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SB chair calls for unity, transparency

By Paula Ouimette
Editor
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WARE – Selectboard Chair Josh Kusnierz said the town is facing “real challenges.”

“It’s clear that we must face them together,” he said.

At the Selectboard’s May 5 meeting, Kusnierz said many people feel frustrated about the appearance of the town’s streets and the lingering impact of the closing of Baystate Mary Lane Hospital. He said these issues effect the quality of life, public health and safety.

He said the “pressure is intense and unsustainable” on the town’s public safety personnel, with the closing of the hospital.

“We are going to be taking action,” Kusnierz said. “We will lead with transparency and integrity, ensuring that every decision reflects the town’s best interest. At the same time, we will welcome collaboration with other boards, committees and any resident who wants to move the town forward and not backward. Together, we can make sure every voice is heard, and every idea counts.”

Kusnierz said the it’s the Selectboard’s responsibility to rebuild trust with residents.

“I ask for your partnership, not just your presence,” he said. “The road ahead may not me easy, but I am confident, together, we can make Ware a town we’re proud to call home.”

Open meeting law complaint

Town Attorney Nicole Costanzo said a draft response to Cindy Allen Bourcier’s open meet law complaint against the Selectboard dated April 26 has been written. She said Bourcier’s complaint “has a number of allegations,” including agendas, agenda postings and meeting minutes of all boards and committees.

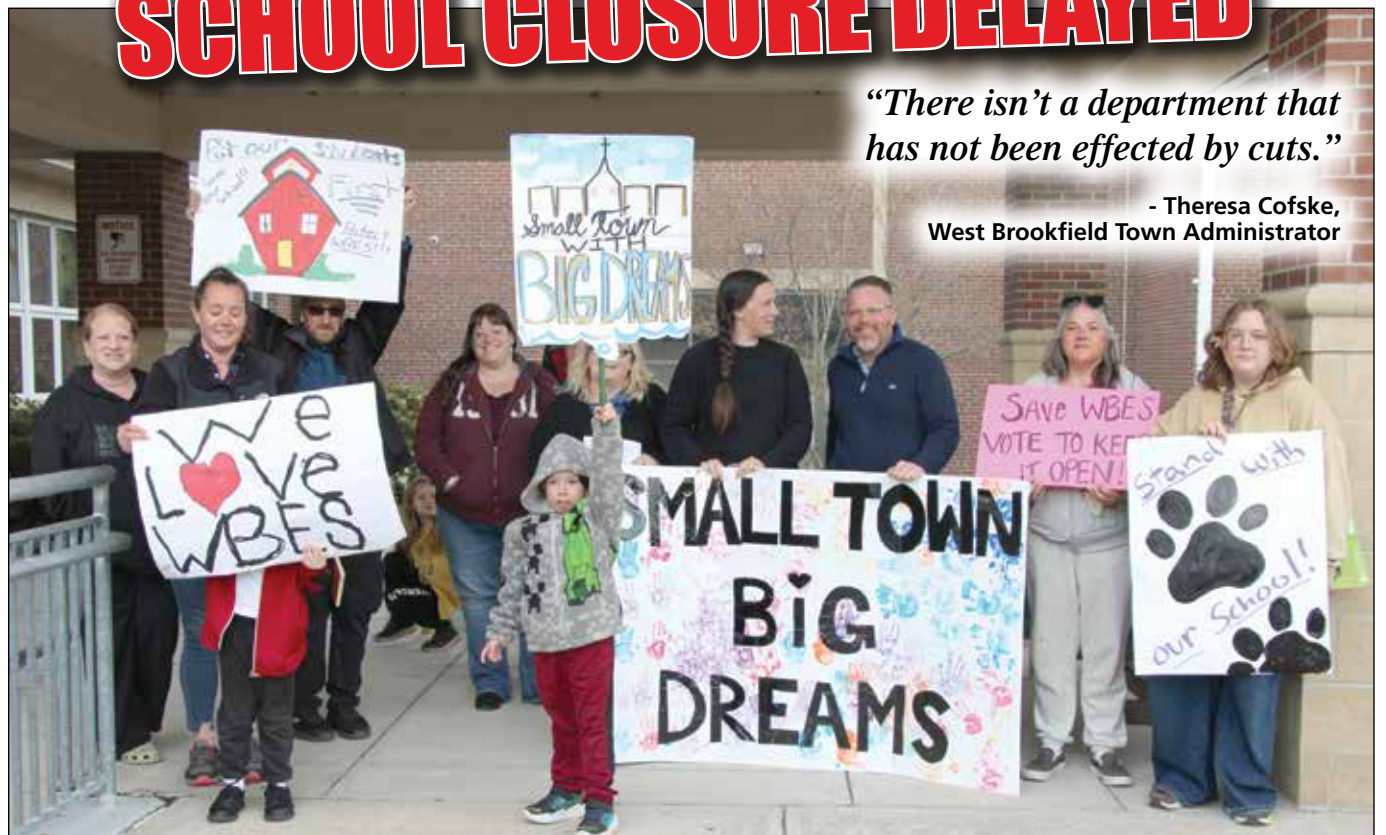
“The allegations in the complaint don’t allege any sufficiently specific violations, if you look at them, they’re very broad,” Costanzo said. “Not identifying specific meetings where agendas were improper or meeting minutes weren’t properly created.”

Please see **WARE BOS**, page 7

SCHOOL CLOSURE DELAYED

“There isn’t a department that has not been effected by cuts.”

- Theresa Cofske,
West Brookfield Town Administrator



Turley Photo by Paula Ouimette

Parents and students stood outside Quaboag Regional Middle High School in support of keeping West Brookfield Elementary School open.

Vote keeps elementary school open

By Paula Ouimette
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WARREN – West Brookfield Elementary School will remain open, after a motion to close the school at the Quaboag Regional School Committee’s meeting failed to pass.

The vote came after overrides questions failed to pass at West Brookfield’s annual town election.

Override votes

The need for an override was explained by West Brookfield Town Administrator Theresa Cofske at the May 11 School Committee

meeting.

In the past, the town used one-time revenues or free cash to fill the budget gap, which is not a recommended financial practice. She said the town’s Advisory Committee and Financial Consultant have warned against this practice for years.

“Clearly you can see the

trend...there was a structural gap going back years,” Cofske said.

For fiscal year 2027, Cofske said the town was told by the Department of Revenue that they could not use free cash to support their operating budget.

Please see **SCHOOL**, page 5

Selectmen continue to review ATM articles

By Ryan Drago
Staff Writer
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WARREN – The Board of Selectmen met on May 7 and welcomed their newest elected member, Ray Kopacko.

During a brief discussion of reorganizing the board, Richard Eichacker will remain as the chair of the board, Derick Veliz will remain vice-chair, and Kopacko will be the clerk.

The board continued their review of the warrant

articles and the fiscal year 2027 budget for the Annual Town Meeting on June 11. Town Administrator James Ferrera began by giving a brief synopsis of what happened during West Brookfield’s election.

The Town of West Brookfield had two ballot questions that both failed for overrides. To his understanding, the officials of West Brookfield are planning to address the outcome of their election during a Quaboag Regional School Committee meeting.

There are 24 articles on the warrant. Ferrera is waiting for any decisions from the board that may have to be added to the warrant. For example, Ferrera asked if there would be an article regarding the above minimum contribution for the school. Also, any additional changes the board would want to make.

Ferrera did go over some of the articles that were recommended by the Capital Planning Committee. One article is for improvements to the Senior Center.

There is also an article for a stabilization account for a new police cruiser. Article 23 will address the snow and ice deficit.

The Town Administrator would like to get the warrant signed and close on May 14.

The board did have some questions about the school budget. Ferrera said the School Committee is meeting again soon and he believes they’re going to be working on a new budget.

Ferrera said he has not seen any final numbers as of yet and believes a lot of

them are still fluid. West Brookfield is also restructuring their budget.

The omnibus budget has been updated and there are some changes to health insurance and increases that reflect new hires from the Fire Department. There are also two separate budgets for Highway.

Fire Chief Adam Lavoie spoke on some of the budget items tied to the fire department.

Please see **WARREN BOS**, page 13

Select Board welcomes new member

By Zacharias Fragkiadakis
Staff Writer
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HARDWICK – The Select Board held its first meeting with new member Zack Spencer, who was voted into the position during the May 2 annual town election.

The first order of business was the reorganization of the board, and Spencer read a nomination letter.

“We are not in a position where we can afford instability, conflict and the loss of key personnel,” Spencer said.

He said there have been concerns from the town about the actions of the board from employees. Spencer said it is the board’s job to create a stable and professional work environment, and the employees keep the town running.

“I am interested in stabilizing this town and moving forward,” he said.

Spencer said the nomination of a chair determines how the board functions, and nominated Select Board member Jeff Schaaf as chair. Schaaf seconded the motion, with an apology to Select Board Vice-Chair William Tinker.

“It’s nothing personal,” he said.

The motion to appoint Schaaf chair passed 2-1, with Tinker voting no. The board

Please see **HARDWICK BOS**, page 6

Quaboag Hills Chamber of Commerce holds annual awards dinner



Turley Photo by Ryan Drago

Shown from left are James Przypek, Mary Dembkowski, state Rep. Todd Smola, Kim Mongeau and Amanda Hellyar. Dembkowski was the recipient of the Volunteer of the Year Award during the 2026 Quaboag Hills Chamber of Commerce Choice Awards Dinner at Steaming Tender Restaurant in Palmer.

By Ryan Drago
Staff Writer
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PALMER – The Quaboag Hills Chamber of Commerce held its Choice Awards Dinner at the Steaming Tender Restaurant.

This dinner is held to honor the year’s finalists and winners of prestigious awards that highlight individuals and businesses in the Quaboag Hills Region of Massachusetts.

Serving as the Chief Executive Officer of the Chamber is James Przypek, who made the announcements during the awards dinner at Steaming Tender held on May 6. President of the Chamber is Renee Niedziela, who presented the plaques

Please see **CHAMBER**, page 7



Superintendent Eric Duda (left) met with Governor Maura Healey to accept the grant of \$3.5 million.

Pathfinder receives record-breaking grant

By Marcelo Gusmão
Staff Writer
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PALMER – Pathfinder Regional School District has been awarded a monumental \$3.5 million grant from the state.

Earlier this month, Superintendent Eric

Duda attended the official announcement event and press conference in Marlborough that was hosted by Governor Maura Healey to announce the funds being awarded to Pathfinder.

Please see **GRANT**, page 11



Honoring a century

Eleanor Czabaj celebrates 100 years

HARDWICK – On May 13, the Gilbertville community celebrated a truly remarkable milestone: the 100th birthday of Eleanor Czabaj.

A centenarian whose life is deeply woven into the fabric of the Ware River Valley, Eleanor has spent a century dedicated to her family, her faith and her neighbors.



Submitted Photos Eleanor Czabaj celebrated her 100th birthday on May 13.



Eleanor Czabaj is shown in her Ware High School year-book photo.

A legacy of hard work and service

Born on May 13, 1926, at Mary Lane Hospital in Ware, Eleanor has called Gilbertville home since 1957. Her working life reflected the industrious spirit of the region; in her youth, she served as a secretary for George Storrs and later worked at the Ware Shoe Shop and Woven Label in Gilbertville.

Many also remember her from the Polonia Shipping & Travel Agency in Ware, where she helped residents stay connected to their heritage by mailing packages to Poland.

Eleanor's commitment to her community was perhaps most visible through her

service. A longtime member of St. Aloysius Church, in Gilbertville she sang in the choir and served as a Eucharistic Minister.

She also volunteered at the Gilbertville Food Pantry for 18 years, ensuring her neighbors were cared for.

Family and simple joys

Eleanor's legacy spans four children, six grandchildren and 14 great-grandchildren. Known for her love of the simple beauties of life, she spent years tending to her vibrant rock garden and her beloved blueberry and raspberry bushes.

An avid knitter, she created many cherished pieces for her children over the decades.

When asked about the secret to reaching 100, Eleanor keeps it wholesome: a daily breakfast of hot oatmeal topped with home-grown blueberries and whole milk. Today, she stays sharp with crossword puzzles and remains a staple of social connection, enjoying a long talk with her friends and family members.

The Ware River News joins her loved ones in wishing Eleanor a very happy 100th birthday and thanking her for a century of kindness and service to our community.

meeting marked the beginning of a nearly seven-decade journey together.

A dollar bet and a walk to remember

At the heart of Eleanor's century of life is her 69-year marriage to her late husband, John. Their story began in 1946 at Forest Lake in Palmer.

Eleanor had gone to the dance with her cousin, Fredrika, while John was there with a group of buddies. Spotting Eleanor across the room, John's friends bet him one dollar that he couldn't get "that pretty girl over there" to dance with him.

Though John didn't actually know how to dance, he wasn't about to lose the bet. He walked over, asked Eleanor to take the floor, and won his dollar – along with the heart of the woman who would become his wife.

The spark was immediate. The very next day, despite not having a car, John walked five miles from Gilbertville to Eleanor's home in Ware just to see her again.

He arrived to find her mother, Bridget, washing clothes in a wooden tub outside. Bridget called Eleanor out to meet him, and that

Wild Ornerly Women (W.O.W) art exhibit opens

WARE – WOW: Wild Ornerly Women/Wise Overlooked Women art exhibition will be on display at ArtWorks Gallery, 69 Main St., May 16-June 20, open Saturday and Sunday from 1-4 p.m.

An artists reception will be held on Saturday, May 16 from 2-4 p.m.

WOW. Where are the WOMEN whose art was OVERLOOKED in the Twentieth Century? They are now OLD – old enough to be unseen as WOMEN. But, they have been ORNERLY enough to continue to create, to explore, to make provocative images. This generation of Wrongfully Overlooked

Women have added the wisdom of maturity and experience to create challenging visual work. WOW is a show of powerful social commentary works by women who have continued to voice their opinions.

This invitational show, curated by Terry Rooney, originator of the Amherst Biennial and the Pioneer Women exhibits, features work from WOMEN OF WISDOM.

Rumor has it, that one of the artists was one of the founders of the "Guerilla Girls!" She used the moniker Alice Neel to bring attention to OVERLOOKED WOMEN. Other artists Grace Graupe

Pepillard and Holly Murray, who express their outrage over the destruction of society and world.

Mollie Kellogg, paints luscious portraits of "Incognito Witches" full of strength and magic. Susan Montgomery explores women who are heroes, decried antiheroes and other women regarded for their strength of vision or voice.

WOW-WILD ORNERLY WOMEN have continued to work after being ignored in the 20th century. And now that the artwork of young women is being acknowledged in the 21st century, these WILD ORNERLY WOMEN invite you to view the WISDOM OF WOMEN.

Are You Old News?



If you recognize the folks in this week's photo, please send their names and your full name to pouimette@turley.com.

Each week the Ware River News digs into its submitted photo archives and selects a people photo to publish. We need your help to help identify those pictured.



File Photo Last week's photo from 2023 showed Ware firefighters, Dolan MacNamee, Kaity Faucher and TJ Berninger and Lieutenant Jeff Zacharie during a training held at the closed Baystate Mary Lane Hospital.

Ware Senior Center NEWS

WARE – The Ware Senior Center, 413-967-9645, located at 1 Robbins Road, is open Monday through Friday from 8 a.m.-4 p.m.

The thrift store is open each of those days from 9 a.m.-noon. Donations to the store are only accepted by Sue LaBarge, who can be reached by calling 413-544-1574.

ACTIVITIES Monday, May 18

- 9 a.m. Tai Chi
- 10 a.m. Scat
- 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Lunch
- Birthday/Mother's Day Party. Call 413-967-9645 by noon on May 15. Entertainment by Donna Lee.

Tuesday, May 19

- 9 a.m. Exercise Class at Valley View Housing
- 10 a.m. Scat
- 11:30 a.m. Lunch
- 12:30 p.m. Knit-Crochet-Laugh
- 5:30 p.m. Scrapbooking. \$3 per class.
- 6 p.m. Pitch (doors open at 5 p.m.)

Wednesday, May 20

- 9 a.m. Tai Chi
- 9:30 a.m. Quilting Club
- 10 a.m. Scat
- 11:30 a.m. Lunch
- 1 p.m. Chair Yoga with Lori

Thursday, May 21

- 9 a.m. Exercise at Valley View Housing
- 9 a.m. Walking Club (weather permitting)

- 9:30 a.m. Line Dancing for Beginners
- 10 a.m. Line Dancing
- 10 a.m. Scat
- 11:30 a.m. Lunch
- 12:15 p.m. Art Class

Friday, May 22

- 9 a.m. Tai Chi
- 10 a.m. Scat
- 11:30 a.m. Lunch
- 1 p.m. Chair Yoga with Lori
- 6 p.m. Pitch (Doors open at 5 p.m.)

LUNCHES DINE IN 11:30 a.m.

All meals \$3.50 unless otherwise noted. Required: call 413-967-4595 by noon on the business day before, to put your name on the lunch list.

Monday, May 18 Birthday/Mother's Day Party

BBQ Chicken, Sweet Potatoes, Veggie of the Day, Dessert of the Day, Entertainment by Donna Lee, Courtesy of the Friends of Ware Seniors Inc.

Tuesday, May 19

Pizza Burger, Onion Rings, Tossed Salad, Dessert of the Day

Wednesday, May 20

Salsa Chicken Over Rice, Veggie of the Day, Dessert of the Day

Thursday, May 21

Stuffed Shells, Chef Salad, Dessert of the Day

Friday, May 22

Baked Fish, Au Gratin Potatoes, Veggies of the Day, Dessert of the Day

Voter registration deadline for ATM is May 29

WARE – Residents of Ware not registered to vote must register on or before Friday, May 29 in order to vote in the Annual Town Meeting scheduled for June 8.

If you are registered but have moved within Ware you must also register at your new address on or before this date.

You may check your voter registration status at any time online at www.mass.gov under Elections & Voting.

Ware Library hosts annual book sale May 11-23

WARE – The Ware Library, 37 Main St., will be holding its annual Book Sale from May 11-23, during regular library hours.

There is a great selection of book and DVDs for adults and children, with great prices. Library hours are Mondays through Thursdays from 10 a.m.-7 p.m. and Saturdays from 9 a.m.-1 p.m.

Please call the library at 413-967-5491 with any questions.

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Friends of Town Hall announce lotto calendar winners

WARE – “Notifying Lotto Calendar winners is our favorite part of our annual Lotto Calendar event,” Pat Skutnik, president of the Friends of Ware Town Hall said in a press release.

“We sold almost all of our printed calendars this year, it was a lot of fun and a great success. Many thanks to all the vendors who were kind enough to sell calendars for us, and also to all our supporters who bought calendars for themselves and also for gifts,” Skutnik said. “A few gift recipients were pleasantly surprised to be notified as winners.”

Skutnik also mentioned they were also happy to see Ware natives who now live out of state purchase calendars after receiving their Ware River News subscription copies.

Congratulations to all the winners as follows: Claudia Kadra, Sandy St. Pierre, Ella St. George, Doug Jablonski, Eileen Swett, Sage Supka, Evelyn Trela, Betty Morin, Shirley MacKenzie, Brenda Wrobel, Maria Goncalves, Peter Wansick, John Soltys, Joanne Kubaniuk, Cheryl Albano, Diane Kardas, Christina Gambino, Andrew Soltys, Cricket Trzpit, Justin Letendre, Lynn Park, Bev Mimeault, Valerie Turtle, Jane Haznar, Bill Lak, Susan Sandridge,



Submitted Photo
This is one of the Town Hall windows the Friends of Ware Town Hall are working to restore.

Claire Cone, Peter Wansick/Marissa Halunen, Susan Sandridge and Wanda Mysona.

“Again, thank you all who helped make this Lotto Calendar fundraiser a success, every dollar is one step closer to restoring

those beautiful windows,” Skutnik said.

Anyone wishing to make a donation toward the restoration of the great hall windows may do so by mailing a check to Friends of Ware Town Hall, P.O. Box 692, Ware, MA 01082.

SC hears about new program

By Zacharias Fragkiadakis
Staff Writer
zachf@turley.com

WARE – The School Committee heard a presentation from IT Director Michael Brown about a new classroom program that is set to be implemented in the upcoming school year called Parent Square.

Brown said as of right now, there are multiple programs used throughout the schools, including Class Dojo, Seesaw and Remind. He said there is a separate program called Smore, which sends out a newsletter.

Brown said Parent Square puts many of the features that require all of these programs into one app, including implemented newsletters and the ability to make phone calls to parents. He said it is similar to a Facebook feed, and has sign ups and electronic permission slips available.

Brown said there will be a professional development day on June 5 for teachers to learn how to use the program.

Brown said there is also a new student information system to be implemented this coming year called School Insight. He said the current system, Ipass, has no mobile app, limited updates and a basic gradebook. He said course registration is on a separate program.

He said School Insight has more features, an app, and registration within the software. He said there is a parent version of the app where they

can access grades, absences, course registration, schedules and report cards.

School Committee member Mel Whitham said since electronic permission slips are available on this app, it may be worth considering whether the school will accept them. Committee members also said teachers and coaches need to be trained to do all official business through the app, and not use personal phones.

Student Representative report

A student representative said last week was teacher appreciation week, and the Parent Teacher Organization for the Stanley M. Koziol Elementary School had coordinated events for teachers. The representative also gave an acknowledgement to the school nurse, Jennifer Knight.

The representative said the elementary school students did a diorama project on May 7 about common habitats, and May 8 was a professional development day where teachers did training on supporting children with special needs and disabilities.

The representative said at the Ware Middle School, the English Language Arts department are trialing a new curriculum called Wit and Wisdom, and will be reviewed for potential implementation in the fall. She said there was catering by Teresa’s for teacher’s appreciation week, among other events.

She said students in grade five are going to Nature’s

Classroom on May 15, and their next spirit day is May 19, Hawaiian Day.

At the Ware Junior Senior High School, the representative said the student council has been coordinating events for teacher appreciation week. She said the school held a senior night for the Ware baseball team, and they beat Palmer 3-2.

She said the volleyball team is on a 14 game win streak.

School choice

The School Committee voted to open one seat for school choice for a student who is already attending, but has moved out of town and wants to continue attending.

School Committee summer schedule

The School Committee has meetings scheduled for May 20 and June 17. The June 3 meeting was canceled due to graduation.

The committee scheduled Zoom meetings for July 29 and Aug. 12. They also scheduled school walk-throughs on Aug. 22.

250th celebration

School Committee Chair Brian Winslow said he got correspondence from the Ware 250th Committee asking if anybody from the school wanted to participate in the upcoming parade and celebrations. He said they could get the band involved, have people walk or build a float.

Annual plant, bake, craft and tag sale this weekend

HARDWICK – The Tri Parish Community Church welcomes the public to its 20th annual plant, bake, craft and tag sale Saturday, May 16 and Sunday, May 17 from 10 a.m.- 3 p.m. on the beautiful Hardwick common.

The sale will feature traditional, favorite, and connoisseur perennials, plus selected annuals, heirloom vegetable plants and herbs. There is a wonderful variety in plants offered through Inishowen Farms of North Brookfield, Stillman’s Farm and Howe’s Farm & Garden both of New Braintree, and

“homegrown lovelies” from private gardens.

A delicious assortment of home-baked desserts and breads will also be sold.

The church will be holding a drawing featuring the “best” of the plant sale. No purchase is necessary to win.

Several outdoor activities and games will be available for children.

A number of craft vendors have rented space on the common for the event. The Friends of the Stone Church will also be on hand, highlighting their preservation of the Stone Church Cultural

Center in Gilbertville, as well as the upcoming programs that are offered at the center.

The Tri Parish Community Church’s Pastor, Duncan Washburn, will lead a brief prayer service Sunday morning on the common in lieu of the 10 a.m. Sunday worship service.

The proceeds from the plant and bake sale support the operational expenses of the church. Come spend the day enjoying all that Hardwick has to offer while supporting the fund-raising efforts of the church.

Browse the plants and vendor booths, connect with old friends, visit the Hardwick Historical Society, open from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. both days, and the 1906 Paige Memorial library which will be open from 9 a.m.-1 p.m. Saturday. Both buildings are located near the common, a short walk from the plant sale venue.

Bring your bicycle and tour some of the great riding routes in the east-Quabbin area and scenic vistas preserved through the East Quabbin Land Trust such as



the Mandell Hill property located just one mile east of the Hardwick common (the church will hold your plants for you), and top it all off with a bite to eat at Mimi’s Coffee House overlooking the common.

All are welcome. This is a rain or shine event.

C4R hosts birding paddle on May 16

BROOKFIELD – Join C4R for a special Birding on the Quaboag paddle on Saturday, May 16 from 8:30-11 a.m.

The Quaboag Marsh offers a special habitat for spring birds. Participants will listen for and perhaps see the American Bittern.

Meet at the Route 148 state boat launch, then park nearby. Limit is 15 paddlers.

RSVP required by emailing chicopeewatershed@gmail.com.

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Highway Dept. Skilled Laborer / Truck Driver

The Town of New Braintree Highway Dept. is seeking qualified applicants for the immediate full-time position of Skilled Laborer / Truck Driver. Applicants must have a valid Massachusetts Driver’s License, Class B (CDL) with DOT Medical Examination Certification and a Hoisting Engineer License Class 2B with DOT Medical Examination Certification. Interested applicants should submit a letter of interest and an employment application to:
Highway Department, 110 West Brookfield Road, New Braintree MA 01531.

Highway Dept. Seasonal Laborer

The Town of New Braintree is seeking a qualified candidate to perform seasonal work in the maintenance of town commons, roadways, grounds and cemeteries. Applicants must have a valid Massachusetts Driver’s License (Class D). This is a seasonal position for 20 hours per week with a flexible schedule, May through October. Interested applicants should submit a letter of interest and employment application to: Highway Department, 110 West Brookfield Road, New Braintree MA 01531.

For further information, please contact
Richard Ayer, Highway Superintendent, at 508-867-2451,
or via email at Highway@newbraintree.gov.

A.A./E.O.E.

viewpoints



This is a photo of the Kelly the dairy cow in Zambia. Submitted Photo

Farming in Zambia

By Felicia Smith

My partner Floyd Kelley and I spent most of January 2026 in Zambia, a country about the size of Texas in South-Central Africa. Since my Peace Corps service there from 2015-2017, we try to return every two years to visit with my host family (the family chosen to host me during the two years in my assigned village), and other people we've met over the years.

Zambia is a relatively new country as compared to the U.S., only gaining independence in 1964.

Most things in Zambia feel like traveling back in time. Locks are opened with skeleton keys. People swath their babies in cloth diapers. Most soda is still made with cane sugar and comes in refillable glass bottles.

Despite this, sometimes going there feels like taking a leap into the future, and not in a good way.

The soil has already been vastly over-farmed, leading to desertification in most places. There are rivers of trash flowing through the city, despite plastic packaging from China being relatively new to Zambians.

Traditionally, it used to be fine to drop food wrappings on the ground, because they were made of natural biodegradable fibers. Now, they're made of plastic that doesn't break down quickly, if at all.

When it rains it pours, and washes all the trash from the streets into the rivers.

Trash is one problem that Floyd and I are still brainstorming solutions for. However, we try to focus on areas where we can have a more immediate positive impact in our quest to help Zambians.

Fortunately for us, another thing that Zambia has a surplus of during the rainy season (in addition to

plastic) is grass. But how to utilize this plentiful green resource, besides waiting for it to dry and "slashing" it to make thatching for roofs?

Since we raise animals at Burnshirt Valley Farm here in Barre, we thought: why not encourage this in Zambia? We decided to offer my host family a dairy cow.

A week into our trip, we went to a nearby farm to buy a dairy calf, in hopes that the calf can turn their plentiful grass into milk for consumption as well as income. The man who took us to the farm to purchase the calf spoke to me and my host father about the dangers of using pesticides and herbicides when growing crops.

He said that it strips the soil of nutrients and biodiversity, and that there were some types of grass that used to grow here that don't anymore. Because the soil has been plowed and stripped of nutrients over and over again since adopting the ways of "conventional" farming, it's now necessary to apply fertilizer to the soil to make any crops grow.

My host family traditionally farms tobacco for a living, but this year the heavy rains washed the fertilizer from the soil. So now the tobacco is pale and struggling, while the grasses growing beside it are healthy and taller than I am.

Seeing all this perfectly good but wasted grass, Floyd thought it was a no-brainer for Zambians to convert the freely available resource into nutrition and money for the household via cattle.

How else can you get something from nothing, he says? And Zambians could really use something.

Poverty grows each year, as prices continue to soar. Gasoline is regularly

Please see **FARMING**, page 6

Rhubarb, a perennial fruit worth growing

Recently I was chatting with a coworker who has a dozen varieties of rhubarb.

Yes, rhubarb. He asked if I wanted a division or two.

Although I love all things old, and this fruit (yes, fruit) is considered about as old-fashioned as they come, I politely declined. Rhubarb and I don't particularly get along.

But, that doesn't mean I'll knock anyone who can eat it and not visit the bathroom. All the more power to them.

Read on for some rhubarb trivia that just may earn you a prize on your next cruise.

Back in the day when everyone made time for baking, or baked out of necessity, rhubarb was indispensable in the garden. Today, most folks figure they can buy what they need when they long to make a strawberry-rhubarb pie or some preserves.

I say, "Why buy it, when it is so easy to grow?" And, as an added bonus, it may just out live you!

Rhubarb was featured on a cooking show and a lengthy discussion evolved between the celebrity cooks about whether it was a fruit or a vegetable. I never did hear the resolution, but did a little research of my own.

Apparently, rhubarb is a vegetable but after a court decision in 1947 it is legally a fruit and was not subject to taxation of the time.

The best time for planting rhubarb is early through mid-spring. If you are lucky enough to know someone with an established patch, it is very likely they will give you all of the divisions you need and then some.

You can also purchase roots or small potted plants from local nurseries. For an average family of four, plan on two or three divisions.

Rhubarb will do best in a spot in the yard that is in full sun or light shade. Most gardeners locate it separately from or at one end of the main vegetable garden.

attentively.

When it's time for your plants to make their way to a permanent spot, dig holes two to three feet apart. The depth of the holes will depend on the size of the divisions you have and how big their roots are.

Plant them at the same depth they were growing in your friend's garden or in the pot you bought them in. If you are planting roots, go by the buds – they should be planted about two inches below the soil surface.

During the first growing season our emphasis should be on root building. For that reason be sure that your water well and keep weeds at bay.

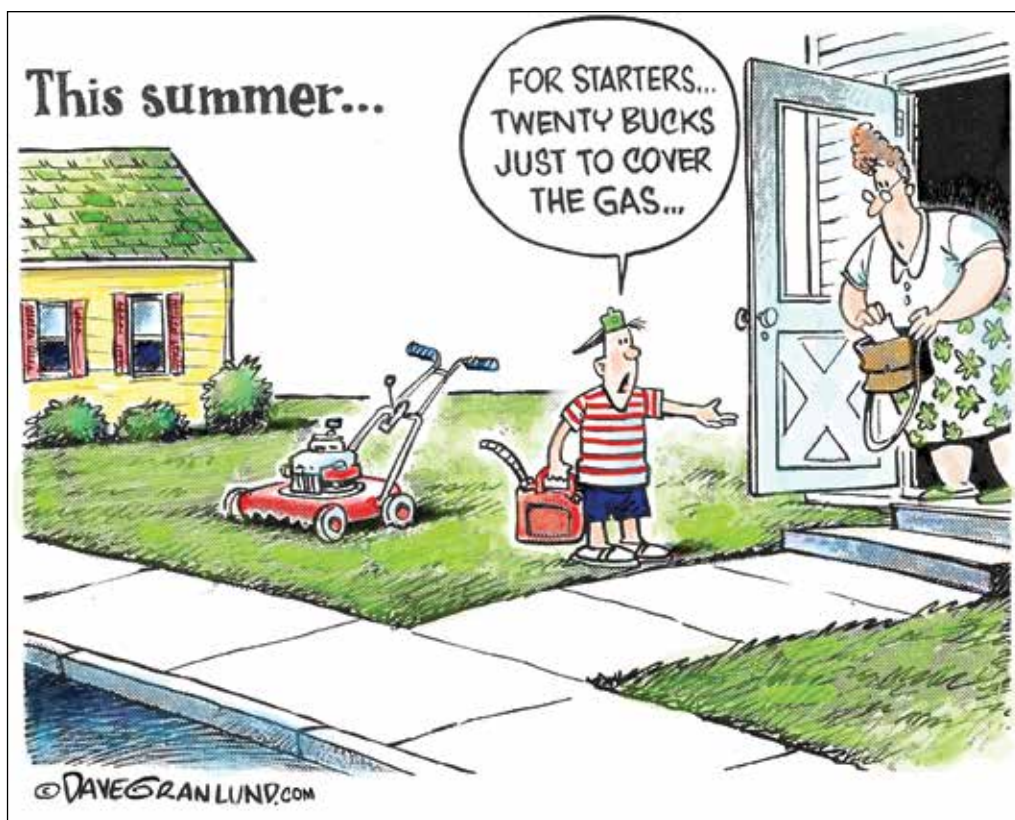
Do not pick stalks until the following spring, but do break off any flower buds that form. Once your patch has established itself there is no stopping it! All you'll need to do to maintain it is provide a topdressing of compost or rotted manure each spring and weed as needed.

Of course, you will also want to pick as much as you can! No knife is needed: simply hold the stem near the base and give it a quick pull along with a gentle twist.

Use only the stem since the foliage is known to be toxic.

The patch will need dividing every 5-10 years; the perfect time to offer up divisions to your friends!

Roberta McQuaid graduated from the Stockbridge School of Agriculture at the University of Massachusetts. For the last 34 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.



I'm still working; why didn't I get a higher Social Security benefit?



Dear Rusty:

I began collecting benefits at age 72 and am now 78. Since that time, I have continued to work and have contributed over \$40,000 to Social Security over the last six years. At the time of my retirement, I was informed that the Social Security Administration would review my contributions annually and replace lower-earning years from my 35-year record

with my current higher-earning years.

Despite my current annual income exceeding \$100,000, I have not seen an increase in my benefit amount over the past six years. I recently met with an SSA representative, who confirmed that my benefits are being reviewed annually but did not provide specific details or evidence of these adjustments. Could you

please advise me on how to formally verify that my benefits are being accurately reviewed and updated to reflect my continued contributions?

Signed: Collecting and Still Working

Dear Collecting:

For information, your contributions from Federal Insurance Contributions Act payroll taxes to Social Security over the last six years are not what determines if you get an increase to your monthly SS benefit.

Although you contributed to SS since you started receiving SS benefits, those contributions do not affect your monthly SS benefit.

Your monthly SS benefit is based only the highest inflation-adjusted 35 years of earnings over your lifetime. And for your monthly benefit to change, your current earnings each year would need to replace at least one of those 35 historical, inflation-adjusted year earnings.

We regularly hear from those who do benefit from SSA's regular review of work earnings after they start receiving monthly SS benefits, and our Advisory staff includes two individuals with a combined 70 years of service with the Social Security Administration. Thus, we are comfortable saying that SSA does, in fact, review your earnings annually to see if

your monthly SS payment should be higher.

From a process standpoint, SSA receives your annual earnings information from the IRS (i.e., directly from your annual tax return) by mid-year annually, after which SSA evaluates your recent earnings to see if an increase in your monthly SS benefit is warranted. If so, that increase is automatically applied, usually around October each year and you are paid the extra amount retroactively to the beginning of the year.

What you may not realize is that your lifetime earnings (your historical earnings) are

Please see **SSI**, page 6

WARE RIVER NEWS

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This newspaper will print free self-submitted statements of candidacy only four weeks or more out from the election. All candidates running in both contested and uncontested races are asked to submit their statements to the editor to include only biographical and campaign platform details. Total word count for statements is limited to between 300-500 words maximum. Please include a photo. We will not publish any statements of candidacy inside the four weeks from election threshold. To publish any other campaign publicity during the race, please contact our advertising representatives. We also do not allow personal attacks against other candidates or political parties in statements of candidacy, nor do we publish for free any information about key endorsements or political fundraisers.

Letters to the editor of no more than 250 words from supporters endorsing specific candidates or discussing campaign issues are limited to three total per author during the election season. No election letters will appear in the final edition before the election. We reserve the right to edit all statements of candidacy and letters to the editor to meet our guidelines.

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Submitted Photo
Ware Junior Senior High School senior Maia Lamothe was awarded the Superintendent's Award of Academic Excellence.

Lamothe received Superintendent's Award of Academic Excellence

WARE — This year's recipient of the Superintendent's Award is Maia Lamothe.

Lamothe is an exceptional young woman who excels academically, socially, and athletically at Ware Junior Senior High School. She is deeply respected by her peers and is someone faculty and staff can always rely on.

For these reasons, and many more, she was unanimously selected to receive this prestigious honor.

Lamothe has consistently ranked among the top of her class and continues to demonstrate an unwavering commitment to academic excellence. Her interests

range from statistics to biotechnology to pharmacy, all connected by her ultimate goal of advancing research in these fields.

For Lamothe, this is more than an academic aspiration, it is a deeply personal mission. She is driven to make meaningful contributions to society through innovation and discovery.

Her academic achievements are complemented by her involvement in a wide range of extracurricular activities.

Lamothe is a key member of the volleyball team, where her leadership and sportsmanship stand out. As a participant in both the chess

club and the "As Schools Match Wits" team, she has developed strong strategic thinking and analytical skills. In addition, her role as Student Council Historian and her membership in the National Honor Society reflect her leadership, integrity, and commitment to excellence.

Lamothe is truly deserving of this year's award. She brings enthusiasm, positivity, and dedication to the Ware community and is a joy to be around. The Ware Public Schools are incredibly proud of all she has accomplished and look forward to seeing the many ways she will make an impact in the future.

SCHOOL from page 1

"Every year the town and the people voted to use free cash," she said. "This year was the year there's no going back."

Because of this, all town departments have faced significant cuts to their budgets.

Cofske said the Police Department will lose two full-time police officers, part-time officers and have reduced overtime available. The Senior Center will go from operating five days a week to three.

The library's budget has been cut by \$40,000, which will have an impact on its certification.

The Highway Department is cutting administrative assistant hours and more and the Board of Selectmen will no longer have an executive assistant.

The town's above minimum contribution to the Quaboag Regional School District was also reduced by \$100,000.

"There isn't a department that has not been effected by cuts," Cofske said.

Cofske was joined by Board of Selectmen member Catherine "Camie" Lamica, who spoke further about the override votes.

"We had two separate options to fund the town and the school," she said. "Unfortunately...the vote didn't pass on both amounts."

Lamica said the board has been working with the Advisory Committee to present a reduced budget to voters at the annual town meeting to be held on Tuesday, June 2 at 6:30 p.m. She said they were able to "very painfully" cut approximately \$500,000 from the proposed FY 27 budget to date.

Cofske said there are still unknowns in the budget, which total about \$300,000.

Cofske spoke about short and long-term goals to address the town's financial situation, including the establishment of financial policies.

"Policies need to be put in place because that's when it stops," she said of the gap.

Cofske said in the long-term, the town will work to develop economic goals, and continue to monitor departmental spending, which she said is "bare bones to begin with."

Cofske said to date, there is about \$17,000 remaining in free cash and another \$276,000 that has been certified by the state.

State funding

Cofske said the state's Unrestricted General Government Aid is still at the same rate it was in 2008, despite inflation.

Superintendent of Schools Stephen Duff said the Senate recently released its version of the FY 27 budget, and that it doesn't include any increases in

Chapter 70 funding or charter school reimbursements.

"It was the exact same budget that the House budget had," Duff said.

Quaboag FY 27 budget

Director of Finance & Operations Nicole Goncalves said the school district has been operating on a "shoestring budget" for many years.

"Every nickel counts," she said.

Without the passage of an override in the town of West Brookfield, the school district will move forward with March 30 version (version 3) of the FY 27 budget. She said both towns would need to approve the budget to move forward.

Goncalves said the state's funding formulas need to be corrected, but she said that process could take years, and would not help the towns now.

Lamica said West Brookfield's "cuts would need to be deeper" if the school budget was put forward.

Warren Board of Selectmen member and former Finance Committee member Ray Kopacko said his town would not be able to afford the assessment put forward by the School Committee's budget.

"Warren cannot do the requested budget," he said. "The money simply is not there."

School district support

Duff said the last thing that anyone wants is to see one of the schools in the district close, or see a reduction in staff. He said supporting the staff is the best way to benefit the students.

"We fight and fight and fight for our teachers," Duff said. "Everybody here contributes in a small way."

Several parents spoke during the public comment period, including Jordan Brooks, who has been a strong advocate for West Brookfield Elementary School staying open.

Brooks attended the school himself as a child, and all of his children have also gone there. He thanked the School Committee members who voted against the motion to close the school.

Jeanne, another parent who also attended West Brookfield Elementary School herself, spoke prior to the meeting about the support her children and her family received from the school staff after experiencing a house fire.

"That's what a small community does," she said.

Doreen Piechota said a West Brookfield Community Advocacy group has been formed to find ways to help support the town and its needs.

"We have been working tirelessly," she said. "We are continuously writing the state."



Members of the Ware High School Domestic Violence Task Force are shown with a banner that students signed about consent.



Ware Police Officer Bren is shown with Ware High School Domestic Violence Task Force members.

High school DV task force educated about consent

WARE — On April 16, several members of the Ware High School Domestic Violence Task Force, along with Ware Police Officer Bren and Ware River Valley Domestic Violence Task Force Coordinator Monica Moran were present at all four lunch periods at Ware Jr./Sr. High School.

Students signed their names on a banner that says "I ask for consent" and then chose their favorite way to ask for consent from a list of 12 possible questions such as "Is this okay with you?" Students also wrote messages of hope for survivors of domestic violence.

April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month. The banner and student writings will remain on the cafeteria wall for a couple of weeks.

Ware Jr./Sr. High School students signed the banner in support of Sexual Assault Awareness Month.



ABOVE: Ware High School Domestic Violence Task Force members and Ware Police Officer Bren are shown with the consent display on the cafeteria wall.

LEFT: Students selected their favorite ways to ask for consent.



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Hardwick is flourishing with activities

HARDWICK – Mindful Mandalas will be held at the Paige Memorial Library, 87 Petersham Road, on Saturday, May 16 at 11 a.m.

Experience the Zen that creating mandalas can bring. Relax and get centered in a rhythm of pattern and color.

A Walking Tour of Gilbertville will be held on Sunday, May 17 from 2-4 p.m. led by Cheryl Wolfe, member of the Hardwick Historical Commission, Friends of the Stone Church, and Board of the Gilbertville Public Library.

This walk will include 75 buildings on the National Historic register. Everyone will meet at the library at 259

Main St., Gilbertville, but there will be transportation for those who need it.

Tri Parish Community Church will host its 20th Annual Plant, Bake, Craft, & Tag Sale on Saturday, May 16 and Sunday, May 17, from 10 a.m.-3 p.m. on the Hardwick Common. Buy perennials, annuals, vegetable plants and herbs in time for spring planting.

Treat yourself to home-baked desserts and breads. The event is held rain or shine.

The Hardwick Historical Society Museum will also be open during the Tri-Parish Plant Sale on May 17-18 from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. each day.

Make polymer clay beads at the Paige Memorial Library during the Quabbin Regional School District early release day on Wednesday, May 20. Drop in from 10 a.m.-4 p.m.

Doctor Rosie Helps the Animals on Saturday, May 30 at 10:30 a.m. This is an Interactive Stuffy Vet Clinic for children who will learn to use a stethoscope and take home take a mini vet kit.

Sponsored by the Friends of the Paige Memorial Library, it will be held at the Gilbertville Public Library. Children should bring a stuffed animal to be examined.

Story Time is held every Wednesday from 10:30 a.m.-noon at the Paige Memorial

Library with interactive activities to support language development, encourage a love for reading and books and foster social skills.

Ongoing library activities include the Paige Book Club, the Cookbook Club, Celebrate Hardwick, the Ongoing Book Sale, the Paige Writers, Paige's Page to Screen book to movie discussion group, and the Movie Festival Committee.

Check the Facebook page and website at www.facebook.com/paigelibrary/ or www.paigelibrary.com/

For more information, call 413-477-6704 or email paigelibrary.hardwick@gmail.com.



Submitted Photo
Seth Newton returns to the Grand Hall stage at Workshop13 on Sunday, May 31.

Seth Newton returns to Workshop13 for pre-tour show

WARE – Workshop13 is excited to welcome Seth Newton back to their Grand Hall stage to kick off his international “Across the Sea” European tour.

This pre-tour show takes place at 13 Church St., on Sunday, May 31. Doors open at 5:30 p.m. and the performance begins at 6 p.m.

This all-ages event will start with opening band Woodshed, a folk/country/american band that loves putting harmonies in your ear. Tickets are available on a sliding scale from \$10-\$20 and can be purchased in advance at www.workshop13.org.

Newton is an internationally touring, signed singer-songwriter known for his

strong, distinctive four-octave vocal range, passionate genre-defying sound and unforgettable live performances. He emerged from the heavy rock scene in Worcester, and has gone on to build a broad and dynamic solo career – releasing dozens of original studio recordings and performing on some of the most prestigious stages around the world.

About Workshop13

Workshop13 is a dynamic center where arts, culture, and community converge – expanding access to the arts and nurturing creativity and self-expression in our rural region.

For more information visit workshop13.org, or call 413-277-6072.

HARDWICK BOS

from page 1

also nominated Tinker as vice-chair, and Spencer as clerk, with each motion passing unanimously.

A resident voiced frustration at the nomination, and Schaaf said the insulting language is part of the problem. Spencer said that moving on, the board and residents should be respectful and do business.

“The people in town think this is a clown show,” Spencer said.

Spencer said the people of town are sick of the “disrespect and infighting,” and his nomination for Schaaf came from concerns from the Highway, Police and Fire departments.

“These are three of the most essential parts of this town that are voicing concerns to me about a member of this board,” Spencer said.

He said that he can't risk instability based on past feelings, and said there will be times where he agrees with certain board members, disagrees with them, and times where nobody agrees.

“We are a board, and we're gonna make decisions as a board,” he said.

Budget discussion

Town Administrator Justine Caggiano said she got a call from department

heads who watched the last meeting, where the board discussed budget cuts.

“There was a lot of concern, a lot of fear,” she said. Schaaf said the board still wants to reach out to the departments to ask about a 10% cut. Caggiano said three departments, the Highway, Police and Fire reached out saying they cannot do it.

Tinker said the department heads should be invited to a meeting to discuss their budgets publicly.

Caggiano also said the budget is currently balanced, but Tinker said there are two one time revenues totaling \$200,000 funding the budget this year, which will leave the town in a \$200,000 deficit next year.

“We do the same thing every year,” Caggiano said, adding that it is not best practice, but the town does not have consistent revenue streams, so using one time revenues can be the only way to balance a budget.

Schaaf said there are three options, using the one time revenue, budget cuts, or passing an override.

“I don't like any of those options,” Schaaf said.

Tinker said he has a list of suggestions to cut \$100,000 from the budget this year, to cut next year's deficit in half, and he would present it at the meeting with the department heads on May 11.

Amateur radio operator club hosts meeting on May 26

WEST BROOKFIELD – Local amateur radio operators and the public are invited to the next Quaboag Valley Amateur Radio Club meeting, Tuesday, May 26 at 6:30 p.m. at the West Brookfield Senior Center, 73 Central St.

This month's program the club will be discussing their plans for Field Day on June 27-28.

ARRL Field Day is the most popular annual on-the-air amateur radio event in the U.S. and Canada, held on the fourth weekend of June. It acts as a combined emergency communication exercise, community open house and

technical competition.

Operators set up temporary, often off-grid stations to simulate disaster response while making as many radio contacts as possible. It is primarily an emergency preparedness exercise designed to teach operators how to set up stations in less-than-optimal conditions (e.g., tents, parks) when using standard infrastructure. Operators use generators, batteries, or solar power. It is open to the public.

All are welcome to attend. For more information about the club, upcoming events, or licensing opportunities, visit www.QVARC.com.

FARMING from page 4

around \$5.44/gallon, if you can believe it. Here, where many people can barely afford food or fertilizer, most certainly can't afford to drive.

And since there are only two (albeit long) paved roads throughout the country, people still travel by oxcart, similar to how we used to travel by horse.

Our faith in bringing back the fertility of the soil currently lies in livestock which, in addition to providing transport, can live

off the grass that grows so effortlessly, and then deposit manure back onto the soil, recharging it with the vital nutrients it so badly needs to be able to retain moisture.

The cow we named Kelly continues to grow big and strong, eating all the grass on my host family's compound. We continue to remain hopeful about the future of farming in Zambia, and look forward to visiting again in 2028 to see what changes, if any, Kelly Cow has made to the Chule Farm.

SSI from page 4

adjusted for inflation. This is a good thing, because that means your current monthly SS benefit is calculated using today's dollar values for your past earnings, rather than the actual money amounts you originally earned and received.

For example, \$50,000 of 1990 earnings would be worth about \$125,000 today. Which also means that those 1990 earnings would only yield a higher current Social Security benefit if your recent earnings were more than \$125,000. And this is true for all 35 years of lifetime earnings used to calculate your current monthly Social Security benefit.

The best way for you to ensure that you are getting the right monthly benefit amount is to first obtain your lifetime earnings history from Social Security. This is most easily obtained through your online “my Social Security” account at www.ssa.gov/myaccount. If you don't have an online account set up, you can also request an “Earnings Statement” by calling Social Security at 1.800.772.1213 (or call your local SS field office to request it). Next, I suggest you use Social Security's “Online Benefits Calculator” explained and available at this link: <https://www.ssa.gov/benefits/retirement/planner/AnypiaApplet.html>

If, after this, you believe

you should be getting a higher monthly SS benefit because of your recent earnings, you can again contact SSA and tell them you believe they did not properly adjust your current SS benefit for your most recent earnings. Following that, you can submit a “Request for Reconsideration” (form SSA-561) which will result in a full separate review of your case by an independent SSA person, followed (some months later) by a formal written determination on your assertion. If you received a letter from SSA because of your previous meeting with them, include a copy of that letter with your “Request for Reconsideration.”

The Association Mature Citizens Foundation and its staff are not affiliated with or endorsed by the Social Security Administration or any other governmental entity. This article is intended for information purposes and does not represent legal or financial guidance. It presents the opinions and interpretations of the Association Mature Citizens Foundation's staff, trained and accredited by the National Social Security Association. To submit a question, visit amacfoundation.org/programs/social-security-advisory or email us at ssadvisor@amacfoundation.org. Russell Gloor is a Social Security advisor for AMAC.

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CHAMBER from page 1

to the finalists and winners of seven awards.

The Quaboag Hills Chamber of Commerce has been hosting this awards dinner over the course of 20 years. The Chamber is a resource and advocate for businesses in the Quaboag Hills region of Massachusetts and has over 200 business members throughout 15 different towns.

Earlier in the year, public voting for the finalists and winners of this year's choice awards was available on the Chamber's website. The Chamber received over 10,000 votes in a 28-day period.

A total of seven awards were given in this year's Choice Awards Dinner. The finalists for the Community Hero of the Year Award included Ann Davidson of Wales Community Food Pantry, Karen Jacobs Davis of Monson Community Cupboard, Brenda McCarthy of the Bondsville Post Office, Amy Scribner of River East School to Career and Chris Smith of Light Up Palmer.

The Educator of the Year finalists included Pamela Ellis of Granite Valley School, Jacqueline Fernandez of North Brookfield Elementary School, Marcie Fusco of Wildwood Acres Farm & Forest School, Beky O'Brien of Old Mill Pond Elementary and Marion Reilly of Wales Elementary School.

This year's Awards Dinner highlighted an HVAC Business in the Quaboag Hills Region. The finalists for HVAC Business of the Year included C.W. Angell, Noonan Energy, Pioneer Valley Environmental, River-Air HVAC and Squier &

Co. Representatives of each company were in attendance during the Awards Dinner.

The Quaboag Hills Chamber of Commerce also wanted to recognize the manufacturing businesses in the region. The Manufacturer of the Year finalists included Palmer Foundry, Palmer Paving, Quabbin Wire & Cable Co., Quirk Wire Co. and Sanderson MacLeod.

This year's Choice Awards dinner recognized a non-profit organization. The finalists were Behavioral Health Network, Hitchcock Free Academy, Palmer Historical & Cultural Center, Quaboag Valley Community Development Corporation and Workshop13.

The finalists for Chamber Champion of the Year were Burkhart Pizzanelli, P.C., Hardwick Vineyard & Winery, Pathfinder Tech, SERVPRO Team Fall and Superior Plus Propane.

The Chamber also recognized finalists and a winner of the Chamber Legacy Award. The finalists were Bell & Hudson Insurance Agency, Country Bank, Monson Savings, Moulton Insurance Agency and North Brookfield Savings Bank.

Each finalist of each award received a finalist plaque and were recognized during the award ceremony.

Joining leaders of the Chamber for the award announcements was state Rep. Todd Smola, District Director from the Office of Senator Ryan C. Fattman Amanda Hellyar, and Kim Mongeau from the Office of Senator Peter Durant.

Smola spoke briefly and wanted to recognize the hard work being done by community leaders, volunteers, and



Pathfinder Superintendent Eric Duda accepted the Chamber Champion of the Year Award on behalf of Pathfinder Tech. Pictured is James Przypek (left), Eric Duda, state Rep. Todd Smola, Kim Mongeau and Amanda Hellyar.

the businesses in the Quaboag Hills region. The State Representative feels a big congratulations goes out to everyone who has been recognized as their work is of great importance.

"You're the backbone of the Chamber," Smola said.

In addition to the awards, Smola, Mongeau, and Hellyar presented citations to the winners.

The recipient of Educator of the Year went to Pamela Ellis of Granite Valley School. The Community Hero of the Year Award went to Brenda McCarthy of the Bondsville Post Office.

The Manufacturer of the Year Award went to Quabbin Wire & Cable Co. in Ware. President and Paul Engel came up and accepted the award on behalf of his company, which he founded in 1975.

The recipient of the HVAC Company of the Year Award went to Squier & Co., with Scott Duprey accepting the award.

The Non-profit of the Year winner was Workshop13. Accepting the award on behalf of Workshop13 was Executive

Director Marie Lauderdale.

Lauderdale gave a big shoutout to "everyone who makes Workshop13 possible."

Pathfinder Tech was the winner of the Chamber Champion of the Year Award. Accepting the award was Pathfinder Superintendent Eric Duda, who shared what is next for Pathfinder Tech.

The school managed to acquire the Cold Spring Elementary School building, which was built in 1954. The building will undergo renovations in the summer of this year and will become a vocational tech school to offer programs for students.

This will add 100 additional students to the school.

Duda said, "We are in such a demand right now" for jobs to be filled and Pathfinder has students who want to do the work and learn the work. Duda says the goal is to "provide a workforce that helps all of you grow."

Acquiring this old school building is something Duda described as taking something meaningful as it is a pristine building that could be of good use to the community. Duda



Pictured left to right are Chamber CEO James Przypek, Jodie Gerulaitis of Country Bank, state Rep. Todd Smola, Kim Mongeau and Amanda Hellyar. Gerulaitis accepted the Chamber Legacy Award which was awarded to Country Bank.



Turley Photos by Ryan Drago
Quabbin Wire & Cable Co. President and CEO Paul Engel accepted the Manufacturer of the Year Award.

thanked the Chamber for this honorable award.

Country Bank was the recipient of the Chamber Legacy Award. Accepting the Award on behalf of Country Bank was First Vice President of Community Relations at Country Bank Jodie Gerulaitis, who talked about Country Bank celebrating 175 years. Gerulaitis said she feels Country Bank will be around for a lot longer.

The Chamber had a surprise award to give during the

ceremony. This award was for the 2026 Volunteer of the Year, and its recipient was Mary Dembkowski of Cedarbrook Village. Dembkowski was surprised by this announcement but was thankful for the award.

The Quaboag Hills Chamber of Commerce thanks the sponsors for the annual Choice Awards Dinner: Noonan Energy (table sponsor), Quabbin Wire & Cable Co. (table sponsor) and Superior Plus Propane (table sponsor).

WARE BOS from page 1

Costanzo said Bourcier's complaint also alleged that meeting minutes need to be posted on the town website, but that is not a requirement of open meeting law.

"The Selectboard may want to encourage that, but it is not a requirement of the open meeting law," she said.

Select Board Vice-Chair Ken Willette asked Bourcier if documenting her concerns with the Selectboard would be better than filing the complaint with the state.

Bourcier said the open meeting violation complaint documents her concerns.

"I like the idea of clearing the slate," she said. "If it's documented, and then in the future if it happens again, then it just deters future behavior."

Costanzo said most of Bourcier's allegations are "untimely" because they are outside of the 30-day timeframe for complaints to be made.

The Selectboard approved the draft response to Bourcier's complaint.

PILOT agreement

The Board of Assessors and the Selectboard met with representatives from the Senior Housing Complex on Church Street to discuss the Payment in Lieu of Taxes agreement. The PILOT agreement is set to expire at the end of this fiscal year.

The last PILOT agreement was for around \$7,000 a year for 29 units. The new PILOT would equal \$29,000 in the first year, or \$1,000 a unit.

The amount received by the town will increase 2.5% each year for the length of the PILOT agreement (fiscal year 2036).

Railroad bridge update

Town Manager Stuart Beckley said the Mass Central Railroad's operations manager was out of the office when he contacted her, but she should be available soon. He also said the railroad is currently for sale.

Willette read an email response from Bruce Crawford to Beckley from July 2024 regarding concerns about the condition of the railroad bridge that crosses Route 32, which states "the railroad is aware of the bridge condition...it is inspected regularly

by a professional bridge engineering firm."

The letter states that "the defect you have noted is not an imminent safety defect, however, please be advised it is an item we are closely monitoring and is scheduled for repair this calendar year."

Town Manager's report

Beckley said fourth quarter tax bills should be issued by May 15. He said the tax rate was approved with help from the Department of Revenue.

He said they will hear soon about the free cash amount.

Beckley said about 16 interviews were held to hire two firefighters this fiscal year, and two for next fiscal year.

He said a listening session on localized flooding will be held at the Senior Center on

May 27.

The Three Mile Bridge will be closed May 18-21 for paving and removing of the center barrier. After this, the bridge will return to two lanes of traffic.

Beckley said the bridge work should be completed by the end of the summer.

Other summer road projects include East Main Street and Church Street. He said there will be community outreach about the projects in late May.

Cultural Council

The Selectboard accepted the resignation of Lynne Rude from the Ware Cultural Council. The board appointed Carol Brundige to serve on the council until May 3, 2029.

Veterans' Agent/Graves Officer appointment

The Selectboard tabled the re-appointment of Mark Avis to the position of Veterans' Agent/Graves Officer.

Comments and concerns

Ann Bigda questioned how \$7,500 was approved for special representation from Attorney Patricia Davidson, but the amount spent has now increased to around \$35,000.

Beckley said the \$7,500 was approved for Davidson's retainer, and the cost of her services came from the town's legal counsel account.

Adoption of Selectboard procedures

Kusnierz read the "Standard Operating Procedures of the Selectboard" which outlined the role and authority

of board members, as well as the chain of communication. The Selectboard will continue review of the document at a later meeting.

Engagement with students

Willette said he spoke with Ware Public Schools Superintendent Michael Wood about increasing students' exposure to civics education.

He said School Committee Chair Brian Winslow is also supportive of the Selectboard working with the school district to increase knowledge of how local government works.

Request for community funds

The Selectboard received a request to utilize community funds provided by

ReSource Waste Services of Ware to replace the wayfinding signs, which cost about \$750 each.

The board approved the use of \$3,010 to place four "Welcome to Ware" signs with the town's motto.

Water quality survey

Willette said water quality perception surveys that were sent out to water users have been received and the data is being inputted.

Town historian

Willette said he would like to appoint a resident as the town's official historian. Interested residents can contact Beckley about the position.



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Ware artist John Collins worked on a sculpture during a live demonstration at West Brookfield Art & Frame Gallery on April 25.

Live sculpture demonstration held at gallery

WEST BROOKFIELD – Ware artist John Collins held a live sculpture demonstration at the West Brookfield Art & Frame Gallery, 10 East Main St. recently.

Collins was joined by model Mary Remington, Workshop13's Program Director.

Throughout the afternoon, people stopped by the gallery to watch Collins' progress, and ask questions about the process of creating a sculpture portrait, and to view his collection of work, "People, Pets, and Prized Possessions" which is currently on display.

To view Collins' work, stop by the gallery during open hours, Thursday and Friday from 10 a.m.-5 p.m.; Saturday from 10 a.m.-5 p.m. and Sunday from 10 a.m.-2 p.m.

Upcoming shows and events at the gallery include Cosmos & The Cosmos on Thursday, May 14 from 4-7 p.m. with Tarot readings by gallery artist Cheryl O'Donnell accompanied by cosmopolitan beverages. This

event is \$20 for 20 minutes.

Space is limited and reservations are recommended.

A Plein Air Paint Out and Wet Paint Sale will be held on Friday, Saturday and Sunday, May 15-17. Join gallery artists painting around town on May 15 and 16 (including during the Asparagus Festival), then stop by the gallery to purchase these pieces on May 17 from noon-2 p.m.

For more information and a complete listing of gallery happenings, stop by, call the gallery at 508-753-8604, email yafacbeber@hotmail.com, or visit westbrookfieldartandframe.com.



Model and Workshop13 Programs Director, Mary Remington, is shown next to her likeness being sculpted by artist John Collins.

Turley Photos by Paula Ouimette

LEFT: John Collins smoothed the clay on his sculpture.



John Collins worked the neck area of his sculpture to match his model, Mary Remington.



LOCALIZED FLOODING

LISTENING SESSION

WEDNESDAY, MAY 27

5:30-7PM

WARE SENIOR CENTER

1 ROBBINS ROAD, WARE MA

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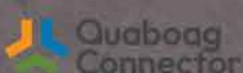
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WARE BOYS VOLLEYBALL WINS 15TH

Turley photos by Gregory A. Scibelli
Ryder Cahalan looks for a point.



King Stallings gets ready to send down a spike.



Sebastian Schmidt serves for the Indians.



Lucas Schilling sends a set up toward the left side of the net.



Jonathon Adkins sends a hard spike down.



Aidan Montone gets low hit to keep the ball in play.

SPRINGFIELD – More than a month ago, Ware High School boys volleyball had a tough opening to the regular season, losing to Granby. The loss did not phase the Indians, as they have now gone on to win 15 games unanswered. The latest was a 3-0 sweep of the Libertas Academy Charter School in Springfield last Friday afternoon. The Indians had no trouble scoring the sweep, and had just two regular season games remaining against Commerce and Veritas Prep. Ware has already beaten both teams during the regular season. Ware is assured a spot in the state tournament, and hopes to also compete in the Western Mass. tournament as well this year.

Indians edge Palmer baseball

By Tim Peterson
Sports Correspondent

THORNDIKE— A decade ago, Zach Handzel won his final game as a starting pitcher for the Palmer baseball team against archrival Ware. Since becoming the Panthers varsity coach, Handzel hasn't been able to celebrate a victory in the rivalry series.

In the only meeting of the regular season between the two neighboring high schools, the Indians squeaked out a 3-2 senior night victory over the Panthers at St. Joe's Park in Thorndike on May 4.

"We didn't get the job done in tonight's game. We left a lot of runners in scoring position," Handzel said. "This has always been a huge rivalry game and the players on both teams know each other very well. I'm really hoping that we can play them during the postseason tournament."

The last time that the Panthers (8-5) defeated the Indians on the baseball diamond was in 2019. They were able to sweep the season series that spring. Joe Lombardi was the Panthers winning pitcher in both games.

The Indians had a 9-5 overall record following last week's non-league home win.

"This is a very big win for us against our rivals," said Ware interim head coach Shawn Clark. "Palmer is a very good team, but my guys came to play tonight. It was an outstanding pitcher's duel. We've lost a couple of close games this season, so it feels nice to win one."

One of the seniors listed on the Indians roster is Brady Guimond, who was the winning pitcher in his final regular season start against Palmer.

Guimond allowed two runs (one earned) on six hits with five walks and seven strikeouts in 61/3 innings. The only reason Guimond didn't finish the game on the mound was because he had reached the 115 pitch limit.

"It's always a lot of fun playing against Palmer, especially on senior night," Guimond said. "It's a little bittersweet."

The other Ware seniors, who were honored during a pregame ceremony are Troy Dufresne, Brodie Koczur, Alex Orzulak, Jack Gaudreau, Kyle Kaczuwka, and Marek Luongo, who's the team manager.

"It's an outstanding group of seniors," Clark said. Baseball is a challenging sport, but the seniors always have an enjoyable time when they're on the field together. We're really going to miss them a lot next year.

Please see **WARE**, page 10

Monson boys lacrosse takes down Central

By Tim Peterson
Sports Correspondent

MONSON -- Prior to last Monday's home game against Springfield Central, Monson senior Wyatt Breault had never been a goalie in a varsity lacrosse game.

The Monson offense helped their first-time starting goalie by scoring the first five goals of the Suburban League matchup. The Mustangs held onto the lead the rest of the way as they swept the season series against the Golden Eagles with a 10-6 victory.

"Our backup goalie played very well in his first

varsity start," said Monson head coach Michael Quinn. "I'm sure that he was very nervous before the start of the game."

Breault, who made eight saves, replaced senior Riley Hurst, who was sidelined with the flu.

Breault and Hurst both attend Pathfinder Tech. They're able to play lacrosse for Monson as part of a co-op.

The other student-athletes from Pathfinder Tech listed on the Monson boys' lacrosse roster are freshman Grayson Contacos, senior Parker Libiszewski, senior Dom Menard, sophomore Lukas Roy, senior Bradyn Wilson, senior Harold Black, junior Gavin Peters, senior Rhees Hageman, freshman Parker Lang, and sophomore John Morrison.

One of the players from Monson High School is junior Kyle Beaudry, who led the way offensively with four goals against Golden Eagles. The duo of senior Landon Couture and Libiszewski chipped in with a pair of goals. Junior Brennan Peterson added a goal and a team-leading four assists.

The Mustangs, who had a 9-3 overall record, will be competing in the Division 4 state tournament for the first time since 2024. They only won one game a year ago.

"We only lost one player



Turley photo by Gregory A. Scibelli
Dom Menard looks to get around a defender.

Please see **MONSON**, page 10



Adam Adams dives safely into second base.

Panthers fall in close matchup with Leicester

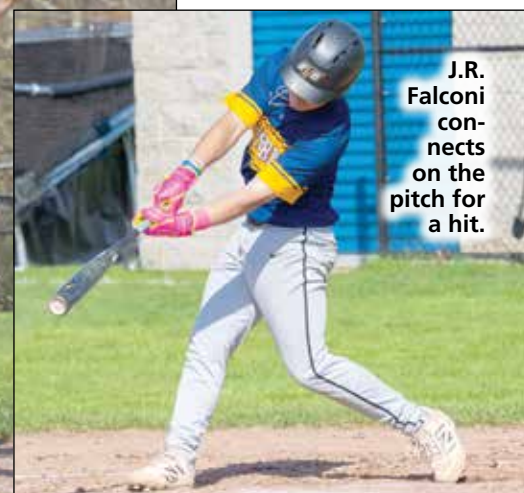
Turley photos by Jeffrey Haynes
Andy Warfield wincnes as he is struck by a pitch.

BARRE – It was a busy home work for the Quabbin Regional High School baseball team, thought the Panthers did lose one game to a rainout last Wednesday. Last Monday, the Panthers

defeated Narragansett 3-1, but suffered a 10-8 loss to Leicester. With the defeat, Quabbin stands at 5-7. They have more games on the schedule, but are looking for that .500 record needed to qualify for the Division 4 state tournament. Coming up, the Panthers will host Murdock High School at 3:30 p.m. on Thursday, May 14. They host Bromfield on Monday, May 18 at 4 p.m.



Ian Haupt stretches out to make the catch as the runner sprints to first base.



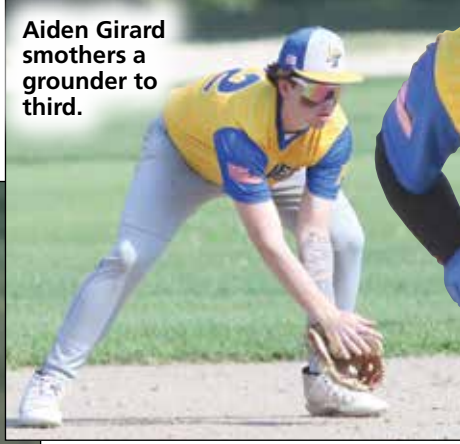
J.R. Falconi connects on the pitch for a hit.

sports

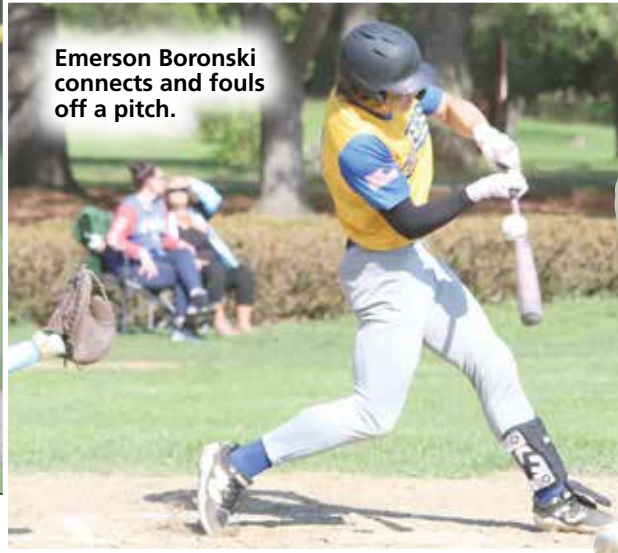
Pioneers score first win of season

SPRINGFIELD – Last Monday afternoon at Forest Park, Pathfinder baseball defeated host Sci-Tech 14-1 for their first win of the regular season. The Pioneers are 1-12 with just a few games remaining in the regular season.

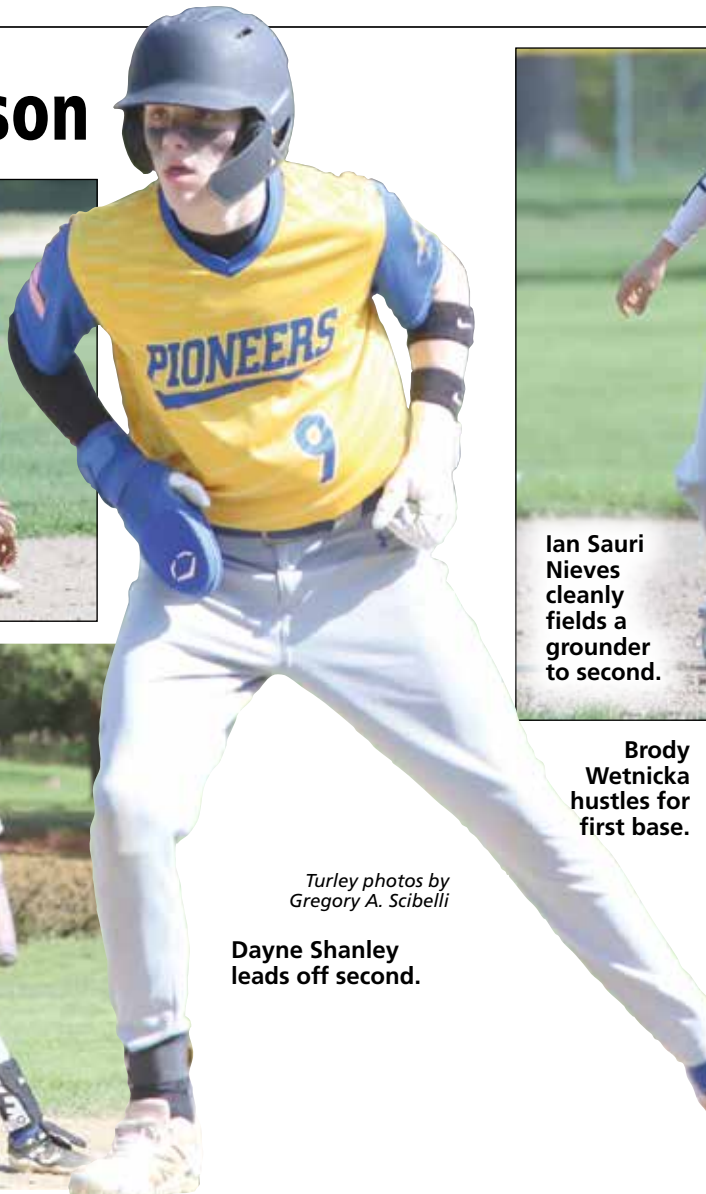
Aiden Girard smothers a grounder to third.



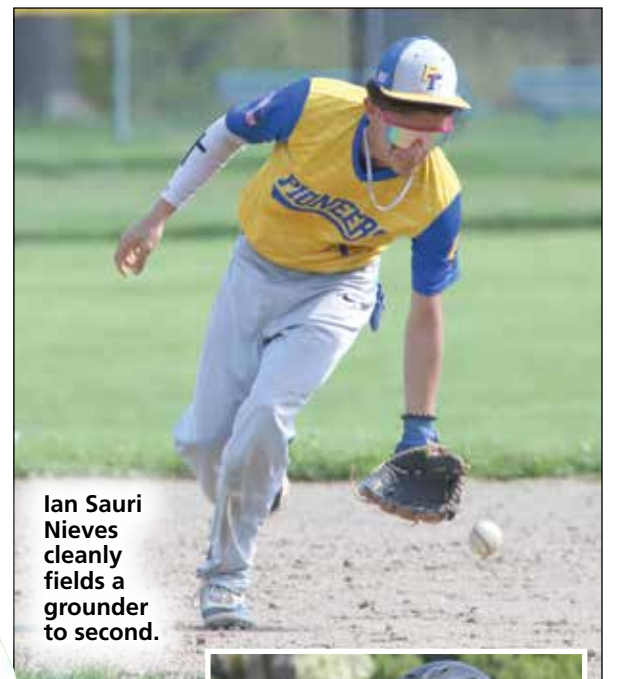
Emerson Boronski connects and fouls off a pitch.



Dayne Shanley leads off second.



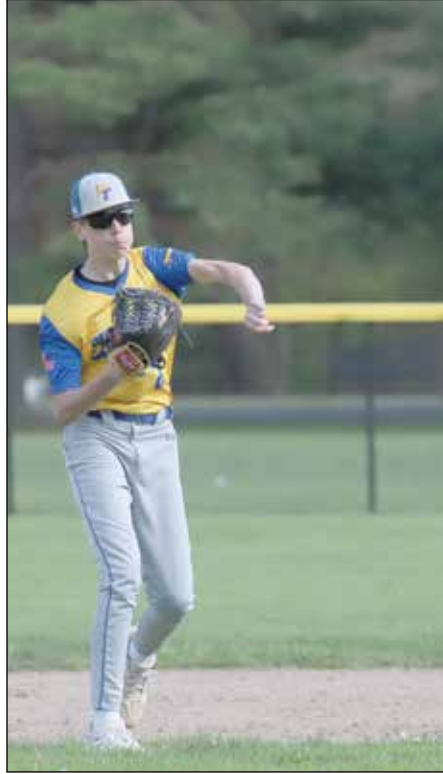
Ian Sauri Nieves cleanly fields a grounder to second.



Brody Wetnicka hustles for first base.



Turley photos by Gregory A. Scibelli



Zachary Smith makes a throw to first.

T-Birds complete upset of Bruins to advance in playoffs

SPRINGFIELD – The Springfield Thunderbirds outlasted the Providence Bruins, 1-0, in a goal-tending duel for the ages on Thursday night inside the MassMutual Center, defeating Providence in four games to advance to the Atlantic Division Finals against the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton Penguins.

By completing the upset of the Macgreor Kilpatrick Trophy winners, Springfield, which finished 38 points behind Providence during the regular season, completed the largest upset by point differential in Calder Cup Playoff history.

Georgi Romanov's dream postseason continued rolling along in the first period for the T-Birds, as the goaltender made a highlight-reel stop for the second straight game in the series, stretching post-to-post to make a tremendous left pad save on Riley Tufto on a 3-on-1 Bruins rush.

Not to be outdone at the other end, AHL regular season MVP Michael DiPietro had answers for each of Springfield's eight shots on net in the first period. The Providence backstop would not be very busy at all in the second period, needing to make just five saves, but one was notable when he flashed out the glove hand to deny a broken play attempt from the left slot by Akil Thomas.

Providence had a tremendous chance presented to them with a power play in the closing minutes of period two, but the Springfield penalty kill continued to shine, improving to 13 out of 15 for the series and 22-for-24 in the postseason.

Neither Romanov nor DiPietro showed any signs of blinking in a busy third period for both netminders, which featured a combined 23 stops between the backstops.

Please see **T-BIRDS**, page 11

Westfield State University softball wins conference

WESTFIELD – After 10 trips to the Massachusetts State Collegiate Athletic Conference softball championship game, the top-seeded Westfield State University Owls finally cashed in when first year RF Lyla Dwyer pulled a ball through the hole on the left side infield and sophomore 3B Allysa Slack scored with a headfirst dive across the plate in the bottom of the ninth inning as the Owls scored a 1-0 extra innings win over #2 seed

Worcester State on Sunday. With the win, the Owls improve to 38-1 on the season, and the Owls earn the league's automatic bid to the NCAA Tournament. Westfield will be making its third-ever appearance in the big dance, but first since 1983. Westfield will learn their destination and opponent in the NCAA's in a live selection show on NCAA.com slated for Monday at 11. Worcester's season comes to a close at 25-15.

The two teams dueled through seven innings scoreless at 0-0, an old-fashioned pitchers duel between the Owls Angelina Vartuli, who was named the tournament MVP, and Worcester's Peyton Maloney. Worcester put one runner aboard in the top of the eighth on a single by Emma LaPoint, but Vartuli invoked a pair of pop ups to Slack at third to end the threat. Westfield appeared to catch a break in the bottom

of the eighth as Hannah Wodecki singled to left with one out, and the ball slipped past the fielder to put Wodecki at second base, but Mia Alfonso popped to second and Latour lined to center to go to the ninth scoreless. Vartuli sent the Lancers down in order in the top of the ninth, with a pair of ground outs to Slack sandwiched around one to Sarah Hough at short. Slack doubled to right

center leading off the bottom half of the inning when the ball dropped between the center and right fielder after an apparent miscommunication, and after Caroline O'Donnell popped to right, Dwyer stepped in with one out, and slashed one pitch just foul down the third base line, before finding the hole for a base hit on the game winner.

Please see **WSU**, page 11

MONSON from page 9

to graduation. Everyone else returned and we're a more experienced team this year," said Quinn, who works at Pathfinder Tech. "It always feels a lot better after you win a game."

While Breault didn't have to make any saves during the opening twelve minutes of the match, the Mustangs built a 4-0 lead.

"The four goals that we scored in the first period took a lot of pressure off Wyatt," Quinn said. "It's always very important to take an early lead in every game."

A little more than two minutes into the first period, Beaudry received a pass from junior Isaac Somers before firing a shot into the cage past Central senior goalie Vernon Charles (12 saves).

Petersen also scored a goal before the home team closed out the first period with goals from Libiszewski and Beaudry.

The Mustangs took a 5-0 lead a little more than a minute into the second period when Beaudry scored his



Kyle Beaudry is pursued by the opposing defense.



Brennan Peterson looks for a teammate to pass to.



Brendan Wilson goes to pick up a loose ball.

third goal, which was assisted by Libiszewski.

Central finally broke the ice with an unassisted goal from senior Jayden DeLeon, who's planning to play lacrosse at Elms College. DeLeon added two more

goals during the second period.

The Mustangs responded with goals from Couture and Libiszewski, as the home team held a 7-3 halftime lead.

DeLeon scored his fourth

goal early in the third period.

The Golden Eagles (2-7) didn't get any closer than three goals.

After Beaudry whipped a shot into the cage, Menard added an unassisted goal which gave the Mustangs a

9-4 lead in the middle of the third period.

Central battled back with two goals before Couture scored the final goal of the contest with eight minutes remaining in regulation.

WARE from page 9

I thought the parents did an outstanding job of putting together the pregame ceremony for the seniors."

The Indians seniors had the opportunity to play catch with their fathers before the ceremony began.

The Panthers will also be the visiting team in a couple of other senior days before celebrating their own against McCann Tech at historic Legion Field on Friday afternoon.

The Palmer seniors are Matt Santos, Brendan Hess, Theo Haley, Chris Stapleton, and Sebastian Mayberry, who was the starting pitcher against Ware.

Mayberry pitched six innings allowing three runs

(two earned) on seven hits. He walked two and recorded five strikeouts.

The Panthers came out swinging against Guimond in the top of the first inning.

Santos and Haley began things with a pair of line-drive singles to left field.

Following a forceout at third base, the Panthers had a runner picked off at first base.

The visiting team did take a 1-0 lead when Mayberry lined a single into center field scoring Haley.

The Indians scored an unearned run in the bottom half of the opening frame.

After Mayberry retired the first two batters on ground-ball outs, Kaczuwka doubled to rightfield. He stole third base before scoring on a

throwing error by the catcher.

An inning later, Orszulak drew a leadoff walk and Gaudreau sprayed a single to left field putting runners at the corners. Orszulak scampered home on a wild pitch, which gave the Indians their first lead. Freshman Joe Cygan made the score 3-1 with a groundball single up the middle into centerfield.

With two outs in the third, Haley lined a single to left field and Hess walked bringing the potential tying run to the plate. Guidmond escaped that jam with a forceout at second.

The Indians stranded a runner at third base in the bottom of the third.

Both teams also left runners in scoring position in the fifth inning.

The Panthers inched a closer bit closer during the top of the sixth inning.

With one-out, junior Dylan Holbrook singled to left field. Then eighth grader Josiel Ortiz beat out a slow groundball to the shortstop. Eighth grader Riley Presho hit another groundball to the shortstop and Holbrook scored following a throwing error.

Trailing, 3-2, with one out on the seventh, Haley walked and Hess grounded a single into left field putting the go-ahead run on base.

At that point, Guimond moved over to shortstop, and he was replaced on the mound by sophomore righty Logan Millet.

"Logan is a very good relief pitcher," Clark said. "I

have a lot of confidence in him."

The two base runners didn't advance as Millet retired the only two batters that he faced on groundball outs to Guimond.

"I didn't know if I could make the play on the last one, but I made a strong throw to first," Guimond said. "We've never lost to Palmer in baseball, which feels very good."

Unless the baseball teams face each other during the upcoming postseason tournaments, the next time that a boys' athletic team from the two high schools will be competing against each other will be during the 2026-27 winter season.

sports

Newest inductees to WMass Baseball Hall announced

HOLYOKE – The Western Massachusetts Baseball Hall of Fame Committee proudly announces members of its 2026 induction class.

This year's inductees include:

- **Chad Paronto** – Former UMass Amherst, and Major League pitcher with 177 MLB appearances.
- **Bill L'Heureux** – Honored for his legendary umpiring career spanning decades in Western Massachusetts and across America.
- **Bob Bohl** – A longtime figure in the baseball community in Ludlow and across the region, recognized for his influence and service to the sport.
- **2010 Amherst High School State Championship Team** – Celebrated for their remarkable Division 1 State Championship season.
- **Steve McKelvey** – MLB agent and UMass Amherst Professor, honored for his longtime service to the baseball community and contribution to the sports management profession.
- **Howard Herman** (Gary Brown Award for Sports Media) – A respected voice in sports journalism in

Western Massachusetts, whose coverage has elevated local baseball for decades.

Follow Valley Blue Sox on social media for more class of 2026 announcements and more information on each of the 2026 inductees in the coming weeks.

The induction banquet will take place on Friday, June 5 at Wyckoff Country Club in Holyoke, beginning at 6 p.m. The evening will feature dinner, recognition ceremonies, and reflections on the careers and accomplishments of this year's honorees.

The evening is presented by the Valley Blue Sox and its presenting sponsor Westfield Bank.

Tickets for the event are available now and can be purchased online at www.valleybluesox.com.

The Western Massachusetts Baseball Hall of Fame continues its mission to preserve and celebrate the rich baseball heritage of the region by honoring those who have made significant contributions both on and off the field.

For additional information, please visit the ticket website or contact info@valleybluesox.com.

T-BIRDS from page 10

For a second straight game, overtime was required, and for a third straight extra session in the postseason, the T-Birds had a hero rise to the occasion. Romanov was the first hero, as he kicked out the right leg to deny a Navrin Mutter breakaway early in the session.

Then, at 4:01 of the extra session, Otto Stenberg carried the puck over the blue line, slipped a cross-ice pass to Chris Wagner, and from there, Wagner spotted Dillon Dube crashing the left side of the crease. The veteran

winger did the honors from there, beating DiPietro and completing the upset with his second goal and fourth point in the four-game series.

With the win, the T-Birds will now take on the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton Penguins in the Atlantic Division Finals, beginning on Tuesday, May 12 at Mohegan Arena at Casey Plaza for a 7:05 p.m. puck drop. Tickets for Game 3 (Tuesday, May 19) and Game 4 if necessary (Thursday, May 21) at the MassMutual Center are available now at www.SpringfieldThunderbirds.com.

WSU from page 10

Vartuli (W, 13-0) allowed six hits over nine innings, walking just one and fanning six for her 13th win of the season.

Worcester's Maloney (L, 10-6) matched her nearly pitch for pitch, working 8.1 innings, scattering 10 hits, and walking and striking out one against an Owls lineup that entered the weekend ranked third in the country in scoring offense at almost nine runs per game.

LaTour was 2-4 with a double and O'Donnell finished 2-3 with a walk to lead the Owl bats. Carisa Andrews was the lone repeat hitter for the Lancers, finished 2-4 with a stolen base. Bailey Tammaro's double in the fifth was the lone extra base hit for the Lancers.

Worcester put two runners aboard in the second before Vartuli got a pop up to end the inning. Andrews made it as far as third in the seventh, but again Vartuli got a pop out to short to end the threat.

The Owls first true scoring chance came in the second inning after a one-out single by Cassidy LaTour followed by a Lancers error put two in scoring position. O'Donnell followed and

stung a line drive back up the middle, hitting Slack who had no way to avoid the ball, causing a dead ball and sending LaTour back to third base instead of scoring the first run of the game. Maloney then escaped the threat by getting a pop up in foul territory.

In the fifth inning, the Owls put two aboard with two outs after a single into left by Rylie Camacho. Hough stepped in and laced a liner back up the middle forcing pinch runner Kalisa Pomfret to duck as she narrowly avoided getting drilled. She could only advance up to third base causing Camacho to overrun the bag at second in expecting the runner to be sent, but the Lancers were able to tag her out in a run-down before Pomfret could cross home.

Westfield wins the MASCAC tournament title for the first time since the league began a post-season tournament in 2001, though the Owls had played in 10 previous finals. Westfield lost as the #1 seed in 2024 and 2025, dropping two games in the championship round to Framingham at home in 2024, and falling to Worcester in the elimination semifinal in 2025.

Quabbin Regional School District where we are

From the desk of the
Quabbin Regional School
District Superintendent
Colleen Mucha

BARRE – The fiscal year 2027 budget process began in the late fall of 2026, well before the district had any idea of how funding may change or stay the same at the state or federal level.

However, Quabbin Regional School District understood that it would be another challenging year with such volatile costs of goods and services. The first FY 27 budget proposal was \$43,887,444 and it included several reductions from the start.

At that time, only one position had been added and it included one reduction. It also included reductions based upon cost savings measures such as revisiting contracts like special educa-

tion transportation.

At this time, the budget was reduced to \$42,545,128.53.

Where have we been

By 2024, after the COVID 19 pandemic, the ESSER funds had fully expended and expired. We knew we would need to make some difficult decisions over the next few years.

QRSD worked tirelessly to build a more sustainable budget foundation while protecting student learning outcomes. The district prioritized fiscal responsibility through a combination of proactive planning and strategic reductions.

In the way of proactive planning, QRSD has utilized Rural School Aid to build "programs" that are allowing them to keep their own students in the district. These programs include therapeutic

classrooms, language based classrooms and their New Horizon Academy – Alternative High School program.

Quabbin has several successful programs such as the Lifeskills programs and Autism programming for many years. If they were unable to provide these educational opportunities for our students, the cost for an out of district placement per student is substantial.

Most day placements are \$60,000/year plus transportation. Some are well above \$100,000/year plus transportation. Not only are these programs good for students, as they are able to stay in the district with their peers, but they make financial sense.

As for strategic reductions, QRSD has been carefully watching student enrollment and interest. One of the challenges

with declining enrollment is that while we may have a decrease of 25 students, for example, that does not equate to being able to reduce one teacher because oftentimes those students are from different grade levels and attend different schools.

In the past two years, the QRSD reduced 14 positions and for FY 27 SY we are reducing an additional 20 positions. These reductions were a necessary step to address ongoing budget challenges following the loss of federal aid and lower than promised state aid.

The tremendous increase in costs of goods and services is also playing a significant role.

These reductions will help to ensure the district's spending is aligned with

Please see **QUABBIN**, page 13

GRANT from page 1

The funding will support the expansion of 150 Career Technical Education seats, and the repurposing of the former Cold Spring School in Belchertown as an expanded campus.

Duda described the award as a transformational moment for the district.

"This \$3.5 million award is truly game changing for Pathfinder Tech," Duda said. "We are about to embark on the largest expansion in the history of our school district, and we are honored to receive the largest grant award ever awarded to Pathfinder Tech."

The new campus in Belchertown is scheduled to open in September of this year. The school promised additional updates and announcements regarding the project in the coming months, as the district prepares the campus for students.

"This is a tremendous opportunity not only for Pathfinder Tech but for the entire region," said Duda. "We are ensuring that a former school building remains an active, thriving educational space while giving more students the chance to pursue rewarding career pathways. This expansion is a milestone for career technical education in Western Massachusetts, building on decades of success at Pathfinder Tech and opening new doors for students."

To ensure that the new campus preserves its local roots and maintains a strong connection to the community, Pathfinder will invite Belchertown residents to help select a name for the new campus through a community survey.

In addition to creating new educational opportunities, the Cold Spring location is expected to create new educational opportunities, generate local job growth, and strengthen community partnerships by preserving a valuable community asset and addressing the increased need for skilled career training.

"This is truly a win-win," added Duda. "We're expanding opportunities for students, creating jobs, and keeping an important school building in Belchertown alive with purpose. The excitement will only continue to build as we move closer to opening our doors in 2026."

Duda emphasized that the expansion is intended to significantly increase access to career technical education opportunities for students throughout the district's nine member communities.

"If a student from Palmer, Monson, Belchertown, Granby, Ware, Warren, Oakham, Hardwick, or New Braintree wants a Career Technical Education, now is the time to apply," Duda said. "Pathfinder Tech will have a seat and



Submitted photo
Governor Maura Healey spoke about how Career and Technical Education provides students with hands-on learning for skilled jobs and great careers.

space available for you next school year beginning in September. We are ready to prepare students for direct entry into a high-wage career, college, military service, or any other aspirations they may have."

This 150-seat expansion is possible thanks to the Cold Spring expanded campus in Belchertown, and represents the single largest student expansion in the district's history. Duda reported that this initiative is being completed without incurring debt to the nine member towns, as well as without major capital requests, and without immediate impacts to local taxpayers assessments.

This strategic initiative is being accomplished solely through strategic financial planning, along with grant funding secured from the commonwealth.

"Support for this planned expansion has been comprehensive and widespread," Duda said. "Senators, state representatives, and elected officials from all nine member communities have signed on in support of this creative, forward-thinking, and affordable approach to increasing access to career and technical education opportunities for students throughout the region."

Now in his fifth year as superintendent and his 20th year serving the district, Duda has made strategic long-term planning into a strength of his leadership. In recent years, the district has received record levels of grant funding. These include over \$5 million in competitive grant funding to increase student access, purchase equipment, renovate facilities, and add square footage to support expansion efforts, and an additional \$1.5 million to support new adult and continue education programming, and to help keep the campus active and vibrant during the evenings and weekends when it's used by adult learners.

Compared to other school districts in the region that are struggling with budget cuts, declining enrollment,

and closures, Pathfinder is a notable exception, with its record levels of enrollment, carrying no debt, and requesting no major capital funding from its nine member towns.

Duda described Pathfinder as a model for what's possible in education throughout the region. As a graduate from Pathfinder himself, Duda said he understands firsthand the life-changing opportunities this model of education can provide students. While some districts in the region are attempting to replicate aspects of Pathfinder Tech's programming, Duda emphasized that Pathfinder already belongs to the nine member communities and exists to serve their students.

"Pathfinder Tech is already your school," Duda noted. "It belongs to the students and families of our nine member towns."

"There's no need for member school districts to waste money, time, and resources on introductory elective type career courses like the ones occurring in the towns of Palmer and Monson," Duda said. "You don't need to try to duplicate with an introductory version of what we offer. Instead,

remember that Pathfinder Tech is already the town's school, and students are now guaranteed to have a seat available for them to attend."

Duda recommended that the towns "encourage students to apply and take advantage of the career and technical education already available to them, should that be the desired educational model they want to pursue."

In addition to Governor Healey, the event was attended by Lieutenant Governor Kim Driscoll, Secretary of Education Stephen Zrike, and Commissioner of Education Pedro Martinez, as well as several additional cabinet members, mayors, and state and local officials.

Pathfinder Tech plans to continue pursuing funding sources to support the expansion, including the recently announced \$100 million CTE Capacity Expansion Grant Initiative from the Healey-Driscoll Administration.

Pathfinder Tech is currently accepting applications for the 2026-2027 school year. Prospective students can apply at PathfinderTech.org.

The deadline for submissions for this sports section is the Monday before publication by noon.

To send in information, contact Sports Editor at 413-283-8393, send an e-mail to sports@turley.com or send it through the mail to: Turley Publications c/o Sports Editor, 24 Water St., Palmer, MA 01069

Messages
Edit

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public safety

Ware Police Log

During the week of April 16-May 5, the Ware Police Department responded to 30 miscellaneous calls, 25 administrative calls, 12 traffic violations, 17 emergency 911 calls, six harassments/stalks/threats, four trespasses, six thefts/larcenies, 12 disturbances, two damage/vandalisms, one brush fire, two outside fires, one breaking and entering, six motor vehicle accidents, two animal calls and 16 motor vehicle stops in the town of Ware.

Sunday, April 26
6:55 p.m. Damage/Vandalism, North Street, Services Rendered
9:25 p.m. Suspicious/Wanted, Church Street, Services Rendered
10:54 p.m. Disturbance/Nuisance, East Street, Arrest Made

Monday, April 27
8:51 a.m. Disturbance/Nuisance, West Main Street, Services Rendered
9:16 a.m. Harassment/Stalk/Threat, North Street, Services Rendered
9:53 a.m. Damage/Vandalism, Highland Village, Advised
10:26 a.m. Brush Fire, Westbrook Avenue, Extinguished
10:45 a.m. Abandoned 911 Call, Parker Street, Services Rendered
12:18 p.m. Outside Fire, Crescent Street, Extinguished
5:05 p.m. Disturbance/Nuisance, West Street, Services Rendered
5:27 p.m. Abandoned 911 Call, Otis Avenue, Services Rendered
7:20 p.m. Disturbance/Nuisance, West Main Street, Services Rendered
8:29 p.m. Disturbance/Nuisance, Otis Avenue, Services Rendered
10:12 p.m. Police Response, Osborne Road, Services Rendered
11:25 p.m. Disturbance/Nuisance, Otis Avenue, Could Not Locate
11:33 p.m. Assault, Otis Avenue, Report Made
11:57 p.m. Harassment/Stalk/Threat, Smith Avenue, Services Rendered

Tuesday, April 28
12 a.m. Trespass/Unwanted, Doane Road, Services Rendered
12:31 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, West Street, Citation/Warning Issued
2:12 a.m. Abandoned 911 Call, Pulaski Street, Services Rendered

7:33 a.m. Theft/Larceny, Buckley Court, Assist Given
9:05 a.m. Harassment/Stalk/Threat, North Street, Advised
10:10 a.m. Theft/Larceny, West Main Street, Services Rendered
4:23 p.m. Disturbance/Nuisance, Main Street, Services Rendered
9:34 p.m. Suspicious/Wanted, East Street, Investigated
10:48 p.m. Harassment/Stalk/Threat, North Street, Services Rendered

Wednesday, April 29
6:48 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Palmer Road, Arrest Made
8:14 a.m. Motor Vehicle Crash, West Street, Report Made
3:10 p.m. Abandoned 911 Call, Belchertown Road, Investigated

Thursday, April 30
10:31 a.m. Theft/Larceny, Palmer Road, Services Rendered
11:27 a.m. Harassment/Stalk/Threat, North Street, Advised
12:59 p.m. Theft/Larceny, North Street, Services Rendered
1:29 p.m. Safety Hazard, West Street, Services Rendered
3:19 p.m. Abandoned 911 Call, Palmer Road, Dispatch Handled
4:20 p.m. Disturbance/Nuisance, Pleasant Street, Advised
4:42 p.m. Safety Hazard, West Street, Advised
4:54 p.m. Disturbance/Nuisance, Main Street, Report Made
7:18 p.m. Disturbance/Nuisance, Main Street, Advised
7:29 p.m. Breaking and Entering/Burglary, North Street, Unfounded

Friday, May 1
8:24 a.m. Motor Vehicle Crash, Town Line, Services Rendered
10:06 a.m. Motor Vehicle Crash, North Street, Services Rendered
7:49 p.m. Abandoned 911 Call, North Street, Services Rendered
8:13 p.m. Outside Fire, Oak Ridge Circle, Investigated
8:20 p.m. Motor Vehicle Crash, Pine Crest Circle, Services Rendered

Saturday, May 2
7:46 p.m. DUI/Impaired, Eddy Street, Services Rendered
7:59 p.m. Disturbance/

Editor's Note: People in this country are presumed to be innocent until found guilty in a court of law. Police provide us with the information you read on this page as public record information. If you or any suspect listed here is found not guilty or has charges dropped or reduced, we will gladly print that information as a follow-up upon being presented with documented proof of the court's final disposition.

Nuisance, Eagle Street, Could Not Locate
9:24 p.m. Disturbance/Nuisance, West Main Street, Services Rendered

Sunday, May 3
1:33 a.m. Motor Vehicle Crash, West Main Street, Services Rendered
9:05 a.m. Theft/Larceny, Beaver Lake Road, Investigated
11:11 a.m. Abandoned 911 Call, West Street, Could Not Locate
1:55 p.m. Trespass/Unwanted, South Street, Patient Refusal
2:33 p.m. Theft/Larceny, Highland Village, Advised
2:43 p.m. Theft/Unwanted, Old Belchertown Road, Services Rendered
3:05 p.m. Trespass/Unwanted, Palmer Road, Services Rendered
6:58 p.m. Motor Vehicle Crash, West Main Street, Investigated
7:43 p.m. Suspicious/Wanted, Main Street, Services Rendered
9:36 p.m. Traffic Violation/Hazard, Palmer Road, Arrest Made
11:20 p.m. Harassment/Stalk/Threat, North Street, Services Rendered

Monday, May 4
5:03 p.m. Trespass/Unwanted, West Street, Advised
5:38 p.m. Abandoned 911 Call, Main Street, Could Not Locate
8:59 p.m. Suspicious/Wanted, Palmer Road, Services Rendered
9:04 p.m. Abandoned 911 Call, Belchertown Road, Taken/Referred to Other Agency

Tuesday, May 5
6:43 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, West Street, Citation/Warning Issued
7:08 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, West Street, Citation/Warning Issued

Warren Police Log

During the week of April 19-25, the Warren Police Department responded to 230 building/property checks, 26 community policings, seven emergency 911 calls, one complaint, two safety hazards, one larceny/theft, one fire call, one illegal dumping, one motor vehicle accident, two animal calls and 38 motor vehicle stops in the town of Warren.

Sunday, April 19
12:50 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Main Street, Written Warning
5:12 a.m. Noise Complaint, Southbridge Road, Negative Contact
7:33 a.m. Unconscious/Unresponsive/Syncope, Main Street, Transported to Hospital
2:48 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Main Street, Written Warning

Monday, April 20
6:26 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Main Street, Citation Issued
8:51 a.m. Breathing Difficulty, Chapel Street, Mutual Aid Transport
11:05 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Main Street, Written Warning
11:16 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Main Street, Written Warning
12 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Main Street, Written Warning
12:07 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Main Street, Citation Issued
1 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Main Street, Written Warning
1:07 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Main Street, Written Warning
2:09 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Main Street, Written Warning

2:21 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Main Street, Written Warning
8:16 p.m. Assist Other Police Department, Boston Post Road, Report Filed
9:09 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Main Street, Criminal Complaint

Tuesday, April 21
11:18 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Main Street, Written Warning
11:26 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Main Street, Written Warning
12 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Main Street, Written Warning
12:07 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Main Street, Written Warning
1:13 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Main Street, Written Warning
1:22 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Main Street, Written Warning
2:19 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Main Street, Written Warning
10:56 p.m. Safety Concern, Main Street, Transported to Hospital

Wednesday, April 22
12:10 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, North Street, Written Warning
1:42 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Main Street, Written Warning
11 a.m. Assist Other Agency, Old West Warren Road, Report Filed
11:14 a.m. Sick/Unknown, Old West Warren Road, Ambulance Signed Refusal
5:03 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Main Street, Written Warning

Thursday, April 23
12:12 a.m. Falls, Crouch Road, Ambulance Signed

Refusal
8:29 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Main Street, Written Warning
9:43 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Southbridge Road, Written Warning
10:01 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Southbridge Road, Written Warning
11:45 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Main Street, Written Warning
12 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Ware Road, Criminal Complaint
3:34 p.m. Open Door/Window, Carl Street, Report Filed
6:58 p.m. Allergic Reaction, Old West Warren Road, Transported to Hospital

Friday, April 24
7:13 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, South Street, Written Warning
7:51 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, South Street, Citation Issued
8:54 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, River Street, Arrest(s) Made
12:27 p.m. Falls, Cronin Road, Transported to Hospital
1:52 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Main Street, Criminal Complaint
3:17 p.m. Miscellaneous Fire, Main Street, Investigated
5:05 p.m. Larceny or Theft, Milton O. Fountain Way, Officer Spoke to Party

Saturday, April 25
2:02 p.m. Safety Concern, Keys Road, Officer/Chief Advised
4:50 p.m. Motor Vehicle Collision, Little Rest Road, Investigated
5:55 p.m. Illegal Dumping, Gilbert Road, Report Filed

Hardwick Police Log

During the week of May 4-11, the Hardwick/New Braintree Police Department responded to 60 building/property checks, 32 directed/area patrols, 14 radar assignments, four traffic controls, 11 emergency 911 calls, five citizen assists, three assist other agencies, one brush fire, one structure fire, one investigation, two vandalisms, three missing persons, two safety hazards, one threat, one larceny/theft/shoplifting, two threats, three motor vehicle accidents, one animal call and eight motor vehicle stops in the town of Hardwick.

Monday, May 4
10:58 a.m. Assist Citizen, Main Street, Spoken To
1:04 p.m. Vandalism, School House Drive, Report Taken
2:29 p.m. Fire/Brush, Lower Road, Extinguished
5:14 p.m. Investigation, Main Street, Officer Handled
6:27 p.m. Missing Person, Main Street, No Action Required
7:38 p.m. Medical Alarm, Delargy Road, Spoken To

Tuesday, May 5
12:45 a.m. 911 Medical Emergency, Old Petersham Road, Transported to Hospital
3:29 a.m. Medical Emergency, Collins Road, Patient Refusal

4:40 a.m. 911 Motor Vehicle Crash, Petersham Road, Transported to Hospital
10:47 a.m. Assist Citizen, Church Lane, Services Rendered
11:52 a.m. 911 Elevator Call, Common Street, Services Rendered
12:09 p.m. Suspicious Activity, Main Street, Investigated
12:46 p.m. Missing Person, Main Street, Officer Handled
1:17 p.m. Assist Citizen, Clapp Road, Officer Handled
3 p.m. Fire/Alarm, Greenwich Road, Services Rendered
3:32 p.m. Suspicious Activity, Lower Road, Spoken To

Wednesday, May 6
5:09 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Lower Road, Citation Issued
1:37 p.m. 911 Fire/Structure, Hardwick Road, Services Rendered
9:41 p.m. Assist Citizen, Mill Street, Officer Handled

Thursday, May 7
5:42 p.m. Safety Hazard, Thresher Road, Officer handled
7:29 p.m. 911 Missing Person, Main Street, Transported to Hospital
8:48 p.m. Motor Vehicle Crash, Lower Road, No Action Required

Friday, May 8
10:46 a.m. Motor Vehicle Crash, Lower Road, Officer handled
11:44 a.m. 911 Elevator Call, Old Petersham Road, No Action Required
1:37 p.m. Assist Citizen, North Road, Dispatch Handled
3:50 p.m. Assist Other Agency, Main Street, Officer Handled
6:28 p.m. Assist Other Agency, Main Street, Officer Handled
7:09 p.m. Vandalism, Barre Road, Officer Handled

Saturday, May 9
3:54 p.m. Threat, Barre Road, Officer Handled
11:06 p.m. Complaint, Barre Road, Spoken To

Sunday, May 10
12:32 a.m. Assist Other Agency, Main Street, Services Rendered
1:20 a.m. Complaint, Lower Road, Negative Contact
3:52 p.m. Larceny/Theft/Shoplifting, Grove Street, Report Taken

Monday, May 11
5:11 a.m. Trespass, Hardwick Road, Spoken To
6:28 a.m. Medical Emergency, Main Street, Transported to Hospital
7:14 a.m. Threat, Hardwick Road, Report Taken

Libraries host small business workshop

By Paula Ouimette
Editor
pouimette@turley.com

HARDWICK – Quaboag Valley Community Development Corporation and Business Assistance Corporation held a workshop for small business owners at the Gilbertville Public Library.

The April 21 workshop was co-sponsored by both the Paige Memorial Library and the Gilbertville Public Library. The workshop was led by Lindsay Aucoin and James DaRosa of QVCDC, and highlighted important steps small business owners can take to be successful. Aucoin talked about the history of QVCDC and QVBAC, which has been in existence for 30 years. The corporation first started in Palmer, and now has a location in Ware at 23 West Main St., Suite 1. Aucoin said the first thing anyone interested in starting their own small business should do, is draft a business plan. "It will really help the

direction of your business," she said. "It's your roadmap to your business." Aucoin said a business plan is required when applying for a business loan, and should be updated regularly. QVCDC's small business support includes classes to help with using QuickBooks and Microsoft products, in addition to ServSafe training. QVCDC can also help with marketing for your small business. Business owners can also request for certain classes to be held, in order to meet their needs. "If your business needs something, let us be your resource," Aucoin said. "We're happy to help and guide businesses. We can offer services in so many different ways." DaRosa said QVCDC and QVBAC also offer loans to small business owners. He said over 200 total loans have been funded by the organizations, ranging from \$500-\$200,000, with the average loan totaling \$30,000. DaRosa said they "help people who might not qualify for a loan from a bank."

In order to apply for a loan, business owners must be up to date on their tax returns and have a "doing business as" on file in the town they do business in. They also need to have been denied for a loan by a local bank. He said it's important to have business plan, or even a management checklist. "We do need to see some kind of thinking or path forward for the business," DaRosa said. DaRosa said the loans can benefit restaurant owners, landscapers, farmers and more. He said the loans cannot be used to fund construction, alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, real estate, rental property or adult entertainment businesses. A lower debt to income ratio will give applicants a better chance of receiving a loan. DaRosa also explained what collateral was in reference to a loan, such as a primary residence or vehicle loan totaling \$30,000. Please see **LIBRARY**, page 13

Localized flooding listening session is May 27

WARE – Healthy Quaboag and Pioneer Valley Planning Commission are hosting a localized flooding listening session at the Ware Senior Center, 1 Robbins Road, on Wednesday, May 27 from 5:30-7 p.m.

This will be an opportunity for residents to learn about the connection between heavy rainfall and flooding, as well as share their concerns and questions. Attendees will receive a gift card for participation

and food and drinks will be provided. To register, visit <https://tinyurl.com/2nzspnh7> or scan the QR code. Those in need of transportation can contact the Quaboag Connector by calling 413-544-3401 by May 20. A childcare stipend is available if needed.



Josephine (Sisco) Dansereau-Calkins, 95

EAST LONGMEADOW – Josephine (Sisco) Dansereau-Calkins, age 95, passed away at Chestnut Hill of East Longmeadow, on April 25, 2026.



Josephine (Sisco) Dansereau-Calkins, originally from Whitefield, New Hampshire, moved with her family as a young girl to New Braintree, where they re-established their dairy farm.

A graduate of Hardwick High School, she was an active member of the New Braintree Grange.

In 1951, Josephine married Noel R. Dansereau (deceased) and began raising her family in Gilbertville before moving to Bondsville. There, she took great pleasure in cultivating her flower gardens, decorating cakes and sewing. Her professional career included 15 years as a clerical worker at Monson Development Center and 10 years as a real estate agent before retiring.

Josephine resided in West Brookfield after her marriage to Charles A. Calkins (deceased), where they traveled the United

States together. She moved to Brimfield and Ludlow before her final residence in East Longmeadow.

A pillar of her community, Josephine was always eager to help those in need. She delighted in hosting holiday celebrations with her loved ones, singing in the church choir, and took pride in knitting hats and gloves as treasured gifts.

Josephine's generous spirit and kind heart will be deeply missed by all who knew her.

Preceded in death by her parents, Earline (Pike) Sisco-Jones and Leonard Sisco; her four brothers, three sisters, two half-brothers, and four half-sisters; her first husband of 30 years, Noel R. Dansereau; and her second husband of 15 years, Charles A. Calkins.

Josephine is lovingly survived by her four children: Betty and Raymond Rebello of Conway, South Carolina; Sandra and John Kopacz of Belchertown; Paul and Loretta Dansereau of Belchertown; and Gayle and (Andrew, deceased) Smith of Wethersfield, Connecticut. She leaves

behind nine grandchildren: Lisa, Allison, Christina, Zachary, Katie, Kevin, Sara, Laura and Allen; 11 great-grandchildren: Kyle, Camryn, Jacob, Annahliese, Zane, Tattiannah, Madison, Charlotte, Rohan, Reza and Florence; and three great-great-grandchildren: Margaret, Josephine and Theodore.

She is also survived by her stepson Charles; two step-grandchildren: Eric, Jacob, Ryan, and (Shane, deceased); and five step-great-grandchildren: Lizette, Lauryn, Dillon, Kendal and London.

Josephine's legacy of love and devotion to her family will continue to be cherished by all who knew her.

A burial service is scheduled for June 6 at 11 a.m. at Saint Anne's Cemetery, located at 121 East Main St., Three Rivers, MA. A friends & family gathering will follow at Tony & Penny's Restaurant, 18 Canterbury St., Ludlow.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests memorial gifts be made in memory of Josephine to: Macular Degeneration Research, a BrightFocus® Foundation Or National Audubon Society (reflecting her passion for birds).

Carol H. Koczur, 81

WARE – Carol Helen (Winslow) Koczur, 81, passed away peacefully at home surrounded by family on May 7, 2026.



She was predeceased by her beloved husband of 58 years Stanley Koczur in 2022. Born on December 29, 1944, in Ware, Carol was the daughter of the late Richard and Amelia (King) Winslow. Also preceded in death by her sister Barbara (Winslow) Robidoux, brother Charles Winslow and son Paul Koczur.

Carol and Stanley were married on Oct. 5, 1964, shortly thereafter building their house at 254 Greenwich Road in Ware. They relocated to Seboise, Maine in 1976. After spending nine years in Maine and missing family, they moved back to their home in Ware in 1984.

Carol became a long-time employee of the Ware Public School system, where she worked in the Superintendent's office. Following her retirement, she opened her accounting business, where she assisted many new and growing companies with their financial bookkeeping.

Above all else, nothing brought Carol more happiness than spending time with her family. She especially enjoyed cheering on her grandchildren at their sporting events and was their biggest fan.

She also had a love for

gardening, cooking, quilting, music; sharing those passions with her family. Among her favorite traditions were the weekly pitch games she shared with her late husband, family, and friends.

Her faith was also an important part of her life, where she attended All Saints Church faithfully for many years.

She will be deeply missed by her daughter, Donna (Koczur) Phelan and her husband Randal Phelan of Germantown, New York and her son, Douglas Koczur and his wife Germaine (Durepo) Koczur of Hardwick. She was a proud and adoring grandmother "Meme" to Andrew Koczur and his wife Courtney, Megan Black and her husband Mitchel, Kurtis Coffin, Zachary Coffin and Brodie Koczur. She was also the proud great-grandmother to her five great-grandchildren Leo, Anna, Malakai, Everly and Amelia. She is also survived by several nieces' and nephews, each of whom held a special place in her heart.

Carol's generosity and unwavering devotion to her family will be dearly missed and forever remembered.

The family will hold a Burial and Prayer Service on Thursday, May 21, 2026 at 11 a.m. in Aspen Grove Cemetery in Ware. Cebula Funeral Home of Ware is in charge of the local arrangements.

Death notices

Dansereau-Calkins, Josephine (Sisco)
Died April 25, 2026
Services June 6, 2026

Koczur, Carol H. (Winslow)
Died May 7, 2026
Services May 21, 2026

Ware River News

OBITUARY POLICY

Turley Publications offers two types of obituaries.

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St. Aloysius celebrates 10th year with chicken BBQ fundraiser

HARDWICK – St. Aloysius Catholic School in Gilbertville is celebrating 10 years. Please join them on Saturday, June 6 at St. Mary's Church Hall in Ware, from 1-4 p.m., for a chicken barbecue, sponsored by the Knights of Columbus Council #183. There will be a DJ, all sorts of fun for the kids, basket raffles, a 50/50 and more. Tickets are \$25 for a chicken dinner or \$5 for a hot dog and chips.

Purchase tickets by calling the school at 413-477-1268 or by reaching out to Megan Morrison by phone or text 978-751-1211.

QUABBIN from page 11

long-term resources.

Where we are going

The Quabbin Regional School District is committed to sustainable financial management and with a proactive approach we will address potential deficits before they escalate.

With the FY 27 budget, we identified necessary reductions that we believe will allow us to weather any future unexpected increases and costs. QRSD will continue to monitor spending closely, seek to increase revenues, and keep our focus on student learning.

These budget decisions are difficult and they directly affect students, staff, programs and the morale. Many of their employees live right here in the five communi-

ties and with reductions like these, they take a toll.

The administration is aware that the budget landscape remains challenging and that more difficult decisions are anticipated over the next few years. By beginning the budget process early and making reductions strategically, QRSD is working to maintain its financial health while ensuring its core mission, student learning, remains the top priority.

In the last article in this series, the district will address Frequently Asked Questions related to topics like: Net School Spending, Transportation, Per Pupil Spending and more. Should people have a specific question, they may cmucha@qrsd.org and the superintendent will try to get it answered in the next article.

WARREN BOS from page 1

The department has two articles on the warrant for the Annual Town Meeting and is tied to waiting on a potential grant, if awarded, will not be received until September. Lavoie hopes the grant will be awarded and expected for this fiscal year switch.

The Fire Chief just wanted clearance from the Board if they're comfortable with the department applying for this grant.

The amount being asked is \$97,000, while waiting for this grant. Lavoie just wants the public understand why there will be certain line items changes.

For clarification, the board asked Lavoie how the 75% reimbursement reflected in the budget.

Lavoie said no money is being moved around for the full \$97,000. They'll be moving around money for 25% of that amount.

Lavoie said the town may have to go back for a special town meeting in November if the grant is not awarded. He said the department is not asking the town to fund to two more positions immediately.

"I don't want people to have a negative opinion right off the bat," Lavoie said. "There's a reason why we're doing this."

Town Administrator's report

Ferrera said he is continuing work with various departments and the Finance

Committee on the fiscal year 2027 budget.

Candidates are being sought for to fill a vacant officer position at the Police Department.

Ferrera participated in a Capital Planning meeting, and is working on FY 27 capital requests and updating the town's Capital Plan.

The Town Administrator successfully negotiated and ratified a successor agreement with the Police Chief. Ferrera held a grant kick off meeting for the new Green Communities Grant for a weatherization project at Warren Community Elementary School.

A joint meeting of the Finance Committee and Board of Selectmen was conducted on April 11. The FY 25 Town Report book was finalized and a final draft was to the printer for a delivery date, which is April 30.

Ferrera participated in an Incident Command training sponsored by MEMA and FEMA in West Boylston. He continues to work with Parks and Recreation on the redesign of Cutter Park. The town was granted a time extension by the Architectural Access Board to complete the wheelchair lift project at the Shepard Building.

Ferrera has been working with the Sewer Commissioners and Chief Operator Scott Urban at the sewer plant to get a bid out for a new sludge hauling contract. The current contract is set to

expire on Nov. 1.

Ferrera put a bid packet together and all parties agree with the specifications. Bids are due back by June 30.

Ferrera held a department head meeting earlier this week to discuss the Annual Town Meeting warrant, budgets, and cyber security training. Ferrera said the departments are working well as a whole from a financial standpoint.

"Services are still intact," Ferrera said.

The town is setting money aside for projects and adding in modest ways.

The town is seeking bids for the River Street and Central Street projects.

CDBG miscellaneous funds

The board discussed allocating and use up to \$2,500 in the Community Development Block Grant miscellaneous funds for a radon mitigation system at the Senior Center. Tests were done at the Senior Center and levels of radon were found in the basement area.

Ferrera said there are funds available in the CDBG miscellaneous funds and project could be taken care of for \$2,500 or less.

"Use a portion of these funds to take care of this," Ferrera said.

There are still some funds available in this account. The Selectmen voted to allocate and use up to \$2,500 for the radon mitigation system.

LIBRARY from page 12

Aucoin said a lot of the classes offered for businesses are free, or low cost. A free marketing class will be held on Saturday, May 9 from 9:20 a.m.-2:30 p.m.

Other free classes include resume writing on Wednesday, May 13 at 3:30 p.m.; Google Suite advances on Tuesday, June 9 from 9-11 a.m.; Excel for beginners on Tuesday, July 7 from 9-11 a.m.; Excel for beginners on Wednesday, July 22 from 5-7 p.m.; Google Suite on Thursday, Sept. 17

from 9-11 a.m.; and Google Suite on Wednesday, Sept. 30 from 5-7 p.m.

Registration is required by visiting qvcdc.org/coursestform. All classes are held in person at E2E, 75 Main St., Ware.

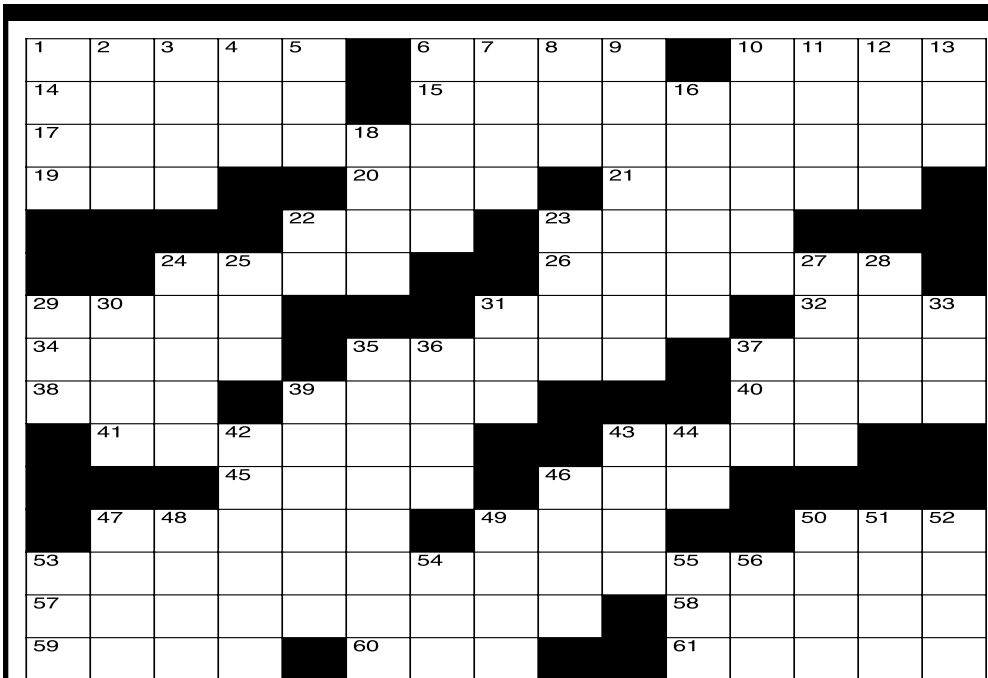
In addition to the small business owner's workshop, QVCDC has a Senior Outreach Program that has served senior citizens in the towns of Ware, Warren and Hardwick. It also a financial literacy program called "Learn & Save" which is a 12-month matched savings initiative for

income-qualified adults.

About QVCDC

The Quaboag Valley Community Development Corporation serves the towns of Belchertown, Brimfield, Brookfield, East Brookfield, Hardwick, Holland, Monson, New Braintree, North Brookfield, Palmer, Spencer, Wales, Ware, Warren and West Brookfield.

For more information about QVCDC and its programs, visit www.qvcdc.org or call 413-967-3001.



CLUES ACROSS

1. Notable casino destination
6. Current units
10. Roman military unit
14. American lizard
15. Fates
17. The Yankees have lots of these
19. Unhappy
20. Mimic
21. Remove from the record
22. Where cargo ships dock (abbr.)
23. A way to fight
24. Turfs
26. Contract
29. Country along the Arabian peninsula
31. Tree species
32. Pituitary gland secretion (abbr.)
34. Perfect
35. "Partner" to groans
37. Jewish calendar

month

38. Where wrestlers work
39. Egotistical
40. Potted plants
41. Containers
43. Large, flightless birds
45. Part of a book
46. American spies
47. Pancakes made of buckwheat flour
49. Swiss river
50. Disfigure
53. Have surgery
57. Formal withdrawal
58. Early English council
59. Area units
60. 2,000 lbs.
61. Siskel and ___

one

4. Every
5. Largest English dictionary (abbr.)
6. Very skilled
7. No more than what is specified
8. Tire measurement
9. Towers
10. Forward
11. Jacob ___, American journalist
12. Vale
13. Former CIA
16. Middle Eastern nation
18. Exhausts
22. South Dakota
23. The complete duration of something
24. Kids love him
25. Singular
27. Cod genus
28. Mild yellow Dutch cheese

29. Resistance unit

30. Ancient kingdom near Dead Sea
31. Cast out
33. 60-minute periods
35. Most worn
36. European river
37. Atomic mass unit
39. Items of food
42. Body parts
43. Ireland
44. Partner to Pa
46. Sammy ___, songwriter
47. Dutch settler
48. Full-grown pike fish
49. Sun or solar disk
50. Minute arachnid
51. From a distance
52. A monthly expense
53. Young women's association
54. Brazilian state
55. Air freight provider
56. Pointed end of a pen

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Storyteller presents Fun with Fairy Tales

By Ryan Drago
Staff Writer
rdrago@turley.com

WARREN – The Warren Public Library hosted Fun with Fairy Tales this past weekend at the Warren Senior Center.

Performing these fairy tales was storyteller and author Diane Edgecomb. For 30 years, Edgecomb has been a storyteller of fairytales that open up a child's world of imagination.

Edgecomb is an award-winning storyteller, including a Parent's Choice Award, an ORACLE Award for Storytelling Excellence in the Northeast, and Storytelling World Awards. For this Boston-based storyteller, the greatest award is giving children and adults with their inner child present the art of storytelling.

Fun with Fairy Tales is a program Edgecomb uses to tell some vintage fairy tales with some of her creative touches added in. This program also includes fairy tales with audience participation.

There was singing, acting, and a little bit of dancing happening at the Warren Senior Center.

"Always ready to fall into a story," Edgecomb said.

The first fairy tale Edgecomb performed is one of her childhood favorites, "Snow-White and Rose-Red". Edgecomb took the floor at the Senior Center and got into character as storyteller and played all the characters in the story.

The sound effects Edgecomb brought brought laughter and got the audience engaged in the story.

This classic fairy tale by the Brothers Grimm follows two girls who befriended a polite bear in the winter. After he left, Snow-White and Rose-Red went out to the woods looking for the bear and came across a mean dwarf with a long beard.

Edgecomb did an amazing job switching roles on the fly and her portrayal of the mean long-bearded dwarf was giving the audience a good laugh.

After helping the ungrateful dwarf on several occasions, the girls encountered both the mean dwarf and their bear friend. After stopping the dwarf, who was hiding treasure from the bear, the treasure was found and the bear soon turned



Diane Edgecomb performed as Goldilocks during her Fun with Fairy Tales program.

Diane Edgecomb is an award-winning storyteller and author who gives entertaining solo performances of various fairy tales.

into a prince.

Edgecomb explained how she likes to incorporate moments in the story. For "Snow-White and Rose-Red", it was how the prince is revealed and that treasures are considered spiritual in fairy tales.

The next story was a traditional Irish fairy tale called "Gilly Dirtyfoot". This story follows a young lad with the flaw of not washing his feet.

As a result of this flaw, Gilly finds himself connected to a band of fairies.

Edgecomb brings this story to life with a strong

Irish accent and once again taking on the roles of multiple characters.

Fun with Fairy Tales would end with an audience participation performance of "Goldilocks and the Three Bears". Edgecomb played Goldilocks and turned three audience members into Papa Bear, Mama Bear and Baby Bear.

For more information on Edgecomb, visit livingmyth.com.

The Warren Public Library, 934 Main St., is hosting a book sale this summer on Saturday, June 13, from 9 a.m.-1 p.m.

Kopacko wins Board of Selectmen's seat

By Paula Ouimette
Editor
pouimette@turley.com

WARREN – Raymond Kopacko was elected to a three-year term on the Board of Selectmen at the annual town election, securing 354 votes over Karen Dusty, 157; and Daniel Thibodeau, 50.

A total of 572 ballots were cast, which reflected a 14% turnout of the town's 4,110 registered voters.

During an April 30 Candidate Night moderated by eighth grade civics teacher Joe Salvadore with help from Quaboag Regional Middle High School students, Kopacko talked about his reasons for seeking a seat on the Board of Selectmen.

Kopacko said he moved to town in 1999 with his family, and he also shared his career background. This included working on a farm, as well as the tech industry.

He said his wife and himself ran a home baking business for some time, before he became nurse, working at area hospitals.

"The reason why I'm running is I feel that I want to bring a higher level of accountability and sensibility and community engagement to the Selectmen's office," he said.

Kopacko said an issue the town has right now is determining the difference between wants and needs.

"The only way to get through that, is to have honest discussions," he said. "Just look at the objective data to understand what the difference is between those two things."

Kopacko said he is semi-retired from nursing and that he has the time and energy to serve the town as a Selectman, just like he has on the Finance Committee, Capital Planning Committee and Planning Board.

"I know the needs, I know the stresses that the town's facing with its finances," he said.

Kopacko said he is willing to talk with and work with anyone.

He said he has attended almost every Board

of Selectmen and School Committee meeting, as well as subcommittee meetings.

"I understand the school's needs, I understand the town's needs," he said. "Those two things have to married...the largest single item in the budget (over 50%) is the school."

Kopacko also spoke about the proposed public safety complex, which he said is a "nonstarter."

"We can't afford a \$25-30 million public safety complex," he said.

Kopacko said the town does need to do something for the Police Department, and that was one of his biggest motivations for seeking this office.

Focusing on spending and cost-containment is another issue he will address during this term.

He said engaging community involvement with residents is also something that he believes is important.

Other contested positions at the May 5 election included a three-year term as Assessor, which was won by John Feeney with 284 votes, over James Dusty with 240 votes. Steven Cristol secured a three-year term on the Cemetery Commission with 293 votes over Susan Brodeur with 223 votes.

Representing the town of Warren on the Quaboag Regional School Committee are Matthew Peloquin, with 418 votes; and write-in candidate Patrick Cieslak with 29 votes. West Brookfield representatives are Philip Landine, 258 votes; and Travis Mathieson, 266 votes.

The rest of the election results are as follows: Moderator, Dario Nardi, 449 votes; Park Commissioner, Anne Norton, 447 votes; Sewer Commissioner, Joan Lavigne, 435 votes; Board of Health, Travis Baker, 442 votes; Planning Board, Karyn Wood, 432 votes; and Housing Authority (two-year term), James Dusty, 380 votes.

A five-year term on the Housing Authority received 17 write-in candidates, with the majority of votes (29) going to Laura Fitzpatrick.

West Brookfield overrides fail to pass at polls

By Zacharias Fragkiadakis
Staff Writer
zachf@turley.com

WEST BROOKFIELD – The Town of West Brookfield held their municipal elections on May 5, with two questions related to the passage of a proposition 2.5 override. The town hosted several information sessions during the month of April to educate residents on what the override is for, and how a reduced budget could impact local services like the police department, fire, EMS, the library and the elementary school.

Ballot question 1A was for a \$1.6 million override, which would have preserved local services, and the Quaboag Regional School District's budget. Question 1B was for the preservation of local services, but a reduced budget for the QRSD.

Both questions on the ballot failed, according to unofficial results posted to the West Brookfield website (wbrookfield.com), with question 1A receiving 497 yes votes and 624 no votes. Question 1B received 501 yes votes and 604 no votes.

Other election results

Henry Brogna was elected to a term on the Board of Selectmen, running unopposed, receiving 808 votes. Jason Paquette was elected to the Board of Health, running unopposed, and receiving 849 votes.

Cassie Paolucci was elected to the Common Committee, running unopposed, and receiving 904 votes. Janet Foley and Jane Higgins were each elected to the Library Board of Trustees, receiving 780 and 751 votes respectively.

Philip Guerin was elected

to the Water Commissioners, running unopposed, and receiving 767 votes.

Matthew Peloquin was elected as the QRSD school committee member from Warren, running unopposed and receiving 534 votes. Philip Landine and Travis Mathieson were each elected as the QRSD school committee members from West Brookfield, receiving 607 and 639 votes respectively.

There were no candidates on the ballot for Assessor, Planning Board, or Housing Authority.

public notices

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The Trial Court
Probate and Family Court
Hampshire Division
Docket No.
HS26P0240EA
Estate of:
Evelyn E. Krol
Also Known As:
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Date of Death:
January 09, 2025
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To all persons interested in the above captioned estate, by Petition of Petitioner **Kathleen J. Bourcier of Ware, MA.**

Kathleen J. Bourcier of Ware, MA has been informally appointed as the Personal Representative of the estate to serve **without surety** on the bond.

The estate is being administered under informal procedure

by the Personal Representative under the Massachusetts Uniform Probate Code without supervision by the Court. Inventory and accounts are not required to be filed with the Court, but interested parties are entitled to notice regarding the administration from the Personal Representative and can petition the Court in any matter relating to the estate, including distribution of assets and expenses of administration. Interested parties are entitled to petition the Court to institute formal proceedings and to obtain orders terminating or restricting the powers of Personal Representatives appointed under informal procedure. A copy of the Petition and Will, if any, can be obtained from the Petitioner.

05/14/2026

ADVERTISEMENT FOR BIDDERS Transportation and Transfer of Liquid Wastewater Treatment Plant Sludge Town of Warren, Massachusetts

The Town of Warren is soliciting sealed bids for the Transportation and Transfer of Liquid Wastewater Treatment Plant Sludge between the periods of November 1, 2026, to June 30, 2029. Bids will be received at the Office of the Town Administrator (second floor), 48 High Street, P.O. Box 609 Warren, MA 01083, until **June 30, 2026, at 1:00 p.m.** The bids will be publicly opened and read aloud at that time. Proposals must be made upon forms included herein. Proposals must be delivered in a sealed envelope plainly marked for the appropriate bids. Late bids will be rejected and returned unopened.

The Proposal Form, Specifications, and Contract Documents may be obtained electronically by emailing Jim Ferrera at townadministrator@warren-ma.gov or can be found on the Town's website at www.warren-ma.gov.

Questions regarding this solicitation must be directed in writing to the Town Administrator, Jim Ferrera at townadministrator@warren-ma.gov.

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Bids must be accompanied by a bid deposit in the form of a Bid Bond, Certified Check, or a Treasurer's or Cashier's Check issued by a responsible Bank or Trust Company, payable to the Town of Warren in the amount of five (5) percent of the minimum total

bid (plus FY28 & FY29). Said bid deposit shall become the property of the Town of Warren should the bidder fail to execute the contract and provide a satisfactory bond within fourteen (14) days after they have been officially notified.

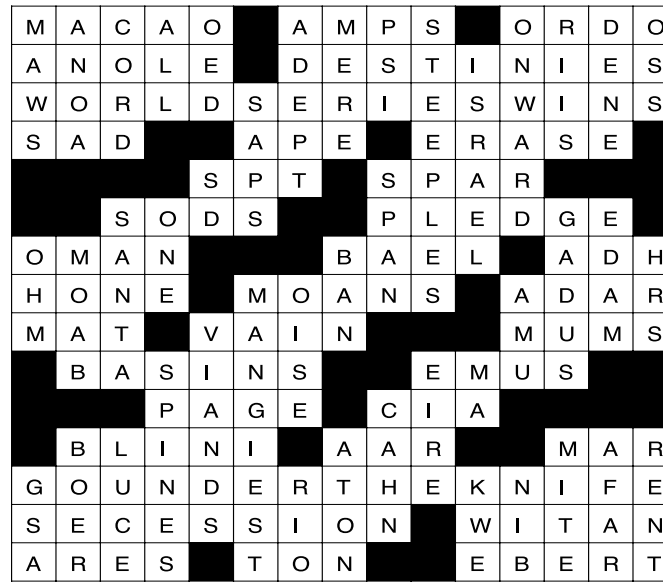
Bids are subject to the provisions of M.G.L. Chapter 30.

Award is contingent upon the appropriation of funds. Bidders may be requested to waive the right to the 90-day withdrawal period.

The Town reserves the right to reject any or all Proposals, to waive irregularities and/or informalities in any Proposal, and to make an award in any manner, consistent with law, deemed in the best interest of the Town.

Town of Warren
James J. Ferrera,
Town Administrator
05/07, 05/14/2026

Please check the accuracy of your legal notice prior to submission (i.e., date, time, spelling). Also, be sure the requested publication date coincides with the purpose of the notice, or as the law demands. Thank you.



EARLY DEADLINES
In observance of Memorial Day,
PUBLIC NOTICES
EARLY AD DEADLINE
Place your public notice
no later than **NOON**
Thursday, May 21
– Thank you!

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 Friday at 3 p.m.

visit www.publicnotices.turley.com

Wings of Song sings to the season



Director Nym Cooke turned to the audience while the chorus performed.

Turley Photos by Paula Quimette

'Spring and Summer in the British Isles' perform May 16

STURBRIDGE – The community chorus Wings of Song is known for taking its audiences on musical expeditions.

This May, the chorus will be taking a deep dive into rural England, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales in the 13th-20th centuries, as it sings of "Spring and Summer in the British Isles." Everyone's invited to come along.

The concerts will be on Saturday, May 16 at 7:30 p.m. in St. Joachim Chapel, 16 Church St., Fiskdale (part of Sturbridge), and on Sunday, May 17 at 3 p.m., at Elm Street Congregational Church, 61 Elm St., Southbridge.

Admission is free, with a freewill offering taken at intermission. As always, socializing and refreshments will follow each concert.

As always with Wings of Song, there's something here for everyone. Also for everyone is the sweet balm of tuneful melodies, and sylvan and pastoral scenes.



Chorus members performed "Here Comes the Sun" by The Beatles.



The accompanist joined the chorus members at rehearsal.



Wings of Song community chorus rehearsed at St. Joachim Chapel recently to prepare for the "Spring and Summer in the British Isles" concerts to be held on Saturday, May 16.

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19 Clinton Street, Ware, MA 01082

7 Room Colonial \$335,000
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Whistle Stop Restaurant For Sale - \$350,000

248 Main St., Gilbertville/Hardwick, MA
 This is a unique investment opportunity to own the landmark "Whistle Stop" restaurant in Gilbertville. The sale includes the well-established business, all contents, and the real estate.

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