimes find that advice from the internet gets confusing - too many options! Also, I was wondering what you thought of trying to root the tomato branches that have flowers. Maybe I could grow them inside for the winter."

Lucky you to still have tomato branches with flowers, let alone those with tomatoes on them! I am impressed.

With frost imminent, I typically allow green tomatoes to ripen single layer in trays or cardboard boxes - something that can "breathe," unlike plastic bags or containers. A paper bag sounds like a fine option too.

The reason for the apple is so that it will emit ethylene gas and hasten the ripening process. Bananas can be used in place of the apple.

There is some controversy about what temperature tomatoes should be kept at to ripen, but it would make sense that ripening would occur at warmer temperatures versus cooler - tomatoes are tropical plants. Typical household temps around 70 degrees are just right.

As far as rooting flowering branches, it would be a fun experiment and tomato stems do root readily. Usually when we take cuttings, we prefer them not to be in flower, though, as it hinders rooting to some degree.

Try it; I'd love to hear how it works out.

If they root, keep in mind that winter light is not as bright as summer light. It might be hard to keep the plants growing well inside.

Sylvia, who gardens in Ware, wrote in with this question:

"My beautiful lush morning glory vine doesn't have any buds, let alone blossoms! I fear we will have frost soon. Do you have any idea why this failed? I started four little plants in June, lots of rain, no fertilizer, soil so-so with some compost added during growth and that's it for care."

My first thought is that your soil is too rich. You said no fertilizer, but maybe the compost was enough to increase fertility, and nitrogen especially, in such a way that you ended up with all that lush foliage but no flowers.

Morning glories are related to bind weed - that pesky weed that tangles around my garden fence and just about anything else it can get its tendrils on. Try to pull it up and the thick white roots break and new plants pop up.

How does this relate? Well, it sort of proves that morning glories prefer soil that isn't so rich.

Another thought is that you have a



Letters to the Editor

Please support Bob Rossi for council

Dear Editor:

I am writing in support of Bob Rossi's candidacy for city council. Being good friends since boyhood, I know we feel the same way about Agawam.

We owe Agawam for providing a safe community to grow up in and for an education that allowed us to get from here to the next level. We owe Agawam for being there with critical, invaluable support in a time of great personal need. We owe Agawam for a circle of loved family and friends, and we owe Agawam for the financial support it has given us, Bob as an Agawam Police Officer and me as a

home town attorney, to provide for ourselves and our families.

The bottom line is that I know he knows what he owes Agawam. And so, when he is in a position to "serve and protect", whether it was behind a badge or studying the issues for making the best vote for the community he loves, I know he takes his responsibilities very, very seriously. I also know, first hand many times over, how valuable he is at such times, and it is main reason I support his candidacy.

Rich Morassi

Hendrickson looks out for residents

Dear Editor:

We are so lucky to have Tom Hendrickson as an Agawam City Councilor. His vote on ordinances and resolutions before the council is always measured and evidence-based, taking into careful consideration input from his constituents. Tom doesn't mindlessly follow the herd.

Tom has a true concern for wisely spending our tax dollars and is looking out for our pocket-books as well. He sponsored a resolution to initiate Community Energy Aggregation which could save money on utility bills for everyone in Agawam. Tom also supports efforts to properly maintain Agawam's water and sewer systems to prevent the kind of costly repairs we had to do recently because prior administrations failed to keep up the infrastructure.

And Tom is completely transparent on his policies and goals for the Town. It's all there for you to read on his website at <https://www.tomhendrickson.org/priorities>.

Tom also cares about your voice. He spoke out in defense of your voting rights when the Town sought to cut in-person early voting in 2022 and eliminate mail-in voting in 2023. Tom invites input from citizens and truly listens and responds to concerns with answers and policy choices.

And beyond all that, Tom Hendrickson is a true gentleman. He often drives elderly residents to city council meetings and assists constituents who aren't sure where to turn on issues like how to dispose of old mattresses. We are so darn lucky to have him.

Susan Grossberg

Guest Column

Can my wife claim her benefit now and switch to a spouse benefit from me later?



Dear Rusty

Can my wife claim her benefits now (at 63, and we know about the reduction for claiming early) and then, when I retire at 66 years and 10 months of age almost 3 years from now, can she switch over to spousal benefits based on my benefit amount? She worked at a higher paying job for much of her career, but is now at a much lower income and would be under the amount that would reduce her benefits further. I currently earn about nine times her annual salary so the spousal benefit for her would be an increase when I retire.

Dear Seeking

Yes, your wife can claim her own (reduced) Social Security retirement benefit now and she will be automatically awarded a spousal boost when you later claim your SS retirement benefit. However, your wife's benefit when you claim will not be 50% of your Full Retirement Age amount because she claimed her own SS benefit early and also because her spousal boost will be awarded prior to her FRA. Any benefit taken before FRA is reduced, including the spousal benefit.

Here's what will happen if your wife claims her own Social Security at age 63. Your wife's personal SS retirement benefit, when she claims, will be reduced by about 25%. When you claim at your full retirement age, your wife will get a "spousal boost" to her own reduced benefit.

The amount of your wife's spousal boost will be the difference between her FRA entitlement and 50% of your FRA entitlement, reduced because the

Signed: Seeking Information



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The Agawam Advertiser News (USPS 001-170) is published every Thursday by Turley Publications, Inc., 24 Water St., Palmer, Mass. 01069. Telephone (413) 283-8393, Fax (413) 289-1977. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Turley Publications, Inc., 24 Water St., Palmer, Mass. 01069.

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Opinion

Black cats? A purr-fect addition to the family



Reports indicate that black cats are less likely to be adopted than other fur colors, and if you've ever purr-sonally known a black cat, you may be just as bewildered as I was when I learned this fact.

As I'm writing this, my two black cats are curled up on a nearby blanket, basking in a sunlit autumn glow. Yet, the stats of the matter remain—according to several studies, including one regarding a cat's fur color and how this impacts their adoptability, the results were certain.

"Black cats in [shelters] should receive extra consideration for rehoming," the study revealed.

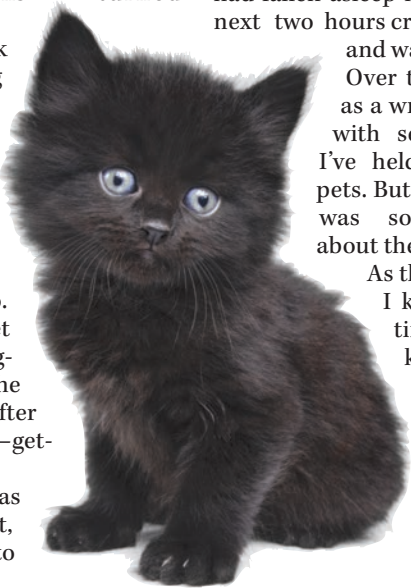
Further, entirely black cats did not enjoy "improved outcomes" during the month prior to Halloween, the one time of year when their outcomes might be expected to improve, the study reported.

So, when considering a new pet for the family, why not consider a black cat or two?

Here's my adoption story for Mayra and Rosie, my "foster kittens turned fur-ever cats."

I met them at a book signing event during which I'd teamed up with a local animal rescue to raise donations. The event started out great, but very soon after I arrived, a dog that I lovingly refer to as "the stinky dog" arrived, too. The event was in a pet store that offered a doggie bathing area, and the stinky dog chanced in after an ill-fated experience—getting sprayed by a skunk.

The dog's owner was noticeably stressed out, and I tried my hardest to



ignore the scent, but tears were quite literally forming in my eyes. Approaching the volunteer leading the event—Kathy—I intended to tell her that I, as a very sensitive soul who can't handle the atrocity of foul odors, would be packing up my books and heading out.

When Kathy turned around, I saw that she was wrangling and wrestling with an incredibly tiny black kitten—and this cat was upset. Meowing, crying, and wiggling, the kitten was passed around to several volunteers, and as a person who'd recently drifted into the center of this chaotic scene, the cat was eventually passed to me.

The kitten, Rosie, was around eight-weeks-old. She was so small, but she was zesty. I hadn't expected to be holding a distressed cat, but I understood the assignment; I also related to the kitten's concerns, and holding her close against my chest, I rocked her like an infant and walked down an aisle into a quiet corner.

In my arms, little Rosie calmed down instantly. The volunteers exchanged glances and sighs of relief; at the time, I didn't know why this kitten chose me as the one human who could calm her. But looking back, I know now what I hadn't known then—it was fate!

For the remainder of the event, no more books were signed. After the kitten had fallen asleep in my arms, I spent the next two hours cradling her, swaying her, and walking around the store.

Over the years, in my career as a writer and as a volunteer with several animal groups, I've held countless adoptable pets. But this little kitten? There was something inexplicable about the way she made me feel.

As the event neared its end, I knew it would soon be time to hand over the kitten, who would be transported back to her current foster home and, eventually, adopted. And thinking about that, I felt an overwhelming sense of sadness.

"What are the chances of me taking this cat home?" I jested to Kathy, who responded by telling me that I could.

"You said what now?" I retorted, still swaying the cat. "I can take her home with me?"

"Well, you could foster her if you wanted to. It would actually be really helpful," she said. "We've got lots of kittens right now and are looking for foster homes."

I knew that fostering kittens didn't require a lot of space; any extra room, or even a small bathroom, could be used to house the kitten until she found her fur-ever home. My mind ignited into a blaze of calculations, and I came to the conclusion—this could actually work.

"Let me ask my husband," I said, not wanting to make a unilateral decision for the family without him. "He will be the deciding factor."

When my husband, Dom, answered the FaceTime call, I knew the possibility of him saying yes was slim—very slim—but it wasn't zero.

"That's a cute cat," he said when he answered; the camera was focused on the little kitten I was holding. "Now put it back and come home."

I truly did try to put her back; she woke, squirming and letting out a shrill meow as she was placed into a small cat carrier. From inside the carrier, I heard another muffled meow—apparently, Rosie had a twin sister named Mayra who'd been inside the carrier the entire event because she was shy.

As I packed up my books, watching as all the adoptable pets were brought out of the store, I turned to Kathy.

"Am I going to regret not bringing that kitten home with me?" I asked, hoping



Mayra and Rosie, two black cats who found their fur-ever homes.

Kathy could somehow supply an answer that would make it feel better. "Is it a mistake to let her go?"

"I don't know," she replied, having witnessed the bond Rosie and I had shared. "How do you feel right now?"

My lip started quivering. Quivering. Tears welled in my eyes, and I stood there in the middle of this pet store like a lost child. In that moment, I realized, having Rosie in my arms had been a peace and connection I'd only known twice before, with my other two cats, so, my husband was surely not surprised at all when I rolled up to our house that afternoon with two new foster kittens who we adopted the following day.

These two black cats have now wrapped their paws around my heart—and perhaps a black cat awaits the love of your family, too!

Or any adoptable pet, for that matter, as all pets are worthy of love.

GARDEN ■ from page 4

late flowering variety! Honest!

Some varieties take a long time to flower. One variety that I know grows well and flowers on the early side is an heirloom by the name of Grandpa Ott's.

Give it a try and you'll be pleasantly surprised by the dark purple flowers with reddish centers.

One thing you didn't mention in your

note was exposure; morning glories do need to be planted in full sun in order to flower. I do hope this helps!

Roberta McQuaid graduated from the Stockbridge School of Agriculture at the University of Massachusetts. For 31 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.

SECURITY ■ from page 4

spousal boost will be awarded automatically before she has reached her own full retirement age. FRA amounts are used to compute the spousal boost, regardless of the age at which benefits are claimed.

When you claim, your wife will not yet be her FRA, so the amount of her spousal boost, the difference between her FRA entitlement and half of your FRA entitlement, will be reduced. The reduced spousal boost will be added to your wife's reduced SS retirement benefit, resulting in her total benefit payment being less than half of yours.

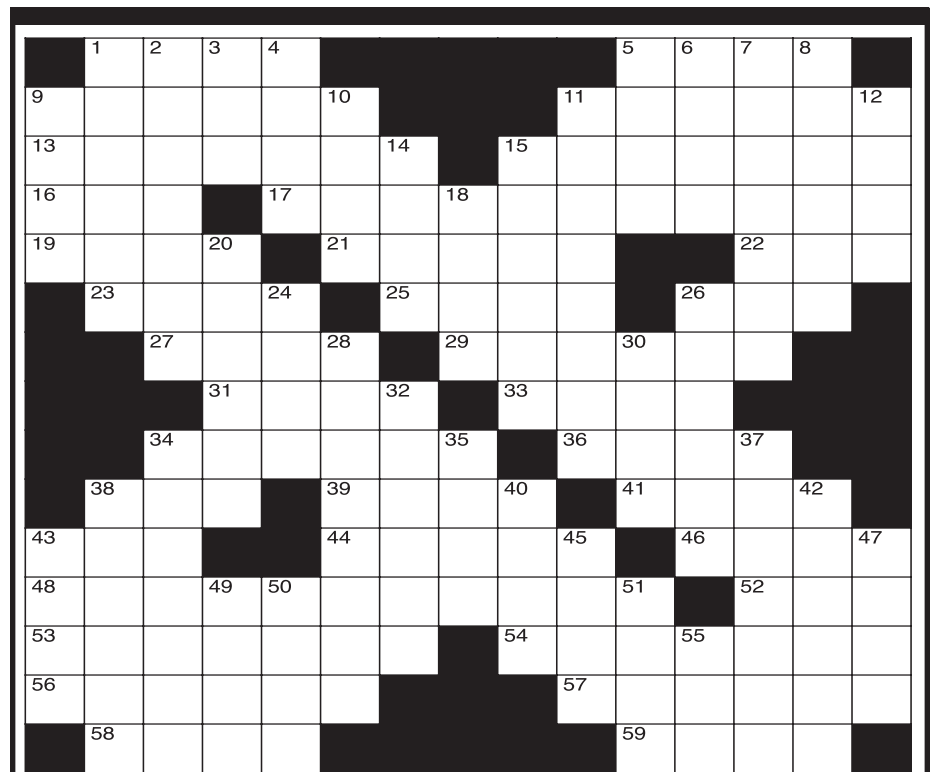
The only way your wife can get the full 50% of your FRA entitlement is to wait until her own FRA at 67 to claim Social Security, but by doing so she also forfeits the money she would otherwise receive if she claimed her own benefit now. As long as she won't significantly exceed the earnings limit while working before her FRA, claiming now is an acceptable strategy because it will take many years to recover the money forfeited by waiting until her FRA to claim.

It's also reasonable because women statistically outlive men and your wife's bene-

fit as your surviving spouse will be 100% of the amount you are receiving at your death, instead of the smaller spousal amount she was receiving while you were both living.

When to claim is always a personal choice and life expectancy should always be thoughtfully considered, but the answer to your specific question is - yes, if your wife claims her own benefit at 63, she will automatically receive her spousal boost when you claim, but her payment as your spouse will be less than 50% of your FRA benefit amount.

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CLUES ACROSS

1. Male children
5. Robert Wagner series "Hart to ..."
9. Unfolded
11. Digestive disease
13. Wednesday
15. Malignant tumor
16. Conscientious investment strategy (abbr.)
17. Slowed
19. Letter of the Semitic abjads
21. Weights of cars without fuel
22. Former CIA
23. Asian country
25. Instead
26. Ancient Egyptian King
27. Privies
29. Shopping trips
31. Paradoxical anecdote
33. It's on the table
34. Ancient Persia ruler
36. Small American rail
38. File extension
39. Days (Spanish)
41. Everyone has one
43. South American plant
44. About ilium
46. Vanished American hoopster
48. A type of breakfast
52. Uncooked
53. Examined
54. Christian recluse
56. Strong posts
57. Some are for pasta
58. Skinny
59. School-based organizations

CLUES DOWN

1. Ringlet
2. Type of complex
3. Midway between north and northwest
4. It becomes something bigger
5. German courtesy title
6. Genus of birds
7. Marked by public disorder
8. Least aggressive
9. Russian city
10. Insect repellent
11. Interruptions
12. Scoundrels
14. 1,000 calories
15. What one does overnight
18. Dwarf planet
20. Pipe
24. Black powdery substance
26. Set of four
28. Canned fishes
30. North Carolina college
32. Secured
34. A disgraceful event
35. Physical suffering
37. The home of the free
38. Some are boys
40. Satisfy
42. Makes very happy
43. South American plants
45. Modes of transportation
47. Female sheep
49. Type of torch
50. Piece of merchandise
51. Jump over
55. Wife of Amun

★ ELECTION 2023 ★ City Council Q&A

Editor's Note: The following are questionnaires answered by incumbent and challenging candidates for the Agawam City Council. In addition to a few basic questions, they answered the following questions with short responses: 1. The second sewer rate increase scheduled for 2024 will come up for vote. Do you support the second increase? Why or why not? 2. Based on current available information, what version of a high school project do you currently support and why? 3. What are the top three issues the town faces in the upcoming term? 4. What unique trait or quality will you bring to the city council? 5. Do you believe the city council should switch from being all at-large to having ward councilors? Why or why not?

Note: Responses are shown in the order they were received.

Robert Rossi

(incumbent)

Years as councilor: 20

Sewer increases: Sewer increases are always determined by regular and unforeseen maintenance and repairs as well as operational day to day service to the community. Sewer services operate under a self-sustaining enterprise system. Which means it is not funded by the budget levy, but by user fees. Only those with sewer services pay a user fee to sustain those services. Those without sewer services do not pay user fees. Raising user fees are never easy, but unavoidable. If user fees are not commensurate with the cost of providing those services and a deficit results, the city by law would have to supplement the difference. That would not be fair to all the tax payers who are not being provided those services.

High School: I support some version of bringing the school up to code and making it a friendly safe, learning environment including latest updates in technologies. The current High school has many issues that need to be corrected. At this point it's difficult to determine which and how would be most cost-effective avenue to take; renovation or rebuild. Whatever the answer, my thought is that it should be based on need and not want. However, what's best for our students learning environment cannot be compromised in the debate.

Top Issues: A new high school is under consideration, as mentioned. Which will require serious funding considerations. Considering the evolution of education and allowing for students' future growth can create some extreme conflicts in deciding cost/worth factors. Also, a new police station is on the drawing board which will be coming for a vote this term meaning another tax issue to be considered by the incoming council. Additionally, on the back burner for many years has been a new Early Childhood Center. The data is well documented and the importance have been well-known for years, not only to our children, but the community as well. Agawam has not responded to date, much to my disappointment. I will continue to be an advocate until I no longer have a voice. Hopefully, the High School renovations might be a solution.

Unique trait: Anyone who has followed my career would know my every thought and consideration has been for the good of the community, and how we choose to live, work and play. It has been clearly established over the years that as a councilor my efforts have always been to make things easier not more difficult for the people of Agawam. My experience has taught me what it takes to navigate complicated issues, find solutions, and get things done. Education and skillset bring a well-rounded uniqueness, a valuable asset to any organization especially public service providing tangible and predictable results to our future.

Ward representation: I do not believe in reverting back to Ward representation. It was proven to be ineffective years ago by our forefathers. I assume our predecessors felt all elected positions should be accountable to all the citizens and not just pander to small districts. Further, Agawam is a small and fairly homogenous town where at large election would achieve much fairer representation, larger cities would have significantly different groups where at large representation may not be as effective as ward representation that case.

Rosemary Sandlin

(incumbent)

Years as councilor: 6

Sewer increases: The second sewer rate increase scheduled for 2024 will come up for a vote. Do you support the second increase? Why and why not?

Sewer rate: The present council voted to take the proposed water and sewer rates in parts, this sewer rate that is scheduled in 2024 would need to show me need for an increase. I would need to know what the current dollars in the sewer enterprise fund and is it adequate for the projected sewer problems. Let me be clear that from all conversations it is not a given that the council will have get a request in 2024. My understanding is that the department is able to come back to the council for an increase in any of the next 4 years if needed.

High school: With the current information at hand, I would support a new building. The cost of renovations to the present building is equal to the cost as we know it to a new building. I am awaiting the school building assistance percentage of what they will offer.



Robert Rossi



Rosemary Sandlin

Top issues: 1, the high school, 2, The completion of the new police complex, 3, repairing of our streets and new build of addition sidewalks

Unique trait: As a lifelong citizen of Agawam and a community volunteer on may committee over the years I bring my desire to serve the city that gave so much to myself and my children. My past experience in government starting with my time on the school committee, my 22 years working with State Senator Linda Melconian as her chief of state as well as my tenure as a representative in the House of Representatives give me the knowledge to work with the state in securing monies for the needs of Agawam. I will continue to put the needs of the citizens first and foremost and pledge to respond to any and all request for assistance no matter how big or small.

Ward representation: No response

Thomas Hendrickson

Years as councilor: 2

Sewer rate: I do plan on supporting the rate increase, for two reasons. First of all, Agawam buys our water from Springfield, and Springfield is likely going to raise their prices. Therefore, we have to raise our rates to cover the increase in Springfield's prices. Second of all, Agawam desperately needs to make major improvements and repairs to our water and sewer infrastructure, and the only way to raise enough revenues to do that is to increase rates. Promising to keep rates low can be an effective tactic for opportunistic politicians trying to get elected, but the fact of the matter is that maintaining our current rates would have severe negative consequences.

High School: I am currently inclined to support New Construction Option 1C. This option would involve 87% new construction and 13% renovation. Our public schools are our community's most important asset, therefore we need a high school that fully meets the needs of our students, teachers, and our community as a whole. Our current high school no longer accomplishes this; the NEASC has warned Agawam that our high school is at risk of losing accreditation due to its inadequate, outdated infrastructure. Rather than sticking another band aid on our dilapidated high school through a renovation project, we need to build a brand new school that will provide a world class education to many future generations of AHS students.

Top issues: Agawam High School I am strongly supporting efforts to bring a new high school building to Agawam. The new high school would be a tremendous asset for our community and would be well worth the investment. Infrastructure Over the past few years, Agawam has stepped up our investment in our roads, sidewalks, and water & sewer systems. Continuing to improve, repair, and expand our infrastructure needs to be one of our top priorities. Housing Agawam is desperately in need of more housing options. Young people are moving out of Agawam due to the lack of housing here, and senior citizens are struggling to find affordable options for downsizing. I support using CPA funds to create more housing options in Agawam.

Unique trait: I have an academic background that is highly relevant to my work as a city councilor; I earned a bachelor's degree in political science and a master's degree in public policy. I am also just 24 years old, about half the age of the next youngest councilor. My youth is clearly an asset. I have a uniquely vested interest in the longterm prosperity of our community, and I approach my work on the council with a high level of energy and passion. My youth also allows me to serve as a liaison between the younger generation of residents and the town government, ensuring that our perspectives are represented and our issues are addressed.

Ward representation: I support undergoing a full comprehensive review of our town charter, and the idea of ward representation would likely be something that we would consider over the course of that process. Every neighborhood in Agawam seems to have its own unique issues, and as an at-large councilor, it can be difficult to stay on top of every little issue going on in all the different neighborhoods throughout our town. Ward representation could potentially allow councilors to serve their respective communities more effectively. I am inclined to support ward representation as part of an overall charter review process, but it's something that I would need to evaluate further before fully committing to.



Thomas Hendrickson

Gerald Smith

(incumbent)

Years as councilor: 4

Sewer Rate: In June of 2024 rates may go up from 2.95 to 3.68 per hundred cubic feet of residential water usage and 6.27 per hundred cubic feet for sewers. I will do everything in my power to keep rates as low as possible. I am not in favor of the increase, but it may be necessary. High School: I am in favor of option 1-C. If we don't act now we will lose accreditation. If we act now, we are eligible for millions in reimbursement. If we lose accreditation, young families will not want to move to Agawam This will decrease property values

Top Issues: The three main issues facing the city are the High School, the new police station, and our sidewalks and roads.

Unique trait: I was a High School business teacher for 35 years. I won several teaching awards. I was a High School coach for many years. Upon retiring I was inducted into the Massachusetts State coaches Hall of Fame, the AHS Athletic Hall of Fame, and the baseball field at the high school was dedicated in my name. I started and am still active in an Agawam small business (Agawam Auto School) for the past 42 years. I have been a member of the City Council for the past 4 years.

Ward representation: I am in favor of having all at-large councilors.



Gerald Smith

Dino Mercadante

(incumbent)

Years as councilor: 6

Sewer rate: Not at this time. The reason that this sewer rate question will come before the council at some point for a vote, is because I offered an amendment to the original bill that called for an automatic second increase. I successfully lobbied to remove that second increase and make the administration come before the council for an up or down vote. If they come before the council for the second increase, they must demonstrate a serious need. At present, I will be looking for a reduction in the sprinkler rate to coincide with our regular water usage rate, as well as a reduction in the meter charges.

High school: Given the two options, I would support a new high school. The preliminary costs are roughly the same. A retrofit to the old high school would not help our accreditation problems, and it would be very disruptive to the students through the school year. Here are the concerns: A) We don't have a real number yet. B) We don't have a concrete reimbursement rate yet. C) Have we added space to the new version that the state won't reimburse. Area new schools have pared down their wishlist more in line to what the state will pay for. So more information is needed before we really can commit. Ultimately, can the taxpayers afford the final cost?

Top issues: A) The high school project. It will be, if passed, the single biggest expenditure the town of Agawam has ever had, even with the MSBA reimbursement. B) Improving our infrastructure. Road work, sidewalks, and the possibility of addressing the unfinished sewer system in the town. C) Addressing the need for a more accessible Townhall.

Agawam is a great community to live in. It truly provides for its citizens very well. It is hard to please everyone all the time. The grass isn't always greener on the other side. With that being said, if we are too aggressive, too fast, we may make it difficult to afford living here.

Unique trait: In owning my own business for 40 years, I have dealt with many people listening to their every day concerns, and what is important to them. I have taken that experience with me to the Agawam city Council, where, listening to people's concerns has allowed me to help more of our citizens. This also, means that the interaction with my colleagues on the council is every bit as important. I work well to bring people together for a consensus on important issues for the benefit of our citizens.

Ward representation: No, I do not believe in ward representation. My thought is we are one body of 11 councilors working for the entire town. Ward representation, to me, is like each ward counselor is mainly interested in their own ward. By being at-large, a counselor is more concerned with the entire community. I know from personal experience, that every one of my colleagues is honorable and concerned with every citizen in every area of our great town. My interest is our entire community and not just the neighborhood I live in. I am always accessible to all our residents.



Dino Mercadante

Every **VOTE**
COUNTS!

★ ELECTION 2023 ★

Meet your City Council candidates

George Bitzas

(incumbent)

Sewer rate: I did not vote for the first 50% sewer rate increase because it was a very high increase for one time. As for now I'm not supporting the second increase of an extra 25% in one year. I will consult with the DPW and the mayor about the need for the second increase and then I will make my decision.

High school: The new high school project is on the right track and I'm open to a new high school or major renovations to our existing school. We do need a lot more information about the high school project. Why is the cost so high and why do we get very low state reimbursement? As of today, we don't have all the information and we don't know how much the average taxpayers will increase.

Top issues: I believe that many of the sidewalks and streets in Agawam and Feeding Hills are in bad shape. We have done some repairs but we need to do more. I have repeatedly asked in past few years for more funds for sidewalk and street repairs to be put in the budget and I will continue to do so in the future. I am also a strong supporter of fire and police protection, good education for our children and continuation of good services to our residents without any extra fees.

Unique trait: I am a graduate of Westfield state university and I taught at West Springfield junior and senior high school. As a teacher I know and I value the importance of good education. My experience as your city councilor for many years and my many accomplishments speak for itself. As a member of the Agawam lion's club, Agawam Rotary Club, American legion and Friend of the Senior Center I am in contact with many people and I hear their concerns and suggestions. I also have served as the council vice-president and chairman of every city council committee, serving the residents of Agawam and feeding Hills with competence, honesty, integrity and common sense.

Ward representation: I don't believe the City Council should switch from being all at-large to having ward councilors. It has worked well for many years and should stay the same. We are elected to represent all the people of Agawam and Feeding Hills the same and we do that.



George Bitzas

also work 3 jobs to support my family with this tough economically challenged country.

Ward representation: I'm not against it. Pros and cons. Ward will help better connect with the smaller amount of constituents versus at large the whole town.

Anthony Russo

(incumbent)

Years as councilor: 2

Sewer rate: At this time, I feel the increase won't be necessary. With the current rising cost of living, I feel it's our duty as elected officials to do all we can to ease the burden of those rising costs. With the advances we have made in the water and sewer department these past two years, I feel going into 2024 we will be in good fiscal shape to continue the work needed to be done without an increase.

High school: With current information I would go with option IC, new construction. From current preliminary cost we have seen it is the most cost effective option. If we renovate the existing school we would have to rent modular class rooms which do not qualify for the state reimbursement. With the cost of modular classrooms, the financial savings of renovation would be minimal compared to new construction. I feel we are getting a better school for the money and students will have educational stability during construction since they will still be in existing classroom instead of a crowded modular room. Also, current stadium and tennis courts won't be displaced.

Top issues: The biggest is the high school. We need to hold several workshops explaining the details and needs of the school. I feel we should send a town wide mailer and robocall to all residents with the dates of these workshops. It's our duty as the elected officials to do all we can to inform the residents and give them an opportunity to have their questions answered. We also need to bring new businesses to Agawam that are more suited to our residents needs. This will bring in more revenue and job opportunities for Agawam. Finally, Charter Review is long overdue. Past and current councilors have talked about it, I would like to see it become a reality.

Unique trait: Being both a small business owner and a chairman of a trades union I understand how the moving parts work between management and the workers in the field. How to be fiscally responsible to bring in profits but at the same time making sure the business can expand while treating everyone fairly. I have sat on negotiating committees and budget committees in my professional career. These are skills and experiences that I've brought and will continue to bring to the city council. Making sure not a penny of taxpayer money is wasted and that the residents of Agawam will have a community that will continue to move forward.

Ward representation: Yes, I do. We currently have 8 precincts with 11 at-large councilors. I would suggest 8 ward councilors and 3 at large. I feel ward representation promotes an opportunity for more change and fresher ideas for the council. It will also give the residents a direct councilor to go to when they have questions or concerns. It would make it easier to hold council debates at election time. Helping residents get more information about their candidates. Currently having 12 to 22 people on a debate stage isn't efficient. With wards we could easily do ward debates over several days.



Anthony Russo

holes in our current zoning that can change the character of our community. My top priority will be to ensure Agawam always retains its small-town charm.

Unique trait: I love Agawam. My educational background includes a Bachelors in Business and a Master's in Public Administration. As a lifelong resident, 37-year Agawam business owner (E. B's Restaurant) and long-time community volunteer, I have the energy, passion and experience necessary to be a new voice for Agawam.

Ward representation: I believe Agawam is best served with an at large form of government where all city councilors are elected town wide. It would be a mistake to return to ward representation which failed our town in the past. We cannot afford to go backwards. Serving on the city council is a privilege and every councilor should be held accountable and focused on what is in the best interest of the entire town.

Maria Valego

(challenger)

Sewer rate: City of Springfield determines the rate. Sewer and water rate is based on usage by the meter reading. We, "the council", could bring it to the table for discussion and to the mayor.

Encourage a meeting between Springfield sewer and water commission with the Agawam mayor and Agawam city council to discuss the rate(s) to come up with a happy median for all!

High school: I would support a "new build" If renovation costs are similar to a new build; the answer is easy = "a new build!" new updated technology, equipment that's not outdated and can't be fixed. We can't keep band-aiding the issue, it's long overdue. Our standing has dropped.

A new build improves physical and safety conditions, enhances the educational environment. This provides students with an environment that's suitable for learning and delivering an exceptional education.

Top issues: 1. Agawam high school renovation/new build 2. New Agawam Police Department 3. Installing of new water lines

Unique trait: born and raised in Agawam Homeowner in Agawam. Graduate of AHS Class of 1988. Education: BA of science and MA of science from Hamilton University; certified paralegal; certified private investigator; training from the Mass Trial Court (cop) and 30 years and of dedicated and creditable experience. Strong knowledge of the Mass General Laws. My background, skills and experience are only the beginning of what I will bring to the city council.

Ward representation: Currently the City of Agawam and Feeding Hills is represented by a city council. I am currently satisfied with it being a city council. Should this city want to change from city councilor at-large to ward, it should be brought forward by public vote.



Maria Valego

Susan Dawson

(challenger)

Political experience: Former Agawam mayor and school committee member

Sewer rate: When the proposed increase comes before the council, I will evaluate the reasons for an increase. No increase in taxes or fees should ever be made until substantial information is provided for its necessity.

High school: I support the plan to build a new high school. Agawam High School has been deemed a failing facility and will lose its accreditation if we do not remedy the situation. In examining the choices, I believe that using the existing building during construction of the new will save the cost of modular classrooms which will reduce the overall cost. Agawam has finally reached the top of the list at the School Building Authority. This will provide that financial assistance needed. Now is the right time to build!

Top issues: The construction of a new high school; the new police building; and balancing our budget through what could be tumultuous economic times ahead.

Unique trait: I am the former Mayor of Agawam and a former Agawam School Committee Member. As such, I bring valuable experience to the City Council and makes me uniquely qualified to serve on the Agawam City Council.

Ward representation: I believe that Agawam is a homogeneously balanced town. Most issues faced in the Town of Agawam effect all members of the community. Therefore, the at-large pool of candidates can represent all of the people in the town evenly.



Susan Dawson

Ed Borgatti

(challenger)

Sewer rate: If elected, I will propose that Agawam establish a Capital Planning Committee that will outline the capital needs and expenses over a five-year period. Having run a business for 37 years in Agawam I have to anticipate and plan for cost increases and expenditures of my business. Although the second sewer rate hike might be necessary the public should have been made aware sooner. Proper planning and awareness are essential. Many of our residents, especially seniors live on fixed incomes. These significant increases with little or no warning, places an unfair burden on many of our residents.

High school: In order to keep Agawam a first-class community we must provide quality education with first class schools. A new high school is essential in keeping Agawam a great place to live, work and raise a family. It is imperative we have public input, debate and discussion on the best way to move forward.

Top issues: 1. Ensure all our streets and neighborhoods are clean and safe. If our residents do not feel safe in their homes and neighborhoods nothing else matters. 2. Establish and maintain civility and cooperation between the city council and the mayor. An open line of communication between them is imperative to move Agawam forward. 3. Create a comprehensive review of all our zoning policies and practices We cannot let outside influences find loop-



Ed Borgatti

Anthony Suffriti

(incumbent)

Years as councilor: 10

Sewer Rate: I will not just vote for a sewer increase without justifying data showing a need.

High school: As part of that particular committee, my knowledge of the project is more in depth. I will say that the tax payers of Agawam should have the major roll in this decision.

Top issues: Keeping taxes low, continued infrastructure, sewers in the section of feeding hills without it.

Unique trait: Just enough time on council to fully understand government and how to utilize it for the benefit of the citizen along with connecting with the people as I



Anthony Suffriti



Community newspapers championed "mobile-friendly"

Keep up with current trends, our newspaper web sites are mobile-friendly too!

Easily connect with your community news, find quick links to our facebook feeds, browse newspaper archives and submit your own news items by visiting www.newspapers.turley.com



Baystate Children's Hospital welcomes facility dog



BCH's first facility dog, Isabela, at her meet and greet.

SUBMITTED PHOTO

SPRINGFIELD— Baystate Children's Hospital's first-ever facility dog, Isabela, Isa for short, who joined the team thanks to a \$150,000 grant from the Dunkin' Joy in Childhood Foundation. Baystate's newest employee goes to work every day to provide special animal assisted therapy to pediatric patients, their families, and staff members.

The Foundation's Dogs for Joy program seeks to increase the number of in-resident dogs in children's hospitals across the country. Facility dogs like Isa are professionally trained to work in a healthcare setting. Unlike volunteer dogs that visit a hospital or medical center for a short time, facility dogs are at the hospital every day with their handlers. In most cases they are used exclusively for clinical work. These dogs are trained to help with tasks like teaching kids how to take medication, keeping a child calm during medical intervention and providing incentives for kids to get out of bed for a walk, these dogs serve as a source of happiness and provide a sense of normalcy for patients.

"Dogs like Isabela are often described as better than any medicine. They just know when someone needs comfort, support, and love, and they give it unconditionally without judgement and expect nothing in return," said Dr. Charlotte Boney, chair, Department of Pediatrics at Baystate.

"We are thrilled to bring joy to patients and their families at Baystate Children's Hospital through our Dogs for

Joy program," said April McGonnigal, Director of the Joy in Childhood Foundation. "We have seen the incredible impact that these special pups bring to children's hospitals throughout the country and look forward to seeing the meaningful impact that Isa has on the patients, staff and families at Baystate."

Isabela, a Golden Retriever, was born and raised at Canine Assistants in Milton, Georgia, a non-profit organization which teaches and provides service dogs for children and adults with physical disabilities or other special needs.

Already a star before arriving at Baystate Children's Hospital, Isabela, now almost 19 months old, began her education at just seven weeks. She has completed over 1500 hours of individual instruction and 2,250 hours of group instruction and was the first of her litter to graduate at only 17 months old.

Isa and her handlers provide goal-oriented interventions Isa will be working with pediatric patients across many areas of the children's hospital including inpatient units, the emergency department, radiology, and some outpatient areas. Isa also has some designated time to support hospital staff across the medical center. She has a calm and intuitive demeanor and has been an added support for staff during debriefs following difficult situations, or when rounding on units to help uplift spirits.

"Isabela is a wonderful new addition to the Baystate Children's Hospital staff. As a dog lover and huge Golden Retriever enthusiast who has been blessed with many Golden over the years, these lovable dogs are known for their gentle nature, goofy sweet smiles, and deep loyalty to and affection for humans. They make great service dogs and we are lucky to have Isa as part of our team," Dr. Boney said. Visit Isabela on Instagram @Isabela_inspires.

For more information on Baystate Children's Hospital, visit baystatehealth.org/bch.

To learn more about the Dunkin' Joy in Childhood Foundation's Dogs for Joy program please visit www.bring-joy.org.

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THANKSGIVING REVIEWS

"Hi Paul, she was great! Lots of plump meat and just enough fat to help prevent her from drying out. We will be having leftovers for a very long time."
— Beth from Belchertown

"Everyone loved it. Absolutely perfect. I was planning on stopping by between now and Christmas to thank you. You beat me to it. We'll definitely see you next year."
— Greg from West Springfield

"It was absolutely AMAZING! This was the first time ever bringing a turkey and then I followed your cooking directions on your website. It was perfect cooking it low and slow."
— Kelly from Ludlow

BUSINESS GIFTS

Volume pricing and exceptional taste with traditional farm-raised birds make a reasonable and generous holiday gift.

"We tried Liberty for our gift program this year. I had one employee thank me five times."
Kevin Sullivan
Commercial Machine

Give a Dickens-style gift to employees or business partners this year with a pasture-raised extra-large turkey for Christmas.

HAND FED, PASTURE RAISED

On a Ludlow family farm, we raise turkeys in a pasture where they can run freely, hand fed on healthful grains and extra vegetables from our farm. Minimally processed, these birds have more meat, less water and the extra taste found only in tradition. No antibiotics, animal by-products, hormones or additive are used.

Call **413-426-6636** to Reserve



Cheryl Birk who needed some of her favorite tops and a sock mended by Clarice Cecchi.

SUBMITTED PHOTO

Quilting club hosts mending event

AGAWAM – On Thursday, Oct. 19, the Agawam Senior Center Quilting club hosted a free minor mending event. Anyone who was in need of some minor mending to their clothing were able to bring it in and have it fixed by our experts.

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SPORTS



Alivia Carrier heads up the right side.



Kylie Warner tries to catch up to a loose ball.



Megan Fitzgerald makes a quick pass.

After stealing the ball, Keira Murphy makes a run up the field.

TURLEY PHOTOS BY GREGORY A. SCIBELLI

Kozhenevsky scores game winner for Brownies

AGAWAM – Last Friday night in the rain, Agawam girls soccer prevailed at Chicopee Comprehensive. Angelina Kozhenevsky scored the lone goal in the match for a 1-0 Agawam win. Agawam improved to 6-9 as they continue to seek a playoff spot in the state tournament, which they may get by finishing in the top 32 in the Power Rankings for Division 2.



Angelina Kozhenevsky pops the ball up.

Boys soccer falls at Ludlow

By Tim Peterson
Sports Correspondent

LUDLOW – The Ludlow boys' varsity soccer team lost the first two games that they played on the grass field located behind Ludlow High School during the 2021 regular season. Since that time, the Lions have won every other match that they've played on that field.

The Lions wrapped up the regular season home slate by shutting out Agawam, 3-0, in a non-league match last Wednesday afternoon.

"I was a sophomore the last time that we lost a game on this field," said Ludlow senior captain Enzo Botta, who joined the varsity soccer team as a freshman. "We work very hard and we're like one big family. I'm very happy to be a member of this team."

The Lions, who have lost a couple of matches at historic Lusitano Stadium during the past three



Lucas Ritson attempts to head the ball to over an opponent.

TURLEY PHOTO BY GREGORY A. SCIBELLI

JUMP | page ?



Finnola Mahoney seeks to steal the ball.



Brooke Dwyer looks to break up a play.



Tessa Ebreo winds up for a free hit.



Sydney Fraiser chases down the ball.

Brownies cruise toward tournament

AGAWAM – Last Thursday afternoon, Agawam defeated Southwick 3-0. In the win, A.J. Croteau, Sarah Kriebel, and Teagan Fullam scored the goals as the Brownies played a bit shorthanded due to some injuries. Agawam is 6-4-5 and should qualify for tournament, which begins next week.



A.J. Croteau heads up the field.



Brooke Dwyer tries to get a ricochet in the net.

TURLEY PHOTOS BY GREGORY A. SCIBELLI

Sports



Brandon Bourgeois tries to stop the ball from going out of bounds.



Vincent Rodier is pressured near the sideline.

TURLEY PHOTOS BY GREGORY A. SCIBELLI



Adam Ross looks to settle the ball.

JUMP ■ from page 1

seasons, had a 13-0-2 overall record following the shutout win against the Brownies.

"This was a solid win for us, and you always want to win your home games," said Ludlow head coach Greg Kolodziej. "We were able to get everyone into today's game, which is always a very good thing."

It was most likely the Lions' final game ever played on the grass field, which is also used by the Lions football team. Construction of a brand new turf field is expected to begin in early November.

The Lions, who captured the Smith Division title, were the top-ranked team in the Western Mass. Class A rankings. They were also ranked ninth team in the latest MIAA Division 1 power rankings.

The Lions wrapped up the regular season with a 3-0 loss at Leominster, who's a Division 1 team, last Saturday afternoon.

The Brownies (7-5-3) are ranked fourth in the Class A rankings and 20th in the Division 2 statewide power rankings.

Since the two teams played a scoreless draw in their first meeting of the 2017 regular season, the Lions have outscored the Brownies, 23-1.

Longtime Agawam boys' varsity soccer coach Tom Smith was unavailable for comment following last Wednesday's match.

It was also the Lions' tenth shutout of the 2023 regular season.

Ludlow controlled possession during the first ten minutes of the opening half.

During the first minute, Ludlow junior James Dias sent a pass into the box from the right side. The ball was headed off the crossbar by Botta.

Junior Owen Wurszt followed with a low shot attempt which was saved by Agawam junior goalie Ben Lang (8 saves).

A couple of minutes later, Lang deflected a free kick taken by Botta over the crossbar.

Ludlow took a 1-0 lead during the 17th minute.

The Lions had another free kick after Botta was fouled just outside the top of the penalty box.

Botta, who's planning on playing college soccer next year, fired a low shot into the right corner of the net past Lang.

"I just want to thank my teammates for allowing me to take the free kick," Botta said. "That was my second free kick goal of the season. I did get a little bit lucky. I hit a low shot at the wall and the Agawam players jumped up. The ball went into the net. It felt very good taking a 1-0 lead, but we always want to score more goals."

Down at the other end of the field, Ludlow senior goalie Anthony Shea (3 saves) only had to make a couple of saves during the first 40 minutes of the contest.

Shea made a save on a long shot attempt by senior Colby Dietrich.

Five minutes into the second half, the Lions scored a corner kick goal.

Senior Tommy Quitero sent a short pass to Botta from the left corner. Then Botta made a pass to junior James Dias scored his first goal of the season by firing a shot past a couple of defenders into the net giving the home team a 2-0 advantage.

"I was going to pass the ball back to Tommy, but then I found James," said Botta, who finished the regular season with a team-leading ten goals. "James is a starting defender and it was his first goal of the season. He's been talking about scoring a goal all season. I'm very glad that I was able to help him get one."

Shea made saves on shot attempts by junior Joe Culhane and sophomore Pat Keating.

With twenty minutes remaining in regulation, a tap in goal by sophomore Luke Slatton sealed the deal for the home team. Wurszt was credited with the assist.

At that point, Kolodziej started to take out his starters.

Agawam junior Jonah Higby replaced Lang in goal during the 63rd minute.

The two boys' soccer teams could meet for the second time in the Western Mass. Class A tournament, which starts this week.



Zachary Sarrazin looks to make a move as pressure approaches.

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Cambridge half-marathon registration open

CAMBRIDGE – Registration is open for the Cambridge Half Marathon and 5K at CambridgeSide. The races are scheduled for Sunday, Nov. 5 (race begins 7 a.m. EST) on a gorgeous new course with views of the Charles River along Memorial Drive.

• The Cambridge Half Marathon is a 13.1 mile fast and flat course featuring views of the MIT, John W. Weeks Footbridge, Harvard University Stadium, Charles River and more. The new 5K race also offers scenic views alongside the Charles River. Both courses are USATF certified and start and finish at CambridgeSide.

• Race registration includes quarter zip pull over (half marathon participants) or long sleeve shirt (5K participants), five complimentary CambridgeSide parking passes, training plan, race bib with timing chip, and finishing medal. Register for both races at CambridgeSide.com.

Cambridge Half Marathon and 5K at CambridgeSide race proceeds benefit Cambridge Camping (CambridgeCamping.org), City of Cambridge Scholarship Fund (Cambridgema.gov/Services/CityScholarship) as well as other local charities. Cambridge Half Marathon and 5K is sponsored by Canam Group Inc. and training sponsor MYSTRYDE.

Sports

Thunderbirds drop decision to Penguins

WILKES-BARRE, PA – The Springfield Thunderbirds (1-3-0-0) put forth a strong effort, but could not come away victorious, falling to the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton Penguins (2-2-0-0) by a score of 3-1 at Mohegan Sun Arena at Casey Plaza.

Vadim Zherenko got the start between the pipes for Springfield and had a terrific game, stopping 33 shots on 35 Penguin attempts. On the other end, Joel Blomqvist got the start for the Penguins and picked up his first AHL win with 31 stops.

It was a special night even before the onset of the game for the Bitten family, as Sam Bitten took the ice for his AHL debut alongside his older brother Will, marking the first time in T-Birds history that a pair of brothers skated as Springfield teammates.

Unlike the other games the Thunderbirds have had this season, the first period did not bring any goals and the two teams remained scoreless heading to their dressing rooms.

Zherenko was the much busier goaltender during the first period, as he denied all 14 Penguins shots sent his way.

At the 1:35 mark of the second frame, Wilkes-Barre got on the board first. Forward Vinnie Hinostroza broke behind the T-Birds defense, took a stretch feed from Rem Pitlick, and scored on a backhand deke that snuck past Zherenko.

The score did not remain 1-0 for long, as Adam Gaudette continued his red-hot start to the season with a stroke of luck. An innocent clearing attempt around the boards instead saw the puck skitter to the edge of the crease. After linemate Nathan Walker spotted the loose puck, he was stopped by Blomqvist on the initial chance, but the hulking Gaudette slammed the rebound home to tie the game up at 1-1 at the 3:18 mark of the period.

As the game hit its midpoint, Wilkes-Barre forward Jansen Harkins broke

away from the pack and went in on a break-away with a chance to restore the Penguin lead, but Zherenko was up to the challenge and made the stop with the left leg. Later on in the period, T-Birds had a great chance to go up a goal with Zachary Bolduc stripping a Penguins defenseman before making it a 2-on-1 with Will Bitten. Unfortunately for the rookie winger, Blomqvist made the stop, knocking away the shot with his blocker, and keeping the score at 1-1. The second period would not bring any scoring for both teams, as the score remained the same at 1-1 going into the third and final period.

The two teams traded chances to start the third period, but neither team could convert. It was not until the 9:03 mark that one of the teams would take the lead. The Penguins power play finally cracked its dry spell, as Pitlick jabbed a power play goal home after a scramble in front of Zherenko's crease, giving his team the 2-1 lead.

With 3:01 to go in the game, the T-Birds were given a power play thanks to a Wilkes-Barre bench minor for too many men on the ice. Walker nearly deadlocked the score, but his deflection on a point shot deflected off the crossbar and stayed out. Shortly after the power play ended, Harkins put the game out of reach with an empty-netter, his first goal as a Wilkes-Barre/Scranton Penguin.

Springfield's three-game weekend continues as the team travels to play Lehigh Valley on Sunday afternoon for a 3:05 p.m. matchup against the Phantoms. The T-Birds will look to avenge their home loss on Friday night against the Phantoms and pick up their second win of the season.

The T-Birds return home to the MassMutual Center next Saturday, Oct. 28 for our Ok-T-Bird-Fest game to face off against the Providence Bruins for the second time this season. The puck will drop at 7:05 p.m. at the Thunderdome.

Monadnock Speedway announces 2024 schedule

WINCHESTER, N.H. – Monadnock Speedway and JDV Productions announced this evening the full 2024 event schedule for the Winchester, New Hampshire oval.

The schedule begins with the JDV Open on Saturday, April 20, 2024 and ends with the return of the Winchester Fair event on Saturday, Sept. 21. The schedule includes 20 events spanning from April through September, including house divisions, touring series dates, special events and more.

The NASCAR Whelen Modified Tour will return to Monadnock Speedway for three dates in 2024: the third annual Granite State Derby on May 4, the third annual Duel at the Dog on July 20 and the second annual Winchester Fair on Sept. 21.

The first competition laps on the brand new track pavement will be on April 20 with Monadnock's house divisions in action. The Mad Dog Modifieds, Super Streets, Mini

Stocks, Pure Stocks, Six Shooters and Mad Pups will be racing. The Mad Dog Modifieds were previously named NHSTRA Modifieds, while the Super Streets were previously NHSTRA Late Models and the Young Guns have been renamed to the Mad Pups.

The house divisions will each have special events throughout the year - headlined by a Triple Crown Series, a Monadnock Salutes Pure Stock special (May 18), 15th annual Firecracker 100 (June 29), the inaugural Six Shooters Showdown (July 13), Mini Stock Meet (August 3), Mad Dog Masters Challenge (August 10) and Super Street Summer Shootout (August 17).

A full 2024 Monadnock event schedule can be found by visiting MonadnockSpeedway.com and JDVProductions.com.

"We're excited to work with the great teams that make up the Monadnock Speedway house divisions, multiple touring series

divisions and others to be sure the 2024 season at Monadnock is one to remember," Josh Vanada, owner of JDV Productions, said. "Our team will look forward to releasing more and more information as the season draws closer. The new pavement at Monadnock Speedway is going to make the racing better than it has ever been and we look forward to showcasing it to dedicated, loyal race fans in 2024."

Additional special events during the season will include the 53rd annual weekly racing opener on May 11, the second annual Winchester Open Modified 100 for the JDV Open Modifieds on June 8, the inaugural 350 Super Thunder in the Mountains on June 15 and the 53rd annual championship Saturday on September 14, where all house division champions will be crowned.

The only two-day show of the season will be the finale weekend on September 20 and 21. On Friday night, Sept. 20, a new winners

night for house divisions will require drivers who enter the races to have never won a Monadnock event before in that division. The season officially concludes on Sept. 21, with the NASCAR Whelen Modified Tour's Winchester Fair and more.

For touring series classes, on top of the Whelen Modified Tour in town three times, the NEMA Midgets will visit once, the NEMA Lites three times, the Evolve Pro Truck Challenge twice and the Pro 4 Modifieds five times. Additional touring series divisions include the R&R Street Stock Open, Little Webb's Super Series and the Senior Tour Auto Racers.

Open Late Models, Open Mini Stock, Big Wheel events and more are also on the calendar. JDV Productions and Monadnock Speedway will release additional information throughout the winter months about the 2024 racing season.

Public Notices

**Commonwealth of Massachusetts
The Trial Court
Hampden Probate and Family Court
50 State Street
Springfield, MA 01103
(413)748-7758
Docket No. HD23C0240CA
In the matter of:
Carole Joan Burns
AKA Joan Carole Shibley
CITATION ON PETITION
TO CHANGE NAME
A Petition to Change Name of Adult has been filed by Carole Joan Burns, AKA Joan Carole Shibley of Agawam, MA requesting that the court enter a Decree changing their name to:**

**Joan Carole Shibley
IMPORTANT NOTICE**
Any person may appear for purposes of objecting to the petition by filing an appearance at: **Hampden Probate and Family Court before 10:00 a.m. on the return day of 11/08/2023.**
This is NOT a hearing date, but a deadline by which you must file a written appearance if you object to this proceeding.
WITNESS, Hon. **Barbara M Hyland**, First Justice of this Court.
Date: October 11, 2023
Rosemary A Saccomani
Register of Probate
10/26/2023

**LEGAL NOTICE
PUBLIC HEARING**
The Agawam City Council Administrative Sub-Committee will conduct a Public Hearing on **WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 2023 at 6:30PM**, at the Agawam Senior Center Hall Seminar Hall, 954 Main Street, Agawam, MA, on an Eversource petition for permission to perform work on or near 534 North Street, Feeding Hills, MA which could include installation of a new pole(s), manholes, wires, cables and fixtures, including the necessary sustaining and protect fixtures along and

across the property. This petition is available by contacting the City Council Office, 36 Main Street, Agawam, MA or by emailing bbard@agawam.ma.us.
Robert E. Rossi, Chair
Administrative Sub-Committee
10/26/2023
Notice of Private Sale
Notice is hereby given by USA Towing, 71 Garden St., Feeding Hills, MA 01030, sale of a motor vehicle pursuant to the provisions of M.G.L. C. 255, Section 39A, that on November 6, 2023 at 8:00 a.m., at USA Towing, said motor vehicle will be sold

at a private sale to satisfy the garage keeper's lien for towing, storage and costs of sale.
2000 Dodge Dakota
VIN: 1B7HG2AZ9YS767733
No plates on vehicle
Last known reg. owner:
Jody Curtis
33 Avondale Ave.
West Springfield, MA 01089
10/19, 10/26, 11/02/2023
**AGAWAM
ZONING BOARD OF
APPEALS
LEGAL NOTICE**
Notice is hereby given that the Agawam Zoning Board of Appeals will hold a public hearing at the Agawam

Senior Center, 954 Main St., Agawam, MA on **Monday, November 13, 2023 at 6:30PM** for all parties interested in the request of the Lower Pioneer Valley Educational Collaborative, which is seeking a Special Permit in accordance with the Town of Agawam's Zoning Ordinances, Ch.180, Section 8(B) for the construction of a fence within the setback areas in excess of 4 feet at the premises identified as 384 Shoemaker Ln/ Lot 3 Moylan Ln.
Doreen A. Prouty
Chairperson, ZBA
10/19, 10/26/2023

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 \$225, which allows families to publish extended death notice information of their own choice and may include a photograph. **Death Notices & Paid Obituaries** should be submitted through a funeral home to: obits@turley.com.

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

**PUBLIC NOTICES
ARE NOW ONLINE**

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

Public notice deadlines are Mondays at noon, Fridays noon for Monday holidays.

visit www.publicnotices.turley.com



Agawam to participate in textile competition

AGAWAM – The Town of Agawam is excited to announce its partnership with the Hartsprings Foundation and Town of West Springfield in a friendly competition to collect used unwanted textiles. In an effort to reduce the amount of textiles entering our waste stream and supporting Hartsprings Foundation's mission of financially supporting Big Brothers and Big Sisters, Hartsprings will be sponsoring the friendly competition. The community that collects the most textiles in weight will

win a \$500 donation to a program within their community. The \$500 donation will be made out to either the Agawam Municipal Scholarship Fund or West Springfield High's Terrier Closet Program.

"The Town of Agawam is very excited to participate in this friendly competition with West Springfield again" stated Mayor William Sapelli. Having fun while encouraging our residents to make responsible waste reduction practices is a win for our community and solid waste disposal

costs. We look forward to this challenge and hope to receive the funds for our community".

Residents and supporters of the Town of Agawam are encouraged to donate their bagged or boxed used clothing, linens, hats, shoes, belts, towels, curtains, drapes, and other cloth items, on either or both of the two drop off dates between 10 a.m. and 1 p.m. the Department of Public Works, 1000 Suffield St., Saturday, Nov. 4 or Saturday, Dec. 2.

Acceptable donations include clothing, bedding, draperies, table cloths, towels, shoes, hats, mittens, gloves, etc.

A Hartsprings truck will be at the DPW for collection and the driver will help residents transfer donations from their vehicles. Hartsprings Foundation, Inc. is a registered non-profit that collects used goods and through the sale of those goods, financially supports Big Brothers Big Sisters mentoring programs in Massachusetts and Connecticut. www.hartsprings.org

Senior Center announces upcoming news and events

AGAWAM – The Agawam Senior center, 954 Main St., has many events for everyone, including:

The Agawam Senior Center Resource Fair

Thursday, Nov. 9, 9:30 a.m. to Noon

In the Veteran's Hall of the Senior Center, with over 30 Vendors and the coffee shop will be open.

Nutrition Seminar with Rosemary Santaniello

Wednesday, Nov. 1, 1 to 2:30 p.m.

SPARK Nutrition is a personal guide to everything one needs to know about eating healthy. Rosemary Santaniello shares

her wisdom to gain a lifetime of healthy eating. Santaniello's experience to remain healthy, fit and active was a struggle for several years until her own SPARK method balanced her personal and medical needs. There isn't one cookie cutter way of way of eating healthy for everyone however when following the advice of Rosemary attendees can find what is right for them. Call Kristina at 413-726-2836 to register.

Health New England

Friday, Nov. 3, noon to 3 p.m.

Representatives from Health New England will be at the Senior Center for information on insurances they can offer.

Medicare 101

Wednesday, Nov. 8, 10 to 11:30 a.m.

Medicare 101 is an educational seminar designed to help you understand your Medicare options here in Massachusetts. A locally licensed, independent Medicare Advisor will answer the questions: What is Medicare? Who is eligible? And what is covered by each of the options? Erica Anne Beaudry from EA Financial Solutions, will be providing this seminar. Call Kristina at 413-726-2836 to register.

Chronic Disease

Self-Management Program

Presented by

Greater Springfield Senior Services
6 Week Program Starting Nov. 8

1 to 2:30 p.m. on Wednesdays

Living with chronic conditions like arthritis, diabetes, high blood pressure, or heart disease can be a daily challenge. Attend this 6-week workshop to learn skills such as relaxing techniques to deal with pain and fatigue. Better communication with family, friends and doctors. Manage symptoms and medications and create an exercise program around your needs. Also discussed will be healthy eating to improve the condition.

Light refreshments will be served. Complete at least 5 sessions of the 6 week course to earn a gift card. Spaces are limited, registration is required. Please call Kristina at 413.726.2836 to reserve your spot.

Art exhibit to feature Westfield artists

WESTFIELD – The Westfield Athenaeum and Westfield on Weekend are announcing the opening of the art exhibit, "Inspired: Two Centuries of Westfield Art." The exhibit will open on Nov. 6, and will run through Jan. 13.

An artist's reception is planned for Thursday, Nov. 9 from 5 to 8 p.m. The public is encouraged to attend and meet the artists who are featured in the show. This exhibit, which will be shown at two sites, the Rand Art Gallery of the Athenaeum, and Westfield on Weekends' location in the Rennova Building, will feature more than 30 artists who have made Westfield home. Included in the show will be a variety of landscapes, still-life compositions, interior scenes, and modern abstractions.

Westfield has maintained for at least 150 years an active and thriving art scene. The expansion of industry, the founding of several important educational institutions, and the increase in population during the Victorian era, created a city with a significant middle class population that possessed both the leisure time and the wealth to support artistic activities.

This environment fostered the development of a community of artists. As early as the 1840s, professional artists were working in Westfield. By the early decades of the 20th century there were a number of highly original artists working in the city. The creation of the Rand Art Gallery at the Westfield Athenaeum in the 1920s further enhanced

the city's art scene. Town residents were now able to see art exhibits on a regular basis.

This exhibit attempts to show the range of art created by Westfield artists over the last two centuries. The earliest work of art in the exhibit dates back to 1815, and the latest paintings in the show were created this year. Guy McLain, executive director of the Westfield Athenaeum, said, "This is a rare opportunity to see just how rich the cultural life of Westfield has been from the very earliest years of the 19th century to the present day. Westfield has long been associated with industry. Hopefully, this exhibit will show that the city has also fostered a rich cultural life as well."

Free budgeting seminar for seniors

AGAWAM – The Agawam Senior Center, 954 Main St., presents a free seminar "Budgeting your money as a senior" on Nov. 8 at 1 p.m. Raymond Rose will be the guest speaker. Some of the topics to be discussed are; basic living expenses, healthcare costs, debt management, insurance, emergency funds, leisure spending, estate planning, social engagement and retirement savings.

REGISTRATION: Register by calling Kristina Lynch at the Senior Center at 413.821.0604 or send her an email at KLynch@agawam.ma.us and walk-ins are welcome.

Real estate, personal property taxes due by Nov. 1

AGAWAM – The second quarter preliminary real estate and personal property tax bills for fiscal year 2024 are due in the Tax Collector's office by 4:30 p.m. on Wednesday, Nov. 1. Bills may be paid online @ www.agawam.ma.us, by mail in the envelope provided or the drop box that is provided outside Town Hall may be used.

Second quarter payment notices were

mailed Sept. 28. By law, bills were mailed to owners of record as of Jan. 1. Any new homeowner or anyone who has not received their real estate or personal property tax bill should contact the Collector's office immediately to obtain the bill amount. The telephone number is 413-786-0400, ext. 8218.

Trunk or Treat hosted by ACC

AGAWAM— Agawam Congregational Church will host our annual family friendly Trunk or Treat, located at 745 Main St. This event will take place on Sunday, Oct. 29, from 4 to 6 p.m. There will be candy, trunks to judge and more. Please bring a box of elbow macaroni or a jar of pasta sauce to support our Loaves & Fishes ministry and be entered into a special raffle. If interested in having a trunk at this event, please email office@agawamcong.com or call 413-786-7111



Holiday bazaar and craft fair set for Nov. 4

AGAWAM – Heritage Woods Senior Living will be holding its 19th annual Holiday Bazaar and Craft Fair on Saturday, Nov. 4. The event will be held from 10 a.m. until 3 p.m. at 462 Main St. Dozens of vendors will showcase homemade items, crafts, candles, jewelry, holiday decorations, cosmetics, and more. A raffle, bake sale, and lunch will also be available. Admission is free and open to the public.

Women's Fellowship scheduled to meet Nov. 8

AGAWAM – On Wednesday, Nov. 8 at noon, a Women's Fellowship event will take place in the church hall at Agawam Congregational Church, 745 Main St., and all women and men from the community are invited to attend, by Women's Fellowship chair Sharon Christian.

A pot luck luncheon will be followed by a presentation by church member Debra Pond on her trip to Normandy,

France, this summer. Her slideshow photos will accompany a bit of World War II history of what took place in Normandy in the 1940s. All veterans from any era are encouraged to attend.

Reservations are requested by contacting the church at 413-786-7111 or office@agawamcong.com.

The church is located in the Agawam Historic District, is handicapped accessible, and has a large parking lot.

ACC hosts holly wreath bazaar

AGAWAM – Agawam Congregational Church, located at 745 Main St., will host its annual Holly Wreath Bazaar on Saturday, Nov. 18, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Get a start on Christmas shopping with plenty of great vendors, a café, baked goods, raffles and more. Please contact the church office for more information at 413-786-7111 or email at office@agawamcong.com.



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Full job description and compensation information at the town of Hampden website: <https://www.hampdenma.gov>.

Submit cover letter and resume electronically to Robert T. Markel, Town Administrator, at townadmin@hampdenma.gov.

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NEWS & FEATURES

As a paper of record, we attempt to cover all general news, personality profiles, and community features that we know about. This includes all selectmen and school committee meetings as well as spot planning board, board of health, finance, and other town meetings determined by the issue's relevance to our readers. There are the annual major community event features that we should always cover, but we are more than open to suggestions of other features to celebrate the fabric of our communities and their many interesting occupants. Our loyal advertisers provide funding for this paid staff coverage.

For more information on news or community features for the Agawam Advertiser News, please email aan@turley.com.

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JOHNSON ■ from page 1

that plan to prioritize are: (1) successfully complete ongoing capital improvement projects such as the new police station on Suffield Street, the recreational development of the former Tuckahoe Turf Farm and storm drainage projects on Meadow and North Streets; (2) complete a thorough review of the town and school budgets to determine if there are ways for the town to save money while continuing to deliver top quality services, and at the same time seek out potential new revenue sources, including new industrial and commercial development; and (3) seek out creative ways to meet our need for affordable housing options for senior citizens who desire to stay in Agawam and young adults who grew up in town and want to start their families here.

Town hall: We need to look at investing in a new town administrative facility to replace the town hall which is quickly approaching its 100th anniversary. The

building has only limited handicap accessibility, and it is not laid out to maximize the efficiency of our local government. Personnel costs are the single largest expense that our tax dollars are spent on every year. Certainly, one of the cornerstones of quality local services is highly trained and highly motivated public employees that care about the residents that they serve. I believe an investment into a new town administrative facility will benefit the residents of Agawam and Feeding Hills in a number of important ways. First, it will allow for an honest attempt at reorganizing our local government with an eye toward improving efficiency. The layout of the existing town hall simply acts a barrier to reorganization. Second, it will allow for the introduction of new and better technology to improve workflow efficiency. Finally, it will boost the spirit and morale of our public employees to move to a more modern facility.

Economic growth: The key to fostering responsible economic growth is work-

ing with potential developers in a professional manner and making sure they know the benefits of locating in Agawam. Agawam is located in close proximity to major highways and an international airport, and our region offers a highly trained workforce. During my original tenure as Mayor, the Agawam Regional Industrial Park was less than half full, and it faced a difficult future. With the assistance of WestMass Area Development Corporation, we were able to attract many new businesses and ultimately fill the park. The industrial park is home to many quality companies that employ hundreds of people and pay significant tax revenue to the town. In addition, we were successful in attracting Berkshire Power, a natural gas fired power plant, which has the source of significant tax revenue. We also were able to keep Six Flags New England in Agawam, which again is a great source of jobs and tax revenue to the town.

You were this town's first mayor and also now have a long stint on the city

council. Why do you want to return to the mayor's seat?

I care deeply about Agawam. I strongly believe that my knowledge and experience make me uniquely qualified to lead Agawam through some of the difficult decisions we face in the coming years. Both my wife and I are lifelong residents and graduates of Agawam High School. We raised our two children in Agawam, and deeply appreciate the great education they both received in the Agawam Public Schools. I was raised to value the importance of public service, and to give back to the community. Over the years, I have participated in many wonderful civic, charitable and athletic groups in town. I was truly honored to serve as Agawam's first Mayor, and I have never lost the passion to work hard to make Agawam a great place to live, work and raise a family. I appreciate all that the community of Agawam has given to me and my family, and I simply want to give back to the place that I love.

CALABRESE ■ from page 1

opportunities. All of that together translates to a more affordable Agawam for our residents. Our seniors can retire in the town they love. Our young adult residents can afford to grown their own families in town. We also need to make sure we cut waste. I will meet with department heads to analyze budgets and live within our means, as a municipality. Tax payers do not deserve to have their fees and taxes increase. Just as I have for 18 years on City Council, I will fight to make sure taxpayers receive quality services, but at a good value.

Town hall: Absolutely. However, every previous mayor has kicked the can down the road regarding the town hall. For decades that building not been accessible to people with mobility challenges, and no previous mayor has done anything about it. Now taxpayers are already paying for a new, much needed, police station, and a new high school. I do not believe now is the right time to saddle taxpayers with the expense of a new town hall. Unless we receive a major infusion of grant, federal, or state money it would be unfair to expect the taxpayers of Agawam to pick up the tab for a new town hall at this time.

Economic growth: As the only Agawam-based business owner in the race for Mayor, I know what it takes for a business to succeed in town. We need a mayor's office that brings town hall into the modern era. We need to make online payments available on the town website. We will have local business spotlight events, business workshops to walk entrepreneurs through the process of creating a DBA through town hall and how to apply for a business license. I will work with regional and state partners to make sure we get resources available to foster growth.

You have had unsuccessful runs for mayor and state senate in the past. Why should townspeople choose you for mayor this time around?

Look at our upcoming election for City Council. For a while, residents were afraid that not every seat on the council would be filled. Thankfully, people stepped up. There should be no shame in running for office. Public service is an honor, not an expectation. The voters chose me to be their city councilor for 18 years, several years giving me the most votes of any other city council candidate. The voters know that I work for them. They know I will always step up to fight for them.

PROJECT ■ from page 1

have to increase that borrowing for the police station," Sapelli said. "The other projects just absorbed that funding."

For the police station project, they have started the renovation process of the building, which used to be the Hub Insurance building.

Currently, they are in the building making measurements and adjustments and working on construction.

The hope is that the project will be complete by July 2024.

The contractor for this project is Morais and the Architect Firm is Caolo and Bienick Associates Incorporated.

Both companies made sure to get input from the police themselves throughout the design of the project so that the building will suit their needs.

The Chief Procurement Officer, Jennifer Bonfiglio and Building Maintenance Director Brian Pagella as well as the police department worked with the architect to inform them of the needs and wants for the station.

"Input was received from the people in the police department who will be essentially living there, once it's done for an

extended period of time—the next 40 or 50 years, hopefully," Sapelli said. "They needed to have some say so the building would function appropriately for their needs."

One such need was a Sally port, which is a type of drive-in garage that the police can take someone in custody to and put them directly into the booking area.

The existing police station was originally built in the 1920s as an elementary school, according to Sapelli. It was converted in 1987 to the police station once it was closed as a school.

That building was only supposed to be a temporary location for the station, but then the station never moved.

Since then, the building has only grown more outdated and unsuitable for the police to continue to work out of.

The goal is for this project to finally provide the police with a facility that will fit all of their needs.

"That's 35 years now that they've been working out of that station, which is totally inadequate for today's standards and technology and needs, so I think it's long overdue to move them into a facility that they can be proud of and where they can get the work they need done appropriately," Sapelli said.



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Sen. John Velis awarded 'Legislator of the Year'

SPRINGFIELD – This week, the Massachusetts Police Association presented Sen. John Velis with their 2023 "Legislator of the Year" award as part of their annual awards ceremony in Springfield. Velis who represents nine communities throughout Hampden County and Hampshire County, noted how humbled he was by the award.

"Over the years I have had the opportunity to join both local and State Police on duty to better understand the difficult and complex work that they do each day to keep our communities safe. Each and every day, the men and women in our law enforcement selflessly and courageously serve our communities and keep the rest of us safe," said Velis. "In turn, it is my honor to advocate on Beacon Hill for them however I can. This is a duty that I will never take lightly and I am truly humbled by this award from the Association."

In addition to filing and supporting legislation for police officers across the com-

monwealth, Velis has also been successful in securing funding for police departments and public safety initiatives specifically in his district. This includes securing approximately \$160,000 for the Westfield Police Department, \$50,000 for the Agawam Police Department, and \$50,000 for the Russell-Montgomery Police Department in just the past several years.

The Massachusetts Police Association union represents state and municipal law enforcement officers throughout the commonwealth. From Greater Boston to Western Massachusetts, the Massachusetts Police Association advocates to ensure that police officers are equipped with the training and tools to best serve the communities they protect. During the ceremony officers were also honored for their hard work and contribution to the police profession. These awards included the Medal of Valor award and Paul Doherty award of exceptional service.

DA endorses Russo



Campaign manager Chris Catjakis, City Councilor Anthony Russo, Hampden County District Attorney Anthony Gulluni, Mayor William Sapelli, and Register of Probate Rosemary Saccomani. Gulluni endorsed Russo's candidacy for re-election to the city council this year.

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WNE to host open house on Oct. 28

SPRINGFIELD— Western New England University will host high school students, transfer students, and their parents at an open house on Saturday, Oct. 28, from 8 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. starting in the University commons. The event is free. Registration in advance is requested. Visit wne.edu/openhouse to register or call 413-782-1321.

This undergraduate open house is intended for all prospective students, regardless of their year in high school, and transfer students. It is an opportunity to come to campus to get a sense of the University's warm and engaging community, while learning about the wide variety of

academic programs and emphasis on inter-disciplinary collaboration.

Students and parents will have the chance to tour the campus and a first-year residence hall, meet current students, get a general overview of the admissions and financial aid process, and have academic questions answered. The day concludes with an exhibit where students can gather more information on student clubs and activities, honors programs, athletic opportunities at both the NCAA and recreational levels, as well as hear from the Career Development Center regarding the varied internship and career opportunities students are receiving.



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