

West Brookfield Winter Farmers Market is back

By Richard Murphy
Correspondent

WEST BROOKFIELD – The start of the day was not promising with snow coming down at speed on Jan. 7, but by 11 a.m. it was over and the sun came out so that by 3 p.m. it would be time for the first West Brookfield Winter Farmers Market of 2026, held at the First Congregational Church of West Brookfield.

On entering, it was the same warmth experienced in the old year with vendors set up and doing business.

Coming inside the hall on the left was Joy Hinton of Joy of Beans, famous for coffee from all over the world. Moving along on the right was Robyn Scott and her Blair House Blooms with beautiful tulips on her table.

Next would be Linda Fuchs of Flourish Farms. Linda has been coming to the market for several years and also comes to the West Brookfield Summer Farmers Market. This day, her table had microgreens, and ginger as well as turmeric.

Other vendors that have been here for a few years include Rich Laba and Farm46 from Charlton. He brings his specialty pork products.

Making specialty products out of scrap wood is veteran market man Bernie Wilson of B&D Enterprises. Years ago, he brought pens and has since expanded the variety of products.

Thompson's Maple Farm came from up in New Braintree. They bring maple syrup and other maple products, but also many flavors of ice cream.

In the center of the hall was Still Life Farm as usual with Halley and Curt Stillman. Still Life Farm was busy, as customers were lining up to buy the winter produce.

Autumn Leaf Farm is the purveyor of locally grown microgreens and is the vendor of a variety of mushrooms. Gail was staffing the table this Wednesday. We asked her why shrooms?

Gail told us she did not find anyone else doing them and could not find them in stores. About a year ago she started teaching herself.

She usually has five types, but this day there were Shitake, Blue Oyster and Pioppino. These are customer favorites and they looked beautiful.



Ryan Laurie and Bucha Bros are vendors at the West Brookfield Winter Farmers Market.

Also on the table were lovely colored eggs from Autumn Leaf Farm's Golden Comet Chickens. It's a breed of Golden-Brown color that is a prolific layer and popular at the market.

To the left of Autumn Leaf Farm was Bucha Bros. Their motto is "In Gut We Trust." What the heck does that mean?

There is an explanation. Kombucha is a beverage that has taken off in popularity in the last several years. It is a fermented beverage that is beneficial for a person's gut health.

We spoke with Ryan Laurie, co-founder with Edward Fisher.

Bucha Bros Kombucha is produced at the Worcester Food Hub. Unlike much of what is on sale in grocery stores, Bucha Bros is not pasteurized. "Pasteurization kills the billions of tiny good bacteria that call Kombucha (and your gut) home."

Bucha Bros is here at the winter market and several others through the year.

On Jan. 14, we again crossed East Main Street and entered the First Congregational Church of West Brookfield. The church has been hosting the West Brookfield Winter Farmers Market for several years now, generously so.

So, at 3 p.m. vendors are already set up along the church hall as patrons arrive. On this day, we arrived

mid-market to see sellers and shoppers happily interacting.

Coming in the hall, on the right, were the lovely tulips of Robyn Scott's Blair House Blooms. Though Robyn is usually greeting shoppers, she was absent this week. That was no problem as her son, Adam, on duty, competently serving the needs of customers wanting to take some color home.

Turning the corner, we came to Kelly Homestead Apiary from Charlton. Again, in the church was Ginger, who was assisted by her daughter. The table had more than a little honey and related products. Infused hot honeys or with garlic are new this year.

Next, back this week is Rich Laba, well known for the pork products he brings from Farm46 in Charlton. There are eggs and pastured poultry, but the jowl bacon is sublime.

The Chairman of the Board was next. It is not in the corporate sense that Wayne Boulette does this, nor is it in the sense Frank Sinatra was. Wayne does boards, that is making cutting boards and other useful kitchen utensils that are brought to market. The man is a dog lover and has a couple of poodles at home, and part of the chairman's profits go to support the ASPCA.

New this year is JARS Bakery & Café down from 23 Summer St., in North Brookfield. Representing JARS at the Market was



Gail of Autumn Leaf Farm offered mushrooms and eggs at the first market of the season on Jan. 7.



Turley Photos by Richard Murphy
Chloe and JARS Bakery & Café are new vendors at the West Brookfield Winter Farmers Market.

Chloe Fredette.

Chloe came with a good selection of pastries. There was banana chocolate chip bread, cinnamon rolls with cream cheese frosting, as well as apple turnover and chocolate chip cookies.

Not looking for something too sweet, a spinach feta croissant looked good.

Soup was also available. The choices were creamy tomato basil and Loaded potato soup.

To the left was an array

of "gifts in a jar." There was drink mixes, soup mixes and various seasonings.

The café is open 8 a.m.-2 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday and 9 a.m.-2 p.m. on Sunday.

They have variety of coffees and teas and other beverages.

On the first Sunday of each month at the café there is "Tea for Two Sundays," with a selection of sandwiches, fresh pastries and desserts as well as teas.

JARS also strives to accommodate allergies and dietary restrictions.

Also, a first-year vendor at the winter market is Golden Grain Artisanal Bread. We spoke with Bryan who is co-owner, with Leidy, of the business.

Bryan is a self-taught artisanal baker, who wanted a break from a previous endeavor. Bryan is without formal training but is not without dedication.

Starting out by utilizing tutorials, cookbooks, "and relentless trial-and-error testing, it would become a true fascination with food."

Bryan brought the results to market. On the table was Rustic Sourdough that was fermented for the better part of three days. He explained that depending on the humidity, fermentation time could vary greatly. A humid summer day could see it happening in four hours, whereas in winter it could be two and a half days.

Whole lot of science in baking.

Also at the market, Bryan had a couple of focaccias, and brown butter chocolate chip cookies. Shok Up An is a Japanese milk bread.

Such was the mid-February day at a market. It's a welcoming venue, so come next Wednesday as the end in March will be here before we know it.

public notices

TOWN OF WARE
Public Forum
Monday, February 9, 2026
at 6:30 PM
Public Hearing
Monday, March 9, 2026
at 6:30 PM
6:30 PM Ware Town Hall
126 Main Street, Ware, MA
or
Join Online:
<https://zoom.us/join>
Meeting ID: 784 604 1861
Passcode: 01082
FY 2026 Town of Ware CDBG
Application

The Town of Ware Community Development Authority, with Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, will conduct a

Public Forum on Monday, February 9th, 2026 at 6:30 PM and a Public Hearing on Monday, March 9th, 2026 at 6:30 PM at the Ware Town Hall, 126 Main Street, Ware – Town Hall Meeting Room or via Zoom with the meeting ID and Passcode noted above.

The public is encouraged to attend these meetings to discuss the FY26 application to the Massachusetts Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities for up to \$950,000 in available Community Development Block Grant Funds. Any person with questions or comments regarding the grant application will have an opportunity to be heard. Those unable to attend can send

written comments to the Community Development Authority, Planning Department, Ware Town Hall, or through email at psmith@townofware.org. All written comments will be presented during the public meetings.

The Town is seeking input on community needs and projects which would benefit from grant funding. Construction of the Cottage Street improvement project is currently being reviewed. The CDBG application will also include a request for funding for up to five social service programs including, but not limited to, adult basic education and GED preparation, domestic violence prevention, elder services, and

community health.

The Ware Town Hall is handicapped accessible. Anyone who requires special accommodation for either public meeting should contact the town at least one week prior to the hearing date at (413) 967-9648 ext. 118. For further information contact Para Smith, Director of Planning & Community Development at (413) 967-9648 ext. 118 or psmith@townofware.org or Erica Johnson at PVPC at (413) 781-6045 or ejohnson@pvpc.org. 01/29/2026

Storage Auction

In accordance with the provisions of the Massachusetts Gen-

eral Law 105A, in order to satisfy past due rents and other expenses, the contents the contents of Jason Strniste, Tracy Pilch and Brian Tinker will be auctioned off at Secure Storage, 70 Boston Post Rd Warren, MA on **February 14, 2026 at 9:00 AM**.

The contents of Kaylee Louvittakis, Adam J. Perez, Kelley Sullivan, Eric Young and Don Aubin will be auctioned off at Secure Storage, 167 West St., Ware, MA on **February 14, 2026 at 9:45 AM**.

Any questions or inquiries call 413-800-6278. 01/29, 02/5/2025

TOWN OF HARDWICK BOARD OF HEALTH PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

The Hardwick Board of Health will hold a Public Hearing on **Thursday, February 5, 2026, at 7:00 P.M.** at the Municipal Office Building, 307 Main Street, Gilbertville, MA.

The purpose of this hearing is to receive public comment on proposed regulations for Restricting the Sale of Tobacco Products.

Interested parties are encouraged to attend. Copies of the proposed regulations may be requested at Town Hall or by email to boh@hardwick-ma.gov. 01/22, 01/29/2026

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