

# QUABOAG CURRENT

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Friday, April 10, 2026

## EASTER EGG HUNT

By Ryan Drago  
Staff Writer  
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**EAST BROOKFIELD** – This East Brookfield Police Association sponsored an Easter egg hunt on Connie Mack Field this past weekend.

This was the third year the Police Association has been hosting an Easter egg hunt around Easter Sunday and it has always been held at Connie Mack Field.

Sergeant Paul Magierowski of the East Brookfield Police Department, also serves as the president of the East Brookfield Police Association. Magierowski said there were around 3,000 Easter eggs placed throughout Connie Mack Field with some specialty eggs included.

Every year, somewhere around 10-15 specialty eggs with a ticket inside goes on the field for kids to pick up and receive a special prize. A special prize table had various gifts to be picked out by the children who find these tickets.

This year's egg hunt featured about 60 kids, who brought their own Easter baskets and were hopping



held at  
**Connie Mack Field**

Trinity is shown alongside the Easter Bunny during the Easter egg hunt.

SUBMITTED PHOTO

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## Selectmen discussed override ballot question

By Ryan Drago  
Staff Writer  
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**WEST BROOKFIELD** – The Board of Selectmen met on March 26 with a focus on discussing the ballot question regarding the Proposition 2 ½ override.

Board of Selectmen Vice-Chair Catherine Lamica said the question will be on the Annual Town Election ballot on May 5.

Lamica provided a brief recap about the override question during the March 26 meeting.

During the Board of Selectmen meeting on March 17, the board voted with the information they had at the time to approve a ballot question for a Proposition 2 ½ override in the amount of \$1,150,000.

Lamica also said there was an informational meeting held at Quaboag Regional Middle High School on March 23 to discuss the budget and that the school district had provided three different options that the School Committee is considering.

The options are as follows: a level service budget, a grade reconstruction on the elementary level, or closing West Brookfield Elementary

School and all elementary students would attend Warren Community Elementary School.

"Each of those options have different assessment amounts for the town of West Brookfield," Lamica said.

Taking these financial circumstances into account, in order to maintain a level service budget, the town is going to need an override.

Being in partnership with the school district and the town of Warren, Lamica said that "both towns need to be able to afford their portion of the school's budget."

A meeting will have to be held if a town says yes, while the other says no to a decision that is put forward. In other words, both Warren and West Brookfield would have to agree on the assessments for the budget.

Board of Selectmen Clerk, Brad Merkel, who attended the March 26 meeting virtually, wanted to be clear by saying the board had no means to close the elementary school and this would be a school board's decision. He said the Selectmen are trying their hardest to manage the finances of

See **W BROOKFIELD**  
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## Radio station discussed license agreement with Select Board

By Zacharias Fragkiadakis  
Staff Writer  
zachf@turley.com

**BROOKFIELD** – The Select Board met last Wednesday, with the first item on the agenda being a reorganization of the board.

The board voted to appoint Sarah Campbell as chair, Richard Chaffee as vice-chair, and Beth Coughlin as clerk. The vote for each of these motions was 2-1, with Coughlin voting no each time.

Additionally, Chaffee

opened the meeting acting as chair, and disallowed public comment time during the meeting, citing poor behavior at the previous meeting. Coughlin said she did not support this action.

### Apple Country Radio

Sharon Mahoney from Apple Country Radio was present at the meeting, and requested a two year extension on the license agreement, with extension terms at three years each rather than one, so she can continue using the "green room"

in the Town Hall for the radio station.

She said the previous agreement, which was signed last year is set to expire on April 3, and that going to the Select Board every year for renewal puts a burden on progress. She said the reason the previous Select Board only signed off on a one year contract was because the town applied for a grant for renovating the ballroom, and could have had to use the

See **BROOKFIELD**  
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## MAPS Testing results reviewed by School Committee

By Paula Ouimette  
Editor  
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**NORTH BROOKFIELD** – Superintendent Timothy McCormick gave a presentation to the School Committee with the results of recent Measures of Academic Progress Testing.

At the March 30 meeting, McCormick said MAP Testing is a good way to show achievement and growth for reading and math for all students in the school district.

McCormick said back in the fall, a consultant was

brought in to come up with a formalized, student-centered, data cycle that would be easy to use.

"It's really a four-step system," he said.

These steps include "describe what you see," "pause and reflect," "interpret patterns and generate ideas" and "prioritize and next steps."

He said enough students participated in the testing to collect "some real concrete data."

McCormick said 334 students in grades K through 12 ranked in the 51st percen-

tile overall for math. He said 36% of these students were in the 61st percentile.

From fall to winter, the school district "held steady" for achievement and growth. He said grade five math scores have been "standout," which he credited to strong instruction and systems.

"We're really trying to kind of grow those systems from grade five to the lower grades and obviously upper grades," he said.

In the middle and high

See **N BROOKFIELD**  
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## 'People, Pets, and Prized Possessions'

Ware artist featured at gallery show

By Paula Ouimette  
Editor  
pouimette@turley.com

**WEST BROOKFIELD** – Ware artist John Collins will have his debut show "People, Pets, and Prized Possessions" at West Brookfield Art & Frame Gallery, 10 East Main St., this month, with an opening reception on Friday, April 17 from 5-7 p.m.

The reception will include wine, cheese, and friendly

fellowship. All are welcome to attend.

Collins said he joined the gallery, owned by Rebecca Fay, a year ago and that he was excited to display his work in this solo show.

Collins is relatively new to the art world, deciding to pursue his childhood passion and see where he could go with it. In a short time, he has already been recognized for his talent in some prestigious shows.

"It's like my retirement purpose. When you retire you should have something

See **COLLINS** PAGE 10



Ware artist John Collins is shown working on a portrait of his dog.

SUBMITTED PHOTO

## CDBG application signed by selectmen

By Zacharias Fragkiadakis  
Staff Writer  
zachf@turley.com

**WEST BROOKFIELD** – The Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission attended the Board of Selectmen's meeting on March 31 to hold a public hearing regarding the joint application for the Community Development Block Grant.

The towns on the application include West Brookfield, East Brookfield, Hardwick, and Barre. John O'Leary, a Princi-

pal Planner from CMRPC said the CDBG program is designed to fund projects for low to moderate income communities, address slum and blight, or in some cases address urgent needs. He said the maximum amount a municipality can apply for is \$950,000, but in joint applications such as this one, towns can apply for up to \$1.35 million.

O'Leary also went over the project selection process. According to a hand-

See **CDBG APPLICATION**  
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# - community -



SUBMITTED PHOTO

## 'Top Dog' donations collected to benefit town pound

Town Clerk Tara Hayes, Animal Control Officer Ali Smichinski and Police Chief Ryan Daley are shown with donations received during the town's Top Dog Contest. All of these donations will be used to improve the town pound.

## DiRico named MASS CPA Educator of the Year

WARREN – Jean DiRico, a dedicated business education teacher at Quaboag Regional Middle High School has been honored with the prestigious MASS CPA Educator of the Year Award.

This award recognizes outstanding contributions to accounting education and the promotion of financial literacy in the community.

"Jean has always been an incredible advocate for her students, making sure they take advantage of every opportunity that comes their way," said a representative

from MASS CPA. "Her dedication, enthusiasm, and genuine love for teaching make her truly deserving of this honor."

Throughout her career, DiRico has demonstrated commitment to student success, innovative teaching methods, and fostering a deep understanding of personal finance and business principles.

"I am truly honored to



Jean DiRico

receive this recognition from MASS CPA," said DiRico. "Teaching is my passion, and inspiring students to succeed both academically and in life is the greatest reward."

The award will be formally presented at a networking event hosted by MASS CPA at Braeburn Country Club in May, where DiRico will join fellow leaders in the accounting and education fields to celebrate excellence in teaching.

## Thrift Store thriving at West Brookfield church

WEST BROOKFIELD – The Thrift Store of the George Whitefield United Methodist Church continues its mission of offering quality used clothing, shoes, accessories, household goods, home décor, collectables, children's toys and clothing, books and DVDs at bargain prices.

The benefits of shopping second hand are many including: affordability, keeping serviceable items out of landfills, community engagement and funds raised in support of church ministries and missions.

The Thrift Store is open the first and third Saturdays of each month, 10 a.m.-2 p.m. at 33 West Main St.

Donations of clean, gently used items are appreci-



Clothing, housewares and much more are available at the Thrift Store of the George Whitefield United Methodist Church in West Brookfield.

ated and may be arranged by contacting Jane Dolan at 508-867-5571. All are

welcome to come see what's new as inventory is constantly changing.

## Candidate's statement

MaryLou Volpe

Dear Sturbridge neighbors,

I am proud to be running for re-election as your Select person.

For nearly 40 years, Sturbridge has been my home, and serving this community has been one of the greatest honors of my life. From my time as a Firefighter, EMT, and SAFE Coordinator, to my 20 years with the Park and Recreation Committee, and now as your Selectperson since 2023, I've been committed to showing up, working hard, and doing what's best for our town.

I've experienced Sturbridge as a resident, a parent, and a town employee. Those perspectives continue to guide the decisions I make on your behalf every day.

This past January brought the unexpected loss of my husband, Rich, who shared that same commitment to Sturbridge. He served on various town boards and as chair of the 250th Anniversary Committee.

I know how much it meant to him for me to serve this community, and I carry that with me every day. Continuing this work is not only an honor, it's a way to carry forward the commitment we both shared to this town that we love.

I'm proud of what I accomplished, and I would be grateful for your vote so I can continue serving Sturbridge with dedication, experience, and heart.

With gratitude,  
MaryLou Volpe

## St. Aloysius Catholic School lists honor roll

HARDWICK – St. Aloysius Catholic School, 52 Church St., Gilbertville, announced the students who achieved the honor roll for the second trimester.

### High Honors

Jakob McBride, grade four; and Connor Shunaman, grade five.

### Honors

Juliana Moryl, grade four; Anthony Prentiss, grade four; Ellie Matt, grade six; Lilliana Soja, grade six; Alexander Velez, grade six; Grant Verham, grade six; Jackson Boudreau, grade eight; Hailey Casiello, grade eight; Gavin Letendre, grade eight; and Noelle St. Jacques, grade eight.

## KofC sponsors spaghetti dinner April 18

WEST BROOKFIELD – Knights of Columbus Council 11080 is sponsoring a Spaghetti Dinner on Saturday, April 18 in Dugan Hall, Sacred Heart Church, 10 Milk St.

Proceeds from this event will benefit Supporting Orphans Nationally & Globally (S.O.N.G.). Dinner includes pasta fagioli, garden salad meatballs and sausage, spaghetti and sauce,

Italian bread, dessert, water, soda, and coffee.

Cost is a \$15 donation and \$10 for children under 12 years old. Take-out is available at 6 p.m. and sit-down dinner is served at 6:30 p.m.

Admission tickets are also good for entry for a special door prize. Raffle tickets for a 50/50 Raffle and more will be available.

Advance ticket purchase is encouraged and appreciated. Tickets are available from any Knight or by calling 413-813-8100 or by emailing wallyconnor122@gmail.com.

Tickets will only be available at the door while they last.

## NOTICE

ERRORS: Each advertiser is requested to check their advertisement the first time it appears. This paper will not be responsible for more than one corrected insertion, nor will be liable for any error in an advertisement to a greater extent than the cost of the space occupied by the item in the advertisement.

## 'Meet the Candidates' night April 27

EAST BROOKFIELD – Candidates seeking election or write-in candidates seeking election for the town of office on Tuesday, May 12 are welcome to attend a Meet the Candidates night on Monday, April 27 from 5:30-

7 p.m. at the East Brookfield Public Library, 122 Connie Mack Drive.

Each candidate will have 5 minutes to talk and answer questions. Please contact Carolann with any questions.

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# - community -

## FrOST announced upcoming spring events

STURBRIDGE – The Friends of Sturbridge trails has released its list of free spring events for 2026.

On Monday, April 13 when there will be a table at the Sturbridge Host Hotel during town elections to promote trails and projects. Stop by during your vote and ask your questions about the trail program and FrOST's future plans. Elections run from 6:30 a.m.-8 p.m. and the table will be staffed from that period.

Saturday, April 18 is the annual Earth Day trail clean up event 8 a.m.-noon, any time you can help, meet at Riverlands, 52 Stallion Hill

Road to start. This event is made possible by a grant from The Last Green Valley.

Saturday, April 25 is Celebrate Trails Day, sponsored by the National Rails to Trails Org. FrOST is planning a hike on the Grand Trunk Trail starting at 9 a.m. from 9 River Road. Come join the friends to learn about the Grand Trunk Trail's history, and the plans for trail completion. This event is handicapped accessible, and child friendly, dogs on six foot leashes are allowed.

Monday April 27 at 7 p.m. is the annual town meeting. Please attend and

exercise your right to vote on town budget and more.

Saturday and Sunday, May 9 and 10, FrOST will have an information booth at Old Sturbridge Village at their "move" weekend. This is part of a month-long event of OSV where they have invited area businesses and groups in the focus area of Eat, Move, Work & Play, each week a focus. The display will include trail construction tools, and a xxx bike. OSV has an entrance fee.

Saturday, May 30 at 10 a.m. the "Yoga on the Trails" returns. Join Jen Songer for a short walk along the Arbu-

tus trail to the field and enjoy an all-levels yoga session. Meet at the Leadmine trail parking lot, 10 Old Sturbridge Village Road. Bring your mat and a water bottle.

The Friends of Sturbridge trails can offer these events free of charge as they are a member supported 501 3c non-profit. Please consider joining them with your membership that starts at \$15. Please visit FrOST at [www.treksturbridge.org](http://www.treksturbridge.org), click about Friends of Sturbridge trails. While you are there check out the rest of the web page and events. Email FrOST at [Froststurbridge@gmail.com](mailto:Froststurbridge@gmail.com).

## LWPA organizes Lake Wickaboag area cleanup

WEST BROOKFIELD – In conjunction with Earth Day, the Lake Wickaboag Preservation Association is once again hosting its annual cleanup effort around Lake Wickaboag shorelines and roadsides on Saturday, April 25, from 9 a.m.-noon, rain or shine.

All are welcome. Please meet at the town beach at 12 Lakeview Avenue at 9 a.m. Light refreshments will be provided as will trash bags and clean up location assignments. Cash prizes will be awarded.

There will be an information table with lake and LWPA-related brochures and flyers. A member of the LWPA Board will be on hand for anyone who

wants to "Ask the Expert" about Lake Wickaboag's water quality, weeds, treatments, etc.

A wide selection of LWPA merchandise will also be available for sale.

The LWPA will sponsor its first-ever "Reduce. Reuse. Recycle! Lake Gear Swap." Bring paddle boards, water skis, tow ropes, kayaks, life vests, etc. in good condition that you no longer need or use and swap it for something else, if you'd like. Corn hole will also be set up at the beach.

Bring your gloves and bring your energy to help bring back the spring sparkle to the area. For additional information, please email [lwpa01585@gmail.com](mailto:lwpa01585@gmail.com).

## Learn about Community Heart & Soul program April 11

NORTH BROOKFIELD – Developed and field-tested over a decade in partnership with over 100 small cities and towns across America, Community Heart & Soul is a proven process for engaging a community in shaping its future and it is coming to North Brookfield.

Lifelong residents and those new to town are being asked to participate in this program that could help identify ways to enhance the character of North Brook-

field. By gathering input from neighbors, local officials, business owners and other stakeholders, citizens will be able to chart a path for their town's future.

A dedicated group of community volunteers are leading the way, guided by a Community Heart & Soul coach. Funded through a grant from the Greater Worcester Community Foundation, the two-year process works in phases: identifying what matters

most to the community; bringing in different stakeholders to be involved with the discussion; planning for the "long game" to chart priorities and potential plans for future growth; and helping the town prepare to act on these goals.

Residents are encouraged to join the group at the Hoston Free Public Library from 11 a.m.-1 p.m. on Saturday, April 11 to learn about the benefits of the Community Heart & Soul

program, share what they love most about our community, and decide if they want to actively participate in this "home grown" effort to shape the future of North Brookfield.

Refreshments will be provided by Subway.

If you are unable to attend on April 11 or would like more information before the event, you can refer to the Community Heart & Soul website: [www.communityheartandsoul.org](http://www.communityheartandsoul.org).

## Solo/Duet poetry, music series starts in April

WEST BROOKFIELD – Solo/Duet, a poetry and music series at the Merrim-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 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 Ardzone, 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.



The Easter egg hunt at Connie Mack Field was sponsored by the East Brookfield Police Association.

### EASTER EGG HUNT FROM PAGE 1

along Connie Mack Field. Speaking of hopping, the Easter Bunny made an appearance and stuck around to take pictures with all the kids and their families.

Seven police officers volunteered their time to join in on the festivities.

The East Brookfield Fire Department also arrived and parked some of their vehicles for a touch a trunk event for the kids. There were police and fire vehicles parked by Connie Mack Field. The East Brookfield Highway Department also brought some of their vehicles over.

The East Brookfield Police Association consists of six full-time officers and

seven part-time officers. The association is involved in various events and engages with the community.

The police association started a scholarship fund that is eligible for students who live in East Brookfield. Around Halloween, the association hosts a Trunk or Treat event at the East Brookfield Elementary School.

"We want to have some community engagement," Magierowski said.

The annual Easter egg hunt is an enjoyable event for the children and for the community. This year's turnout was excellent, and the East Brookfield Police Association are proud of the community work they do.



Gwen McEvoy was one of the finders of a lucky ticket in one of her Easter eggs and received a prize during the Easter egg hunt at Connie Mack Field in East

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Over the past 13 years, I've had the privilege of meeting so many wonderful, caring, and appreciative families, along with dedicated clergy, church and cemetery personnel, town clerks, staff, colleagues, and have made many friends. Serving in this second career as a Funeral Director has truly been an honor.

Thank you to everyone who trusted me to support you and your loved ones—it means more than words can express. Wishing you all health, peace, and well-being. Live long and be well.

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- opinion -

# The ins and outs of forsythia

Each year as forsythia burst into bloom, I am reminded of my dad.

You see, this spring harbinger always blooms right around his birthday. This year would've been a monumental one, as he would have celebrated 100 years!

Although most landscape professionals aren't all that fond of forsythia, it holds a special place in my heart. When it is in full bloom our eyes are lifted away from the still drab lawn and the bare borders to bask at its branches of yellow flowers.

If you are lucky enough to have forsythia growing in your yard, perhaps you will find the following facts interesting, straight from the archives.

Forsythia can be forced into bloom indoors. While it is a little late in the season to fully appreciate this technique, it can easily be achieved now.

As long as temperatures are above freezing, you can harvest the branches. Simply prepare them as you would any other cut flower by removing side shoots that would be under water in the vase. Fill the vase with hot water and just prior to insertion recut the end of the stem on a 45 degree angle to expose as much surface area as possible.

We use hot water because it will move through the plant's vascular system quickly, hydrating it fully.

Place the vase in indirect, bright light, and change the water a couple of times a week. Expect blooms in a matter of days this time of year; if you harvest stems in early March it will take a bit longer to enjoy the flowers.

Forsythia buds are tender. While the shrub itself is hardy to Zone 4, the buds are reliably hardy to only Zone 5.

After an especially cold winter you may see forsythia in half-bloom! The tops of the shrub may be devoid of blossoms, but the bottom chock-full. This generally happens because the lower portion of the shrub was insulated under a snow bank or leaf mound.

Likewise, the blossoms are also tender – sometimes reduced to mush the morning after a hard freeze.

Forsythia flowers are borne on the previous year's wood. With that in mind, prune as soon as possible after flowering.



Simply cut the oldest stems all the way down to the ground. You can safely remove up to one-third of the bush in a single pruning session. New growth will emerge over the summer and provide blossoms for next season.

While some books recommend cutting overgrown forsythias down to the ground completely, in my experience, this advice is drastic. The plant will need a couple of years to recover from that approach.

Sometimes you see forsythia pruned into balls or stiff hedges. While some homeowners consider this look appealing, I like to see the bush a little less tame. It's also hard to guarantee flowers throughout such a manicured shape; sometimes part will bloom and the rest will be just foliage. Kind of a weird look.

Propagating forsythias is easy! Do you want more of a good thing? Try layering your forsythias. Take a long, pliable branch and bend it to the ground a foot or so from the main plant. Cover the bend with soil and secure it with a brick or heavy stone. In a few months' time it will root, and by the following spring the new plant can easily be separated from its mother.

Forsythia is easily grown. Perhaps this is why we see so many forsythias in the landscape.

While it will undoubtedly bloom best in full sun, once established, it can tolerate all but the driest of soils and adapts to a range in pH. Also, it is bothered by few pests or diseases.

*Roberta McQuaid graduated from the Stockbridge School of Agriculture at the University of Massachusetts. For the last 34 years, she has held the position of staff horticulturist at Old Sturbridge Village. She enjoys growing food as well as flowers. Have a question for her? Email it to pouimette@turley.com with "Gardening Question" in the subject line.*

## in my BACKYARD

By Ellenor Downer



Eastern Phoebe

I saw an Eastern Phoebe on March 28, my first sighting of 2026.

The Eastern Phoebe is a plump songbird with a medium-length tail. It appears large-headed for a bird of its size. The head often appears flat on top, but phoebes sometimes raise the feathers up into a peak. Like most small flycatchers, they have short, thin bills used for catching insects. The Eastern Phoebe slightly larger than a tufted titmouse.

The Eastern Phoebe is brownish-gray above and off-white below, with a dusky wash to the sides of the breast. The head is typically the darkest part of the upper parts. Birds in fresh fall plumage show faint yellow on the belly and whitish edging on the folded wing feathers.

The Eastern Phoebe generally perches low in trees or on fence lines. Phoebes are very active, making short flights to capture insects and very often returning to the same perch. They make sharp "peep" calls in addition to their familiar "Phoebe" vocalizations. When perched, Eastern Phoebes wag their tails down and up frequently.

These birds favor open woods such as yards, parks, woodlands and woodland edges. Phoebes usually breed around buildings or bridges on which they construct their nests under the protection of an eave or ledge.

### Bring in bird feeders

The Allen Bird Club of Springfield reminds area residents that early spring means hungry bears. If people enjoy feeding birds during the winter, it's now time to bring feeders in at night or to put them away entirely until next December. Black bears have an excellent memory and will return to feeders where they find easy meals. When that happens, bears can become a nuisance. FYI, over 50 million Americans purchase more than one billion pounds of bird seed and suet annually.

An excellent way to feed birds year-round is by planting native fruit and seed

bearing plants that provide food for wildlife. The Cornell Lab of Ornithology's new citizen science initiative, Garden for Birds, offers regionally-tailored tips on the best plants to choose to help struggling wildlife thrive. This program is free and participation can be cancelled at any time. Information on how to turn a yard into a bird-supporting habitat can be found by visiting gardenforbirds.org.

### Common mergansers

My husband and I saw the male and female Common Merganser diving in cedar Lake Sturbridge in between the ice on Thursday, March 19. They were beautiful.

### Brimfield birds

I received an email from a Brimfield resident. He said, "In my last email I had reported a broad-winged hawk seen in the yard. I later was looking at some photographs I had taken of the bird and discovered I was wrong, the bird was a red-shouldered hawk. Also it would have been very early for a broad-wing."

He saw crows, blue jays and a red-shouldered hawk on his trail camera as well as raccoons and an opossum.

He also has eight goldfinch visiting regularly. He said, "For most of the winter we have only seen one or two at the feeders. One was starting to show some yellow plumage."

He puts out a coffee can of whole peanuts every day in a tray. He said, "Blue jays, titmice and an occasional red-bellied woodpecker take the peanuts that are usually gone within a couple of hours. Lately the peanuts have been lasting two or three days and I haven't seen any blue jays." He also noted it is "A sign of spring, the chipmunks are out and about and the daffodil leaves have started to emerge, hooray."

### Goldfinches

I received an email from a Worthington resident. He said, "Around mid-February each year my bird feed-

ers are inundated by a flock or maybe flocks of goldfinches in their drab winter colorations. It's amazing how many flit in and out of my feeders. And, when the goldfinches come, they are joined by an equally large flock of pine siskins. They must travel together and they look somewhat similar since the goldfinches aren't yet sporting their bright yellow colors. They usually hang around for a month or so and then move on further North." He said, "I enjoy watching them at the feeders, the few who decide to spend the summer in Western Massachusetts."

### Bluebirds

I received an email from a Hampden resident, who shared video from a blink camera she installed inside her bluebird house in 2025. She placed the camera in the birdhouse to keep track of activity and this resulted in two broods of bluebirds successfully hatching and fledging a total of eight young. She said, "The camera helped to keep the sparrows from establishing a nest and gave us close ups of the bluebird families." She also said, "Once September rolled around, it was time to clean and sanitize the birdhouse. However, a downy woodpecker found it was a fine place to spend the night. He has continued arriving at sundown and leaving at sunrise the next day. The bluebirds sometimes stop by during the day possibly checking it out for their future nest." She said, "Our hope is the bluebirds return this spring and don't have issues with the woodpecker as well as the sparrows."

*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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## OPINION PAGE/ LETTERS POLICY

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.

## Turley Election Policy

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

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

## NEWS & FEATURES

As a paper of record, we attempt to cover all general news, personality profiles, and community features that we know about. This includes all selectmen and school committee meetings as well as spot planning board, board of health, finance, and other town meetings determined by the issue's relevance to our readers. There are the annual major community event features that we should always cover, but we are more than open to suggestions of other features to celebrate the fabric of our communities and their many interesting occupants. Our loyal advertisers provide funding for this paid staff coverage.

For more information on news or community features for the Quaboag Current, please email pouimette@turley.com.

## HOW ASTRONAUTS WILL TRAIN FOR RETURN TO MOON...



## - community -

# Sold-out supper benefited town's community garden

By Paula Ouimette  
Editor

pouimette@turley.com

WARE – The Ware Grange #164 hosted a sold-out crowd at a supper held at the Ware Senior Center to benefit the Ware Community Garden, an effort led by those seeking to improve food access in town.

The meal of chicken marsala was prepared by Ware Senior Center Chef Alton Davis and his wife Nikki, and raffle prizes were generously donated by local businesses. The meals were served by members of the Ware Jr./Sr. High School's National Honor Society and Quabbin Regional High School's NJROTC.

"We are here to raise money for the community garden," Ware Grange's John Carter said at the March 30 supper.

Carter explained the history of the Grange, and how the organization became involved with the effort to build a community garden on the grounds of Trinity Episcopal Church's Jubilee Ministries at 80 Pleasant St.

"We work to support agriculture," he said. "This is what the Grange does... we're here to support the community and help people who are interested in becoming a farmer and starting their own gardens."

Carter said the Ware Grange secured a grant that will also be used to support the Ware Community Garden.

The Ware Grange is also hosting a series of gardening workshops for adults and children. The first adult workshop will be led by Turley Publication's "In



State Sen. Peter Durant attended the supper and spoke in support of the community garden.



John Carter of Ware Grange #164 spoke about the role of the Grange and its support of agriculture.

the Garden" columnist and expert grower, Roberta McQuaid on May 1 at 7 p.m. The first in the Kids' Corner Workshops with Jen McNally will be held on May 9 at 10 a.m.

More information about Ware Grange and its programs are available at www.waregrange.org and on their Facebook page. People can also email waregrange164@gmail.com.

The Ware Community Garden was developed by a task force of Quaboag Valley Food Policy Council



Members of Ware Grange #164 sponsored a sold-out fundraiser supper at the Ware Senior Center to benefit the Ware Community Garden.

TURLEY PUBLICATIONS PHOTOS BY PAULA OUIMETTE

members, under the umbrella of Healthy Quaboag.

Healthy Quaboag's primary objective is to address health disparities and enhance the well-being of the region's residents, striving to improve the overall health of the community by implementing impactful prevention strategies and health initiatives.

A recent Community Food Access Assessment showed a great need for accessible and affordable spaces for residents to garden, and the task force got to work to partner with the town of Ware, Trinity Episcopal Church, the Ware Grange, and several other organizations and businesses, including the East Quabbin Land Trust, Workshop13 and the Hardwick Farmers Co-Op. These key

partnerships have secured enough space to provide 10 foot by 10 foot gardening plots that will be available to residents on a first come, first serve basis.

Sawyer Blake, Project Coordinator for Community Health at Healthy Quaboag, thanked the Ware Grange and the Ware Senior Center for hosting the fundraiser supper, and for supporting the community garden.

"This event truly means so much to me," Blake said.

Blake explained the role of Healthy Quaboag, and the food policy council.

"The food policy council is a subsection of Healthy Quaboag," they said. "It is a group of people who want to make healthy food sustainable."

Blake said creating a community garden was a

"top priority" for the council's members.

Not only will the community garden be a space for residents to grow food, but it will also be a space where they can connect with others.

Blake said one major goal is to make the community garden affordable to everyone, and fundraisers such as that evening's supper and raffle, helped to do that.

Blake said the community garden is expected to open at the beginning of June, and they encouraged anyone interested in getting involved or securing a plot, to reach out by emailing sblake@townofware.com or calling 413-807-0901.

### About QVFPC

The Quaboag Valley Food Policy Council is over-

seen by Healthy Quaboag, and is funded through a grant received by the Town of Ware in partnership with Quaboag Valley Community Development Corporation, covering the towns of Ware, Belchertown, Palmer, Monson, Wales, Holland, Brimfield, Warren, Brookfield, West Brookfield, North Brookfield and East Brookfield.

The council is open to all, and everyone is welcome to join in the discussion.

The full results of the Community Food Access Assessment are available online. To view the comprehensive report and learn more about the findings, visit healthyquaboag.org/food-policycouncil.

### W BROOKFIELD FROM PAGE 1

the town and appropriations for the school.

Lamica said she attended the informational meeting on March 23 and heard all the concerns and emotions expressed regarding the decisions that may impact WBES. She said the town has come to a difficult decision.

Lamica said discussion regarding an override has been talked about over the course of about six years.

From the Board of Selectmen's standpoint, the town is looking at about a 10% cut to every operational budget. By observing the concerns expressed during the informational meeting, Lamica understands that everybody at the meeting

was not satisfied with the options that were presented.

"It needs to be put to the voters," Lamica said when it comes to these decisions. "It's their community, their children, and their finances at home."

The Selectmen said this decision is not a permanent fix, but is to help the town for one year. Warren could be impacted too, depending on how their finances line up.

Overall, this decision on an override will go to the voters. A dollar amount should be decided at Town Election. Once decided by the Election, the next step would be decided by the School Committee.

Quaboag Regional School District Superintendent, Stephen Duff, attended the March 26 meeting

and said if WBES closes, the students will move to WCES and still be reimbursable for transportation.

"The reality is that the School Committee and the school system has to work collaboratively with our towns to make a decision that is in the best interest of our towns and what we can fund," Duff said.

He said there are many small towns throughout Massachusetts that are going through similar dilemmas. He said there seems to be a lack of state funds being released to small municipalities.

The Board of Selectmen thought of a two-part question featuring two different dollar amounts for Proposition 2 1/2.

Question 1A is \$1.6 million for ongoing Town Gov-

ernment "Level Services" budget including the proposed Quaboag Regional School District "Level Services" budget. Question 1B is \$1.1 million for ongoing Town Government "Level Services" budget including the proposed Quaboag Regional School District "Reduced" budget.

Prior to this vote, the Selectmen voted to rescind their original Proposition 2 1/2 vote that was made on March 17. The board members then voted on the two-part question they came up with and passed.

This two-part question will be on the ballot for the May 5 election. The outcome of the ballot will determine the amount that will be assessed and what the town works with when it comes to finances between

town departments and the schools.

There will be public information sessions held to provide some understanding of the Proposition 2 1/2 Override on Monday, April 13 at the West Brookfield Senior Center at 6:30 p.m. and Monday, April 27 at WBES at 6:30 p.m.

Members of the public at the March 26 meeting also factored in tax rates, lack of businesses, and lack of revenue not helping during these financial strains. Raymond Kopacko of the Warren Finance Committee was in attendance and had addressed the public and the board after some wondered if Warren could afford their portion of the school district's assessment.

"I can guarantee you, Warren cannot do the level

service request," Kopacko said, addressing option one, which he thinks will not pass in Warren.

Duff said everyone has to be mindful that Warren may not be able to support some of these numbers.

"The School Committee makes their decisions based upon the recommendation of what the towns tell us they have," Duff said.

Merkel shared that regardless of what decision is made, the students will still receive a high level of education.

The public did address concerns with transportation, class sizes, shortage of support staff, and student needs not being met if these decisions are made. Other factors are insurance, retirement, and operating expenses.

### CDBG FROM PAGE 1

out provided by O'Leary, CMRPC has held community development strategy forums, and met with town officials. He said in East Brookfield, they held playground committee meetings, and in Hardwick they held team meetings and a public presentation regarding Memorial Park.

### Projects and costs

According to O'Leary, there are four projects planned for this year's application: The Depot Neighborhood Infrastructure Planning Study in West Brookfield, with an approximate budget of \$150,000; Memorial Park Design Improvement Project in Hardwick, with an approximate budget of \$117,000; Barre Senior Center Improvement Project in Barre, with an approximate cost of \$90,000; and East Brookfield Town Complex Playground, with an approximate budget of

\$70,000.

O'Leary said there is also a grant administration cost that CMRPC charges, which is about \$75,000, and the total budget including administration is about \$502,000.

### Project details

According to the handout, the Depot Neighborhood project is to "assess the existing conditions of all subsurface and surface infrastructure" in the area.

The Memorial Park project is going to evaluate the current conditions, and look at "opportunities to improve safety, accessibility, functionality, and overall user experience."

The Barre Senior Center Project will involve a design study for building improvements and construction, with up to \$25,000 allocated for addressing accessibility.

The East Brookfield Town Complex Playground project will evaluate the current conditions, look at alternative designs, and pre-

pare "bid-ready plans for improvements."

The Selectmen signed and approved the submission of the application, which O'Leary said is due April 21, with award announcement dates coming in the late summer or early fall. The Selectmen also appointed Town Administrator Theresa Cofske as the Environmental Certified Officer.

### Regular meeting

After the Public Hearing, there was a brief regular meeting in which the board approved the minutes of their March 10 and March 17 meetings, approved treasury warrants, and accepted the resignation of Rebekah Cornell from the Capital Planning Committee. The board also announced that informational sessions on the proposed override will be held April 13 at the senior center and April 27 at the elementary school.

The board is scheduled to meet next on April 14.

## Highway Dept. Skilled Laborer / Truck Driver

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

## Highway Dept. Seasonal Laborer

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

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

A.A./E.O.E.

**BROOKFIELD FROM PAGE 1**

green room for productions. Mahoney said the room is also going to be shared with the IT department, and if she can start broadcasting from that room, she could get information on town meetings out to the public.

She also said the radio station has put \$12,000 towards repairs, and has another \$12,000 worth of equipment in the room. Mahoney said there is an antenna on the clock tower, with cable running through to the transmitter, and they are going to hook it up to the emergency alert system.

Chaffee said he finds an agreement of more than a year "concerning," because there are other grants the town has applied for, including one for a stairlift. He also said the cultural council may want to do events in that space, and productions may happen again in the future.

Campbell said she was not for or against extending the agreement, but wanted to make sure the town was following the law, specifically Mass General Law Chapter 30B, which is about procurement. This law requires municipalities to put property out to bid for lease or rental agreements, but there is a

difference for license agreements.

Campbell said she would like the opportunity to ask these questions and get concrete definitions from counsel regarding this agreement, and the laws that pertain to it.

Coughlin said the board makes it difficult for people trying to start a business or endeavor in town, the green room is a shared space with the Brookfield IT department, and the service is well liked in the community. She also said that productions could still happen even with the green room being used by the radio station.

"We are making this way too hard," she said.

Mahoney said she was not aware of what chapter 30B was, and that she requested to be put on the March 18 agenda but was not, even though she sent the request on March 11. She also said that she was denied answers to legal questions she had.

The board voted to maintain the agreement for 90 days to allow them to do re-

search on the laws pertaining to this agreement, and also stipulated that the radio station could broadcast during that time if they are ready to.

**Town election warrant**

The board voted to reduce polling hours for the town election from 7 a.m.-7 p.m. to noon-7 p.m. because there are no contested races, and the last time there were no contested races in 2023, they did the same. The election is May 4 at the Town Hall.

**Annual town meeting warrant**

The board discussed the annual town meeting warrant, and Town Accountant Laurie Bartkus said she has not put together copies of a draft yet. Coughlin said they usually don't sign the warrant without a draft in front of them, but Campbell said they need to close the warrant to get a draft done.

They also discussed putting blanket articles for snow and ice, highway department and municipal repairs,

should they come up. The board voted to close the warrant.

**Appointments**

The board voted to appoint Ashley Dennison as a full-time police officer. Chief of Police Michael Blanchard said she is a recent graduate of Quinsigamond Community College and is Police Officer Standards and Training certified.

The board also appointed Margaret Powers to the Cultural Council.

**Town common use**

Ana Afton, who is the chair of the Cultural Council, requested town common use for Cultural Council events, including April 18, July 10 and 24, and Aug. 7 and 15. The board approved those requests.

**Spending request**

The board approved highway equipment repairs to be paid from fleet repair/replace, not to exceed \$10,000 each.

**Interim treasurer**

Bartkus said the current interim treasurer has completed her last day as of April 2, and their only option is to go back to a firm the town previously used called Mass MuniFin. She said the CEO of the company, Sara Hunter, charges a rate of \$225 an hour, but is lowering the rate for Brookfield to \$175 an hour for regular staff, and \$200 an hour for upper level staff.

Bartkus said the hours a week are likely to be 20-30 for the first couple weeks, with the hope to reduce to about 15 by the fourth week. The board approved the Mass MuniFin contract.

**Shade tree hearing**

The select board held a shade tree hearing on April 2, to approve the removal of a Norway Maple between the library and the library annex, for the installation of a handicap accessible parking space, to meet ADA requirements. The tree removal was approved.

*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**.



# Quaboag Hills

## CHIP GENERAL BODY MEETING

*Open to the General Public!*

Join us to review progress, hear updates, and discuss next steps for the CHIP initiative.

**FOOD AND DRINKS WILL BE PROVIDED!**

**MAY 1, 2026**  
**10:00 AM – 12:00 PM**

**E2E Center,  
79 Main St.,  
Ware, MA 01082**

**RSVP BY  
APRIL 24**

Scan QR Code or Use Link:  
<https://forms.gle/Bq8VtsUvLs2yan8V6> to Register



**CONTACT US**

**413-807-0901**

**sblake@townofware.com**

# SPORTS

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SEND US YOUR SPORTS SUBMISSIONS

## Panthers take down Cougars in season opener

By Tim Peterson  
Sports Correspondent

WARREN—The seven seniors listed on the 2026 Quabbin Regional baseball roster have been members of the varsity team since they were freshmen.

The seniors, along with the Panthers underclassmen, have two primary objectives for this season. Their first goal is to contend for Mid-Wach D league title. They're also hoping to secure a berth in the Division 4 state tournament for the first time.

The Panthers began the regular season with a 12-1 road win over the Quaboag Cougars, last Tuesday afternoon. The non-league contest ended after sixth innings due to the 10-run mercy rule.

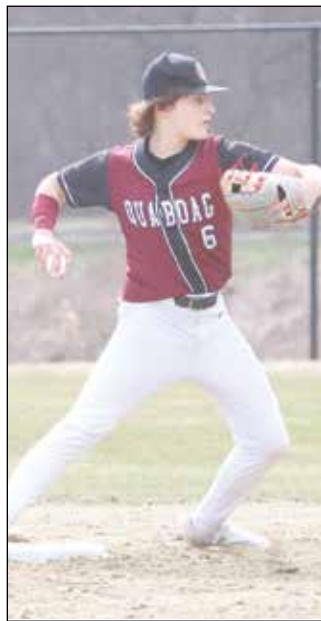
"We're in a different league this year, so we're not playing teams like Oakmont or Clinton anymore," said Quabbin head coach Mark Battista. "Our expectation is to compete for the league title and hopefully qualify for the state tournament."

The Panthers seniors are Aiden Lapointe, Chase Talbot, Adam Adams, Andrew Warfield, Jordyn Guilder-son, Finn Leander, and Ian Haupt.

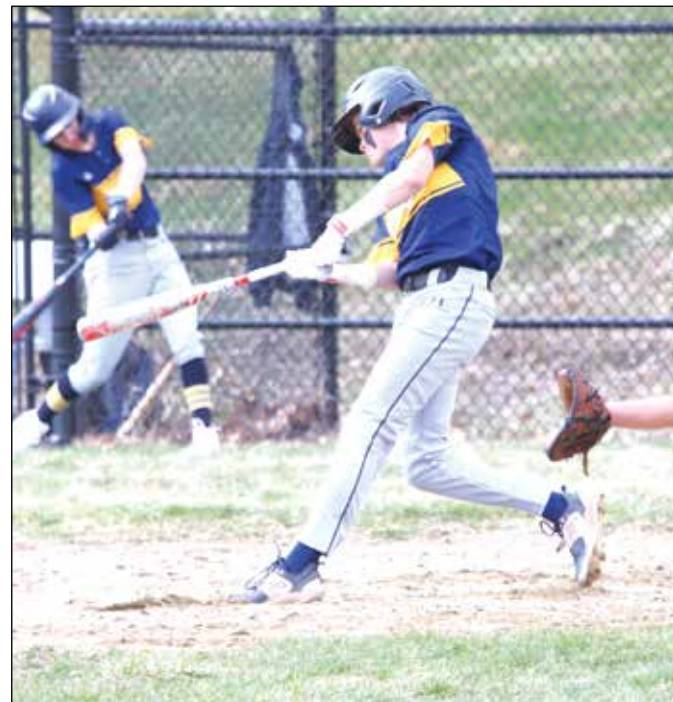
Adams, who's a righthander, was the Panthers starting pitcher in the season opener. He didn't allow any runs and gave up just one base hit during the first three innings before being replaced on the mound by sophomore righty Abe



Liam McGrath delivers a pitch for the Cougars.



Adam Adams fouls off a pitch.



TURLEY PHOTOS BY GREGORY A. SCIBELLI

Aiden Lapointe swings and hits a soft grounder.

Brown, who started the game at second base.

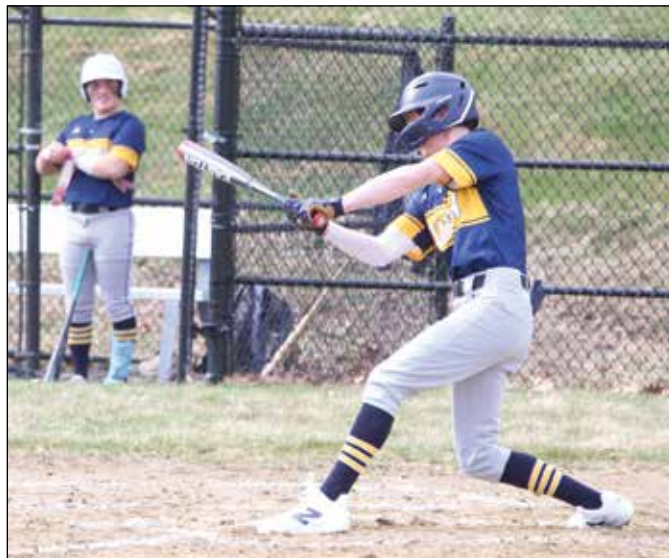
Adams, who threw 54 pitches, did issue three walks and recorded seven strikeouts.

"Adam is our best pitcher and he pitched very well," Battista said. "It's our first game of the season and I really didn't want him to throw that many pitches."

The Panthers also defeated the Cougars, 14-1, in last year's season opener, which took place on their home-field.

Quaboag entered the 2026 campaign looking to celebrate a victory for the first time since they defeated Southbridge, 6-2, at home on May 17, 2024.

"We did have a couple of scoring opportunities in today's game," said Quaboag



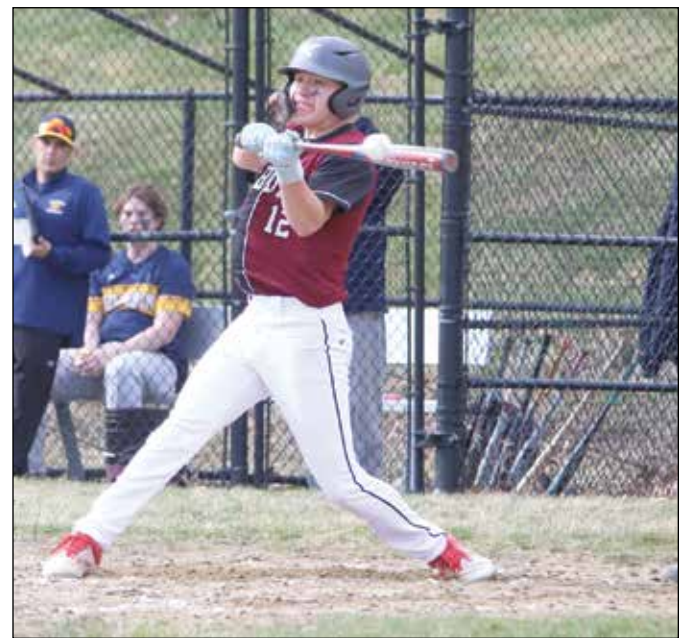
Abe Brown tries to check his swing.

head coach Brian Guimond. "I was really hoping for a much better outcome. It's just another disappointing loss for us.

Quaboag junior righty

Liam McGrath gave up four runs on three hits in 42/3 innings, but only one of those

See **BASEBALL**  
PAGE 8



Thomas Bellizzi leads off with a double down the left field line.

## Pioneers edged by rival Panthers

By Tim Peterson  
Sports Correspondent

PALMER— Tyler Wilson, Connor Roche, and Zach Handzal were the starting pitchers for the Palmer Panthers the last time that they began the high school baseball season with consecutive victories.

For the first time since 2014, the Panthers had a 2-0 record following an 11-9 victory over cross-town rival Pathfinder Tech before a large crowd at historic Legion Field, last Friday afternoon.

"Everyone played a key role in today's victory," said Handzal, who's beginning his second season as the Panthers varsity baseball coach. "We finished the week with a 2-0 record, and we now move on to next week. You always want to go undefeated each week."

The 2014 Palmer squad won its first five games and finished the regular season with a 17-3 overall record before losing to Athol in a Western Mass. Division 3 quarterfinal game.

The Panthers, who are first year members of the Tri-County League, lost both games that they played against the Pioneers a year ago.

While Palmer began the

See **PIONEERS**  
PAGE 8

## Quabbin gets big win over Quaboag softball

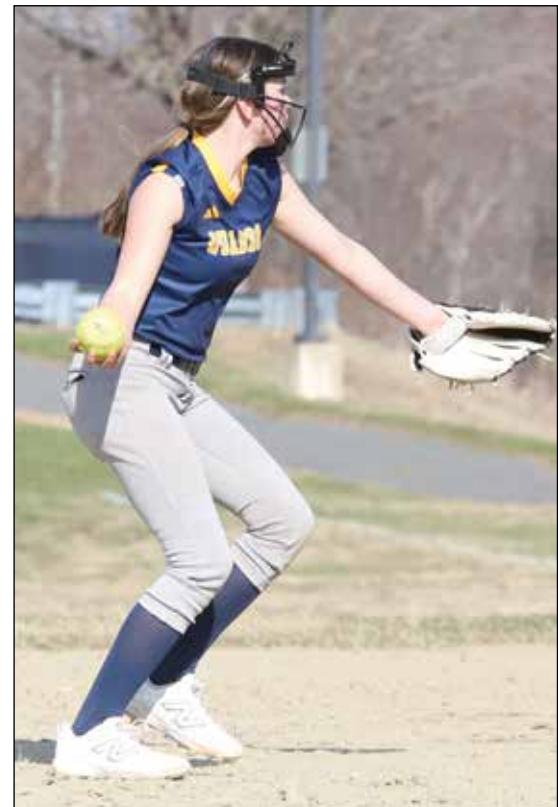


Abby Rogowski sends a base hit to the outfield.

BARRE – In the season-opener for both teams, Quabbin Regional High School softball handily defeated host Quaboag 21-2. The independent matchup between the two teams will be the only team they meet this season.

Quabbin was off until earlier this week with a matchup against Tahanto. Coming up, the Panthers face Narragansett. Quaboag has already played three games this season. Thought they lose to Quabbin, the Cougars did defeat South High and Keefe Tech and are 2-1 to start the season.

They next face North Brookfield on Monday, Apr. 13 at 3:30 p.m.



Josie Castell comes up throwing to first.



Ali Jones reaches out to catch a pop-up.



TURLEY PHOTOS BY GREGORY A. SCIBELLI

Raegyn Wnek lays down a bunt for the Panthers.



Aubrey Pope lines up a base hit.



Makayla Savoie makes a throw to first.

# - legals -

## Town of North Brookfield Notice of Public Hearing

The North Brookfield Planning Board will hold a public hearing on **Wednesday, April 15, 2026 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, 4/10/2026

## TOWN OF NORTH BROOKFIELD BOARD OF SELECTMEN

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the North Brookfield Board of Selectmen will hold a public hearing to consider a petition to locate poles, wires, cables, and fixtures, including the necessary anchors, guys, and other such sustaining and protecting fixtures, brought before it by Massachusetts Electric Company d/b/a National Grid and Verizon New England, Inc Tuesday, **April 21, 2026 at 6:15 PM** at the North Brookfield Police Department, 55 School Street, North

Brookfield, MA 01535.

The pole locations that will be considered are as follows:

**Green Rd** – National Grid to install 3 JO Poles on Green Rd beginning at a point approximately 4,200’ feet northwest of the centerline of the intersection of Shore Rd and Green Rd and continuing approximately 200 feet in a northwest direction. Install three new poles # 74, 74-50, & 75-84 on Green Rd.

**Ward St** – National Grid to install 1 JO Pole on Ward St beginning at a point approximately 300’ feet west of the centerline of the intersection of Hines Bridge Rd. Install a new pole 71-2 for new residential home.

Said hearing will begin at 6:15 PM and continue until completion, and will be conducted pursuant to the provisions of Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 166.

Jason M Petraitis, Chairman  
Jamie Gilman  
Ralph Kay  
04/03, 04/10/2026



# - sports -

## BASEBALL FROM PAGE 7

runs were earned. He threw a total of 99 pitches and recorded a total of 13 strikeouts.

“Liam is a very good pitcher,” Guimond said. “We didn’t give him very much support defensively.”

Lapointe, who’s the Panthers starting shortstop, hit a groundball to the third baseman leading off the top of the first inning. Lapointe wound up standing on second base following a throwing error. Lapointe scored after another throwing error by the second baseman.

Quaboag junior leftfield-

er Thomas Bellizzi lined a double to left leading off the bottom half of the opening frame. Both eighth grade shortstop Zach Deremian and McGrath walked, which loaded the bases with no outs.

The Cougars failed to capitalize, as Adams, who’s hoping to play college baseball, got himself out of that jam with the help of two strikeouts and a pop-up.

The Panthers, who only had four base hits in the game, stranded a runner at third base in the second inning. The visitors from Barre added two more runs in the third with the aid of

a fielding error and wild pitch.

After McGrath struck out the side in the fourth, Quabbin junior catcher Alijah Flint delivered an RBI single into right field making the score 4-0 with two outs in the fifth inning.

The Cougars battled back in the bottom half of the frame.

Eighth grade first baseman Landon Kelly drew a leadoff walk. After the next batter struck out, Deremian lined a single to center. Kelly crossed the plate when McGrath doubled to left field.

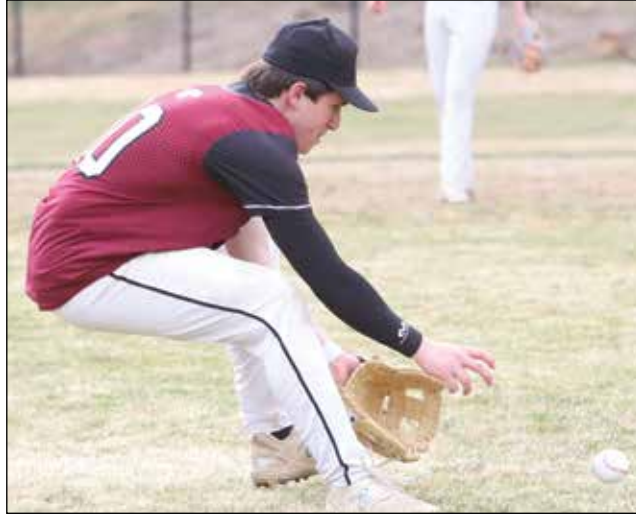
The Cougars had run-

ners on second and third base with no outs, but Brown worked out of the jam by retiring the next two batters with the help of a strikeout and a comebacker.

The two Panthers pitchers received plenty of support defensively.

Quabbin put the game out of reach by scoring eight runs against a couple of relief pitchers in the sixth inning.

Brown set down the side in order in the bottom of the sixth inning, which ended the ball game.



Connor Burgess fields a grounder inside third.



Jordyn Guilderson makes a throw from deep left field.

## PIONEERS FROM PAGE 7

2026 season with a 10-2 win at Westfield Tech on March 31, Pathfinder Tech (0-2) fell to Tri-County League rival McCann Tech, 13-2, in their season opener at Legion Field.

“Seven of the 13 players listed on our roster are new players, and I’m also a first-year varsity coach,” said Pathfinder Tech head coach Dan Szostek. “We’re still getting to know each other. I thought we kept battling back in today’s game.”

The winning pitcher in last Friday’s contest was Brendan Hess, who’s one of the five seniors listed on the Panthers varsity roster. The righthander allowed five runs (3 earned) on only four base hits with five walks and

nine strikeouts during the first five innings. He threw 101 pitches.

The Pioneers took a 2-0 lead against Hess in the top of the first inning.

Senior right fielder Dayne Shanley, who drew a leadoff walk, stole second base and scored the first run of the game on a passed ball. Senior centerfielder Edward Szostek drove home the other run with a cue shot that rolled past first base for a single.

The Panthers, who were the home team, responded by scoring four runs against senior righty Andrew Sullivan in the bottom half of the opening frame. Sullivan only pitched in a couple of games as a junior before suffering a season ending

injury.

“Andrew was a pitcher for the varsity team as a sophomore,” said coach Szostek, who was an assistant coach a year ago. “He missed most of last season with an arm injury. It’s nice having him back on the mound again this year.”

With one-out, Hess blasted a run scoring triple to center field before scoring the tying run on a wild pitch that skipped to the backstop. Eighth grade second baseman Josiel Ortiz and sophomore leftfielder Liam McKee also contributed with RBI singles which gave the Panthers a 4-2 lead.

Both teams scored a run in the third inning.

The Pioneers closed the

gap to 5-4 with two outs in the fourth when junior shortstop Brody Wetnicka crossed the plate on a wild pitch.

It didn’t remain a one run game for very long, as the Panthers put four runs on the left field scoreboard in their next at-bats. Two runs scored on bases loaded walks by senior third baseman Theo Haley and senior catcher Sebastian Mayberry, who had two hits in the home opener. Another run scored when Hess hit a pop-up single to center.

Sullivan, who threw a total of 80 pitches, was replaced by freshman lefthander Zach Smith with no outs.

He retired junior first baseman Dylan Holbrook

on a ground ball out which scored Haley making the score 9-4.

“We’ve been hitting the ball very well so far this season,” Handzel said. “We scored four runs in the fourth inning, which gave us a little breathing room.”

The Panthers scored two more runs in their next at-bats.

Pathfinder Tech, who added an unearned run in the fifth, was trailing 11-5 entering the top of the seventh inning.

The Pioneers put together a rally against Palmer senior right-hander Matt Santos, who had pitched a scoreless sixth inning.

Freshman Anthony Elliott began the seventh inning with a double to

left field. Junior left fielder Emerson Boronski also doubled to left field scoring Elliott. Then back-to-back walks by Edward Szostek and freshman DH Zach Latourelle loaded the bases.

At that point, Handzel decided to make a pitching change. Ortiz, who’s a righty, replaced Santos on the mound. The Pioneers scored two more runs before Ortiz ended the game with a strikeout.

“Josiel came in with the bases loaded and got the job done,” Handzel said. “It was his first appearance on the mound this season.”

The two baseball teams are scheduled to meet again under the lights at Legion Field on May 14.

## SCHOOL COMMITTEE FROM PAGE 1

school, they have seen improvements in grades eight and nine, but there are some concerns in grade 11, which saw a decline.

For reading, the school district scored in the 54th percentile over the winter with 328 students participating.

### Recognitions

McCormick said each

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year, grade six students attend Outdoor Classroom, which involves a lot of fundraising to offset the costs. He said that student Micha’el Kittredge used 3D printers to create keepsakes that he sold to raise money for this important learning opportunity.

“We have a student who has shown his love of STEM education, he owns three printers, at many events this fall he was selling his homemade things,” he said. “And then gave back over \$1,000 to Outdoor Classroom.”

McCormick also thanked staff for organizing and attending the recent STEAM Night. He said it was a “very nice night for our families.”

“We’re always trying to look to make that event bigger and better, and our staff was a big part of the planning and also the implemen-

tation of it,” he said.

McCormick said the Student Council earned the Gold Council of Excellence and Top 10 Project awards at the Massachusetts Association of Student Council’s state conference last month.

“They do a lot to build the culture and just a positive influence here at the Jr./St. High School,” he said.

### Curriculum grant

McCormick said the school district has the opportunity to receive a grant from the One8 Foundation to train teachers in the Investigative History, an Applied Learning curriculum.

McCormick said the school district received grant funding for Investigative History for grades three-sev-

en. “This grant sums just over \$16,000 for the next

three years,” he said.

McCormick said the grant will provide training and access to curriculum for multiple teachers across the school district.

“We love their products... we’ve done some great work with these products,” McCormick said.

The School Committee voted in favor of accepting the proposed grant funding.

### Student Council update

Student Representative Noah Gillette spoke about the MASC conference held recently in Hyannis.

He said the Seniors versus Staff basketball game was held, with the Seniors team securing the win.

He said April 13-17 will be a Spirit Week with the Lip Sync competition. Students in grades six-12 will compete in the Lip Sync on April 17, with grade five stu-

dents invited to watch.

The Student Council spring conference will be held on April 15.

### Rural school funding

McCormick said he has been working with representatives from the 67 rural schools across the commonwealth, to discuss funding issues these schools face.

“We’re hoping to meet with some state reps. and senators next month at Quabbin,” he said.

McCormick said rural school funding “needs to really change,” and be more consistent.

The slide presentation about rural school funding will be available on the school district’s website, www.nbschools.org.

### Professional Development

McCormick said for the past years, the school dis-

trict has been working with a consultant to provide Professional Development training to staff. He said for the next school year, a training team will be formed in-house at each school, to provide Professional Development to staff.

### Staff listening sessions

McCormick compiled data collected during staff listening sessions held over the winter, when the School Committee was exploring the possibility of a tuition agreement with a regional school district.

### 2026-2027 school calendar

The School Committee voted to approve the calendar for the 2026-2027 school year. After brief discussion, the committee members agreed to observe Good Friday as a non-school day.

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**COLLINS FROM PAGE 1**

to do with your time," he said.

Collins started taking oil painting classes with his mentor Roc Goudreau at Workshop13 in Ware. He has also been taking virtual classes with painter Victor Wang.

"Roc has shepherded me along the path," Collins said.

Both of these teachers have taught him different techniques with oil painting, which Collins has put to use to create stunning portraits of the things that inspire him. These subjects are primarily people, pets and prized possessions.

"It's got to be something that gets my juices flowing," he said. "People, pets... a lot of pets."

Collins is currently working on a painting by incorporating Wang's techniques, which is a portrait of his Golden Retriever exiting the waters of Beaver Lake.

Collins' other focus for his artwork is cars.

"I've always liked cars," he said. "My dad was the one that got me into cars."

Collins has created about 30 portraits of cars, mainly on commission. His own Porsche is the subject of many of his paintings, including his largest one featuring his car on Turn 14 at Palmer Motorsports Park.

"One of my muses is my car," he said.

His first portrait of his Porsche was awarded the Porsche Family Award for Excellence by the designer



*SUBMITTED PHOTOS*

A bronze sculpture of an otter created by artist John Collins will be featured in the "People, Pets, and Prized Possessions" show at West Brookfield Art & Frame Gallery with an opening reception on Friday, April 17 from 5-7 p.m.

of his car.

"He chose my piece, which was kind of a moment," Collins said.

At the show, Collins will also feature his series of paintings of cars featured in movies, including "Back to the Future", "Transformers" and "Thelma & Louise". He is planning to continue adding to the series by painting the cars from "Ferris Buehler's Day Off" and "Smokey and the Bandit".

Collins will also display his 3D work in the form of bronze sculptures.

Collins has captured the likeness of some well-



Artist John Collins painted a portrait of his Porsche on Turn 14 at Palmer Motorsports Park.

known local figures, including Goudreau and Chris DiMarzio, two of the founders of Workshop13, and the late Dr. PJ McDonald, who was the long-time headmaster of Eagle Hill School.

The busts of Goudreau and DiMarzio both received awards at recent shows.

"I'm very proud of those two pieces," he said.

Collins has two of his paintings featured at local establishments, including the Roadhouse Café in Belchertown, and the newly opened location of Fieldcrest Brewing in Ware.

The café's painting features a classic car pulling into its parking lot, and the brewery's has a werewolf on the street outside its entrance.

"Those are both kind of consignment pieces that are

also there for decoration," he said. "The owners of those two establishments are supporting local artists."

Following his "People, Pets, and Prized Possessions" show at West Brookfield Art & Frame Gallery, Collins will display his paintings at Rapscaillon in Sturbridge from May through July.

"I'll be featuring mostly the vehicles," he said.

Collins will also be giving a live portrait sculpture demonstration at West Brookfield Art & Frame on Saturday, April 25 from 1-5 p.m. People can stop in anytime and watch him bring his art to life

**Upcoming events at the gallery**

Upcoming shows and events at the gallery include Cosmos & The Cosmos on

Thursday, May 14 from 4-7 p.m. with Tarot readings by gallery artist Cheryl O'Donnell accompanied by cosmopolitan beverages. This event is \$20 for 20 minutes.

Space is limited and reservations are recommended.

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

The annual Summer Solstice Outdoor Party will be held on Saturday, June 20 from 6-9 p.m. in conjunction with the Joy of Beans. This neighborhood block party is hosted by two women-owned, small businesses

and will feature music, fine art, food, coffee and sweet treats.

This fall, a special "The State of our Union" show will be held and is open to anyone. An opening reception will be held on Friday, Nov. 6 from 5-7 p.m.

The public is encouraged to submit a piece of work. All entries will be hung unless they are inappropriate for children.

Artwork must meet the following requirements: the theme of the art is "The State of our Union;" the format is six inches by six inches; and the artwork must be mailed to West Brookfield Art & Frame Gallery, P.O. Box 102, West Brookfield, MA 01585 or dropped off at the gallery during open hours before Oct. 30.

Artists can use any medium of their choosing.

Gallery owner Fay said, "You don't have to be an 'artist' or an adult to participate, and it doesn't matter what you like or don't like. All work submitted will be respected."

**About the gallery**

For more information and a complete listing of gallery happenings, call the gallery at 508-753-8604, email yafacceber@hotmail.com, visit westbrookfieldartandframe.com or stop by the gallery during open hours, Thursday and Friday from 10 a.m.-5 p.m.; Saturday from 10 a.m.-5 p.m. and Sunday from 10 a.m.-2 p.m.

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