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Friday, February 13, 2026

Tuition proposals from Quaboag and Quabbin analyzed

By Paula Ouimette
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NORTH BROOKFIELD – The School Committee held a special meeting to review proposed tuition agreements from the Quaboag Regional and Quabbin Regional school districts for the town's middle and high school stu-

dents.

At the Feb. 4 meeting, School Committee member and chair of the Tuition Task Force, Matt Grant, said the purpose of the meeting was to have an open discussion about the future of the North Brookfield Public Schools.

"We do have a lot to be proud of here at North Brookfield," Grant said. "But

we do also have to acknowledge that there are real challenges that we face with our size, particularly in terms of limited programming and the state funding formulas that work against districts with low enrollment and a high choice-out rate."

Grant said the School Committee is responsible for offering a high-quality pub-

lic education that meets the needs of all students.

"We deeply care about our students and their future," he said. "I am very hopeful that we can all come together as a community to make a decision that is fiscally responsible to taxpayers and also supports the needs of all students in town."

Grant said while ideally,

the town would continue to have a "thriving K-12 district in town," it is not unusual for small towns to not have a middle/high school. He said currently, there are over 200 North Brookfield students attending schools out of district.

Grant said the two proposals were analyzed independently by David Verdoli-

no, a 40-year Certified Public Accountant with 25 years experience as a school business administrator.

"It's an analysis," Verdolino said. "There won't be conclusions, and there won't be a recommendation from me as part of this analysis."

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Terry Hall displayed a blue onion pattern quilt being raffled by the First Congregational Church at the West Brookfield Winter Farmers Market.



Robyn Scott and her Blair House Blooms.

TURLEY PHOTOS BY RICHARD MURPHY

Dinner fundraiser held to support Hearts for Heat

By Ryan Drago
Staff Writer
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NORTH BROOKFIELD – The 18th annual North Brookfield Hearts for Heat Spaghetti Dinner Fundraiser took place on Jan. 31.

The dinner was held at the North Brookfield Elementary School cafeteria and was done to help provide emergency fuel assistance for qualified North Brookfield residents. All the donations and funds raised will be used to meet the home heating

needs of residents affected by a fixed income, COVID, job loss, injury, or illness.

Sue Lewandowski is the founder, president, and secretary of North Brookfield Hearts for Heat and shared that this cause is made possible thanks to a helpful community. Though they missed one year of hosting a supper due to the pandemic, North Brookfield Hearts for Heat came back even stronger and has now reached its 18th year

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Jack McClintock was on soda and coffee duty during the Hearts for Heat Spaghetti dinner fundraiser.

TURLEY PHOTO BY RYAN DRAGO

Winter continues, and so does the Winter Farmers Market

By Richard Murphy
Correspondent

WEST BROOKFIELD – By Feb. 6, most of the digging out had taken place and it was time for the West Brookfield Winter Farmers Market at 3 p.m. in the First Congregational Church.

At a table, Terry Hall of the church, was display-

ing the lovely quilt made by Mary Deotte, a church member and officer. The lady makes one every year. The quilt is on raffle and will be drawn on Dec. 6, which conveniently is the next White Christmas in West Brookfield.

Tickets are only \$5 or three for \$10 to win a beautiful quilt "made with love."

Many regular vendors were arrayed on the sides of the hall, but it was time to put a couple of them under the figurative microscope. They are Blair House Blooms and Kelly Homestead Apiary.

Blair House Blooms

Walking straight in the hall, on the right is Robyn Scott who has been at this spot for years now. Robyn,

whose operation is Blair House Blooms, of 50 West Main St. in West Brookfield, is well known for tulips, and this day, on her table, they were there in profusion with a wide variety of colors.

Robyn knows the tulip business as she has studied

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'A Watershed Moment'

C4R promotes conservation, stewardship and enjoyment of rivers

By Keith Davies
Coordinator,
Chicopee 4Rivers Watershed Council
Guest Contributor

wat-er-shed 'wöder SHed, 'wäder Shed **noun**
noun: watershed; plural noun: watersheds

1. an area or ridge of land that separates waters flowing to different rivers, basins, or seas.

• an area or region drained by a river, river system, or other body of water.

2. 2. an event or period marking a turning point in a course of action or state of affairs.

"these works mark a watershed in the history of music"

Editor's Note: This is the first part in a multi-part series about the Chicopee 4Rivers Watershed Council.

Just over a decade ago, a small group of people began to renew an idea: the Chicopee Watershed and its



tributaries should be better known and appreciated by local residents and even people beyond.

It was a watershed moment, meaning what happened could tip in one of two directions: either people engaged or did not. Fortunately enough people became involved.

The name of the idea was the Chicopee 4Rivers Watershed Council because four rivers made up the watershed.

It was a slow but positive start, initial goals and actions were modest. C4R sponsored river area clean ups, fun paddles, and a modest six site sampling program on two rivers.

By 2017 C4R had expanded to 10 sites on all four

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Madison Schreier performed as Elle Woods, the lead character in "Legally Blonde the Musical". This was Schreier's final show at Quaboag Regional High School as she will be graduating this spring.

TURLEY PHOTO BY RYAN DRAGO

A dream come true

Students performed 'Legally Blonde the Musical' at Quaboag

By Ryan Drago
Staff Writer
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WARREN – Quaboag Regional Middle High School's Theater Program put on another amazing

show to kick off 2026 by presenting "Legally Blonde the Musical".

The show is based around the energetic character of Elle Woods, who follows her old boyfriend to Harvard Law School to win him back, but soon discovers her self-worth, passion for law, and finds herself defending a fitness instructor during a murder

trial.

Serving as the Director and Music Director of the show was Quaboag Music Teacher, James Joinville. The Assistant Director and coordinator of costumes was Christine Taylor, and the show was choreographed by Bethany

See **LEGALLY BLONDE**
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W Brookfield held STM, each article passed

By Zacharias Fragkiadakis
Correspondent

WEST BROOKFIELD – The Town of West Brookfield held a special town meeting at the elementary school last Tuesday.

There were eight articles voted on, including appropriations, transfer of funds, and an article relating to funding repairs of the town hall.

Article 1

Article 1 asked voters to approve supplemental appropriations to fund town departments or projects. The warrant said these funds were previously approved at a past town meeting.

The amount of money to be transferred was about \$180,000, with recommendations for approval from the Select Board and Advisory Committee. The article passed.

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- community -

Select Board appointed police dispatcher

By Paula Ouimette
Editor
pouimette@turley.com

STURBRIDGE – Police Chief Earl Dessert presented Megan Saucier to the Select Board for appointment to the position of full-time dispatcher with the Police Department.

Dessert said Saucier holds a bachelor's degree in business management and brings valuable experience from her previous employer where she was responsible for managing sensitive information, coordinating complex schedules and handling high volumes of calls in a fast-paced environment.

"This experience has strengthened her ability to listen carefully, communicate effectively and remain composed; qualities that are essential for a successful dispatcher," Dessert said at the

Feb. 2 meeting.

The board members appointed Saucier to the position of full-time dispatcher.

The Select Board also appointed Amanda Galonek Hellyar to the 250th Anniversary Committee.

License approval

The Select Board reviewed an application from the owners of Mangia Bene, 139 Main St., for a common victualler license.

The applicant sought this license for the retail end of the business, which will be selling shelf-stable items, deli items such as meats and cheeses, meal specials to-go, salads and more. Mangia Bene will also have a restaurant, featuring Italian food.

Mangia Bene is expected to open the last week of February or the first week of March.

The board members approved the license application.

Moment of silence

The Select Board held a moment of silence for two community members who recently passed away, Ronald Komar and Richard Volpe.

"We lost two men who always had a ready smile, who served their community, loved their country, and took care of their families," Select Board Chair Jamie Goodwin said.

Town Administrator's report

Town Administrator Robin Grimm recognized Volpe's contributions to the town's committee celebrating of the country's 250th anniversary.

"Everything you see on this 250th coming up, will have Rich's fingerprints... what a beautiful way to remember a man who gave so much to his community and his country by virtue of that," she said.

Grimm announced the opening of the Hometown

Heroes banner program, which will honor the town's veterans with personalized banners displayed along Main Street and other prominent locations in town.

Banner applications and information about eligibility can be found on the Memorials Monuments and Markers Committee site at www.sturbridge.gov, or under "News." People may also contact Grimm directly at rgrimm@sturbridge.gov.

Donation

The board members accepted a donation to benefit the Police Youth Fund in the amount of \$250 from the Federated Church of Sturbridge & Fiskdale.

Grand Trunk Trail bid

The board members accepted a bid from Green Hill Engineering in the amount of \$9,500 to prepare and deliver a base plan for the extension of the Grand Trunk Trail.



SUBMITTED PHOTO BY THE WARREN FIRE DEPARTMENT
One resident was injured in a house fire at 458 Boston Post Road on

One injured in Warren house fire on Feb. 4.

WARREN – The Warren Fire Department responded to a house fire with one serious injury the afternoon of Feb. 4, said Warren Fire Chief Adam Lavoie and State Fire Marshal Jon Davine.

Firefighters responded to 458 Boston Post Road just after 4:30 p.m. following reports of a fire in the single-family home. On arrival, they observed heavy fire and an injured adult who had escaped.

Firefighters immediately began providing medical care while attacking the blaze. A second alarm was quickly struck, bringing mutual aid from Ware, Brimfield, Brookfield and West Brookfield. The Palmer Fire Department provided station coverage.

Given the serious nature of the man's injuries, he was transported by Life Flight to Rhode Island Hospital.

Firefighters brought the fire under control in about

25 minutes and remained on-scene for about four hours extinguishing hot spots and supporting fire investigators.

The origin and cause of the fire are being investigated by the Warren Fire Department, Warren Police Department, State Police fire investigators assigned to the State Fire Marshal's office, and State Police assigned to the Worcester District Attorney's office. Preliminarily, it does not appear suspicious.

The Department of Fire Services, Central Mass Sparks, and Fire District 7 Canteen provided food, beverages, and rehab services to support firefighter health and safety at the scene.

Lavoie expressed his thanks to the Central Massachusetts Regional Emergency Communications Center for coordinating the rapid multi-agency response.

Quaboag Student Council Craft Fair to held on Feb. 28

By Ryan Drago
Staff Writer
rdrago@turley.com

WARREN – Quaboag Regional Middle High School will be hosting its 5th annual Quaboag Student Council Craft Fair on Saturday, Feb. 28.

This craft fair has free admission with a raffle table and concessions available. There will be over 80 local vendors.

Approximately 10 Student Council members who attend Quaboag help with the annual craft fair. Students will assist with setup, vendor support, raffle sales, and cleanup.

Overseeing the work done by members of Student Council is Kayla Hatch, a teacher at Quaboag Regional Middle High School. Hatch is an advisor for Student Council, and works closely with student leaders to plan,

organize, and run the event.

"My role includes coordinating logistics, communicating with vendors, overseeing student responsibilities, and supporting students throughout the planning process," Hatch said.

Additional Quaboag staff assist with supervision, setup, cleanup, and day-of-event support.

With Student Council members taking the responsibility of helping out during the craft fair, they develop a wide range of leadership and life skills. These skills include communication, teamwork, problem-solving, organization, time management, and responsibility.

Hatch said students will also gain experience working with adults, managing real-world logistics, and adapting to unexpected challenges in a professional manner.

The craft fair supports both community engage-

ment and fundraising for students to attend the annual Massachusetts Association of Student Councils Leadership Conference held in Hyannis in March.

Proceeds from the event also help benefit organizations such as the Special Olympics and support local initiatives.

This annual craft fair also gives local vendors an opportunity to showcase their work.

A raffle will be held during the craft fair. Raffle prizes are generously donated by local businesses, community members, and the vendors participating in the craft fair.

"These donations help increase community involvement and support fundraising efforts," Hatch said.

Over the last five years of hosting this craft fair, Quaboag has seen the event grow in attendance, vendor

participation, and community involvement. According to Hatch, improvements in organization, promotion, and student leadership roles are made each year making the event more successful and impactful.

Hatch said this craft fair is important because it brings together students, staff, families, and community members in a meaningful way.

"It provides students with authentic leadership opportunities, supports local businesses and charitable causes, and strengthens the connection between the school and the community," Hatch said.

The annual Quaboag Student Council Craft Fair will take place on Saturday, Feb. 28 from 9 a.m.-3 p.m. at Quaboag Regional Middle High School, 284 Old West Brookfield Road. For more information, contact Hatch at khatch@quaboagrsd.org.

Town Clerk posts Town Election information

WEST BROOKFIELD – Town Clerk, Klarissa Rose, announces that Nomination Papers are available on Monday, Feb. 2, for the upcoming Town Election to be held on Tuesday, May 5.

These papers must be filed with the Board of Registrars, in the Town Clerk's

office, for certification on or before Tuesday, March 17 at 5 p.m. Final day to withdraw as a candidate is Thursday, April 2 at 5 p.m.

Appearing on the ballot will be the following: Selectman, three-year term; Board of Health, three-year term; Assessor, three-year term;

Common Committee, three-year term; Library Board of Trustees, three-year term; Library Board of Trustees, three-year term; Planning Board, five-year term; Housing Authority, five-year term; Water Commissioner, three-year term.

The Quaboag Regional

School District positions will also be incorporated on the Town Ballot. Two members from the Town of West Brookfield for a three-year term and two members from the Town of Warren for a three-year term.

These nomination papers are available on Feb. 2 at the Superintendent's office at 284 Old West Brookfield Road, Warren. Deadline for returning these papers is Friday, March 20 by 4 p.m.

Last day to register to vote before the Town Election is Friday, April 24, 9 a.m.-5 p.m. at the Town Clerk's office at 2 East Main St.

Historical Commission announces 2026 15th annual scholarship

WEST BROOKFIELD – The West Brookfield Historical Commission is pleased to announce its 2026, 15th annual scholarship in the amount of \$2,000.

Qualified students must reside in West Brookfield and may attend Quaboag Regional High School, or be school-choice students, home schooled students, and independent school students.

This award is made possible through the J. Irving and Jane L. England Charitable Trust.

The students must be planning to attend either a four-year college/university program or a two-year college with the intent to transfer to a four-year college.

The Commission will show preference to study plans with concentration on History and Histo-

ry-related areas. Major or minors may include Political Science, Social Studies, Anthropology, Archaeology, Historical Preservation, Museum Studies, and Education in any of these related fields.

Applicants must submit a brief essay based on one of the Notable Persons or Significant Places listed on the application. All necessary information will be found on the West Brookfield Historical Commission website. <http://westbrookfield.org>

Essays are due no later than April 6.

Email info@westbrookfield.org or mail to: West Brookfield Historical Commission, P.O. Box 372, West Brookfield, MA 01585.

The application and details can be found on the Historical Commission website- <http://westbrookfield.org>.



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AAU membership needed \$28
(purchase on our website, well pull them)

Tryout # 1: Saturday, February 21, 2026

Location: Tantasqua Jr High School
(320 Brookfield Rd., Fiskdale, MA)

- Boys Grades 4th-6th 8:30 a.m. - 9:45 a.m.
- Boys Grades 7th & 8th 9:45 a.m. - 11 a.m.
- Boys Grades 9th-12th 11 a.m. - 12:15 p.m.
- Varsity players sign up if still playing with school**
- Girls Grades 4th-6th 12:15 p.m. - 1:30 p.m.
- Girls Grades 7th-8th 1:30 p.m. - 2:45 p.m.
- Girls Grades 9th-12th 2:45 p.m. - 4 p.m.

Tryout # 2: Sunday March 1, 2026

Location: Oxford High School
(100 Carbuncle Dr., Oxford, MA)

- Boys Grades 4th-6th 3:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.
- Girls Grades 4th-6th 4:30 p.m. - 5:30 p.m.
- Boys & Girls Grades 7th & 8th 5:45- 7 p.m.
- Boys and Girls Grades 9th-12th 7:15 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.
- Varsity players sign up if still playing with school**

Pre Register/pay on website: teammassbasketball.com
Questions Email: teammassbasketball@gmail.com or call 413-539-1548
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- community -

FARMERS MARKET FROM PAGE 1

it in detail with Emily von Trapp. Emily is a member of the famous von Trapp family most known for the movie, "The Sound of Music".

Emily runs von Trapp Flowers in Vermont where the von Trapp family settled after leaving Austria. She specializes in tulips and teaches the craft at the Tulip Workshop where Robyn learned.

Robyn has made good use of the skills learned up north. She has expanded the number of varieties to around 45 and at each market has four or five different ones.

Robyn will be at the rest of the winter markets, but that is not all.

On Valentine's Day at Klem's in Spencer, Robyn will be doing a Pop-Up from 4-7 p.m.

March 13 will see her bring Blair House to Sawdust Cafe in Sturbridge for a Pop-Up from 6-9 p.m.

Blair House also does special events such as weddings and has lilies as well as tulips for Mother's Day.

Robyn has taken Blair House to Farmer Matt's in New Braintree, Mimi's Coffee House in Hardwick as well as Joy of Beans in West Brookfield. She is open to suggestions.

To contact her for tulips or information email hello@blairhouseblooms.com.

Kelly Homestead Apiary
Kelly Homestead Apiary is back again this year at their usual corner spot. The apiary and farm are the project of Ginger Kelly and family. This day, the table would be ably represented



Faith and Kelly Homestead Apiary.

by daughter, Faith.

It is wonderful to have beekeepers at a winter market. The Kelly Homestead is that, but also much more.

Kelly Homestead is justly proud of its poultry as it is PRO fed, that is Pasture Raised Organically fed. According to Faith, it is the "best taste in poultry" and for folks tired of the store stuff.

Kelly had a great special for the Super Bowl, and there is the BOGO Turkey Bone Broth Special. There is always something on offer. Also brought to market are the organic soy free eggs.

The products of the apiary are on the table as well. The operation in Charlton and on other land is 80 hives, and that requires no little skillful management, especially as there are mites and diseases that can attack bees. Kelly treats with infused sugar bricks of probiotics and amino acids.

There is the usual raw

treatment free honey, but there are other varieties. New this year are garlic infused and Chipotle honeys.

There is even more and you can find out about it at the website, <https://kelly-homesteadapiary.com/>

There were more sellers in the hall consisting of the much-loved usual suspects. The first one you come across to the left just in the door is Joy Hinton with her Joy of Beans gourmet coffee. Continuing in that direction is Thompson's Maple Farm with maple products and great ice cream.

Next are the woodworkers, The Chairman of The Board. No, not Frank Sinatra, but woodworking artisan, Wayne Boulette, known for his cutting boards and other examples of craftsmanship, and Bernie Wilson of B&D Enterprises. Ware native, Wilson is known for making pens out of recycled pallets and

other products, because he is "too cheap to buy wood,"

Chloe Fredette brought JARS Café and Bryan Faucher brought Golden Grain Artisanal Bread which is what the name says.

Rich Laba brought the Farm46 pork delicacies and Ryan Laurie had Bucha Bros kombucha for a healthy microbiome.

Linda Fuchs of Flourish Farms had microgreens, and ginger as well as turmeric and Gail of Autumn Leaf Farm, came with her microgreens and locally grown varieties of mushrooms. Also on her table were lovely eggs from charming Golden Comet chickens.

Again, holding the room together, Halley Stillman and Still Life Farm with their welcome veggies in winter were in the center.

So, winter turned tough, but we're getting through it and we have this market until spring.

Bluebirds in winter



TURLEY PHOTOS BY PAULA QUIMETTE

A male eastern bluebird enjoyed the warmth of the sun one day after the groundhog predicted six more weeks of winter.



A pair of eastern bluebirds perched on a dead tree in Gilbertville. Several eastern bluebirds spend the winter in this location every year. According to Mass Audubon, eastern bluebirds are increasingly becoming a more common winter sight.

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- Highlight educational programs and support resources
- Share information about genetic testing opportunities
- Help individuals and families better understand available PD support services

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- opinion -

Online seed houses offer endless choices

It's been a fun couple of weeks in the realm of gardening! While I haven't yet gotten my hands into the soil yet, I have been on the hunt for all kinds of seeds for the Old Sturbridge Village gardens: those for obscure medicinal plants, unique heirlooms, and rare native plants.

That process has led me to some interesting mail order companies that I'd like to share with you.

My mail order "go to" for herb seeds has always been Richter's (www.richters.com) but when I couldn't locate a few of the items on my list there, a simple internet search led me to Thyme Garden (www.thymegarden.com).

Their catalog boasts over 400 varieties of herb seeds and more. The text doubles as an herbal encyclopedia of sorts, providing the reader with cultural information in addition to loads of herbal lore.

A paper copy will set you back \$2.50, but you can get a digital download for free. It's noteworthy to mention that many of the seeds are harvested on the farm in Oregon. The company has been in business since 1989, and clearly knows their stuff.

I purchased both Jimsonweed and Cotton for the Paul Roger's Herb Garden from this company.

Prairie Moon Nursery (www.prairiemoon.com) is an excellent source for native plant material and seeds. This statement from their website gave me something to think about: "Native plants co-evolved with native insects and wildlife; they are deeply dependent on one another. These plants provide food and shelter to insects, birds, and other small animals, which in turn support larger predators. Native plants are the fundamental stepping stones of a healthy ecosystem."

While many of us already enjoy growing native



that you, the visitor, see the real deal, 1830s style. I've often ordered heirloom vegetable and flower seeds from Baker Creek Heirloom Seed Company (www.rareseeds.com) and this year is no exception.

Their big, beautiful Rare Seed and Whole Seed Catalogs are free for the asking and seed shipping is free, also. Search over 1,300 seeds.

If you can't find what you are looking for there, hop on over to Victory Seeds (www.victoryseeds.com) and there will be more heirloom, open pollinated, non GMO varieties to choose from. I love the concept of Victory Gardens, and the company does a great job of explaining and promoting it.

Victory Seeds offers free shipping on all orders over \$30 and their website provides "quick links" to each main category for easy online shopping. They also encourage seed saving practices, which is neat.

This summer, look for China Rose Radish, Tall Telephone Peas, Boston Marrow Squash and Long Green Cucumber growing in our gardens and used in our households. These were all purchased from Victory Seeds.

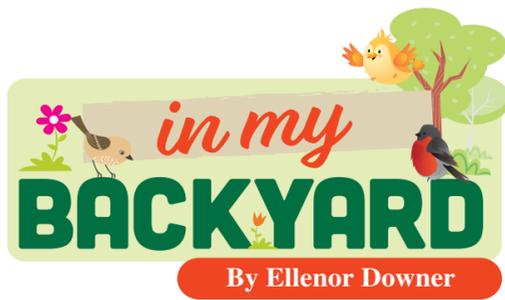
If you are bored one afternoon, why not take a look at what these or any number of reputable seed houses have to offer. You will no doubt expand your plant knowledge while you expand your garden!

Roberta McQuaid graduated from the Stockbridge School of Agriculture at the University of Massachusetts. For 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 was also able to secure seeds for unimproved versions of Rusty Foxglove and Black Eyed Susan Vine. Because of this good fortune, you will see authentic 1830s gardens when you visit the Village.

There is no printed catalog to my knowledge, but the shop has its seed sales organized in a friendly manner online. Some seeds are even harvested on site.

Speaking of authenticity, it's also important that we utilize heirloom vegetable varieties within our gardens, so



Male gadwall

On Dec. 20, compilers at the Athol Christmas Bird Count recorded a total of 58 species including a Gadwall, a first time for this species during a Christmas count.

Male Gadwall have grayish-brown heads, sometimes showing cinnamon on the forehead and faint purplish iridescence on the crown. Females resemble female mallards, but they have a thinner, darker bill.

Gadwall nest in tall vegetation near water and show a preference for nesting on islands. Their choice of nesting location gives them some protection from predators. Female Gadwall produce an egg a day and lay a clutch of seven to 12 eggs. To meet their demand for protein during this stressful time, female Gadwall eat more invertebrates than males during this period in addition to using reserves of nutrients they've stored in their bodies during the winter.

Their winter habitat is fresh and brackish wetlands with abundant aquatic vegetation on which they primarily forage. Gadwall often snatch food from diving ducks as they surface. Gadwall number have increased in North America since the 1980s. This is partly because of conservation of their habitat, wetlands and adjacent uplands.

The oldest known Gadwall was a male, and at least 19 years, 6 months old. He was banded in Saskatchewan in 1962 and shot during hunting season in Louisiana in 1981.

Christmas Bird Count

The National Audubon Society Christmas Bird Counts take place within a 22-day period, there are many state count circles and volunteers must be available. Despite snowy weather, compiler Jon Skinner said of the Groton-Ayer count on Dec. 14, "I was surprised that we were able to scratch our way to 81 species in such snowy conditions. It has to be a testament to the relentless nature of both our team and the birds." Two new species were added 13 black vultures soaring over Lancaster and a killdeer at Devens. Some of the other highlights were evening grosbeak in both Harvard and Groton, red crossbills in Townsend, Lapland longspur at Fitchburg Airport and in Ayer, chestnut-collared longspur at Fitchburg Airport, American kestrel in Groton, two Baltimore orioles in Groton, eastern Phoebe in Shirley, redpoll in Lancaster and a long-eared owl in Devens. Species seen three

days before or after the actual count date and noted as such were chipping sparrow, brown-headed cowbird, Peregrine falcon and sandhill crane.

Bluebird

I received an email on Jan. 26 from Jeffrey Landry. He had a visit from a bluebird on Friday, Jan. 23. He thought it was either the male parent or one of its offspring from a previous summer. He said, "For several years I have called him, 'Sunshine' and he arrived at my feeder on a bright beautiful winter's afternoon and this uncalled for visit was icing on my day's cake."

He offered to share this bluebird story. He said, "I was sitting on my meditation cushion yesterday watching my breath emerge from a deep silence and then gently return back into it. There was no counting, no manipulation, only watching, only flow. After some time had passed, I opened my eyes because I felt I was being closely watched."

"I have a bird feeder right outside of my window and sure enough a male bluebird or one of his offspring from a previous summer, was perched and staring directly at me. Two summers ago I named the parent bluebird, 'Sunshine' and last May he returned to the same nesting box in my front yard.

Quizzically, Sunshine leaned slightly forward. He was amazingly close."

"It was beautiful, glorious to see his blue rust colored body outlined by a background of white snow still clinging to frozen lilacs and tall trees. The sight of this sent ripples of love, that became currents of joy, to course through me."

"I felt a smile stretch a mile wide across my whole being. It was like being visited by a long absent friend. Within minutes this made me get up and fill another feeder with dried mealworms because bluebirds aren't seed eaters like many of the other birds that seek nourishment here. Like my breath, the mealworms disappeared into a well of silence. A contented peaceful silence that then took flight."

Evening grosbeaks

A Cummington resident sent a photo of evening grosbeaks at her feeder. She said they are part of a flock that come to visit the feeders often.

People may report a bird sighting or bird related experience by emailing mybackyard88@aol.com or edowner@turley.com or mailing to Barre Gazette, P.O. Box 448, Barre, MA 01005. The Palmer office has a new phone system and I will be getting an extension where messages may be left. I will publish the number as soon as it is set up.

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Letters to the editor should be 250 words or less in length, and guest columns between 500 and 800 words. No unsigned or anonymous opinions will be published. We require that the person submitting the opinion also include his or her town of residence and home telephone number. We authenticate authorship prior to publication. We reserve the right to edit or withhold any submissions deemed to be libelous, unsubstantiated allegations, personal attacks, or defamation of character.

Send opinions to:

Letters to the Editor, 80 Main Street, Ware, MA 01082 OR e-mail to pouimette@turley.com. Deadline for submission is Monday at noon for the following week's edition.

Am I entitled to more Social Security as a Veteran?

Dear Rusty:
I served in the U.S. Army from July 1964 to July 1967. Am I eligible for a higher Social Security payment?

Thank you. Signed: Vietnam Era Army Vet

Dear Army Vet:
Please accept my sincere thanks for your military service. I believe you are referring to the "Special Extra Credit for Military Service," which has been the subject of many published articles. That refers to a special Social Security accommodation available only to those who served in the military during specific periods of time, but it does not add



to your monthly Social Security payment. Rather, it adds to your military earnings record for the years you served, which may or may not result in a higher Social Security benefit when you later claim Social Security.

Here's how it works in your case:

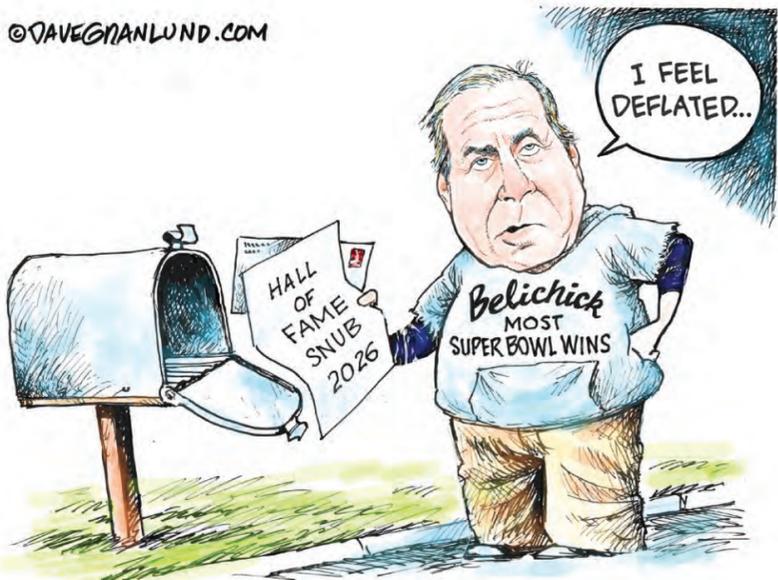
Serving between 1964 and 1967, if you told Social Security of your military service when you applied for Social Security benefits or gave them a copy of your DD-214, they would have added up to \$1,200 per year

to your military pay record. FYI, those who served after 1966 were automatically given earnings credit for their military years. However, whether those special extra credits would affect your monthly Social Security benefit depends on your lifetime earnings record when you later claimed Social Security.

When you applied for benefits, Social Security reviewed your lifetime earnings and used the highest earning 35 years of earnings over your lifetime (adjusted

See SOCIAL SECURITY PAGE 8

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Quaboag Current

- community -



Sue Lewandowski made announcements during the 18th annual North Brookfield Hearts for Heat Spaghetti Dinner Fundraiser.

HEARTS FOR HEAT FROM PAGE 1

hosting this annual supper to support a good cause.

North Brookfield Hearts for Heat is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization that helps residents in need of emergency home heating assistance for oil, propane, natural gas, electric, pellets, or cordwood. Hearts for Heat has helped hundreds of families since it was first founded.

The meals were prepared by members of the Hayden Masonic Lodge in North Brookfield. The meal came with spaghetti, meatballs, tomato sauce, salad and dinner rolls. There were desserts

available such as cookies as well as hot and cold beverages.

Popular local band The Otters performed a variety of toe-tapping songs during the meal.

Local author Jack McClintock was at the elementary school helping during the spaghetti supper and was on coffee and soda duty.

This event was sponsored with the Hayden Masonic Lodge and was also supported by Hannaford's Supermarket. The spaghetti supper was assisted by the North Brookfield High School National Honor Society and Valley View School. Students walked around the cafeteria

trying to sell raffle tickets to guests who attended the spaghetti dinner.

A 50/50 raffle was held to help support the fundraiser, and guests could buy tickets to win some neat raffle prizes. Some of the prizes included two signed Boston Celtics basketballs, a WooSox family package, and a Boston Bruins hockey puck.

Gift certificates could also be won and were donated by dozens of local businesses. The certificates came from Angel Nails, Bike House Brewery, Bogey Lanes, City of Smoke, Connect Restaurant, Dragon Stones, JARS Café, Jim's Pizza, Inishowen Farms, Joy of Beans, Spencer



Members of Hayden Masonic Lodge prepared the meals in the North Brookfield Elementary School cafeteria.

Greenery, Shaman's Closet, Strandz, and Subway. Over 30 prizes in total were donated to benefit North Brookfield Hearts for Heat.

Lewandowski thanked North Brookfield Savings Bank, who matched the first \$3,000 raised. She also thanked Monson Savings Bank for their \$2,000 support.

Donations can be mailed to North Brookfield Hearts for Heat, P.O. Box 44, North Brookfield, MA 01535.

More information about North Brookfield Hearts for Heat can be found at this link, nbcare2help.org/hearts_for_heat_fuel_assistance.



Two signed Boston Celtics basketballs were raffled at the Hearts for Heat spaghetti dinner fundraiser.

SCHOOL COMMITTEE FROM PAGE 1

Verdolino said he compared the "status quo," against the two tuition agreement proposals for fiscal year 2027. He said his data only looks at one year, as there are too many variables to create a long term view.

His analysis also does not include non-financial factors, such as curriculum, educational programming, logistics, etc.

"There are pros and cons, aside from finances, to considering an undertaking of this nature but I don't feel it's appropriate for me to present my thoughts - I'm dealing with the financial analysis," Verdolino said.

The 'status quo' Verdolino said if the status quo were maintained and the middle/high school was to remain open, the FY 27 net budget request would be \$7,317,454 after offsets.

"In addition, there are costs that are borne by the town to run the school department," he said.

These costs include other non-employee insurance, Medicare and the Worcester County Retirement System assessment, and health insurance for active employees and retirees (and related administrative fees), which total \$2,348,854.

"Those are town costs that support the North Brookfield Public School district next

year if there's no change in operation," Verdolino said.

Tuition agreements Verdolino said if the school district were to enter into a tuition agreement with another school district, it would not change chapter 70 aid, Circuit Breaker, net school spending and compliance with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education requirements.

"But there would be changes that would significantly effect the funding of the education of those students if they were tuitioned out," he said.

Verdolino said entering into a tuition agreement would save some costs for the town, and also add some costs.

A tuition agreement would reduce the gross budget by an estimated \$2,829,822. He said it would also reduce the offsets received, resulting in a net budget reduction of \$2,608,992 if tuitioning out to Quabbin and \$2,641,918 to Quaboag.

Verdolino said the added costs of the agreements include a base cost of \$2,182,875 to Quabbin (125 non-choice students at \$17,463 per student) as well as \$240,000 for current school choice students (48 students at \$5,000 per student), and \$130,000 in transportation. This results in total estimated incremental costs of tuition for Quabbin at \$2,560,875.

He said there are other costs that cannot be quantified at this time.

Verdolino said Quaboag's base cost is less, at \$1,541,000 (134 non-choice students at \$11,500 per student) as well as a tuition surcharge (grade seven school choice students at \$5,000 per student) at \$32,500 and transportation at \$130,000. Additional special education services are estimated to cost between \$500,000 and \$1,270,612.

This brings the total estimated incremental costs of tuition for Quaboag between \$2,211,500-2,982,112, depending on the actual special education costs.

He said his opinion is that Quabbin's proposal is a "break-even" proposal and that Quaboag is either a money saver or a money loser, depending on the true costs of special education services.

"But there are some other considerations to take into account," Verdolino said.

Verdolino said if the middle/high school was to be closed, the "staff isn't going to go quietly" and there will be separation costs involved. This includes unemployment compensation, sick time buy-back, retirement and other negotiated results.

"That could be a very significant amount of money," he said.

These additional costs cannot be easily estimated, he said, but could be significant.

Verdolino said his opinion is that the projection for FY 27 is "the best it's going to be" from a financial standpoint.

He said there are many questions that need to be answered prior to the decision to enter into a tuition agreement is made.

Input from community

Rich Rigney, president of the North Brookfield Teachers Association, spoke about the difference of becoming a partner with a neighboring school district, versus becoming a customer. He said the School Committee seems to be looking at only two options - keeping the middle/high school open, or tuitioning out to another school district.

He said if North Brookfield became part of a regional agreement, it would have more stability than it would if it entered into a tuition agreement.

"We could have two districts really kind of balancing their budget on North Brookfield's back and we have no say in it," Rigney said of tuitioning out. "I think we should really kind of think about staying away from this really binary choice system and look at all the options available."

Rigney also noted the impact the school's staff has on the local economy.

"The teachers here in town buy gas in town, buy groceries in town," he said. "We

pump some money into this town and so that would be lost for local businesses and that would have impact also."

Rigney said the recent three-year regionalization study to join Quaboag had "a serious impact" on the town's school district.

Several teachers and parents spoke in support of the school district's middle/high school, and how it's small size was beneficial to learning and individual student growth.

Former School Committee member Deb Arnold urged residents to create a vision for the school and to work together to make it better.

"Because what we have, is good here," she said.

Student Dante Gigrande spoke about the academic and athletic opportunities he received as a student in the district.

"The opportunities here are enough, and I feel like we're not highlighting them enough," he said. "If we highlight those opportunities enough and showcase them, we will get those children back."

Others noted the rising costs of education (including health insurance), especially in rural areas, and how it is has become increasingly unaffordable for small towns.

Resident and Selectman Jamie Gilman said he didn't expect to see a huge savings for the town with the tuition agreements, but that the

world is a competitive place, and there has been less offered to the students at the middle/high school over time due to this.

"If we could do something to turn this around, then I don't think there would be anyone in town who would be opposed to that," he said. "I think everybody would be behind that."

Gilman asked "how far is too far" and questioned what would be left for the students if trends continued as they are.

"There's a finite amount of money...that's the reality," he said. "The more kids that leave, the less money that there is left here. If we talk about the future of North Brookfield, then it is the kids. The question we need to be asking ourselves, is what are we doing for them? And what's going to be there for them? If we haven't turned it around by now...then we need to think seriously about doing something different."

Continued discussion

The School Committee will continue discussing the proposals at its next meeting to be held on Wednesday, Feb. 18 at 6 p.m.

The committee members will also hold office hours in the high school kiva on Friday, Feb. 13 from noon-2 p.m. to hear from the community. People can also email Grant at mgrant@nbschools.org.

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- community -

W BROOKFIELD FROM PAGE 1

Article 2

Article 2 asked voters to approve about \$116 to pay unpaid bills from the previous fiscal year. The article reached the required nine-tenths vote to pass.

Article 3

Article 3 asked voters to approve about \$15,400 in grant deficits. According to the warrant, passing this article “maintains the financial integrity of the town’s

grant programs.” The article passed.

Article 4

Article 4 consisted of two motions, for funding capital improvement projects. The first motion was for \$15,000 to be transferred from the stabilization fund, and the second motion was a transfer of \$17,700 for phase two appraisals for a project on Route 9. Both motions passed.

Article 5

Article 5 asked voters to approve the borrowing of

about \$227,000 for the replacing of the Town Hall roof, as well as structural repairs. According to the warrant “borrowing will allow the town to address safety concerns, prevent further deterioration, and preserve the historic integrity of the building.”

Bob Haveles, a representative from Architectural Insights, based in Palmer, gave a brief explanation of the work that needed to be done at the town hall, saying he has worked on it in

the past. Haveles said the project he was originally assigned was essentially a paint job, but he discovered damaged siding, and water damage.

He also said there was deterioration in the attic space, and structural failures throughout the building. The Advisory Committee did not recommend approval for the article because the source of funding came from borrowing, which carries a 4% interest rate.

The article reached the two-thirds majority required for approval.

Article 6

Article 6 asked voters to approve the transfer of \$25,000 for the purpose of delinquent tax expenses. According to the warrant, the money would be used to cover the legal costs of collecting overdue taxes, including court proceedings. The article passed.

Article 7

Article 7 asked voters to

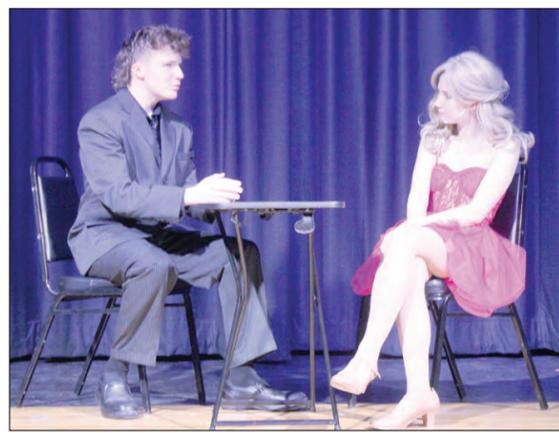
accept Massachusetts General Law Chapter 200A, Section 9A. This law allows for alternative disposition of abandoned funds, including allowing a town to claim abandoned money if it is not claimed. The article passed.

Article 8

Article 8 asked voters to approve the transfer of \$500,000 from the retained earnings fund into the water stabilization fund. The article passed.



TURLEY PHOTOS BY RYAN DRAGO



Elijah Wilhelm, left, as Warner Huntington III, sat with Madison Schreier as Elle Woods during the production of “Legally Blonde the Musical”.

LEGALLY BLONDE FROM PAGE 1

Joinville.

The production came to the Quaboag stage when James Joinville wanted to do something a little different from last year’s production of “Beauty and the Beast”. The Director usually alternates shows between a Disney-type production and a play that has more of an edge.

Joinville has been involved in 24 productions at Quaboag Regional Middle High School, and “Legally Blonde” was his 12th show as a director.

What also contributed to getting “Legally Blonde” to Quaboag is having students mentioning the show for quite a while. After analyzing who he had for students and his production team, Joinville thought the program was ready for putting together this show.

One of the students that continuously asked Joinville about doing a production of “Legally Blonde” was senior Madison Schreier. This soon-to-be graduate was cast as Elle Woods, which accord-

ing to Schreier was a “dream come true.”

Schreier shared that “Legally Blonde” is one of her favorite musicals since her middle school years and she thought playing Elle would be a dream role for her to play. For several years Schreier tried to convince Joinville to do a production of the show.

Once the decision was made by Joinville, Schreier was initially excited about the news and wanted to audition for the show. When it came time to rehearse, Schreier learned that Elle dances quite a bit in the show. She worked extremely hard to get better on the steps.

This was Schreier’s first time playing and experiencing taking up a lead character.

It began as a stressful process and a bit exhausting and Elle would have a lot of wardrobe changes that go fast. Schreier described Elle as an energetic character, and she wanted to capture and maintain that energy.

This was Schreier’s final show at Quaboag, as she will

be graduating in the spring.

She said this was her favorite show to perform out of a total of six productions at Quaboag, including “The Curse of the Bard”, “Camp Omigosh”, “The Addams Family” in 10th grade, “Beauty and the Beast” and “Clue” in 11th grade.

For Schreier, being in “Legally Blonde” was a great way to finish her high school theater career. Schreier will look into doing other shows in the future after high school.

After several days of performing in the show, Schreier is proud of being a part of this production and is thankful for the friendships she has made.

“I found my best friends throughout the theater program,” Schreier said “A lot of great memories for forever. In my heart, this is my home.”

According to Schreier, “the shows solidified the feeling of theater magic,” and thought everyone got together and made the show amazing. She described Joinville’s leadership in the theater department as someone who always knows what’s best.

Amarie Martino is a junior at Quaboag and played Brooke Wyndam in Legally Blonde the Musical. Martino described this show as a “very busy show” and auditioned for several roles. Soon, Martino was cast as Brooke Wyndam, a fitness instructor who at some point sings and jumps rope at the same time.

The multitasking was a bit of a challenge, but Martino felt prepared after rehearsing a lot on set and was ready for showtime. Martino is also known for playing Le-Fou in last year’s production of “Beauty and the Beast”. Martino has also starred in “Clue”, “The Addams Fam-

ily” and “Freaky Friday”.

Natalia Veliz-Baldizon is a sophomore at Quaboag and played Pilar, Elle’s friend, in “Legally Blonde”. Veliz-Baldizon has been involved in the theater program since the seventh grade. When it comes to “Legally Blonde”, it was a scary and fun experience at the same time.

What made it seem scary at first for Veliz-Baldizon was the higher elevation of singing that exists in the show. What helped Veliz-Baldizon prepare for this show is having a background in dancing.

There were three different roles she wanted to play but soon was cast as Pilar. Veliz-Baldizon took the time to understand her character and felt a boost of confidence going into the shows.

For Veliz-Baldizon, playing Pilar is the biggest role she has played in her theater career. The role required a lot more singing, which she admitted she sang more in this show than any other play she’d been involved in.

With costumes, Veliz-Baldizon thought it was fun to put together her own

costume for the show. Over time, she feels she’s gotten used to performing in musicals, which involves acting, singing, and dancing.

“It’s been very fun,” Veliz-Baldizon said.

Karl Prosser is also a sophomore at Quaboag and “Legally Blonde the Musical” was his first show having an acting role. Prosser played the bailiff in the courtroom and Sundee Agrawal Padamadan.

Prior to “Legally Blonde”, Prosser was part of the stage crew for several plays. When hearing about how big of a show “Legally Blonde” would be, Prosser wanted to try out. In addition to acting, this was Prosser’s first play where he got to sing.

During rehearsals, Prosser got a feeling of what it’s like working on stage and worked on memorizing lines and remembering cues. Prosser also got to sing with the ensemble during the shows and said he will try out for an acting role in a future show.

Joinville said interest in theater at Quaboag is steadily growing.

For “Legally Blonde the

Musical”, there were 47 students on stage and roughly 25 students working backstage.

Joinville said he believes this was one of the largest groups of kids who were involved in a show.

“These kids have worked incredibly hard over these past several months and the show was a great example of that hard work,” Joinville said. “These kids were resilient too especially with a shortened Tech Week due to Mother Nature dumping snow on us.”

The hard work and resilience paid off as all the shows put on at Quaboag were successful. The students involved in “Legally Blonde the Musical” are a perfect example supporting Joinville’s claim of interest in theater steadily growing.

The next production at Quaboag will be “Lion King, Jr.” and will take the stage on Friday, April 17 at 7 p.m., Saturday, April 18 at 7 p.m. and Sunday, April 19 at 2 p.m. The shows will feature students in grades seven-10, with the juniors and seniors taking on the directing roles.

Are you having difficulty communicating with your partner, struggling with boundaries, and healthy relationships?

We invite you to join us Friday afternoons from 1-2:30 pm to explore these topics and more.

This group will be held in zoom, is educational, confidential, and free.

Please contact **Pat James 413-726-8661**.

**Town of West Brookfield
FY26 Community Development Block Grants (CDBG)
Thursday, February 19, 2026**

Time: 6:00 PM

Location: West Brookfield Senior Center,
73 Central Street, West Brookfield, MA 01585

Topic: Community Development Strategy Discussion

The Town of West Brookfield is working with the Central Mass. Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC) to pursue Fiscal Year 2026 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds for proposed public infrastructure project on Front Street, an infrastructure study in the Depot Area Neighborhood, and an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan. Additional projects may be discussed and may be included in the grant application.

All are Welcomed and Encouraged to Attend

This meeting is open to the public, and residents are strongly encouraged to attend and provide input on potential CDBG projects. Those who cannot attend may submit their comments in writing to John O’Leary, at the Central MA Regional Planning Commission, 1 Mercantile Street Suite 520, Worcester, MA 01608 or via email at joleary@cmrpc.org.

The meeting room is handicapped accessible. Persons who require special accommodations for the meeting should contact the town at least three days prior to the meeting date at (508) 867-1421. For additional information please contact John O’Leary at (508) 459-3331 or joleary@cmrpc.org.



The marching band made its way during one of the musical numbers of “Legally Blonde the Musical”.

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Pioneers fall at home to rival Panthers

By Tim Peterson
Sports Correspondent

PALMER— The Palmer Panthers won their previous five encounters on the hardwood with the Pathfinder Tech Pioneers by more than ten points.

The sole meeting of the 2025-26 regular season between the cross-town rivals was a tightly contested battle until the middle of the fourth quarter. The Panthers closed out the non-league game with a 10-1 run leading to a 52-41 victory before a large and enthusiastic crowd inside the Pathfinder Tech gym, last Monday night (Feb.2).

“We were finally able to pull away late in the game and it was a very gritty win for us,” said Palmer boys’ varsity basketball coach Missy Rocker. “It was a very aggressive game, and the referees allowed the players to play without calling many fouls. This is a rivalry game, and I was a little bit worried that it was going to get out of hand.”

Following the 11-point road win, Palmer had a 9-7 overall record.

The Panthers, who slipped to 35th place in the MIAA Division 5 power rankings, needed one more victory to qualify for the state tournament for the third consecutive year.

“We do have a very diffi-



Dustyn Cook rushes for the hoop.



Maddox Baer holds the ball just inside the arc..



Grayson Griswold tries to get a shot up in traffic.



Dustyn Cook rushes for the hoop.

cult regular season schedule,” Rocker said. “This is another tough week for us starting with tonight’s game against Pathfinder. We just need to find a way to win one more game.”

Palmer was scheduled to wrap-up the regular season by hosting Chicopee Comp in another non-league game last Wednesday night and Bi-County East rival High School of Commerce last Friday night. It was also the Panthers senior night game.

Their six seniors are Matt

Santos, Dylan Doherty, Chris Stapleton, Adonis Dupre, Gavin Smola, and Stephen Fredette.

“The seniors are very special players and they’re going to be very difficult to replace next year,” Rocker said. “They’re outstanding young men.”

Palmer should be able to qualify for the Western Mass. Class C tournament, which starts this week.

Depending on the results of the Class C quarterfinal game, the Panthers will either

advance to the semifinals or play a non-playoff game. Regardless of which path they take, those games will also contribute to their overall state power ranking.

Pathfinder Tech (6-7) entered the home contest against Palmer riding a five game winning streak. They were ranked 78th in the Division 5 power rankings

“I don’t think that we’ve ever beaten Palmer in the past, but I was expecting my guys to give them a hard

fought battle in tonight’s game,” said first-year Pathfinder Tech head coach Jeff Kularski. “I’m looking to build a culture here. I think we’ll be a dangerous basketball team in a couple of years.”

The Pioneers seniors are Aiden Girard (1 point), Dustyn Cook (2 points), and Angelo Rentas, who didn’t play in the Palmer game.

Because they probably won’t be one of the top 32 teams in the power rankings,

the Pioneers will need to finish the regular season with a .500 record to clinch a berth in the state tournament for the first time in two years.

The mood of the varsity game was a little bit somber after Palmer freshman Abees Castillo suffered a serious leg injury during the second quarter of the junior varsity game. That game was delayed for about 30 minutes as Castillo was taken by ambulance

See PIONEERS PAGE 8

New look for sectional hockey tournament this year

By Tim Peterson
Sports Correspondent

WEST SPRINGFIELD—The 2026 Western Massachusetts high school hockey tournament is scheduled to take place from Feb. 16-19.

Six of the seven Berry Division teams will qualify for the Class A tournament.

The Berry Division teams, who are looking to qualify for the Class A tournament, are Westfield, East Longmeadow, Greenfield, Minnechaug Regional, Longmeadow, Ludlow, and West Springfield.

The Westfield Bombers are the two-time defending Class A champions. They defeated the Greenfield Green Wave, 7-3, in last year’s championship match.

All six of the teams in the Fay-Wright Division will be competing in this year’s Class B tournament.

Those six teams are Easthampton, McCann

Tech, Amherst, Taconic, Agawam, and Chicopee High School.

Agawam defeated Taconic, 6-1, in last year’s Class B championship match.

The top two teams in Class A & B will automatically advance into the semifinals.

Prior to playing the semifinal round, the top-seeded team in Class A will be facing the second-seeded team in Class B. The top-seeded team in Class B will also play the second-seeded Class A team.

Those games will boost the team’s state power rankings.

The other four teams in each of the classes will be playing in the quarterfinals on February 16.

The higher-seeded teams will be hosting the quarterfinal matches.

Any of the quarterfinal games played at the Olympia Ice Center in West Springfield will be held

during the daytime. The game times on rink 1 will be 11am and 1:30pm. The games on rink 2 will be at noontime and 2:30pm.

The losers of the quarterfinals will be playing non-playoff games against each other.

The Class A semifinals are scheduled to be played at Olympia on Feb.17. The start times for those two games will be 11am and 1:30pm.

The Class B semifinals are scheduled for Olympia on Feb.18. The start times for those two games will also be 11am and 1:30pm.

Both Western Mass. finals will be played on rink 1 at Olympia on Feb.19.

The Class B finals will be held at 5:30 p.m. followed by the Class A final at 8 pm.

The tickets prices for the semifinals and finals are \$8. Tickets are available through GoFan Only.

There is not a different price for students or senior citizens.



Mia Ducos slings a throw.



Aubrey Thorpe takes a free throw.

Quabbin girls basketball defeats Worcester Tech

BARRE – Last Thursday evening, the Quabbin Regional High School girls basketball team defeated Worcester Tech 54-33. For the Panthers, it’s the third win of the season. The Panthers were set to face Littleton next at home on Tuesday, Feb. 10 at 6 p.m.



Makenzie Casey makes a short-range shot.



Izzy Doty keeps the ball inbounds.

T-Birds suffer loss to Toronto Marlies

TORONTO, ON - The Springfield Thunderbirds (16-24-4-2) fell by a final score of 5-1 to the Toronto Marlies (23-15-4-3) on Saturday inside Coca-Cola Coliseum in what proved to be one of the nastiest games of the season.

Simmering tensions boiled over from the opening drop of the puck on this night, a result of an altercation in the clubs’ prior meeting on Jan. 23. In that contest, Marshall Riffai of the Marlies fought Spring-

field’s Simon Robertsson and threw multiple punches at a vulnerable Robertsson when he was lying prone on the ice. Robertsson has yet to play in a game since.

On this day, Steve Ott chose to start Kale Kessy for the opening puck drop, and Kessy immediately dropped the mitts with Riffai, which lit the fuse for three separate fights between the foes in the opening 15 seconds, resulting in 37 combined penalty minutes, plus a game miscon-

duct to Toronto defenseman Blake Smith.

Once the dust from the altercations subsided, the Marlies quickly threw their own punches on the score-sheet, beginning with Vinni Lettieri snapping a shot past Vadim Zherenko on the blocker side just 1:12 into the contest, giving Toronto the 1-0 advantage on a 4-on-4 goal.

Springfield’s power play had a tough go to begin

See T-BIRDS PAGE 8

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