



LIBRARY
March activities
 PAGE 2



REGION
Health Careers open house
 PAGE 3



SPORTS
State tourney begins
 PAGE 8

AGAWAM

ADVERTISER NEWS

A TURLEY PUBLICATION | www.turley.com

March 5, 2026 | Vol. 48, No.1 | \$1.00

www.agawamadvertisernews.turley.com

Full-day pre-school may be green-lit

By Gregory A. Scibelli
 gscibelli@turley.com

AGAWAM – Many years ago, making full-day kindergarten a reality was a big priority for education. Now, ac-

ording to Agawam Schools Superintendent Sheila Martin, full-day pre-school is in the pipeline.

Martin told the school committee on Feb. 10 that officials in the public schools

are looking into a full-day program for four-year-old children at the district's Early Childhood Center.

Martin says there are studies that have been done stating that high-quality, full-day

early childhood education aids in literacy development.

"It provides the extended instructional time necessary to master foundational phonics and vocabulary," Marin said.

The research shows an expanded schedule offers the consistent social-emotional learning needed so the small children are more ready for kindergarten.

Martin says a full school

day has the potential to set up participants for long-term academic success.

The research tells the district that students who have

PRE-SCHOOL | page 12

Project update coming



As you drive through campus you can see the substantial progress on the community wing that is scheduled to open in January 2027. Recent progress includes the near completion of steel erection, the beginning of the gymnasium roof, underground electrical and plumbing, fireproofing and exterior framing. On Tuesday, Mar. 3, there was a community meeting scheduled at Agawam Public Library with a major updates on the projects. We will have a look at that in next week's edition.



Golf course loan paid back to town ahead of schedule

By Gregory A. Scibelli
 gscibelli@turley.com

AGAWAM – A loan made to the Agawam Municipal Golf Course recently is already being paid back, with the interest promised to the town and 22 months ahead of schedule after the Agawam City Council unanimously approved a fund transfer from golf course to the Capital Stabilization Fund, which was the source of the loan.

City councilors were elated to learn that recent earnings at the course led to the loan being paid off early, helping Mayor Christopher Johnson keep a promise he made to the city council late last year, that unlike previous loans made by the town to the golf course's enterprise fund, this one would be paid back.

"I was particularly happy to see loan was being paid off early," said Councilor Robert Rossi. "I'm happy for the community to see that the golf course is thriving."

Council Vice President Anthony Suffriti thanked the mayor for keeping his word and showing great leadership.

"I know once during my tenure the town made a loan to the golf course and it was not paid back," Suffriti said. "Thank you to the mayor. This is an example of great leadership. It also the great

leadership at the golf course. It shows us that we can have these kinds of relationships."

The course needed the temporary loan in order to purchase new golf carts to replace the current fleet, which was nearing the end of its useful life and was costing the course more to maintain.

The council would support the loan after Johnson presented a specific plan for repayment as well as the knowledge that the current management at the golf course had been leading the town-owned business in the right direction, with increasing revenues that would pay the loan back within two years and with the interest promised to the town.

"I have always strode to have the golf course be able to pay its own bills," said Johnson when he pitched the loan to the council.

On having the town loan the course some funds temporarily is economics, the mayor said. He said other borrowings that would be needed to purchase the carts would have cost the town and the golf course more. The town being the loaner of the funds made the most sense, he said.

He also said, funds from the stabilization fund will be needed for other capital needs.

"We are trying to give the

golf course some flexibility," Johnson said. "It's very possible the loan will be paid sooner than two fiscal years."

Johnson, who is running unopposed and should be mayor the next two years, also went out on a limb to allay concerns about yet more taxpayer funds being used for the golf course would not be repaid.

According to the funding proposal made by Johnson, \$158,700 of the funds needed would come from the golf course's stabilization fund, while the remaining \$100,000 will come from the town's Capital Stabilization Fund. However, that funding will be a loan which will be paid back by the Municipal Golf Course's Revolving Fund at 4% interest. Paybacks are scheduled to take place with payments made in the next two fiscal year budgets.

Johnson said in a memo to the city council the \$100,000 loan allows \$200,000 to remain in the golf course's stabilization fund while also making sure the town benefits from the loan to the golf course. The golf course would also save substantial funds from not having to pay a traditional bond for the carts.

The old cart fleet was previously leased, and the new fleet will be a purchase with a five-year service plan for major repairs, Johnson said.

Whalen seeks to challenge Neal for congressional seat

SPRINGFIELD – On Tuesday, Feb. 10, public school teacher Jeremie Whalen pulled papers to begin his campaign to challenge longtime incumbent Congressman Richard Neal in a bid to represent the people of Massachusetts' 1st Congressional District.

A proud product of Western Massachusetts, Whalen grew up in Belchertown, built a life with his wife in South Hadley, and earned three degrees from the University of Massachusetts Amherst, most recently his Ph.D. in Mathematics, Science, and Learning Technologies in 2025. He has spent over a decade as a high school teacher in the Pioneer Valley.

"I'm coming from outside the traditional politi-

cal world, and I think that's exactly what we need right now," said Whalen. "Old-school establishment thinking and the corporate greed that has seeped into our campaign finance system have pushed this country in the wrong direction. The way forward is electing real people from our communities who are not tied to those entrenched systems and who will actually fight for the policies we need to create change."

Massachusetts' 1st Congressional District represents 83 cities and towns across Western and Central Massachusetts, including communities in Hampden, Hampshire, Franklin, Worcester, and Berkshire counties. The district spans a wide range of urban, sub-

urban, and rural areas. Neal, who has held the seat since 1989, once served as chair of the House Ways and Means Committee.

"Some worry about losing perceived influence in the halls of Congress," said Whalen. "But when I hear about the power our current congressman is supposed to have, I can't help but ask who he's actually using that power for. When nearly all of your funding comes from corporations and large donors, it means Congressman Neal is motivated to support policies that benefit those contributors rather than the people in his district. What you're left with is a congressman who's rarely around,

WHALEN | page 12

Starting on a high note



The Winterguard has started their season on a high note. They debuted their 2026 production, "Green Garden" at the New England Scholastic Band Association's Winterguard Evaluation show on Jan. 31 in Salem. This past weekend, on February 21, the group competed at NESBA's Blackstone show at Blackstone-Millville Regional High School. The show was a favorite of the judges and the group was awarded first place this week, with a score of 68.66, a seven-point jump from the Eval show. Their next show will be Mar. 7 at Melrose High School. The captains are: Clarissa Kotjahasan, Emma Hart, Reed Cusson, Nevaeh McNamee, Finn Mansur, and Brihana Dupre.



SPORTS

Agawam hockey gets win in WMass tournament

By Tim Peterson
Sports Correspondent

AMHERST – Senior assistant captain Andrew Holton had a team-leading 13 goals and 12 assists for the Agawam

hockey team this winter. Holton's final high school goal was very memorable.

The Western Mass. Class B quarterfinal match between the fifth-seeded Brownies and the fourth-seeded Am-

herst Hurricanes was tied 4-4 a minute into overtime. That's when Holton received a pass from junior Kaeden Clifford before firing a shot into the net past Amherst senior goalie Jason Kim

(34 saves), which gave the Brownies an exciting 5-4 victory at Orr Rink located on the Amherst College campus on Presidents Day, Feb. 15.

"I've never scored a game winning goal before and it's

just an amazing feeling," said Holton after celebrating with his teammates. "We worked very hard in tonight's game."

Holton, who joined the varsity squad as a freshman, described his first career

game-winning goal.

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

HOCKEY | page 10

Offensive falters in middle, Brownies fall in state tourney

AGAWAM – Last Tuesday evening, Agawam High School boys basketball got off to a good start, but their offense had a power outage

in the second and third quarters, limited to just 15 points, causing Agawam to go from a six-point lead to a six-point deficit. Despite a strong fin-

ish, Agawam was not able to come all the way back and fell to Norwood High School 60-56 in the preliminary round of the Division 2 state tour-

nament. Gavin Cruz would lead Agawam with 17 points, while Dylan Jorgensen, Brody Sheehan, and Caeden Roeder had 11 points all each.



Caeden Roeder tries to get around a Norwood guard.



Yusuf Ebrahim makes a three-point attempt.



Matthew Letellier tries to get the rebound.



Dylan Jorgensen gets ready to pass over midcourt.

TURLEY PHOTOS BY GREGORY A. SCIBELLI



Trevor Moynihan calls out a play



Gavin Cruz attempts to make a pass.



Brody Sheehan makes his way down the court.