

WARE RIVER NEWS

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Voters approved transfers at Special Town Meeting

By Paula Ouimette
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WARE – Just over 100 voters took action on six articles on the Special Town Meeting warrant this past

Monday night in the auditorium of Ware Jr./Sr. High School.

While the warrant contained 15 articles, nine were dismissed due to free cash not being certified yet. These dismissed articles will appear

on the spring Annual Town Meeting's warrant.

The remaining six articles were funded through the town's Stabilization account, which will be replenished at the Annual Town Meeting when free cash is available.

High school chiller article Article 12 asked voters to approve the transfer of \$300,000 from the Stabilization account to supplement the \$250,000 previously approved at town meeting to replace the high

school's chiller. The article initially failed to pass by the required two-thirds majority vote, with 53 in favor and 29 opposed. School Committee Chair Brian Winslow asked to reconsider the vote, and

gave more detail about why the additional \$300,000 was needed in order to complete the project. Winslow said the bids for the project came in Please see **STM**, page 3

Selectmen appointed interim exec. assistant

By Paula Ouimette
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WARREN – The Board of Selectmen appointed Madeline Witaszek to serve as the interim Executive Assistant to the Board of Selectmen and Town Administrator.

Witaszek said Town Administrator James Ferrera asked her to assist with helping visitors, answering phones and emails, and administrative duties.

"I'm always trying to help out where I can," she said at the Feb. 26 meeting.

Selectmen Derick Veliz said Witaszek was "the perfect match" to fill this position following the departure of Executive Assistant Griffin Harrington at the end of February.

The board unanimously voted to appoint Witaszek to the interim position.

Rural health discussion

Board of Selectmen Chair Richard Eichacker said Judi Korzec from the Rural Health Transformation Program was supposed to attend that night's meeting to discuss rural healthcare in Worcester County.

"This Rural Health Transformation Program was getting together...basi-

Please see **WARREN BOS**, page 7

Questions needed for 'Meet the Candidates' forum

WARE – Ware Community Television and the Ware River News will be hosting a "Meet the Candidates" forum prior to the April 13 election, and we need questions from the community.

Select questions will be asked to each candidate running for the Selectboard during the March 28 forum.

Please send your questions by email to pouimette@turley.com by March 27.

Town launched redesigned website

By Paula Ouimette
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WARREN – Town Administrator James Ferrera held a press conference last Wednesday afternoon to announce the launch of the town's newly redesigned website.

"This was a six month project," Ferrera said. "It took a lot of time and a lot of effort."

He credited Executive Assistant Griffin Harrington for his hard work and dedication to prepare the updated website for launch. He also thanked all of the towns departments for working together.

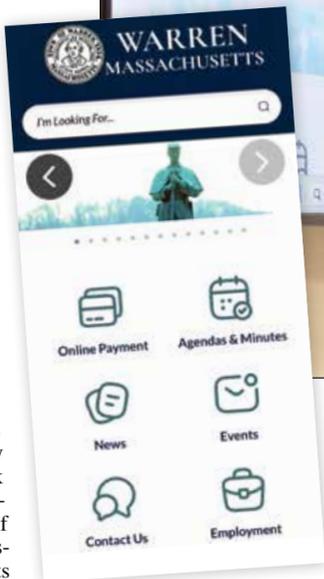
"To make sure it's a website the town can appreciate and love," Ferrera said.

The redesigned website features photos taken by Selectman Derick Veliz, which showcase all aspects of the town, from its historic buildings, to its department members, community events and more. Ferrera said anyone can submit a



JAMES FERRERA
TOWN ADMINISTRATOR

Turley Photos by Paula Ouimette
Warren Town Administrator James Ferrera explained new features on the town's updated website at a press conference last Wednesday.



The new homepage for Warren's town updated website, www.warren-ma.gov.



Residents can also report potholes to the Highway Department.

and better to navigate. He said it also easier for staff to upload information.

He said the redesigned website will provide residents

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Fire Chief proposed merging

Towns look at combining fire departments

By Zacharias Fragkiadakis
Correspondent

NEW BRAINTREE – New Braintree Fire Chief Dennis Letendre proposed merging the New Braintree and Hardwick fire departments during a joint meeting between the two town's select boards on Monday night.

Letendre said the idea was originally proposed during the last meeting of the New Braintree Select Board when they signed the intermunicipal police department agreement, which was also signed by Hardwick at the Monday meeting.

Letendre said both town's fire departments are struggling with staffing and financial restraints, and they cannot afford full time firefighters. He noted that in the past, the fire departments were well staffed, with 25-30 members of each fire department until the 1990s, and their training nights were well attended.

He said enrollment in the department has cut in half since then.

Proposal

Letendre said his proposal is to merge the two town's fire officials to provide better coverage, training, and community access to firefighters. He said the firefighters from each respective town would still be assigned to their current station to prevent confusion. He also proposed becoming a member of the regional technical rescue team, as technical calls are currently handled by other municipalities, he specifically mentioned the town of Holden as an example.

He said the towns currently do not have enough money to buy the technology required, and merging the budgets could provide purchasing power.

Additionally, he proposed combining CPR and first aid training to cut costs, facilitating the recording software for writing incident reports, combining hose and pump testing, and upgrading and sharing an air compressor, which he said could be earmarked by the state.

He said under the agree-

ment, the towns would have two fire engines, down from the three current, two tankers, a rescue, a brush truck, and a utility terrain vehicle. Letendre said he would be the chief and Nick Gaumont the deputy chief.

Residents comments

One resident asked how response times and homeowner's insurance would be affected under the agreement. Letendre said there would be no change in response times, and said that the reduction of fire engines could have an effect on insurance. Liz Cyran, a resident from Hardwick, said that she lives 25 minutes from the fire stations, and response times to her area are already too long.

Cyran also noted that Hardwick could merge with Barre or Ware, as both of those towns have ambulances.

Hardwick Select Board Vice-Chair William Tinker seconded that idea, and Letendre said it would cost a lot of money.

One resident said those towns are also unionized, and it could be difficult to

Please see **MERGING**, page 2

School Committee named supt. candidates

By Paula Ouimette
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WARE – The School Committee will interview two candidates for the position of superintendent at the March 11 meeting.

"Each candidate brings a strong record of leadership and demonstrated commitment to supporting and strengthening their school communities."

- Search Committee Chair Mel Whitham

School Committee Chair Brian Winslow said a decision on the selection of the superintendent is expected to occur after the interviews are completed. Each interview will last for one hour.

The candidates to be interviewed are Nicole Heroux of Belchertown and Marc Gosselin

"Each candidate brings a strong record of leadership and demonstrated commitment to supporting and strengthening their school communities," search committee chair Mel Whitham said at the School Committee's Feb. 25 meeting.

Heroux has previously worked for the Pathfinder Tech, Monson and Granby school districts. She currently serves as a director of student services.

Gosselin has experience as a teacher, principal and superintendent. He also is familiar with special education programming.

Administrators' reports

Ware Middle School Principal Kimberly Thompson gave an update about happenings at the school called "Middle School in a Minute."

Thompson said the staff at the middle school instill the importance of communication with parents, students, staff and administration.

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SPORTS

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Ware girls basketball advances to second round

By Tim Peterson
Sports Correspondent

WARE—The Ware girls' varsity basketball team had only won one game in the Division 5 state tournament prior to this season.

The 16th seeded Lady Indians advanced into the Sweet 16 for the first time since the MIAA changed the postseason format after squeaking out a 48-47 victory over the 17th seeded Neighborhood House Charter School at Paul Orszulak Gymnasium, last Friday night.

"The only thing that matters at this time of year is to win and move onto the next round," said Ware head coach Dan Orszulak. "They might've had only seven players, but it turned out to be a hard fought battle for us. They got on a roll in the second half and kept coming at us. We did manage to hold on at the end."

The Neighborhood House, who are nicknamed the Legends, is a Charter School located in Dorchester.

The seven Legends players, along with their two coaches, didn't arrive at Ware High School until about 15 minutes before the round of 32 game was scheduled to start. The opening tipoff was delayed for about 15 minutes.

The Lady Indians (14-7), who led by as many as 12 points late in the first half, almost watched it all slip away from them during the second half.

Ware was trailing, 45-44



Turley photos by David Henry www.sweetdogphotos.com
Gloria Cotaj sends a free throw away.

with 2:30 left in the fourth quarter when senior point Madi Slattery, buried a jump-

er from the top of the key, which sent the student section into a frenzy.



Madisyn Slattery pivots and changes the direction of play.

"I've been the starting at point guard since I was a freshman," Slattery said. "My main role has always been to pass the ball to our scorers. Scoring isn't the number one thing on my agenda but hitting that shot did feel very good. It also gave us the momentum."

The score was tied for the final time at 47-47 with 57.1 seconds remaining in regulation when Slattery made one of two shots from the foul line giving her team a one point lead.

Slattery, who's the Lady Indians only senior, has been a member of the varsity team since the eighth grade. She certainly didn't want to see her basketball career come to an end with a home loss.

"I was feeling all the emotions at the end of the game," Slattery added. "I couldn't be more grateful that we won tonight's game."

The Legends did have one final chance to win the ball game, but a couple of freshmen became the hero for the home team.

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HCC Women celebrate final home game

HOLYOKE – Women's basketball played their last regular season game on Friday evening, Feb. 20, hosting regional opponent Bunker Hill CC. The Lady Cougars defeated their opposition 67-56 to earn their seventh straight win. Holyoke's two second-year players, Emily McGrail (Ware, MA / Ware HS) and Erin Bullough (South Hadley, MA / South Hadley HS), were honored with a sophomore night that included a pregame ceremony recognizing the athletes and their accomplishments. Posters, photos and decorations were hung on the walls and in the stands around Golas Court.

McGrail led the Cougars in blocks during Friday's game and was second in rebounds, tallying six of each. She leads Holyoke in blocks this season with 59 and blocks per game, averaging 3.5. McGrail is sixth in NJCAA Division III in blocks and third in blocks per game. Bullough sunk the Lady Cougars first basket of the game on Friday. She leads Holyoke in three-point shooting percentage this season and is second in three-pointers made. Bullough has made 41.3% of the three-point shots she has attempted this year, ranking her fourth in NJCAA Division III. She has drained 31 total shots from long range on the year. Anastacia Dixon (Keene, NH / Keene



Turley photo by David Henry www.sweetdogphotos.com
Johansy Andrades goes for the layup.

HS) had an outstanding game in the regular season finale, leading Holyoke in points with 24 and rebounds with eight.

Women's basketball closes out the regular season with a 10-3 regional record and a 14-7 overall record. They are the second-place team in the New England (Region XXI) standings and will be the #2 seed entering the

Please see **HCC**, page 10

Amherst-Pathfinder co-op hockey falls

By Tim Peterson
Sports Correspondent

AMHERST – Senior assistant captain Andrew Holton had a team-leading 13 goals and 12 assists for the Agawam hockey team this winter. Holton's final high school goal was very memorable.

The Western Mass. Class B quarterfinal match between the fifth-seeded Brownies and the fourth-seeded Amherst Hurricanes was tied 4-4 a minute into overtime. That's when Holton received a pass from junior Kaeden Clifford before firing a shot into the net past Amherst senior goalie Jason Kim (34 saves), which gave the Brownies an exciting 5-4 victory at Orr Rink located on the Amherst College campus on Presidents Day, Feb. 15.

"I've never scored a game winning goal before and it's just an amazing feeling," said Holton after celebrating with his teammates. "We worked very hard in tonight's game."

Holton, who joined the varsity squad as a freshman, described his first career game-winning goal.

"After Kaeden passed me the puck, I cut to the middle of the slot and fired a shot. I just knew that the puck was going into the net," said

Holton, who also assisted on two goals. "This was one of the best hockey games that I've ever played in. We're now hoping to win another Western Mass. title this year."

Agawam, who wrapped up the regular season with a 4-3 overtime loss against Chicopee two days earlier, posted a 6-1 victory over Taconic in last year's Class B finals.

Unfortunately, the Brownies (3-15) didn't make it back to the championship match again this year. Their season came to an end 24 hours later following a 5-2 semifinal loss to top-seeded McCann Tech at the Olympia Ice Center in West Springfield.

The other seniors listed on the Brownies hockey roster are Jackson Lariviere, Noah Beavis, Joey Wilkinson, Gavin Ogorzalek, Nick Brown, Brady Blanchette, Casey Thomas, who's an assistant captain, and team captain Anthony Barbarini.

"We have a total of nine seniors on this year's team," said Agawam head coach Todd Rowley. "We had an up and down season, but those guys never quit. They work very hard at practice

Please see **HOCKEY**, page 10



Abby Rogowski passes out of the paint.



Aubrey Thorpe makes a three-point attempt.

Season concludes with three straight wins

BARRE – The season has come to a conclusion for Quabbin Regional High School girls basketball. The Panthers would end up finishing with games against Narragansett and then Montachusett Tech. Both, combined with a win

against Ayer Shirley were also wins. The Panthers would beat Monty Tech 50-35 on Feb. 18 to finish off the season with a 6-14 record overall. Unfortunately, the Panthers were not able to make the playoffs this year, and their

season ended without a state play-off appearance. There was also no Central Mass. tournament this season.



Mia Ducos heads down the court during late-season action.

Turley photos by Gregory A. Scibelli

LEFT: Makenzie Casey is all alone looking for a layup.