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AGAWAM

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Historical Association celebrates America's 250th



By Christina Gioscia
Correspondent

AGAWAM - On Saturday July 4 at the Thomas Smith House, Agawam Historical Association hosted a fun and educational event to celebrate the 250th birthday of the United States of America. This event included reenactors from the 25 Continental and Green Valley Homestead Living History Group. These

reenactors allowed attendees to view how people ate, dressed, and lived during this part of our history. The reenactors had historically accurate games set up as well which attendees were encouraged to ask questions about and try out for themselves. Refreshments were provided on this hot summer day. There was a reading of the Declaration of Independence presented by Agawam

Historical Association President David Cecchi and a few of the reenactors. The 25 Continental group presented two musket firings throughout the day. "There's not really any town sponsored, you know, celebration," Cecchi said. "So, all this year really, all our events are tied in with the 250th. We wanted to do something big. This country, you know, where things are right



Left: Green Valley Homestead Living History Group members Shante White and Holly Echert. Above: Reenactors doing metal work.

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now. We need a reason to celebrate. We're still, you know, working words a more perfect union. So, it's just a work in progress. And I think its, people need to know there's a reason to celebrate. You learn from your mistakes right. You know, people as parents, you always learn from your mistakes, same with the country. So, hopefully we can figure things out and move forward in a good way."

Cecchi's point that this event is to bring people together in celebration stood out with the large number of attendees that turned out to this event to come together in unity and celebrate the 4th of July. Cecchi then shared a couple upcoming events, "In August, we have reenactors from Fort Ticonderoga coming out with oxen." This event will also take place at the Thomas

Smith house. Treasurer of the Agawam Historical Association Katy Krause talked about why celebrating today, especially for the 250th birthday of America, is so important to her as a citizen and also enjoyer of history. "I think it is a once in a lifetime opportunity that I

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Local author Angela Grout and Adult Services Library Associate Kristen Frost.

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Local author makes appearance at Library

By Christina Gioscia
Correspondent

AGAWAM - On June 29, local author Angela Grout gave a presentation at Agawam Public Library on her newest book, "A Bean in My Breast." Her book tells the story of a woman going through breast cancer, coming to terms with her sickness and dealing with her loved one's reactions. Grout

mentioned in her presentation that grief and death are uncomfortable and difficult topics of life that people often avoid in conversation. Her book discusses these universal yet taboo subjects, bringing them into the light to be discussed. "I think sometimes we think they're uncomfortable

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FY2027 budget unanimously approved, now in operation

By Gregory A. Scibelli
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AGAWAM - The Agawam City Council meeting of June 15 had a very busy agenda and went for more than four hours, a rarity in recent member for the legislative body of the town. Residents often hear the discussion and debate on the upcoming fiscal year budget at one of the June meetings, with the new operating budget scheduled to begin in July. However, this year, the other controversial topics taking such a long time to go through along with a very effective budget proposal led city councilors to very quickly and quietly unanimously approve the FY2027 budget. Many communities in the region made headline during the last few months because

they had to go through budget override votes, or like in the case of South Hadley, major budget cuts after an override vote failed. However, Agawam appears to be in good fiscal shape, with a healthy amount of free cash and no major cuts made to basic services. There was also no proposal for an override required. "It was prepared with a mindset of being as fiscally conservative as possible while maintaining existing essential services," Mayor Christopher Johnson in his memorandum to the city council. "Upon completion of the high school project, Agawam residents and businesses will be facing a significant tax increase to meet the financial obligations of that project. The administration has tried to be forward looking given that fiscal reality.

In that vein, we have tried to keep annual tax increases to only 2.5% over the past couple of fiscal years. This budget continues that trend with only a 2.5% increase in taxes. The overall increase in the general fund portion of the operating budget is approximately \$4 million, a 3.4% increase over FY2026. This year's budget for the Agawam Public Schools will be \$55,105,348, an increase of less than 3% from the previous year. Public safety will have an increase of approximately 5.75%, and public works will increase about 5%. The general fund budget, including the year's included capital improvement expenses is \$123,329,975. Building maintenance and the police department have the largest budgets after the school budget. The fire department is next.

One major issue that Johnson noted in his budget proposal is that compared to previous years, the proposed local aid is significantly decreasing from the state level. The project aid is about \$142,000 compared to more than \$1.17 million the previous year. The highest local aid in recent years came in 2024 when Agawam received a little less than \$3 million. Aid has slashed since then, but none more than the massive cut this year. "The level of local aid from the Commonwealth is shrinking fast," said Johnson. City councilors did not have any discussion at the June 15 meeting after receiving a June 1 public hearing presentation. The nine councilors still present at the meeting approved the budget, which is now in effect.

Donations sought for new 100-year time capsule

By Gregory A. Scibelli
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AGAWAM - As part of its year-long celebration of the 250th anniversary of America's birth, the Agawam Historical Association is now seeking donations for a time capsule, which will be closed for 100 years. The association has already collected a number of

items, including some local historical items from Agawam's history, a flag that has flown over Mt. Vernon, the home of first president and father of the country George Washington, this year's AHS yearbook, and a collection of poetry. However, more items are sought for the capsule and the contributions are very open-ended as to what can

sent to the Historical Association. Visitors are encouraged to provide letters to future Agawam residents describing 21st century life for inclusion in the time capsule, which will be sealed later this year and not opened for another century. The Historical Association continues to hold a series of events throughout the year

to celebrate America 250. Anyone wishing to make a contribution to the time capsule should contact cecco@davidcecchi.com. The Historical Association will likely make an announcement later this the exact date for a ceremony when the final time capsule items will be inserted and then sealed for a future generation to unearth in the year 2126.



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SPORTS

Brownies tied for bottom playoff spot

AGAWAM – Heading into the Fourth of July break, Agawam boys summer soccer has an even 3-3 record, which is good enough for a tie for eighth place in the A Division.

The Brownies have a handful of games remaining to look to increase their position and secure a playoff spot in the PVSSL playoffs. Play resumed earlier this week.



Mark Stepchuk makes a high kick to stop the ball.



Inset: Benjamin Gretchka socks a free kick away. Above: Owen Allen turns and goes after a loose ball.



Leon Privedenyuk turns play around.

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Nicholas Ghareeb plays the ball off his chest.



John Carra slips a quick pass away.

Pioneers, Black Rock battle to 1-1 draw

By Tim Peterson
Sports Correspondent

LUDLOW—Just when it appeared that the Western Mass. Pioneers were set to close out a 1-0 shutout victory against Black Rock FC, a late lapse gave the visitors from Nashua, New Hampshire an opportunity to score the tying goal.

Black Rock FC converted a corner kick goal during the seventh minute of stoppage time and last Friday night's USL League 2 match-up held at Lusitano Stadium ended in a 1-1 draw.

The result all but ended the Pioneers' postseason hopes, eliminating them from the USL League Two playoffs for

the first time since joining the league in 2019.

"I really don't know what happened at the end of tonight's game," said Pioneers head coach Federico Molinari. "Almost everything has gone wrong for us this season."

It was the third consecutive tie between the two teams, who played a scoreless tie in the first meeting of the season on June 3. The two squads also played a 1-1 draw at Lusitano Stadium a year ago.

The Pioneers entered the final week of the 2026 regular season sitting in third place in the Northeast Division table with a 7-2-3 (24 points) overall record.

The Western Mass. squad were scheduled to play at

AC Connecticut on Tuesday night before hosting the first place and undefeated Vermont Green FC, who have already clinched a playoff berth, in the regular season finale on Friday night.

NEFC (10-2-0), who joined the league a year ago, is sitting in second place with 30 points. They only need a tie against either last place Boston City FC or the Albany Rush to officially lock up a playoff spot for the first time. NEFC defeated the Pioneers, 4-2, at Lusitano Stadium on May 23.

Black Rock FC (5-3-3, 18 points) has the chance to tie for third place if they can win their final three matches and



Santiago Blasco Gomez tries to keep the ball from going out.

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