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Meet the Candidates

Annual election to be held April 13

By Paula Ouimette

Editor

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STURBRIDGE – Voters were given the opportunity to hear from candidates seeking office at this year's annual election to be held on Monday, April 13 during a Meet the Candidates event at the Sturbridge Senior Center.

Moderator Leigh Darrin and Town Clerk Lynne Girouard organized the event held on March 12, which is the first time it has been held since 2017.

Select Board candidates

There are three candidates seeking two seats on the Select Board; Charles Blanchard, MaryLou Volpe and Kadion Phillips.

Blanchard was unable to attend the Meet the Candidates forum, but submitted a statement detailing his background in local government.

"I have over 40 years of experience in municipal government, including 13 years on the Sturbridge Water and Sewer Commission, 17 years on the Board of Selectmen and 15 years on the Planning Board."

Blanchard has also served on various building committees.

In his professional career, Blanchard has worked as a town administrator and town manager.

He shared concerns

about the growing deficit in the town budget. He said his experience in balancing budgets would be an asset to the Select Board.

Blanchard said two issues before the Select Board now include the major rehabilitation and replacement needs of the water and sewer system, as well as the transition to a regional dispatch center.

"Looking ahead, I will work to maintain the character and quality of life of our community and to keep Sturbridge affordable, while helping to ensure that you get the maximum value for your tax dollars," Blanchard said.

Volpe is seeking reelection for her second term on the Select Board.

She has previously served on the Tantasqua School Committee and served the town as a firefighter/EMT.

"To me public safety is my number one concern in this town," Volpe said.

Volpe said it is important that police and fire have the resources that they need to ensure the town's safety.

Volpe said she understands the needs of people, both from her role as a firefighter/EMT and as a Select Board member.

Phillips is seeking election for the first time to the Select Board.

He said he enjoys volunteering in town, including at the Joshua Hyde Public Library where he ran the mini

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Kip, Halley and Curtis Stillman are the team at Still Life Farm in Hardwick.

TURLEY PHOTO BY RICHARD MURPHY

Winter recedes, but the West Brookfield Winter Farmers Market keeps on

By Richard Murphy
Correspondent

WEST BROOKFIELD – On March 18, a fair crowd of folks migrated to the First Congregational Church of West Brookfield at 36 North Main St. for the penultimate session of the town's Winter Farmers Market.

Again, this week, they would meet with vendors who would bring their

wares from locales not so distant from the town, and again, sellers and shoppers would interact cordially with each other.

And again, this week we highlight one of the regular participants of this market.

Still Life Farm

Still Life Farm of Hardwick is a long-time veteran of the winter market. The farm occupies the center of the hall, and its tables are laden with many varieties

of vegetables.

Halley, Curtis and son Kip Stillman are the farmers. Halley provided us with the information below:

"Still Life Farm is working hard to provide year-round local seasonal food access. A big portion of this growing is done in greenhouses and high tunnels on our farm," she said.

"Exciting news for us this year – we are working with NRCS to install two more

high tunnels on our farm (for a total of seven tunnels) which will continue to increase our options for year-round crops and growing. We are proud to be able to serve our community at the West Brookfield Winter Farmers Market from November through March each year."

Halley said people

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Select Board held joint meeting with Advisory Committee

By Zacharias Fragkiadakis
Correspondent

BROOKFIELD – The Select Board had a joint meeting with the Advisory Committee to discuss the upcoming fiscal year 2027 budget.

Select Board Chair Richard Chaffee said many department budgets were level funded.

According to the Advisory Committee, the elementary school's budget increase was poised to be

increased by 5.4%, but that number now sits at a 3.87% increase. They said the school took a gamble on funding coming through by October to lower the budget, but if that funding does not come through, there will be staff cuts.

Some other budget increases mentioned by Town Accountant Laurie Bartkus were retirement, which is increased by \$75,000 and health insurance, which is up 30%. Another increase is the social security cost of

living adjustment, which is 2.8%, an increase that town employees will see in their paychecks.

The boards also reviewed requests, including a \$4,200 dollar request from the Town Clerk for records software. Another request that came in was the gas and plumbing inspector, who according to the boards is also employed in East Brookfield, and is requesting a \$7,000 salary in-

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Town presents information forums on override vote

WEST BROOKFIELD – The Board of Selectmen, Advisory Committee and West Brookfield's Financial Team held public meetings on Nov. 12, 2025, Dec. 4, 2025, and Jan. 5, 2026, to discuss the financial projections pertaining to the fiscal year 2027 budget.

What became apparent was that the town continues to have an increasing structural financial gap caused by revenues versus expenditures, according to a press release by Town Administra-

tor Theresa A. Cofske.

In the past the town has used one-time revenues to fill the gap (not a recommended practice) to go into town meeting with a "balanced" budget. However, as was forewarned by the Advisory Committee and the Town's Financial Consultant for the last six or seven years, supplementing the budget this way would prove to be unsustainable as those one-time revenues would be depleted over time, which has led to the decision to

propose an override.

The amount of the override being proposed is \$1,150,000. This amount covers the \$863,000 budget gap for FY 27, and the remaining \$280,000 addresses the FY 28 budget gap.

"We will be providing information through public information forums, printed materials, departmental budget presentations, town's cable access television chan-

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Keith Davies, coordinator of the Chicopee 4Rivers Watershed Council, gave the history of the council at the spring kickoff meeting held at the Palmer Historical Cultural Center this past Sunday

TURLEY PHOTOS BY PAULA OUIMETTE

Chicopee River Watershed looks to the future in 2026

Volunteers needed to continue watershed council

By Paula Ouimette

Editor

pouimette@turley.com

PALMER – The Chicopee 4Rivers Watershed Council held its spring kickoff meeting to reflect on the work that has been done to ensure the health of the area's rivers, and also to look ahead to the future.

Community members and volunteers joined Chicopee 4Rivers Watershed Council Coordinator Keith Davies and Events Coordi-

nator Jim Emerson at the Palmer Historical Cultural Center in Three Rivers on Sunday afternoon, close to where the rivers in the watershed meet up. These rivers include the Swift, Ware, Quaboag and Chicopee.

"They all meet right here within a half mile of each other," Davies said.

The Chicopee River Watershed is the largest in the commonwealth and the largest in the Connecticut River basin. Despite its geographic area, this watershed is often overlooked.

"It's the largest watershed in Massachusetts," Davies said. "It's also one of the least recognized in the state."

Davies said the council needs a dedicated core group of volunteers to keep a focus on the watershed, and continue to grow its mission.

"We need long term commitments and people to really engage," he said.

Water monitoring and restoration

Davies said the former watershed council, the Chicopee River Watershed Council, was inactive, and by 2014, he and others worked to revitalize it, and changed its name to Chicopee 4Rivers Watershed Council to encompass all of the local rivers.

In 2015, the council put a major focus on water quality sampling, with grant fund-

ing under the umbrella of the Connecticut River Conservancy. The council has also received financial support from various towns, in addition to Country Bank, the Lake Wickaboag Preservation Association and the Quaboag & Quacumquasit Lake Association.

"It largely relates to bacteria," Davies said of the water quality sampling. "The bacteria sampling is kind of that pulse...that annual physical. That's what the sampling is; it's really that check-up."

Water quality sampling is conducted at sites across the watershed from late spring

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- community -

School Committee heard about STEM program

By Ellenor Downer
edowner@turley.com

BARRE – Three Science Technology Engineering and Math students told the Quabbin Regional School District Committee on Feb. 12 about the One8 Foundation and the Massachusetts Learning Project they attended.

Kalina Dyer and Alyssa Ebert, both seniors and Brody Faucher, a junior, said this project in conjunction with Alynlam Pharmaceutical joined over 100 other schools to work as teams to solve a packaging issue for the pharmaceutical company. Two representatives from the company participated as well as engineers in the field acting as mentors.

Alynlam ships globally a drug product, which costs \$100,000 per syringe. Their product is used in the treatment of Amyloidosis, a rare heart condition.

The treatment, which is an injection, is shipped in a syringe with a plastic case. The product since it is a biological product must be kept between 2 C to 20 C. It quickly degrades if not kept at that temperature.

Some of the requirements of the packaging they came up with must prevent breakage, be recyclable and cost effect.

Each team would present their plan to a mentor. The mentor would make suggestions. They would work on those suggestions and present back to the mentor.

Then they presented their final solution to the company.

Dyer said, “[They] got to experience engineering in a real situation.”

Ebert said, “[They] got to think of other things such as cost.”

Faucher said [They] followed a “one step at a time” process. They came up with a solution of using aerogel sheets, which were light weight to keep the product within the required temperature range. The sheets were not that expensive and helped reduce shipping cost. The company currently uses gel freezer packs.

Student representatives

Student representatives Anna Metcalf and Ella Reeves, both juniors, said students were looking at course selections. They said some of the courses they were interested in might not run.

They asked why the school no longer provided the Virtual High School program. If VHS was available, students could take a course they wanted that the school did not offer.

QRSD Superintendent Colleen Mucha said the

state previously funded the program, but did not provide funding last year. She said funding for VHS was not included in the Governor’s budget this year. Mucha said the district might offer VHS for some of the course options dropped.

Reeves said she eats third lunch every day this term and she said by third lunch many of the lunch options are not available. The Superintendent will pass that information on to the food department.

Superintendent report

Mucha said 76% of those who responded to the strategic plan survey felt pride in the schools. She also said there were a lot of comments on transitions from elementary school to middle school and middle school to high school.

She said the district was working with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education on issuing a plan for an agricultural program. She said it would be collaborative with other schools to help the program be more sustainable.

She also said she hoped the house and senate budgets when received would provide more for K to 12 grades than the Governor’s budget.

She said there was no concrete plan for the Hard-

wick Elementary School boiler, one of two, which started leaking and was shut off. At present, only one of the boilers functions. The Oakham Center School boiler automatic control panel failed and that system has to be manually set.

She also gave an update on North Brookfield tuitioning high school students to either Quabbin or Quaboag School District. Sixty students school choice to the Quabbin District.

She said many in that town want to keep their high school and work at getting school choice students back to the high school.

School Committee member Dr. Richard Allen said North Brookfield got it “wrong and they should be looking at what was the best education then look at how they can pay for it.”

Other business

The Superintendent reported there were three students looking into attending either Norfolk or Smith Vocational Agricultural schools. Two were from New Braintree and one from Oakham.

Tuition at these schools were \$30,000 per student plus transportation costs. These students have the right to attend and the towns must pay for their education.

Ecumenical Easter Sunrise Service at Old Sturbridge Village

STURBRIDGE – The annual Ecumenical Easter Sunrise Service will be held at Old Sturbridge Village on Sunday, April 5 at 6 a.m.

The service is open to the public.

According to The Federated Church of Sturbridge and Fiskdale’s pastor, the Rev. David W. Cote, seven local faith communities will gather at the original Baptist Meetinghouse located at the end of the Common at Old Sturbridge Village.

Also participating in this year’s service are the faith communities from Bethlehem Lutheran Church (Sturbridge), St. Anne/St. Patrick Catholic Church (Fiskdale), Brookfield Congregational Church (Brookfield), Elm Street Congregational Church (Southbridge), Holy Trinity Church (Southbridge), and St. Joseph Church (Charlton).

“The sunrise service is a simple but meaningful way to begin Easter,” said Cote. “I believe that this Sunrise Service is a representation of Christ’s love for us all. We come together as one body, as the sun rises to celebrate the hope that Easter brings. All are welcome to join us.”

Those planning to attend should enter the Village through the security gate at the top of the parking lot and proceed to the Meetinghouse on the Common. Attendees are encouraged to dress appropriately for the weather.

Food and drink are not permitted, except for bottled water. Old Sturbridge Village will not be open for touring during the event and restrooms will not be available. Guests are asked to leave the Village directly following the service.

St. Aloysius Catholic School to hold Open House on April 6

HARDWICK – St. Aloysius Catholic School is hosting an Open House on Monday, April 6, from 3-5 p.m.

Prospective families are encouraged to visit the school, located at 52 Church St. in Gilbertville, where they can tour the classrooms, meet the teachers and learn more about the

rich, faith-filled educational experiences that await.

For more information, please call the school and speak to Roberta McQuaid, Enrollment Coordinator, at 413-477-1268. Or apply on line at <https://www.staloy-siuses.com/join-our-family/application/>.

Ham radio club meeting to be held March 31

WEST BROOKFIELD – Local amateur radio operators and the public are invited to the next Quaboag Valley Amateur Radio Club meeting, March 31 at 6:30 p.m. at the West Brookfield Senior Center, 73 Central St.

This month’s program features Smitty KC1IKA, who serves as a Net Control Station (NCS) for ARES, Skywarn, and CERT – roles that require staying on the air when conditions are at their worst.

Smitty will share a behind-the-scenes look at

how he prepares for storms, power outages, and field deployments. His presentation covers the radios he relies on, the battery and solar systems he built, and the reasoning behind his equipment choices. He’ll also discuss situational awareness techniques and multiple methods for maintaining communication when the grid goes down.

Whether you’re involved in emergency communications or simply enjoy operating portable from parks, summits, or Field Day sites, you’ll come away with prac-

tical ideas you can apply to your own setup. All are welcome to attend.

For more information about the club, upcoming events, or licensing opportunities, visit www.QVARC.com.

The club also will be having a VE session for any hams looking to upgrade or newcomers looking to test for the first time. The exam fee is \$15. Session starts at 5:30 p.m. Questions? Please email Peter at pbaldrachi@charter.net.

Troop 163 to hold waffle dinner fundraiser

STURBRIDGE – Troop 163 will hold a fundraiser waffle dinner on Saturday, April 11, from 4-7 p.m. at the Bethlehem Lutheran Church, 345 Main St.

Waffles, toppings, and sausages will be served, and gluten-free waffles will be available. No tickets are required – pay what you can.

There will also be a silent auction with themed baskets, and Bluey and Bingo will be there for photos.

Troop 163 is a Scouting America troop for girls ages 11-17. The troop is based in Sturbridge but has members across southern Worcester County. Please email troop163sturbridge@gmail.com with any questions.



Submitted photo: The annual Easter egg hunt at Lucy Stone Park in Warren will be held on Saturday, April 4.

Easter egg hunt at Lucy Stone Park

WARREN – The annual Easter egg hunt will be held at Lucy Stone Park on Saturday, April 4 with a rain date of April 11.

Egg hunts will be organized by age group with children ages 5-7 starting at 10:30 a.m.; ages 8-10 start-

ing at 10:45 a.m.; and ages 4 and under starting at 11 a.m. Please bring your own Easter basket.

There will be prizes, an Easter raffle, refreshments and a chance to have your photo taken with the Easter Bunny.

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Celtic Celebrations

All things Irish celebrated at OSV

By Ryan Drago
Staff Writer
rdrago@turley.com

STURBRIDGE – Old Sturbridge Village held their Celtic Celebration program during the month of March.

Visitors learned about Scottish and Irish heritage, and the ways it shaped 19th century New England. Celtic Celebrations featured music, dancing, crafting, magic, games, and a lot more.

Throughout the day, the historic village had various activities for guests to explore, including a fun hands-on craft for the kids. The craft was held in the David Wight Gallery.

Residents of the Fitch House were teaching guests about Mountmellick Work, an Irish white embroidery that brings nature to life through raised and textured stitches. The residents kept busy by mixing Irish and New England traditions of embroidery and made bedspreads, table covers, and scarves.

Mountmellick embroidery is known for having floral designs on white cotton or a satin-based fabric.

In the kitchen was Danielle preparing some Irish puffs. The recipe takes time to learn, but Danielle was confident as the fire was going in the Fitch House and her cookware was prepped.

Guests got to meet Irish cabinetmaker, Brendan of West Cork, Ireland at the cabinetmaking shop. Brendan built and taught about the different styles and forms of furniture in early 19th century Ireland and New England.

One of Brendan's designs was a small-scale model of an Irish settle, or bench. This bench features a tall back and helps prevent heat from escaping and serves as a space to sleep. Some settles are designed to flip back to become a table.

Another project was a stick chair, also known as a Gibson or Hedge Chair. These chairs can be made

from various trees including hickory, elm and yew.

This was Brendan's first time attending Celtic Celebrations at Old Sturbridge Village. One of his most enjoyed experiences was using antique tools to design these furniture pieces that were common in the early 19th century for both Ireland and New England.

History and folklore are familiar in Celtic life, including the history of sacred trees. A lot of Celtic mythology is tied to different trees and was shared by one historian inside the Richardson House.

A "deep rooted belief" in Celtic history is a lot of trees are considered religious symbols. Cutting down these trees are considered utterly forbidden and resulted in a fine or some form of punishment.

During the end of the Roman Empire, the Romans burned many of these sacred trees as they tried to occupy Celtic lands. This moment in history, however, didn't stop tree worship from living on.

There are five great trees of ancient Ireland, an oak, a yew, and several ash trees.

A yew is a sturdy evergreen and has bright berries. A yew tree does have toxic elements to it and in Celtic folklore, it is known as the tree associated with death.

The ash tree is also big in Norse mythology, and the wood from an ash is considered a charm against evil. The historian mentioned the berries from a mountain ash is associated to compel a witch to reveal themselves.

Alder trees are known to turn from white to red if harmed or cut down. Blackthorn is known for being a protector for humans, but in Celtic mythology, cutting down a blackthorn tree has disastrous consequences.

Handouts telling the story of the foxglove were in the Richardson House. This beautiful but poisonous plant known in Celtic folklore was considered unlucky to have in a household.

The plant was brought to New England by European settlers and foxglove was soon introduced to be-



Dancers from the Inishfree School of Irish Dancing performed inside the Gebhardt Barn at Old Sturbridge Village during Celtic Celebrations.

TURLEY PHOTOS BY RYAN DRAGO



Shelley Otis performed on the harp inside the Bullard Tavern. Otis played the familiar Irish tune, "Brian Boru's March".



Danielle cooked some delicious Irish puffs inside the Fitch House kitchen.

ing used for herbal remedies. Later in history, foxglove became a component of heart medicines.

Guests would then follow the historian on a tour through the village stopping at various tree spots.

Music was big in Scottish and Irish heritage and was a popular feature during Celtic Celebrations. Musician

Shelley Otis performed a selection of harp music at the Bullard Tavern. The first song she played was "Raglan Road".

During her program, Story of the Celtic Harp, many guests asked questions about the strings and the history of the harp in Irish culture. Surprisingly, the harp was outlawed by the English monarchy.

The instrument was viewed as a symbol of resistance and would eventually survive in history despite the English attempts to try and eradicate the harp from the world.



Uilleann Pipes Le Cheile performed Irish music in the Center Meetinghouse.

Another beautifully played song by Otis was a song about an Irish king, who was a well accomplished harpist. The song is called "Brian Boru's March".

At the Center Meetinghouse, traditional Irish music was being played with pipes, fiddles, and other popular Irish instruments by the Uilleann Pipes Le Cheile. The Sonorous Scotch Singers also performed at the Meetinghouse and taught visitors about Scottish musicians of the 1830s.

The Gebhardt Barn at Old Sturbridge Village was the home of dancing and music. Guests witnessed the lively reels and jigs performed by the dancers of the Inishfree School of Irish Dancing.

More magic arrived at the barn's stage as Celtic magicians Daniel GreenWolf and Bella performed a mafic show, starring a slightly mad Irishman.

The Village Blacksmith forged cookware inspired by early 19th century Celtic blacksmiths.



Newborn lambs arrived at the village during Celtic Celebrations.



A small-scale model of an Irish settle, crafted by Brendan of West Cork, Ireland.



Seed program is back at East Brookfield library

EAST BROOKFIELD – The seed program is back for another exciting growing year at the East Brookfield Public Library, 122 Connie Mack Way, either come or call the library with the number of the items you would like.

The seeds are re-bagged, so if you need growing instructions see Carolann.

Did you know she was named Massachusetts Agri-

culturist of the year by the National Grange in 2000 and has won a number of vegetable growing competitions including the heaviest tomato contest and the heaviest pumpkin at the Big E. She has been named

Grand Champion in the vegetable contest at the Big E 19 out of the 26 times she has entered.

She knows her vegetables and is more than willing to answer any questions you may have.

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

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- opinion -



When will I get full credit for delaying my SS retirement?

Dear Rusty:
The time is nearing that I want to move from my current Social Security survivor benefit to my own SS retirement benefit at 70 years of age.

I have been looking more deeply into the application of Delayed Retirement Credits and I have read that DRCs accumulated in the year that I turn 70, September 2026, will not be effective when I actually turn 70. Rather, those DRCs won't be paid until the following year. Can you verify that this is correct? I presume that if the DRCs are not applied at age 70, that they will be applied sometime after the first of the year and any increase will be paid retroactively.

Signed: Retiring Soon

Dear Retiring Soon:
The Delayed Retirement Credits you speak of have accumulated at the rate of 8% per year (.667% per month) since you reached your SS Full Retirement Age, which means that at age 70 your monthly SS benefit will be about 129% of the amount you were entitled to at your FRA of 66 years plus 4 months.

However, your understanding of how DRCs will work for you at age 70 is not correct. If you claim for your Social Security retirement benefits to begin in September 2026 (the month you turn 70) you will receive all DRCs, you have accumulated up to that point in time. In other words, you will get your full age 70 benefit amount immediately, including all DRCs earned until then, effective with your first SS retirement payment, which you will get in October 2026. What you have likely read about is that DRCs

work a bit differently for those who claim SS after their full retirement age, but before their 70th birthday month.

For those who claim mid-year but before age 70, only DRCs earned through the end of the preceding year are initially applied and DRCs earned during the current year are not paid until the following January. This results in a loss of some SS benefit between the time benefits start and the following January, because only the amount earned as of the end of the previous year are first paid, and the full number of DRCs earned during the current year are applied in January.

But, as is the case for you, when benefits are claimed to start in the month you reach 70 years of age, all DRCs earned up to the month of your 70th birthday are immediately applied. Congratulations on selecting a strategy which will maximize your monthly Social Security benefit.

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.

Plants to celebrate Easter and then some

It's hard to believe that in just a little over a week we will be celebrating the Easter holiday!

I am sure that many readers will be either receiving the Easter lily as a gift or purchasing one for someone else. Its pure white, intensely fragrant blooms are emblems of new life and hope for the future – I can think of no better symbol of the holiest day on the Christian calendar than this one.

If you find yourself in the market for an Easter lily this week, select one that is deep green and has more buds than open flowers. It should be proportionate in height and not top heavy.

If outdoor temperatures remain chilly, be sure to cover the plant well upon exiting the store, and don't leave it in the car while you do other errands!

Once home, the Easter lily prefers temperatures around 65 degrees and bright but indirect light. Water thoroughly, but allow the soil to dry out in between waterings.

Be careful for the decorative foil or plastic wrapper – sometimes water will pool in the bottom, keeping the soil too moist. If you like how the wrapper looks, poke some holes at the base and place the pot on a shallow saucer to catch any water that drips out. Dump the saucer as needed. You can also remove the wrapper and allow the pot to drain in the sink for a few minutes after each watering.

To prolong the life of your plant, be sure to remove the anthers before the pollen ripens. This will also prevent the pollen from staining the pure white flowers and your nose!

As flowers start to wither, cut them off – this will keep it looking its best and redirect energy back to the bulb.

Once the soil warms, the Easter lily can be planted outside in full sun and well-drained soil. Sink the bulb with foliage and stem attached, to a depth of three inches and water well.

After the original foliage dies, cut it back to the soil

surface. New growth will soon emerge. Lilies benefit from a layer of mulch to keep their roots cool. Although they are quite hardy, do provide some winter protection in the form of straw, evergreen boughs or the like.

With any luck you will be delighted with big, beautiful white flowers next summer. Although lilies bloom in spring under the

season but then take a few years off-time to recharge before blooming again.

If you wish to plant your bulbs outside, remove spent flowers as they wither and allow the foliage to brown. At this point stop watering and let the bulbs dry out. They can be planted outdoors in spring, or saved until the fall for planting as you normally would.

Sometimes I get the job done in spring, although it does feel odd to be doing it then, simply so I won't forget to plant them in the fall!

Primroses are plentiful at florist shops and nurseries this time of year as well, and they too make great Easter gifts. Even though they are usually sold in small pots, it's hard to miss their brightly colored flowers poking up through basal foliage.

They come in almost every color of the rainbow.

Many types of primrose make great garden plants; check the label to make sure the one you purchase is hardy before planting it outdoors. I have had a clump of primroses blooming for years now that started out as a potted plant.

An inexpensive but cute gift idea is to insert a pot of primroses into a basket and fill in around it with Easter "grass," this way it can be enjoyed as a centerpiece before it makes its way to the garden.

These days I prefer green paper "grass" purchased at the craft store, or make your own by use of a shredder. It is less problematic for pets.

As you plan for Easter, make these plants part of your celebration, and enjoy them in the garden thereafter!

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.



controlled conditions of the greenhouse, they bloom naturally during the summer months.

Another good and widely available option for Easter gift giving is a pot of spring bulbs.

With tulips, daffodils and hyacinths to choose from, there will no doubt be a fragrance and flower color that appeals to you. Be sure to choose them in bud, rather than full flower because warm household temperatures will cause them to burst into bloom in no time.

To maximize indoor bloom time, enjoy in your living space during the day, but move to a basement, spare room or garage each night where temperatures are cooler, but not freezing!

The great thing about forced bulbs is that they can be enjoyed in the house this Easter and next year in the garden.



Daffodils and hyacinth are the most dependable repeat bloomers. Tulips (depending on the type) may bloom great the following



By Ellenor Downer



Male yellow-bellied sapsucker

An Oakham resident saw a yellow-bellied sapsucker also known as yellow-bellied woodpecker at her suet feeder earlier this month.

They have a long pointed bill and the typical black and white feather pattern of the downy and hairy woodpeckers. Sapsuckers are larger than downy woodpeckers and smaller than hairy

woodpeckers. The yellow feathers are muted and not that visible as the resident noted. They also have vertical, white wing patches. Both adult males and females have a red forehead. However the male has a red throat and the female, a white throat. Their young have brownish coloration, but they do have the white wing patches

As the name sapsucker implies, these woodpecker drill holes, row after row, to get at the sap found in many native species of trees such as aspen, birch (paper and yellow), elm, eastern hemlock, sugar maple, etc. in springtime. Other birds such as ruby-throated hummingbirds, bats and insects also drink from these "sap taps."

People who burn wood most likely have seen the neat rows of holes drilled by the sapsucker in some of the wood from their pile.

The drumming of the

yellow-bellied sapsucker is very distinctive, consisting of a roll with clearly separated taps at the end and sometimes at the beginning "tap-tap trrrrrrrrrrrr tatta-tat-tat-tat." Both sexes drum. Ritual tapping at the lower rim of the nest hole is a rather common acoustic signal.

The yellow-bellied is the only sapsucker seen in the eastern half of the U.S. and across the northern forests. These sapsuckers are migratory, which is a fairly rare trait for woodpeckers. They live in a variety of habitats from low-lying floodplains

to mountainous forests at 10,000 feet. Their breeding range extends from Alaska to Newfoundland and south along the Appalachians. They winter across the East from New Jersey west to Texas and all the way south to Panama.

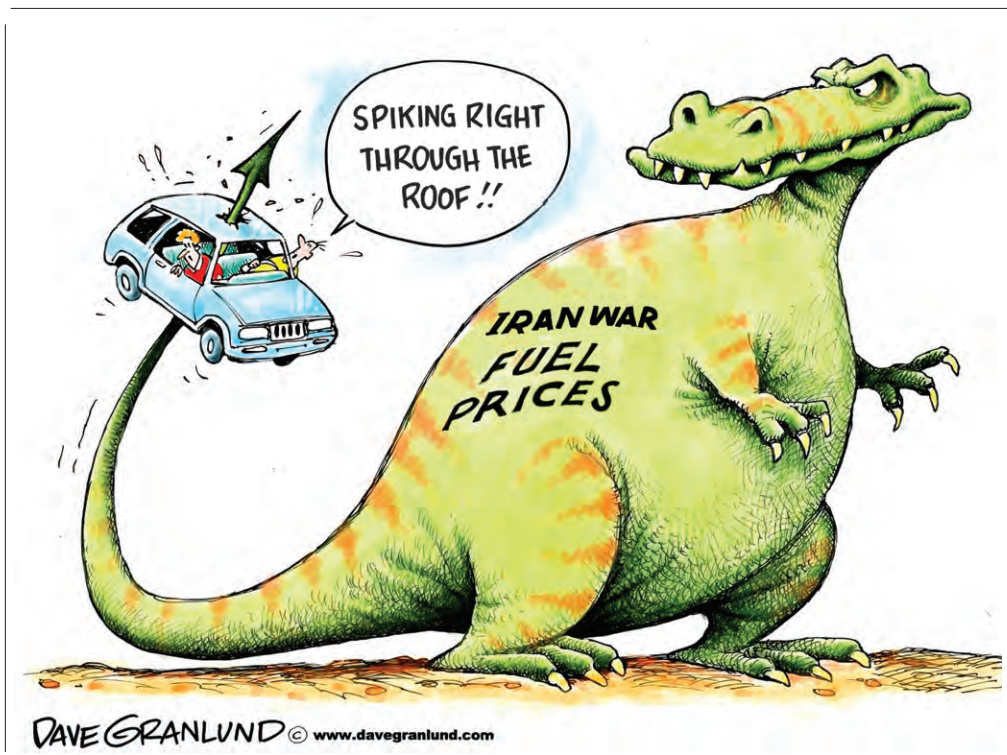
A common breeding display involves males pointing their bills skyward as they showcase their red throat patch for an interested female. Though both sexes are involved with excavating nesting cavities; males do most of the work. Occasionally, sapsuckers visit bird feeders for suet.

Bald eagle and turkey vultures

Early this month, a Worthington resident sent an email. He said he had a "lucky and thrilling sighting of an eagle, white tail obvious, circling on high with three turkey vultures and he called it "intra species cooperation" or more likely, the eagle using the vulture's ability to find carrion.

I saw three turkey vultures along Route 122 in Barre near Vernon Avenue on March 16. I saw two turkey vultures in Oakham on

See BACKYARD PAGE 8



DAVE GRANLUND © www.davegranlund.com

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Quaboag Current

- community -

Quabbin Regional High School honor roll

BARRE – Quabbin Regional High School, 800 South St., announces the second quarter honor roll.

Grade Nine, High Honors

Kalina Bassett, Hazel Carter, Lauren Colleton, Adalyn Cranston, Maya Faucher, Gemma Mullins, William O'Neill, Whitney Reeves, Chloe Richardson, Ava Rogowski, Madisyn Shotwell, Addison Surprenant, Robyn Waltz and Jack Wynne.

Grade Nine, Honors

Emma Ackert, Shahad Alshujairi, Alison Baptiste, Caleb Conway-Dias, Joseph Cook, Brynn Dunphy, Tyler Ellis, Silas Flint, Lindsay Fors, Nathan Gingras, Madison Haley, Sawyer Harmon, Reese Jamieson, Sarah Jean-Francois, Allie

Lipiec, Sage McQueston, Greyson Mullins, Nathaniel Perry, Kimberly Riendeau, Jillian Rigney, Zoey Salvadore, Michael Tabares, Robert Tobin, Mackenzie Toupin, John Tyler and Dylan Woodward.

Grade 10, High Honors

Chloe Howarth, Ava Sobol and Benjamin Thompson.

Grade 10, Honors

Finnegan Baker, Brent Benoit, Anyiah Bergeron, Abraham Brown, Josephine Buck, Eleanor Carroll, Nicholas Carroll, Brian Colleton, Aiden Crane, Kayla Curran, Maya Edouard, Arianna Fagnoli, Audrey Faucher, Sydney Freeman, Daniella Gaudreault, Jesse Grillo, Samuel Jamieson, Matthew Labrousse,

Alison LaRoche, Emma Lindsey, Max Melad, Gianna Montalvo, Niki Nikakhlagh, John Orsini, Ellie Poulin, Moira Powers, Juliet Priestley, Hailey Stoll, Silas Stukuls Barrieau, Ryleigh Sullivan, Erin Trottier and Catherine Tucker.

Grade 11, High Honors

Jacob Bassett, Madeleine Boisselle, Tess Dunphy, Kathryn Ford, Sadie Kennan, Ella Reeves and Brendan Welch.

Grade 11, Honors

Skyler Bard, Halo Bissonnette, Mackenzie Casey, Isabel Doty, Leah Doucette, Katelyn Durant, Quinlan Fauteux, Grace Flamand, Anna Hautala, Lilian Hinckley, Kirk Kaelin II, Jillian LaMontagne, Audrey Laursen, Ailey Majoy,

Scarlett Merriman, Anna Metcalf, Mia Miville, Kevin Njenga, Charlotte Oliver, Jennavicia Roseberry, Emma Ryan, Sienna Shaw, Brady Skinner, Ellary White, Carlo Zolla and Leanna Zou.

Grade 12, High Honors

Aidan Mahoney and Madelyn Stauder.

Grade 12, Honors

Aaron Bodine, Owen Breuer, Tricia Bruso, Troy Budreau, Kylee Costello, Mia Ducos, Kalina Dyer, Hemily Halaby, Madeleine Hardy, Adelaide Harmon, Grace Manna, Elizabeth Matheson, Hunter McQueston, Adrian Parker, Madeleine Rigney, Cameron Vega, Andrew Warfield, Thomas Wigglesworth, Bianca Wilder and Richard Wilson.

Solo/Duet poetry and music series starts in April

WEST BROOKFIELD – Solo/Duet, a poetry and music series at the Merriam-Gilbert Public Library will be held on Tuesday evenings in April starting at 6 p.m.

Each evening will feature poetry readings that will book-end a set of chamber jazz music.

This program is made possible by the West Brookfield Cultural Council as supported by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, in celebration of National Poetry and National Jazz Month.

Performances are as follows: April 7, bassist Jerry Wilfong and percussionist-trumpeter Dick

Hummel with poets Glenn D'Alessio and Susan Roney-O'Brien; April 14, bassist Jerry Wilfong, guitarist Mitch Seidman, and Chet Williamson, on harmonica with poets Clair Degutis and Jim Beschta; April 21, bassist Jerry Wilfong, guitarist Rich Falco and trombonist Rich Ardizzone, trombone with poets Judith Ferrarra and Jonathan Blake; and April 28, solo bass recital by Jerry Wilfong with poets Beth Sweeney and Stephen Campiglio.

Free and open to all.

Please stop by or call the library at 508-867-1410 to reserve your seat.

FARMERS MARKET FROM PAGE 1

should keep their eyes open for the Early Bird launch of their Winter CSA 2026-2027 farm share program. Signing up early will give you access to the Early Bird discount and the option to sign up for their extremely popular (but extremely limited) Winter Greens CSA add-on. Visit their website (StillLifeFarm.com) or follow them on social media (FB/Insta @stilllifefarm) for updates.

Halley said their 6-year-

old son Kip has an exciting new venture of this own – Kip's Pumpkin Garden.

"Look for him this fall when he pops-up to sell his awesome specialty pumpkin crop," she said. "Other exciting news – our sister farm, Stillman's Farm, will be joining the West Brookfield Summer Farmers Market for the 2026 season! They will offer the best fruits and vegetables around and carry many of Still Life Farm's summer niche crops like our diverse offering of delicious specialty fruits."

Stillman's Farm accepts SNAP/HIP, WIC and Senior coupons, credit/debit, and cash.

Good luck Still Life and have a lovely summer.

On this Wednesday, all the usual suspects were on hand for the late season meeting.

As one entered the church hall, to the right was Robyn Scott's Blair House Blooms with the brilliant colors of her tulips.

Next, Gail of Autumn Leaf Farm, came with locally grown varieties of mushrooms and eggs from her

Golden Comet chickens.

After Gail, we came to Linda Fuchs of Flourish Farms with a full complement of microgreens, and ginger as well as turmeric as she gets ready for the coming outside market season.

Turning the corner there is Ginger Kelly and Kelly Homestead Apiary with all things honey and wax.

Then, if you want to keep your microbiome in shape, Ryan Laurie had Bucha Bros Kombucha to do just that.

Rich Laba and Farm46 were there with high-quality

bacon and pork products as well as free range eggs.

Turning the corner, Golden Grain Artisanal Bread were found with their sourdough and other flavorful loaves as usual.

JARS Café & Bakery, have returned with pastries soups and their "gifts in a jar."

The woodworkers were next. The Chairman of The Board, woodworking artisan, Wayne Boulette, known for his cutting boards and other examples of craftsmanship, and Bernie Wilson of B&D Enterprises. Ware

native Wilson makes pens and other stuff out of recycled pallets as he is "too cheap to buy wood."

Next is the man to see if you're having pancakes. Thompson's Maple Farm has your maple syrup and also great ice cream.

Last but not least, by the door is Joy Hinton and her Joy of Beans Coffee, with beans sourced from all over the planet.

So, we have one more week, and then it will be spring and we shall be thinking about the outdoors.

CANDIDATES FROM PAGE 1

golf tournament. He's also served on the Recreation Committee.

Phillips is the vice-chair of the Community Preservation Committee. He is also active in youth sports and has been a coach.

Phillips works as an educator, and currently is the Director of Technology in Shrewsbury. He said he understands the needs of schools and how funds are spent in a fiscally responsible way.

He said there is a national discourse around politics, and it is important to build trust at the local level.

"The time that you spend volunteering, the time that you spend getting to know your neighbors, I think that's what makes our town special," he said. "We build trust through transparency."

Phillips said he will use his IT background to ensure information is more readily available on the town's website.

Sturbridge (Burgess) School Committee candidates

There are three candidates seeking two seats on the Sturbridge (Burgess) School Committee.

Mary Bridget Burns is seeking reelection to the school committee after serving her first term. She moved to Sturbridge in 2012 and has an extensive career background in education.

"It's been an honor and I'm really excited to continue for a second term if you'll have me," she said.

Burns said it was the strength and quality of the school district that drew her and husband to the town.

"I want to be on the committee again for three reasons, the same reasons that drew me to it in the first place," she said. "The first is communication – it is important to me that you all know, as your representative, what's happening on the committee... Two, I want to bring an advocacy voice to this... your tax dollars are not coming back to Sturbridge... and third, I want to apply my knowledge as an

educator to keep the schools running smoothly, to advocate, and for good stewardship."

Burns spoke about the challenges of rural schools, and the need for funding.

"We are entitled to a lot more than we are receiving," she said of rural school funding.

Candidate Amanda Hellyar said she began her career in education in South Africa, and also rural Louisiana and Mississippi, as well as Springfield schools and Tantasqua Regional High School. She was also a curriculum specialist in Lawrence and UMass Lowell through Teach for America.

"I'm very passionate about education, education policy," she said.

Hellyar is currently the District Director for the Worcester and Hampden Senate District.

"I do have a pulse on what's going on at the state level, but I also have a passion for being a bridge for people," she said.

Hellyar said Burgess Elementary School is not receiving rural aid like Tantasqua is. Incumbent Whitney Goodwin has had a career in education since 2008, starting as a school counselor. She is now the guidance department head at Worcester Technical High School.

Goodwin said she has had the opportunity to work on grant-funded programming in her career, as well as Early College.

"All these experiences kind of showcased my passion for education," Goodwin said. "Early education is very important to me. I believe we have a very strong education system in Sturbridge from elementary all the way to Tantasqua. I know a lot of people move here to be a part of the system."

Goodwin said a strong education system builds foundations for future student success. She said it is important to advocate for that system at both the state and federal level.

"Funding for education is just going to become more

challenging so it's very important that we are able to advocate for that," she said. "We're going to have to do more with less and get creative in certain situations. It's very important to have people on the school committees who know the needs of the students, the needs of the administrators, the needs of the teachers and who can understand what specific things are going to make students more successful."

Goodwin said she understands these needs, which is why she is seeking reelection.

Tantasqua School Committee candidates

There are two candidates running for two seats on the Tantasqua School Committee, Karen Kowal and Edward Goodwin. Kowal was unable to attend the Meet the Candidates forum.

Goodwin said this will be his third term on the school committee and he is "more excited now than I've ever been."

He highlighted some changes at the high school, including the development of a computer science program.

Goodwin said the administration at the high school is the best it's ever been, and he credited Superintendent Deb Boyd for her work across the school district.

Library Trustees candidates

There are three candidates running for three seats for Library Trustees; Jessica Colati, Sandra Gibson Quigley and Elisa Krochalnyckyj. Krochalnyckyj was unable to attend the Meet the Candidates forum.

Quigley said this is her third term as Library Trustee. She worked at Old Sturbridge Village and is a re-

tired social studies teacher.

She has served on the Finance Committee, Burgess Elementary School Building Committee and Planning Board in addition to Library Trustee.

"We're responsible for the custody and management of the library," Quigley said. "I think our library is really special."

Colati said this would also be her third term as Library Trustee. In her career she works as a librarian at another library.

Colati said the preservation of the library's building is the focus of the trustees, including modernization efforts.

"We're growing out of it," she said of the building. "Our building is wonderful...but it is a challenge to the staff every day to do everything they want to do."

Recreation Committee candidates

There are two candidates running for two seats on the Recreation Committee; Jeffrey Shapiro and Krysta Crouse. Crouse was unable to attend the Meet the Candidates forum.

Incumbent Shapiro has served since 2020 and is seeking his third term on the committee.

Shapiro said he looks at the recreation needs of all residents, including youth and adults.

"I look forward to serving again," he said.

Board of Health candidates

Incumbent Linda Cocalis is seeking reelection to the Board of Health, where she has served since 2008. She is the sole candidate for a three-year seat on the board.

Cocalis spoke about the changes that have occurred on the board since she first started, and the progress that has been made. She spoke about the board's role in landfill monitoring, public health emergencies, and more.

"There's been a lot of great things," she said. "I'm really excited, we have an awesome board."

Karen Errichetti and Sarah McGee are seeking election to fill a two-year seat on the Board of Health.

Errichetti has a background in public health and works to assess the health

needs of communities. She is also experienced in finance.

"I want to be on the Board of Health because I feel like I love helping people and I want to make a difference," she said.

McGee said she is running for the Board of Health because she is semiretired and has a background in health as a physician. She also has a master's degree in public health.

In her role as a physician, McGee has worked to build trusting relationships with patients and their families; something she would also work to do if elected to the board.

Other positions

Other candidates seeking election are Moira McGrath, Board of Assessors; Constantine Economos, Constable; and Elizabeth Banks, Zoning Board of Appeals.

Election information

The Annual Town Election will be held on Monday, April 13 at the Sturbridge Host Hotel with polling hours from 6:30 a.m.-8 p.m. The polling location is in the ballroom this year.

Town of West Brookfield

The Town of West Brookfield will be holding several public information forums over the next month relative to the FY2027 Budget gap.

The dates of the public information sessions are as follows:

Public Information Forums Schedule:

Wednesday, April 1st, 2026, Time: 6:30pm
Location: West Brookfield Elementary School,
89 North Main Street, West Brookfield

Monday, April 13, 2026, Time: 6:30pm
Location: Senior Center,
73 Center Street, West Brookfield

Monday, April 27th, 2026, Time: 6:30pm
Location: West Brookfield Elementary School,
89 North Main Street, West Brookfield

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- public notices -

TOWN OF BROOKFIELD PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

In accordance with M.G.L. Chapter 40, Section 15C and Chapter 87, Section 3 of M.G.L., a Public Hearing will be held at 7 p.m., on **Thursday, April 2, 2026 at Town Hall Banquet Room, 6 Central Street, Brookfield, MA.** Anyone wishing to comment may do so at this time.

The Select Board, acting as Tree Warden, has posted the following tree to be removed:

On 18 Common Street, a Norway Maple tree located between the Merrick Public Library and the Library Annex. Removing the tree would make it possible to install a 16' x 16' parking area to provide ADA-accessible park-

ing for the Wood Room/Meeting Room and Barn program space. Without this improvement, ADA-accessible parking at 18 Common Street would not be feasible.

This notice is also posted on the Town Website; the Brookfield Town Clerk's Office, 6 Central Street, Brookfield, MA; the Brookfield Post Office on Route 9; and a local newspaper.

Brookfield Select Board selectmen@brookfieldma.us 03/20, 03/27/2026

Town of North Brookfield Notice of Public Hearing
The North Brookfield Planning Board will hold a public hearing on **Wednesday, April**

15, 2025 at 6:15PM at the Senior Center, 29 Forest St., North Brookfield, MA. Public opinion will be received for 32 Summer St., regarding a change from office use to residential use (Section IV.A.2.i.) per the North Brookfield Zoning Bylaws. The property is also in the Downtown Overlay District. Any person interested in being heard or seeking information should appear at the above stated time and place. A copy of the proposed permit application is on file in the office of the Town Clerk, 215 North Main St., No. Brookfield, MA.

William King, Chair
03/27, 04/03/2026

- obituary -

Robert J. St. George, 96

HAMPDEN/WARREN – Robert J. St. George, 96, died on Tuesday morning, March 17, 2026, in the Vantage Health and Rehabilitation Center in Hampden.

He was just one month shy of his 97th birthday. Robert lived a very long and well fulfilled life, remaining active up until just a few years ago.

He leaves his loving and caring sons, Christopher St. George and his wife Mary of East Longmeadow, and Nicholas St. George of New Jersey, along with one grandson, Aidan St. George. He was predeceased by his brothers, Warren and Walter and sister Mary. Robert is survived by his sister Jane.

He was born in Ware and grew up in Warren, son of the late Charles W. and Mary E. (Bullock) St. George.

Following graduation from Warren High School, Robert was drafted into the United States Army, serving in the Korean War.

After his service, Robert graduated from Clark



University in Worcester with a Bachelor of Science Degree and a Master's Degree in Education. He then earned a Master Degree in Science from the University of North Carolina.

He was passionate about science and teaching, and was a beloved Biology teacher at Horace Greeley High School in Chappaqua, New York for 27 years, prior to retiring. Newer and older students remember Mr. St. George with admiration. After he retired, Robert moved back to his roots in Warren, where he enjoyed farming. He grew vegetables, and raised goats, chickens and turkeys on his farm.

DEATH NOTICE

St. George, Robert J.
Died March 17, 2026
Services March 26, 2026

Robert held his Catholic faith close, and believed that his long and well fulfilled life was attributed to God.

A Funeral Mass for Robert was held on Thursday, March 26, 2026, at 11 a.m. in Our Lady of Sacred Heart Church, 22 West Main St., in West Brookfield. A calling hour for visitation was held the same day from 9:30-10:30 a.m. in the Varnum Funeral Home, 43 East Main St., in West Brookfield. Burial will be in St. Paul Cemetery in Warren later in the spring.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made to EWTN (Eternal Word Television Network), which is a global Catholic Television, Radio and News Network at ewtn.com.

An online tribute page is available at varnumfuneral-home.com.

Massachusetts State Button Show to be held April 11

THREE RIVERS – Massachusetts State Button Society's spring meeting will be hosted by the Metropolitan and Monson Button Clubs on Saturday, April 11 at the AMVETS Post 74, 2159 Main St. in Three Rivers from 9 a.m.-3 p.m.

The public is invited to attend the day's activities and to purchase buttons and button related items from 9 a.m.-noon, and from 1:30-3 p.m. There

will be no button sales during the break from noon-1:30 p.m. as lunch, a business meeting, and auction will take place.

Morning visitors will be treated to coffee and refreshments provided by the hosting club; bring your own brown bag lunch, and dessert will be provided.

There is no admission fee, and all are welcome.

Brandon Sears earns degree from University of Maryland

ADELPHI, MD – Brandon Sears of Fiskdale, earned a Master of Science in cybersecurity technology from University of Maryland Global Campus in fall 2025. Sears was one of more than 6,400 students worldwide who earned degrees from UMGC in the fall 2025 term.

BROOKFIELD FROM PAGE 1

crease to reflect the earnings he makes in East Brookfield.

Other information presented was that the town has \$913,000 dollars in free cash, and is on track with revenue.

Insurance Advisory Committee

The Select Board appointed Bartkus to the Insurance Advisory Committee by unanimous decision.

Rice Corner Road Contracts

Jeff Howland, a representative from the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission, presented three contracts the Select

Board has to sign to move forward with a culvert replacement. He said the project is fully funded, and the culvert has to be replaced by June 30.

Howland said the project has approval from the Conservation Commission. The board elected to table signing the contracts until March 23.

Snow and ice deficit

The Select Board approved the Highway Department Superintendent Kyle Rutkowski's request to deficit spend \$35,000 in expense and \$30,000 dollars in wages. Bartkus said the Highway Department is now \$106,000 over bud-

get.

Highway liaison discussion

Chaffee said he added this item to the agenda because since the town has hired a full time town administrator in Bob Ayers, the highway liaison position should go to him. Chaffee said Rutkowski and Ayers meet frequently, and he does not hear much communication from the current highway liaison in Beth Coughlin.

Bruce Clarke, a member of the water department said Chaffee goes to the highway department many times a day, and is taking authority from Coughlin. Chaffee said he is not trying to take any power away from Coughlin.

Clarke also questioned how often is standard for a selectman to visit the water department, and Chaffee said it depends on projects happening.

Chaffee said the reason he goes to Rutkowski is to give him information, and help set him up for success in his position.

Select Board member Sarah Campbell said she has also had negative reactions to helping Rutkowski. Campbell said she helped him make a spreadsheet for

the budget, and alleged that Coughlin and Rutkowski said she had no reason to be at the Highway Department.

She said she has not been to the department in weeks to avoid that perception. The board eventually voted to rescind the position of highway liaison.

Town Hall improvement

The board discussed the Town Hall bell tower, which was quoted at \$21,000 to repair last year. Coughlin said it should be addressed because it is a structural repair.

Campbell suggested using the \$25,000 in the town hall improvement fund, and put it toward the bell tower. The board said they need two more quotes first.

Firearm reimbursement

The board voted not to reimburse a firearm, which the animal control officer requested they do, as Campbell cited the animal control officer is not allowed to carry a gun on Brookfield property by law. Chaffee said the quotes were in the range of \$110-\$125.

W BROOKFIELD FROM PAGE 1

nel and the town's website," Cofske said. "We will be holding several public informational forums over the next month."

Cofske said the purpose is to provide residents with factual information over the course of these meetings that will include but is not limited to the following:

- Explanation of Proposition 2 1/2
- Explanation of how the town's financial situation changed over the years
- Explanation of why the town/school can't operate within the existing 2.5% increase provided by Proposition 2 1/2
- Fact driven financial and comparison data
- Estimated annual tax impacts
- What do the two scenarios (override passes or override fails) provide or reduce
- Identify/explain long-term financial plans
- Spending measures implemented
- Revenue sources being explored
- Capital projects coming forward, the expected costs and how they will be funded
- Exemptions/abatements

for seniors, veterans or low-income residents

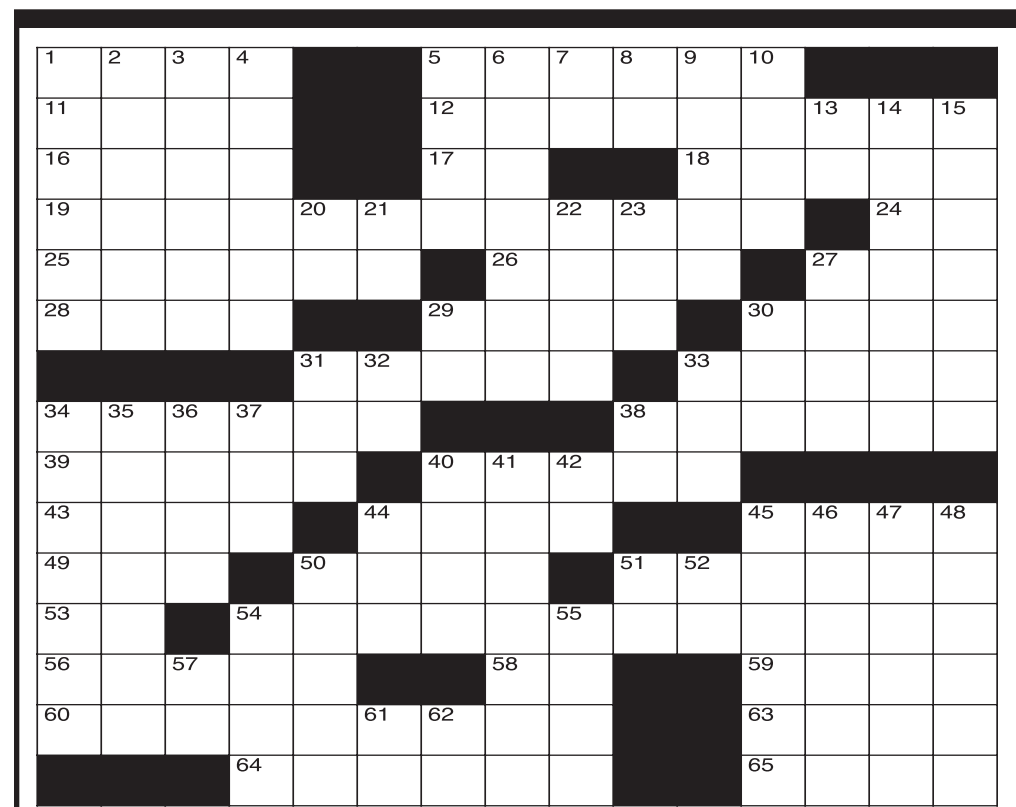
• Questions and answers
The materials prepared and presented to the residents of West Brookfield are meant to provide unbiased, fact-based information. The sole intent is to provide them with information to necessitate an informed decision that they are comfortable with.

"We expect the presentations to last up to an hour, followed by a question and answer session," Cofske said.

If you were unable to ask questions during the forums, you may email those to BOS@wbrookfield.com. The town will post the questions and answers, along with any updates or additional information. These can be accessed on the Town Administrator's page of the town's website www.wbrookfield.com.

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The town will post the questions and answers, along with any updates or additional information. These can be accessed on the Town Administrator's page of the Town's website at www.wbrookfield.com.



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|---|--|--|---------------------------------------|
| CLUES ACROSS | 34. Have an impact on | CLUES DOWN | 33. Partner to cheese |
| 1. "Bird of Paradise" constellation | 38. Violent disorder | 1. Some are "secret" | 34. Snack nuts |
| 5. Red Sox WS winner Bronson | 39. A French river | 2. Intestinal openings | 35. Quadruped's body part |
| 11. Whirl | 40. Early Mesoamerican civilization | 3. Distant planet | 36. Locate |
| 12. The State Dept. has a notable one | 43. Messenger | 4. Assembly possessing high legislative powers | 37. Pitching statistic |
| 16. Energy, style and enthusiasm | 44. Musician Clapton | 5. Genus of typical owls | 38. "___, myself and I" |
| 17. Part of the mind | 45. Ancient Greek sophist | 6. One with distinctively colored hair | 40. Utah city northwest of Provo |
| 18. Mountainous country | 49. Largest English dictionary (abbr.) | 7. Red cross | 41. Football players in the trenches |
| 19. Type of beverage | 50. Valley | 8. An alternative | 42. One who runs the show |
| 24. Atomic #109 | 51. A way to unwind | 9. Abominable snowmen | 44. Wood |
| 25. Opposite of falsities | 53. Atomic #93 | 10. About ear | 45. Performing artists |
| 26. Female sheep | 54. Recommending | 13. The opening letters | 46. Slang for a cut |
| 27. Rocky peak | 56. Indigo bush | 14. Feeling of regret | 47. More breathable |
| 28. Sensitive information sharing environment | 58. Larry and Curly's pal | 15. Atomic #39 | 48. Most crafty |
| 29. Ethnic group of Thailand | 59. Off-Broadway theater award | 20. Luteinizing hormone | 50. Provokes into action |
| 30. Patron saint of Rome Philip | 60. Fencers | 21. Atomic #55 | 51. University of Dayton |
| 31. Psychedelics | 63. Small Eurasian deer (pl.) | 22. Carries a debt | 52. Sodium |
| 33. Japanese pine | 64. Relating to songbirds | 23. Albanian monetary unit | 54. Large fish of the mackerel family |
| | 65. A way to assign | 27. Semitic abjad letter | 55. Not one |
| | | 29. Yes | 57. ___ and behold |
| | | 30. Negative | 61. Sports highlight show |
| | | 31. Earn a perfect score | 62. "The Great Lakes State" |
| | | 32. Connecticut | |

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Perfect day for a road race

Holyoke runs 49th holiday 10K

By Gregory A. Scibelli
gscibelli@turley.com

HOLYOKE – A warm and hot day is not ideal for running long distances, but give a harrier a 40-50-degree day, and it's the perfect environment make great time.

Louis Serafini, of Cambridge, experienced that as he completed a sub-30-minute 10K in the 49th running of the Holyoke St. Patrick's Day Road Race last Saturday afternoon. Serafini completed the hilly course throughout downtown Holyoke in 29:45. He had a great pace going, averaging 4:47 a mile with thousands of people cheering him on as he completed the course 50 seconds ahead of the runner-up.

Yankarlos Diaz was the second-place finisher. He comes from Manchester, CT. He completed the 6.3-

mile course in just 30:35.

This year's top female finisher was Rachel Schilkowsky. She comes from Providence, RI and placed 12th overall. She completed the course at 34:03, winning the race for the very first time.

Among local finisher, Monson's Matt Provost came in at 34:15. He had a pace of about 5:30 per mile.

According to the results provided by Presidential Timing, which took over the timing of the race last year, nearly 4,900 runners, male, female, and many children and teenagers, completed the 10K race.

In addition to the ideal temperature for running, the day was sun-splashed and beautiful, making for a great setting for the running of the race, which had more than 6,200 runners signed up.

The race included multiple waves of competitors, and also included a beautiful rendition of the Nation-



The runners are off in the 49th running of the Holyoke St. Patrick's Day Road Race.

TURLEY PHOTOS BY GREGORY A. SCIBELLI

al Anthem by a member of the Holyoke Grand Colleen Court, Bridie Bowler.

Crews in the city did an excellent job preparing for the race, getting the course prepared despite a lot of snowfall during the past couple of months.

While there were plenty of local runners, race results showed individual participate from all over New England, New York, and New Jersey. There were even some international runners.



Louis Serafini, of Cambridge, won the 10K race at 29:45.



Rachel Schilkowsky, of Providence, RI, was the top female finisher at 34:15.

Senior All-Star games at Hall of Fame



TURLEY PHOTOS BY GREGORY A. SCIBELLI

Last Friday night, three Senior All-Star games took place at the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame featuring the best senior players from all over Western Massachusetts. The tradition puts an exclamation point on the high school season as spring practices get started.

Shorthanded goals lead to win for Thunderbirds

BELLEVILLE, ON - The Springfield Thunderbirds (25-28-6-2) rode a fantastic night from their shorthanded unit to a 5-3 win over the Belleville Senators (24-30-8-1) on Saturday night at CAA Arena.

The Thunderbirds' penalty-killing unit had a first period for the ages. As if going 3-for-3 was not impressive enough, Springfield added not one, but two shorthanded tallies in the opening 5:31 of the contest. Chris Wagner set up Alek Kaskimaki for the first one, just 1:48 into the festivities, sliding a 2-on-1 pass to the crashing winger in the low slot before Kaskimaki deked to his backhand to beat Mads Sogaard.

On Springfield's second kill of the period, Dylan

Peterson picked off a loose puck at his whole blue line and finished off a shorthanded breakaway with a forehand snapper through Sogaard at 5:31, making it a 2-0 score.

Tyler Boucher would bring Belleville back to within one when he banked a centering pass off a T-Bird and past Will Cranley at 7:48 of the first, cutting the score to 2-1.

However, Springfield used offensive zone time from a man advantage to strike back at 16:24 as Zach Dean feathered a smooth saucer pass to Juraj Pekarcik for the T-Birds' third goal of the period and first even-strength marker of the night.

With the teams skating

4-on-4 early in the second, Sam Bolduc netted his first goal as a Senator as he wristed a shot through a screened Cranley to make it a 3-2 game just 55 seconds into the middle stanza.

However, the one-goal score would last only another 55 seconds before Peterson cashed in for his second of the evening, tapping a loose puck past Sogaard in the blue paint following a pass from Pekarcik.

With the 4-2 advantage, Springfield added still more insurance at 5:42 when Chris Wagner stole a breakout pass in the neutral zone and tapped the puck forward for Dillon Dube, who slipped a forehand through Sogaard's five-hole for Springfield's fifth goal on just 13

shots.

Sogaard's night came to an unceremonious end, as he gave way to Leevi Merilainen, who promptly picked up where he left off from a 40-save shutout in Springfield on Jan. 24, stopping the final eight T-Birds shots of the period to keep the score at 5-2 heading into the third.

Belleville far outshot Springfield in the third, but the T-Birds kept the Sens from high-danger chances, relenting only a late power-play goal by Carter Yakemchuk at 17:45 of the final period. Cranley picked up his third win of the season in his home province, stopping 23 in the win, including 14 in the final period alone.

Ayala competes on Regis Women's Basketball

WESTON – Serenity Ayala, Class of 2026, and the Regis College Women's Basketball team recently completed the 2025-26 season.

The Pride concluded their season in the Great Northeast Athletic Conference (GNAC) quarterfinals with an overall record of 12-14 and 9-3.

"As our winter seasons come to a close, I want to congratulate our stu-

dent-athletes on their hard work and determination," said Dean of Athletics Pam Roecker. "The growth they've achieved through competition, discipline, and teamwork will stay with them well beyond the season."

Ayala is majoring in at Regis College.

The Pride are led by 5-year head coach, Samantha Crough.

Registration continues for new players in QVBL

SOUTH HADLEY – Registration for new players in the Quabbin Valley Baseball League, an over-28 recreational league, continues. The league is now headed for its open practices for new players and the new-player draft for players looking to join the league.

There will be open practices for all players but specifically targeted at new players scheduled for Mar. 29 and Apr. 4 at times and locations to be announced. The draft is currently scheduled to take place on Apr. 4 following that practice. Any players who sign up will be contacted directly for the time and location of the open practice.

For the 2026 season, the cost will be \$215 and will include a 16th game added to the regular season sched-

ule. During the 2025 season, the league experimented with playing on Mother's Day Saturday as well as a weeknight game to allow players an opportunity to play under the lights. While the night games were very successful, the Mother's Day Saturday games were rained out.

Those elements will return along with a 16th game with an opponent to be determine as the league's board explores possibilities for interleague matchups with another league in the region.

The season is currently slated to start on Sunday, April 19 and following the success of the six-team fall league last year, the league

See QVBL PAGE 8

Follow Turley Sports on Instagram

Turley Publications sports department has recently joined Instagram. You can find our account by searching "turleysports." We will regularly feature samples of photos that you will see in our publications on a weekly basis. Please fol-

low and share with your friends and loved ones. We will be featuring photos from all 11 of our sports sections, but as always, you can see all the photos that appear by subscribing to your local paper or picking up a copy in your community.

More players wanted for new team in Pioneer Valley League

SOUTH HADLEY – The Pioneer Valley Baseball League, an adult baseball league for players who are age 18 and over, is now fully open for registration for the 2026 season.

New players are especially wanted for the new

sixth team. There are several spots open for that sixth team, so players interested in joining the league should get signed up as soon as possible to claim a spot.

The adult league will be administered by the Quabbin Valley Baseball

League, and a registration link is on the home page of the league's website www.quabbinvalleybaseball.org. Thought it will be under the Quabbin umbrella, there will be no major changes in how the league is operated.

This year, the PVBL will

have a 22-game regular season schedule followed by a double-elimination playoffs. The league, which had five teams last year and had to utilize multiple byes throughout the season, will

See PIONEER VALLEY PAGE 8

- sports -

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Athlete of the Month

NAME: Sophia Giangrande
SCHOOL: North Brookfield



Giangrande was one of the players that helped lead North Brookfield High School girls basketball to a state playoff appearance this year.

To nominate someone for Athlete of the Week, contact Managing Sports Editor Gregory A. Scibelli at 413-283-8393 ext. 258 or send an e-mail to gscibelli@turley.com.

New Braintree Police Log

During the week of March 16-23, the Hardwick/New Braintree Police Department responded to 13 building/property checks, 22 directed/area patrols, 15 radar assignments, eight emergency 911 calls, eight safety hazards, four citizen assists, one assist other agency, one missing person, one complaint, one animal call and seven motor vehicle stops in the town of New Braintree.

Monday, March 16
12:30 p.m. Assist Citizen, Memorial Drive, Officer Handled
10:22 p.m. 911 Medical Emergency, West Brookfield Road, Transported to Hospital

Tuesday, March 17
5:01 a.m. Safety Hazard, Barr Road, Referred to Other Agency
5:11 a.m. Safety Hazard, Mara Road, Referred to Other Agency
5:16 a.m. Safety Hazard, Old Common Road, Services Rendered
5:38 a.m. Safety Hazard, Gilbertville Road, Merge
6:27 a.m. Safety Hazard, West Road, Referred to Other Agency
6:33 a.m. Safety Hazard, Barr Road, Merge
7:47 a.m. 911 Missing Person, West Road, Transported to Hospital
9:11 a.m. Safety Hazard, Pierce Road, Referred to Other Agency
2:56 a.m. Safety Hazard, Gilbertville Road, Referred to Other Agency
5:09 p.m. Assist Citizen, Memorial Drive, Officer Handled
8:53 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Barre Road, Vehicle Towed

Wednesday, March 18
4:26 a.m. 911 Medical Emergency, West Brookfield Road, Patient Refusal
9:04 a.m. Assist Citizen, Memorial Drive, Officer Handled
5:25 p.m. Suspicious Activity, Webb Road, Referred to Other Agency

Thursday, March 19
5:05 a.m. Medical Alarm, Barre Road, Transported to Hospital
10:03 a.m. Utility Issues, Cushman Road, Services Rendered

Friday, March 20
3:36 a.m. 911 Medical Emergency, West Brookfield Road, Patient Refusal
7:38 a.m. Complaint, Ravine Road, Officer Handled
7:46 a.m. Disabled Motor Vehicle, Gilbertville Road, Removed Hazard
9:34 a.m. Assist Other Agency, Memorial Drive, Officer Handled
9:56 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Ravine Road, Written Warning

Saturday, March 21
11:35 a.m. Assist Citizen, Memorial Drive, Officer Handled
1:53 p.m. 911 Medical Emergency, Oakham Road, Transported to Hospital
4:36 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Ravine Road, Written Warning
5:13 p.m. 911 Medical Emergency, West Brookfield Road, Patient Refusal

Sunday, March 22
5:09 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Barre Road, Written Warning

Monday, March 23
3:36 a.m. Medical Emergency, Scott Road, Transported to Hospital

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QVBL FROM PAGE 7

will also have a fall league in September and October this season. The registration is live at www.quabbinvalleybaseball.org. Players must register and then pay the league

dues via Venmo or contact the league leadership if an alternate form of payment is needed. Aside from the weeknight and Mother's Day games, other games take place Sundays at 10 a.m. outside of Mother's Day, Memorial Day and July 4

weekends. Playoffs will be in August. This is the 30th season for the league and league officials are looking to celebrate the anniversary with a couple of events.

PIONEER VALLEY FROM PAGE 7

be fielding a sixth team this season. The league is a wood-bat only league utilizing playing under regular baseball rules though all players do bat. The league operates on a Saturday-Tuesday schedule. Games are played on Saturday mornings with 10 a.m. starts typical and on Tuesday evenings with start times in the 5:30 to 6 p.m. range. The league will start play in late April and run

through the end of August. There are slots open for both full-time players and part-time players. The fee for full-time players will be \$260 with part-time players getting up to 11 games for \$130. Fees paid go toward the operation of the league, paying for insurance, umpires, fields, and baseballs. No one profits in any way. In addition to the new sixth team, there are limited open roster spots on the other teams in the league, so get your registration in as soon as possible to par-

ticipate in this season. Games are played at ballfields throughout the region from as far south as Southwick's Whalley Field, through South Hadley's Beachgrounds and up north at Frontier Regional High School in South Deerfield. For any questions, please go to the league website for more information. The league hopes interested players will come out and join the fun this spring and summer.

BACKYARD FROM PAGE 4

St. Patrick's Day. Their return is a sign of spring. **Robins** Last week, I saw a huge flock of robins, probably close to 100 birds fly over

head along Route 32 in Gilbertville. Robins overwinter in this area, but large flocks are the returning robins that migrate. **Canada geese** The Canada geese are also returning. I saw quite a few geese in a cornfield

in Spencer last week. I also saw about a dozen or saw fly overhead. People may report a bird sighting or bird related experience by calling me at 413-967-3505, leaving a message at extension 100, emailing mybackyard88@aol.com or edowner@turley.com or mailing to Barre Gazette, P.O. Box 448, Barre, MA 01005.

WATERSHED FROM PAGE 1

to late summer. The bacteria levels are then analyzed at Connecticut River Conservancy's lab, and posted on its website ctriver.org or at isitclean.us.

Water quality is listed for "primary" or "secondary" use, with primary being safe for swimming and secondary for boating or fishing. In 2023, the Department of Environmental Protection awarded a grant that allowed the council to take samples from more sites than ever before.

"There were six sites in 2015," Davies said. "Since 2023 we've done 25 sites." Davies said the council was recently notified that the Connecticut River Conservancy received DEP grant funding again for this year's sampling season.

In addition to collecting water samples for testing, the council's volunteers also collect data on weather conditions and water temperatures.

"If there's rainfall before sampling, it can elevate bacteria levels," Davies said.

He said if there's an elevated bacteria level without rainfall prior to sampling, it could be an indicator that something along the river is causing the spike.

"We do look at how those values change," he said.

C4R has also facilitated invasive plant removal from waterways, such as water chestnuts.

Davies explained the importance of continuing to monitor rivers for the invasive plant, as its spiked seeds are easily transported by waterfowl, and can lay dormant for 10 years.

"If it's not checked it will inundate the area again," he

said.

Blue Trails expansion

C4R also works to establish and maintain the Blue Trails, which have sections along all of the rivers in the watershed.

This year, C4R is continuing its focus on a new section, the Lower Quaboag, spanning from Route 67 to Laviolette Park.

The new section will start at an old rest area on Route 67, passing through to Water Street, then to Laviolette Park. Davies said a kiosk will be built by local Scouts and placed at the access point.

"The whole trail is about 12 miles," he said.

Davies displayed a draft of the map for the new section of Blue Trail, which highlighted historic points along the river. Points of interest include the second oldest flow gauge in the state at the Route 67 access point, the remnants of Blanchardville, a unique concrete T-beam bridge, a mysterious rock with the "1856" carved in it and much more.

The Lower Quaboag Blue Trail ends at Laviolette Park, which prior to 1960 was a backwater impoundment for the dam near the confluence. The Army Corps of Engineers built flood control measures and created the park following flooding in the 1930s and 1950s.

Davies shared a photo that showed people ice skating where the park is now.

"It's still a place of recreation, it's just not wet, it's land," he said.

Davies said trail crewmembers are also needed to act as stewards of the Blue Trails

Duties of a trail steward includes looking for downed trees, checking portage areas, picking up trash, talking to Blue Trail users, taking photos and reporting findings back to C4R.

Macroinvertebrate monitoring

Davies said he would like to expand the river monitoring to include macroinvertebrate sampling – taking a closer look at the insects in the water.

"Certain bugs can only

live in healthy water," he said.

Davies said sampling for macroinvertebrates is especially appealing to children, and could be a great way to get them involved in the protection (and enjoyment) of the watershed.

"It's a fun way to get people involved because it's hands-on," he said.

Upcoming paddles

A special birding paddle with a Mass Audubon-certified bird guide will be held on Saturday, May 16 on the Quaboag River. A dragonfly paddle is being planned for July at a location to be determined.

More information about future paddles can be found on C4R's website, c4rivers.org.

How to get involved

"If you know someone who really loves these rivers," Davies said. "Talk to them – have them get in touch with me."

Davies said it's important to get more people involved who can help with communication, organization, and other tasks.

"If we can't get some of this organized in the next years, I don't know if we're going to be here," Davies said of the council. "We've got to bring some movers and shakers."

About C4R

Memberships and donations help C4R with resources for basic operations, including preparing events, creating and maintaining Blue Trails, collecting samples, writing reports and performing community outreach.

C4R has established a nonprofit relationship with the Connecticut River Conservancy, which holds and manages C4R funds for tax-exempt purposes for all donors who want this coverage.

To become a member, visit c4rivers.org and click on "Membership/Support – C4R."

For more information or to get involved, visit c4rivers.org, email chicopee-watershed@gmail.com or find Chicopee4Rivers on Facebook.

Messages Edit

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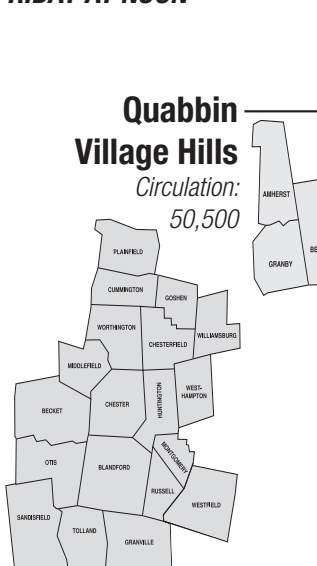
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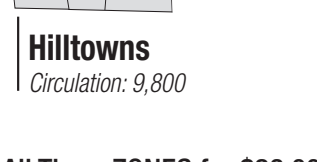
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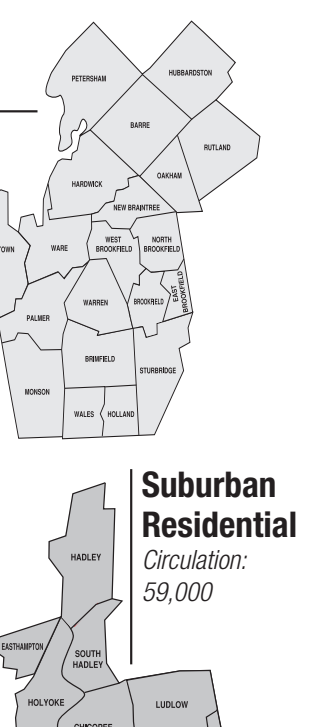
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'Silents are Golden' returns to Stone Church on April 11

HARDWICK – The 9th “Silents Are Golden” concert featuring Charlie Chaplin’s “The Gold Rush” (1925) with live improvised accompaniment by organist Peter Krasinski will be held on Saturday, April 11 at 7 p.m. on the Gilbertville Johnson & Son pipe organ at the Stone Church Cultural Center, 283 Main St., Gilbertville.

This performance is sponsored by the Friends of the Stone Church.

Organist, conductor and music educator Krasinski is broadly recognized for his imaginative and energetic performances. Winner of First Prize in Improvisation from the American Guild of Organists National Competition, he is known worldwide for his unique accompaniment to classic silent films.

The “Gold Rush” takes viewers to the Klondike, Alaska where a comedy unfolds amid harsh conditions.

Writer, producer, director and leading actor Charlie Chaplin plays his “Little Tramp.”

The film also stars Georgia Hale, Mack Swain, Tom Murray, Henry Bergman and Malcolm Waite. It is the fifth-highest grossing silent film in cinema history.

Variety called “The Gold Rush” “the greatest and most elaborate comedy ever filmed.” The New York Times called it “the outstanding gem of all of

Chaplin’s pictures, as it has more thought and originality than even such masterpieces of mirth as ‘The Kid’ and ‘Shoulder Arms’.”

Krasinski is House Organist of the Providence Performing Arts Center, Principal Organist at Mechanics Hall, Organist of the Basilica of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Boston, Organist at First Church of Christ, Scientist in Providence, Rhode Island, and accompanist at Beth El Temple Center in

Belmont.

He recently presented “THE CAMERAMAN” starring Buster Keaton to a sold out audience at the Musiikkitalo, Helsinki, Finland, and appeared in an Oscar-winning move “The Holdovers”. For more information on the artist, please visit www.Krasinski.org.

All concerts at the Stone Church are free to those under 18.

Tickets are \$20 per person and holders of the Mas-

sachusetts Card to Culture may request up to two free tickets at the box office for any ticketed concert on the concert day, or may make a reservation by email to events@FriendsOfTheStoneChurch.org.

Partial support for the 2025-2026 concert season has been provided by the Mass Cultural Council. Support for spring concerts, including free community concerts, has been received.

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