

BLANDFORD

Blandford Select Board reflect on 2025 big events

By Mary Kronholm
Correspondent

BLANDFORD – Responding to the question on what in your opinion were the things that had the biggest impact on the town, members to the select board replied.

Chair Cara Letendre said that the most “uplifting moment of the year was at the special town meeting on Dec. 9 when the town unanimously voted to move forward with the expansion of the Porter Memorial Library. Nicole was passionate and her pleas for this expansion to build a stronger sense of community clearly resonated with residents.”

She also found the opening of the Swap Shop at the transfer station uplifting. Since it opened, she has “witnessed children excited to come to ‘the dump’ with their parents to trade in gently used toys and shop for something new. I am thrilled to see that items in town are being passed on to neighbors who need them rather than being thrown out.”

A significant moment for Letendre was the size

of the turnout at the August 11 meeting for the Mission Clean Energy presentation. “Whether there in support or otherwise, people clearly care a great deal about the effect this project may have on the town. It is my hope that when it is time to go back to special town meeting to discuss our next steps in building a safe and modern fire department, residents show up with the same amount of support.”

She was proud to watch “residents, both young and old, enjoy our Memorial Day celebration. Our recreation committee works so hard behind the scenes to help create these core memories.”

“And lastly, seeing the old stage area at the Fairgrounds being torn down and replaced was emotional. Sitting under the new pavilion and listening to local talented musicians as my nearly grown children wandered the fair on their own felt surreal.”

Board member T.J. Cousineau found inspiration in two things that “brought our town together.”

The expansion of the Porter Memorial Library, “a very positive move forward.”



Blandford Select Board are shown from left, T.J. Cousineau, Cara Letendre and Jackie Coury.

File photo

ward.” And the generosity of Sumner Robbins for the benefit of the library.

And the other one is the solar and battery movement in the state and the “total disregard the state holds for the small towns like Blandford, in the western part of the state.”

He also included the appointment of the new Highway Superintendent, Ray Hultay, “who is doing a superb job on maintaining our roads and equipment” and the efforts on the part of the Historical Society, citing the Ghost Walk and the upcoming John Knox re-en-

actment on Jan. 11 at the Fairgrounds.

Board member Jackie Coury thought there were two major events that stood out for her. First, the impact of Governor Healey’s Climate Bill on Blandford. “Blandford is uniquely

affected due to the presence of an Eversource substation within the town. This infrastructure has attracted increased interest from commercial solar and battery energy storage system developers seeking to locate projects nearby to reduce interconnection costs. The resulting influx of proposed commercial energy facilities has generated significant controversy and concern among residents, particularly regarding public safety and the preservation of Blandford’s rural character.

For Coury, the second most meaningful event was “the approval of the Porter Memorial Library expansion.” This long-anticipated project became possible through the dedication and hard work of the Library Project Team, the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners grant award, the generous contribution of the Sumner and Sally Robbins Trusts, and the support of Blandford residents. The Porter Library will continue to be an integral part of Blandford’s character and community life for many years to come.

Town Administrator reflects on our strong community

BLANDFORD – Asking Town Administrator Cristina Ferrera to consider 2025, her first full year holding the office, she responded with the following observations.

“One of the most impactful realizations for me in 2025 was seeing just how deeply the Blandford community has always stepped up to support and sustain the town. That spirit of involvement, residents, who genuinely care and actively participate, is what truly defines a strong community.”

She is certainly aware of the town’s volunteers. “So many of Blandford’s essential boards and committees rely on the dedication of resident volunteers to keep the town running smoothly, and that commitment does not go unnoticed.”

She added that she is



Cristina Ferrera

“deeply grateful to all of our volunteer board and committee members, past and present, for the time, energy, and care they give to our town.”

As Blandford moves into the new year, she said, “hope we continue to see that same spirit of service, along with new faces who are excited to step forward, get involved, and help shape Blandford’s future.”

Open burning season begins

BLANDFORD – Open burning begins Thursday, Jan. 15 and continues through Friday, May 1.

Permits are available through the Fire Department online by visiting the town’s website at townofblandford.com. No permits are issued in advance due to the potential for changing weather conditions.

Requests for burning permits must be made every time anyone wants to burn.

The following regulations must be observed: People may only burn

brush. All other materials are illegal. No leaves, grass, hay, stumps, building debris or any other materials may be burned.

All open burning must be a minimum of 75 feet from buildings or structures.

Burning starts at 10 a.m. and must be extinguished by 4 p.m. Any open fire must be attended at all times by the permit holder.

No person shall set, maintain or increase a fire in open air at any time except by permission. People must be 18 years

or older to apply for a permit and/or set, maintain or increase a fire once permission has been granted by the Fire Department.

People must have an appropriate means to extinguish an open-air fire completely at the end of the day or if requested by the Fire Department. The Fire Department can refuse or cancel a permit at any time such as violation of permit regulations or change in weather conditions. Permits are only issued between 8:30 a.m.-1 p.m. and only on the day anyone wants to burn.

Conservation Commission has new agent

BLANDFORD – At the Dec. 15 Select Board meeting, the board appointed Sabrina Pooler as the Conservation Commission Agent.

She will begin her new position soon. This is a five to ten hour a week part-time position for providing technical and administrative assistance to the Conservation Commission. She is currently

the Conservation Commission Coordinator for Southwick. She reviews all the Wetlands Protection Act applications, works up all the appropriate documents and works with the applicants while conducting inspections, etc. She also is responsible for general office duties.

In her letter of interest, she said she would be a good

fit for this position because of her experience running the Conservation Department and understanding its many layers. She has had three years with Southwick’s Conservation Commission and has volunteered with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife and the Connecticut River Conservancy regarding invasive aquatic species removal; certifying vernal

pools and documenting threatened species and is a past member of the Southwick Land Trust board.

Her education includes a Bachelors Degree in natural resource studies from UMASS Amherst; additional environmental science coursework at Arcadia University in Granada Spain and Holyoke Community College.

HS hosts Knox Trail program

BLANDFORD – The Historical Society will again re-enact a pivotal moment in the town’s history on Sunday, Jan. 11 from 3:30-5 p.m.

This marks the day, when 250 years ago, Blandford met Gen. Henry

Knox as they brought cannons from Fort Ticonderoga to Boston to help Gen. George Washington.

There will be a bonfire with hot chocolate or cider and donuts. There will be a cast of characters retelling the story.

Tax rate set at \$12.57 per thousand valuation

BLANDFORD – A Special Town Meeting had to be held on Friday, Dec. 19 to correct an error in the budget approved at the June Annual Town Meeting.

The error duplicated

some “raise and appropriate” line items and needed to be reversed. The original vote gave the town \$1,260,213 in certified free cash. Of that amount, voters approved moving \$370,000, correcting

the error.

The Tax Classification hearing then re-opened and the Select Board approved a uniform tax rate for the town. All classifications of property will be taxed at the same

rate of \$12.57 per thousand dollars of evaluation. The rate has been approved by the Department of Revenue and is on their website.

Ten registered voters participated in the meeting.

PUBLIC NOTICES

Town of Worthington Conservation Commission
In accordance with M.G.L. Chapter 131, Section 40, the Worthington Conservation Commission will hold a public hearing in response to a **Request for Determination of Applicability (RDA)** regarding proposed work associated with the upgrade to an existing septic system at 58 Patterson Road
The Hearing will be held **Thursday, January 15, 2026, at 7:20 PM** in the Selectboard meeting room at Town Hall, 160 Huntington Road.
01/01/2026

SOUTHERN HILLTOWNS Public Hearing – Tuesday, January 20, 2026, at 6:00 PM
FY 2022/2023 Construction Progress Hearing &

FY 2026 Application Forum
The Town of Russell, on behalf of the Towns of Chester, Huntington and Middlefield, in association with the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, will conduct a performance hearing regarding the town’s ongoing FY24 Community Development Block Grant Programs. The hearing will take place at **6:00 PM on Tuesday, January 20, 2026**, in person at the Town Hall, 65 Main Street, Russell, MA 01071.
The hearing will review the projects funded through the town’s FY22/23 Community Development Block Grant Program including Valley View Avenue infrastructure improvements, public social services, and housing rehabilitation. These activities received funding through the U.S. Department of Housing

and Urban Development and the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities, Massachusetts CDBG program.
This hearing will also serve as the first public forum to solicit community input on potential activities to be included in a potential Southern Hilltowns FY26 Community Development Block Grant application. All community members and stakeholders are invited to share thoughts on potential CDBG-eligible activities to be included.
All persons with questions or comments regarding the performance hearing will have an opportunity to submit comments up until and through the public hearing. Please submit comments to Joe Hagopian at the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission @ jhagopian@pvpc.org or 413-781-6045. Persons who require

special accommodations should contact the Town prior to the hearing date at 413-862-6200.
01/01/2026

Town of Worthington Conservation Commission Notice of Public Hearing
In accordance with M.G.L. Chapter 131, Section 40, the Worthington Conservation Commission will hold a public hearing in response to a **Request for Determination of Applicability (RDA)** regarding proposed training by Wild & Scenic Westfield River Committee at 102 Clark Road on the proper way to remove various invasive species.
The Hearing will be held **Thursday, January 15, 2026, at 7:00 PM** in the Selectboard meeting room at Town Hall, 160 Huntington Road.
01/01/2026

WESTFIELD
Westfield Bank promotes Harrington to Senior Lender

WESTFIELD – James C. Hagan, President and CEO of Westfield Bank, announces the promotion of Michael Harrington to Senior Vice President and Senior Lender for the state of Massachusetts.



Michael Harrington

President and Chief Lending Officer of Westfield Bank.
With over thirty-three years of banking and commercial lending experience, Harrington joined Westfield Bank in 2007. Prior to that, he

served as a commercial lender and credit analyst at the former Westbank. Harrington is a lifelong resident of West Springfield.
People may visit the bank’s website at www.westfieldbank.com for more information.
Westfield Bank, headquartered in Westfield is a federally chartered savings bank organized in 1853 and is the largest publicly traded bank headquartered in Western Massachusetts. Currently, the bank has twenty-five branch offices, forty-nine ATMs, and an additional thirty seasonal ATMs and serves Hampden and Hampshire counties in Western Massachusetts and Hartford County in Northern Connecticut.