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**PALMER**

## Updated fee structure approved

By Marcelo Gusmão  
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PALMER – At the April 21 Conservation Commission meeting, the commission went over several issues, including an updated fee structure, a forest cutting plan on Ware St., and an amendment to construction at Camp Ramah.

The updated fee structure has been continued for close to a year due to absences on the board, and is set to go into effect on July 1 of this year.

“This will be the first change in 10-11 years,” Commission Chair Donald Blais said. “I think we’ve done a lot of due diligence throughout this process. I think it’s time that we act.”

Commission Member Peter Izyk described the update as “not that much of a change.” Blais noted that there were several meetings where this fee structure was discussed, and it was modeled after several other communities throughout the commonwealth.

“That’s how you do something like this, you look at the comparisons and come up with a reasonable proposal,” Blais said.

Conservation Agent Jessica Ladin added that the update “won’t really affect single-family homeowners at all.”

“It’s mostly just holding commercial properties accountable for what they should be doing anyway,” Ladin said, “so most people won’t see a change. In fact, they might see a positive change.”

The commission voted to recommend the fee structure to the Town Manager and Town Council.

A forest cutting plan for 1451 Ware St., otherwise known as the James Hamilton Estate, which is in the care of trustee Catherine Wilson, was proposed to the commission as well.

“If anybody has any questions or comments about what’s happening on Ware St., this is what’s going on,” Ladin said. “Comments that I thought were interesting are that they’re going to protect advanced regeneration and desirable mid-story trees.”

Ladin added that the plan suggested stabilizing slopes with water bars, but was unfamiliar with the property. Commission

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**MONSON**



Gardeners of all ages stand together in front of a mural, posed with their eclectic variety of lawn ornaments.

Submitted photo

## Down-to-Earth Gardeners Club holding Annual Garden Sale May 16

By Marcelo Gusmão  
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MONSON – It’s almost time for the Down-to-Earth Gardeners’ Club’s annual Plant Sale, which will be held on Saturday, May 16, from 9 a.m. to noon at the United Methodist Church.

The club formed in 1995, reportedly by friends Paul Blatchley, Linda Brown, Frances Chudy, Kim Defoe, and Bruce Murphy over tea. They discussed forming a club with a kitchen-table

type of forum and, sharing an interest in gardening tips, swapping plants, and learning more about gardening, they invited friends who gardened to discuss the idea.

“The decision was made to have meetings on the third Thursday of the month at members’ homes and a mission to invite friends to the first meeting,” Chudy said. “The first task was to name the club. They settled on the name Down-to-Earth Gardeners’ Club and the Nitty Gritty News for the newsletter.”

The club welcomes

members from any town, and of any age or gender, and grew into its home at the United Methodist Church. The first plant sale was held in the summer of 1998 to raise money for speakers at the meetings.

“The club has helped with gardens at Hillside Cemetery, Jacob Thompson House, and Hillcrest Cemetery, along with a basket donation to Top Floor Learning at the library,” Chudy said.

Co-President Julie Minns-Piepho said that the club sees the sale, as well as

its work at the cemetery, as a way to give back to the community.

“The members donate from their own garden,” Minns-Piepho said. “We transplant them in the beginning of May for the plant sale. We have annual perennial ground cover shrubs, firs, trees, and more.”

Minns-Piepho explained that the sale will include a variety of plants, including plants that need to be planted in the shade as well as others

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**MONSON**

## FinCom views school budget cuts

By Marcelo Gusmão  
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MONSON – At the Monday, April 27 Finance Committee meeting, members of the School Committee, Superintendent Paul Foster, and Director of Business and Operations Leah Zippin were asked to speak on several line

items for the Fiscal Year 2027 budget.

“I want to give credit to the School Committee,” Foster said. “We had two separate working sessions where we went line by line through the budget to identify what we could cut.”

FinCom Member Maureen O’Sullivan started the discussion by asking about

the before- and after-school programs, and how they are funded. Zippin and Foster explained that the cost of the program is to pay the staff, and that it regularly breaks even.

“It doesn’t have to be subsidized by the operating budget,” Foster said. “We set the rates at a level to cover the cost.”

Foster also clarified that the program is run entirely by the school, and so there is no cost to use the school facilities beyond paying the staff. Zippin speculated that a third party may have previously run the program, but when it ended, it was taken over by the school, estimat-

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**PALMER**

## PSC gets updates from student council

By Marcelo Gusmão  
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PALMER – At the April 15 School Committee meeting, Student Council members from Old Mill Pond School and the high school presented on the events and activities that the schools have had over the past month.

Two sixth grade students and Student Council members from Old Mill Pond, Adriana B. and Mila A., shared news from their school. The first item was the Teddy Bear Social on April 16 for the kindergarten class, which involved reading stories, eating snacks, and playing games with a teddy bear theme. Mila then described the March Madness tournament.

“Classes were assigned MIAA basketball teams and competed by solving puzzles to encourage students to earn their ST math puzzles,” Mila said. “Gonzaga 4B, Mr. Orzelak’s class, won the March Madness Tournament.”

Adriana then presented on the Thunderbirds Sticks to Reading program.

“A special guest, Boomer, came out to collect reading logs and took photos with the kids that went,” Adriana said. “The kids got free tickets to the April 3 Thunderbirds game. Many OMP families attended the game and had a great time.” Mila announced the

completion of the school’s MCAS testing for English Language Arts, and the MCAS tests of April 28-29 for fifth grade science, and May 5-20 for math. Adriana announced that Career Day for fourth grade will be held on May 21.

“OMP is still looking for volunteers to present to students and educate them on various careers in our community,” Adriana said.

The Student Council also announced the Ecology School Field Trip and the school band’s performance at the Thunderbirds game on April 3 in Springfield. They then unveiled the poster made for the Bookmark Drawing Contest, led by Champagne.

“Students and staff were encouraged to draw on a bookmark and submit it to a team of reviewers,” Mila said. “The team selected the winner.”

The students presented the winning bookmarks to the school committee, and thanked the Cultural Council for its donations to support field trips and upcoming projects.

High School Senior Kelsey C. then presented on the past month’s events at the high school, stating

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**MONSON**

## Library goes viral on TikTok

By Marcelo Gusmão  
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MONSON – Last week, the public library celebrated National Library Week with a series of viral TikToks to raise awareness of all the library has to offer.

Teen Coordinator Sarah Thomas, along with several of her coworkers, have been starring in a variety of videos that have been uploaded to the library’s TikTok account, under the handle MonsonFreeLibrary.

“We were very pleased that National Library Week happened to coincide with school vacation week,” Thomas said. “It gave the communi-



Patrons mended old clothes together during the library’s Visible Mending Craft.

Submitted photo

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## BASEBALL



Josiel Ortiz fires a strike down the middle

Above, Dylan Holbrook speeds past third with eyes on home. Right, Theo Haley tosses the ball to a teammate. Below, Matthew Santos winds up for a pitch. Far right, Brendan Hess settles under the pop fly.



Theo Haley darts for home plate.

Turley photos by Maddox Baer

## Panthers rebound from tough loss with pair of wins

PALMER – Last Tuesday afternoon, Palmer High School baseball suffered a tough mercy-rule loss against Westfield Tech.

But the Panthers were able to rebound and defeated Granby 5-2 last Wednesday and Smith Vocational 19-3

last Friday. The wins helped elevate Palmer's record to 7-3 for the season.

The Panthers have a rematch coming up with McCann Technical on Thursday, Apr. 30 at 4 p.m. McCann defeated Palmer 8-5 in the first meeting between the teams.

## BASEBALL



Emerson Boronski delivers a pitch.

## Pathfinder falls to SICS

PALMER – Last Thursday on a sunny, but breezy afternoon, Pathfinder baseball was defeated 14-4 by SICS at Legion Field in Palmer. While Pathfinder was able to get on the scoreboard, SICS was able to score some early runs to get ahead, and the Pioneers could not match the offense. Pathfinder fell to 0-8 on the regular season.



Above, Brody Wetnicka winds up for a throw across the diamond. Right, Zachary Smith tries to make throw to first for an out.



Dayne Shanley takes the pickoff at first.



Anthony Elliott sends a long throw to third.



Zachary Latourelle sends a throw to first.

Turley photos by Gregory A. Scibelli

## SOFTBALL

## Palmer falls in wild matchup with Comp

By Tim Peterson  
Sports Correspondent

PALMER – A softball team that scores at least one run in every inning has a strong chance of coming out on top.

The Chicopee Comp Lady Colts accomplished that feat in their 27-13 road victory over Suburban East rival Palmer, last Friday afternoon.

"We're a young team and we've been struggling a little bit lately. We really needed to win a game," said Comp head coach Kelly Walsh. "We took an early lead, but we could never let up because Palmer can make a comeback. I'm very happy with this result."

At the beginning of April, Comp defeated Palmer, 14-2, in a home game.

In the second meeting of the regular season between the two squads, the Lady Colts (4-7) scored a season-high 27 runs on 16 base hits.

The Lady Colts scored 25 runs in another road win against Pathfinder Tech. Their other victory came at home against the Springfield International Charter School by the final score of 18-5.

Leading the way offensively for the Lady Colts in last Friday's game was senior centerfielder Arianna Bird. She contributed with six base hits and four RBIs.

Senior right fielder Millie Fidalgo chipped in with two base hits and she scored four runs.