

# QUABOAG CURRENT

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Friday, May 15, 2026

## School Committee vote keeps elementary school open

By Paula Ouimette  
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WARREN – West Brookfield Elementary School will remain open, after a motion to close the school at the Quaboag Regional School Committee's meeting failed to pass.

The vote came after overrides questions failed to pass at West Brookfield's annual town election.

### Override votes

The need for an override was explained by West Brookfield Town Administrator Theresa Cofske at the May 11 School Committee meeting.

In the past, the town used one-time revenues or free cash to fill the budget gap, which is not a recommended financial practice. She said the town's Advisory Committee and Financial Consultant have warned against this practice for years.

"Clearly you can see the trend...there was a struc-



Parents and students stood outside Quaboag Regional Middle High School in support of keeping West Brookfield Elementary School.

TURLEY PHOTO BY PAULA OUIMETTE

tural gap going back years," Cofske said.

For fiscal year 2027, Cofske said the town was told by the Department of Revenue that they could not use

free cash to support their operating budget.

"Every year the town and the people voted to use free cash," she said. "This year was the year there's no go-

ing back."

Because of this, all town departments have faced significant cuts to their budgets.

Cofske said the Police

Department will lose two full-time police officers, part-time officers and have reduced overtime available. The Senior Center will go from operating five days a

week to three.

The library's budget has been cut by \$40,000, which will have an impact on its certification.

The Highway Department is cutting administrative assistant hours and more and the Board of Selectmen will no longer have an executive assistant.

The town's above minimum contribution to the Quaboag Regional School District was also reduced by \$100,000.

"There isn't a department that has not been effected by cuts," Cofske said.

Cofske was joined by Board of Selectmen member Catherine "Camie" Lamica, who spoke further about the override votes.

"We had two separate options to fund the town and the school," she said. "Unfortunately...the vote didn't pass on both amounts."

Lamica said the board has been working with the Advisory Committee to

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## Overrides fail to pass at polls

By Zacharias Fragkiadakis  
Staff Writer  
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WEST BROOKFIELD – The Town of West Brookfield held their municipal elections on May 5, with two questions related to the passage of a proposition 2.5 override. The town hosted several information sessions during the month of April to educate residents on what the override is for, and how a reduced budget could impact local services like the police department, fire, EMS, the

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Director Nym Cooke turned to the audience while the chorus performed.

TURLEY PHOTOS BY PAULA OUIMETTE

## Wings of Song sings to the seasons

'Spring and Summer in the British Isles' performed May 16-17

STURBRIDGE – The community chorus Wings of Song is known for taking its audiences on musical

expeditions.

This May, the chorus will be taking a deep dive into rural England, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales in the 13th-20th centuries, as it sings of "Spring and Summer in the British Isles." Everyone's invited to

come along.

The concerts will be on Saturday, May 16 at 7:30 p.m. in St. Joachim Chapel, 16 Church St., Fiskdale (part of Sturbridge), and

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## Selectman recognized for years of service

By Paula Ouimette  
Editor  
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NORTH BROOKFIELD – State Rep. Donnie Berthiaume presented outgoing Board of Selectmen Chair Jason Petraitis with a citation for his years of service to the town.

At the May 5 meeting, Berthiaume said he served as a selectman in his town of Spencer at the same time Petraitis did in North Brookfield in 2008. As the town's state representative, Berthiaume said Petraitis has called him more than any other selectmen in the towns he represents to advocate for the town of North Brookfield

"We spent a lot of time

serving in a lot of meetings together," he said.

Berthiaume said it was his honor to present a citation to Petraitis, which was also signed by state Sen. Peter Durant.

"Everybody in this room knows how dedicated you were and the many hats you wore, not just as selectmen, but school committee and many other boards, and all the other stuff you did on the side," Berthiaume said to Petraitis. "I'm going to miss you, not only because you're a great selectman, but because we are friends."

New Board of Selectmen Chair Jamie Gilman presented a plaque to Petraitis,

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## SB interviews TA candidates

By Zacharias Fragkiadakis  
Staff Writer  
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BROOKFIELD – The Select Board is looking to appoint an interim town administrator, until the town can form a search committee and find a full-time administrator.

The search for an interim follows the departure of the previous town administrator, Bob Ayers, who was appointed in late January, serving in the role until mid April.

Three candidates were interviewed during the week of May 4, including Blythe Robinson, David Snowdon III and Eric Weiss. The interviews were conducted virtually on Microsoft Teams.

### Blythe Robinson

Robinson was interviewed first on May 4, and

said she has spent her "entire career" in local government, having served three communities part-time between 2010-2022. She said in 2022 she decided on continuing her work, but in an interim role. She said her most recent full-time position was in Norfolk, and since leaving that position in 2022, she has served in 22 different communities on an interim basis during a span of four years, including Oakham.

She also highlighted her interim roles in Randolph and Bridgewater.

Robinson said she likes helping communities provide services to the best of their abilities, and has researched the town's website and bylaws. She said the bylaws are all "very famil-

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## Pathfinder receives record-breaking grant to expand opportunities

By Marcelo Gusmão  
Staff Writer  
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PALMER – Pathfinder Regional School District has been awarded a monumental \$3.5 million grant from the state.

Earlier this month, Superintendent Eric Duda attended the official announcement event and press conference in Marlborough that was hosted by Governor Maura Healey to announce the funds being awarded to Pathfinder. The funding will support the expansion of 150 Career Technical Education seats, and the repurposing of the former Cold Spring School in Belchertown as an expanded campus.

Duda described the award as a transformational moment for the district. "This \$3.5 million award



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Superintendent Eric Duda (left) met with Governor Maura Healey to accept the grant of \$3.5 million.

is truly game changing for Pathfinder Tech," Duda said. "We are about to em-

bark on the largest expansion in the history of our school district, and we are

honored to receive the largest grant award ever awarded to Pathfinder Tech."

The new campus in Belchertown is scheduled to open in September of this year. The school promised additional updates and announcements regarding the project in the coming months, as the district prepares the campus for students.

"This is a tremendous opportunity not only for Pathfinder Tech but for the entire region," said Duda. "We are ensuring that a former school building remains an active, thriving educational space while giving more students the chance to pursue rewarding career pathways. This expansion is a milestone for career technical edu-

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# - community -

## Selectmen hear update on CDBG program

By Zacharias Fragkiadakis  
Staff Writer  
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EAST BROOKFIELD – Andrew Loew, a representative from the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission gave an update to the Board of Selectmen on the 2026 Community Development Block Grant application, and asked the board for guidance on projects approved on last year's application.

He said the 2026 application was submitted on time, and would expect approval from the state between July and October.

At the May 4 meeting, Loew said the 2025 grant was fully executed, and the projects on it include an Americans with Disability Act study, facilities upgrades, and infrastructure upgrades.

He said that the ADA study should be completed by the end of this year, and the infrastructure and facilities should be "complete enough" to feed into the next grant, due next year.

Loew said he would put in requests for qualifications for the facilities and infrastructure studies, and town employees and the board of selectmen would be able to review the studies, which will be done by consultants. For the ADA study, Loew suggested putting in requests for quotes with four firms in the state.

### Lake Lashaway 200th

A representative from the Lake Lashaway 200th Anniversary Committee came to the Select Board to inquire about a human powered vehicle race on the lake in 2028, using the town beach

as a staging area.

Select Board Chair Andrew Lynch said the lake is town property and he does not need permission, but just needs to coordinate dates to make sure emergency personnel can be present and that the town beach can be closed on that day in case motor vehicles are being used for launching.

### Meals tax

Lynch said there are towns in the commonwealth that implement a 0.75% tax on meals, which are foods made on site, or delivered. The board said it would be put on the Annual Town Meeting warrant.

### Contract

The board signed a contract with Ricoh USA Inc. to continue supplying their copiers through FY 27

### Authorization

The board authorized Scouting America Troop 238 to continue maintaining town entrance signs with mulch and flowers.

### Year-end transfer

Lynch said there may be a need for a year-end transfer from free cash to a maintenance account for fire and carbon monoxide alarm work, which will be completed before the end of the fiscal year.

### Job posting

The board said the Water Department is going to post an advertisement for a position of water clerk, with applications to be sent to the water department.

### Policy and procedure

The board approved the federal grants policy and procedure.

## Sturbridge earns 2025 Tree City USA recognition

STURBRIDGE – The Arbor Day Foundation named the Town of Sturbridge a 2025 Tree City USA in honor of its commitment to plant, grow and maintain trees to benefit its community.

The Arbor Day Foundation is a global nonprofit with a mission to inspire people to plant, nurture and celebrate trees. Its network of more than a million supporters and partners has helped the organization plant more than 500 million trees in forests and communities across more than 60 countries.

The Foundation's Tree City USA program is now celebrating its 50th recognition season. The anniversary underscores the program's rich history of growing healthier, greener, and more resilient communities through urban forestry.

"For five decades, Tree City USA has rallied passionate local leaders

to enhance the livability and sustainability of their communities. Tree champions like Sturbridge are leading the way in a growing movement to shape a better future with trees and action," said Michelle Saulnier, Vice President of Programs at the Arbor Day Foundation. "Trees are critical infrastructure, building resiliency and fostering good health in our nation's cities. We're proud Sturbridge is among the Arbor Day Foundation's growing network of communities dedicated to creating positive impact through trees."

In cities and neighborhoods, trees are proven to help mitigate the urban heat island effect, reduce stormwater runoff, improve air quality, and boost mental and physical health. When the right trees are planted in the right places, they can also reduce traffic noise, increase property values,

and lower energy costs for homeowners.

Town Administrator, Robin Grimm, commented, "Sturbridge has a rich tradition of celebrating the natural beauty of Central Massachusetts, and its Tree City designation stands as a testimony to the commitment in this town to preserving our precious natural resources."

To earn Tree City USA recognition, a city must uphold four core standards including maintaining a tree board or department, having a community tree ordinance, spending at least \$2 per capita on urban forestry, and participating in an Arbor Day celebration.

The Arbor Day Foundation's Tree City USA program is operated in partnership with the National Association of State Foresters and the USDA Forest Service. To learn more about Tree

City USA and other Arbor Day Foundation programs, visit [arborday.org/](http://arborday.org/) programs.

About the Arbor Day Foundation

The Arbor Day Foundation is a global nonprofit inspiring people to plant, nurture, and celebrate trees. They foster a growing community of more than 1 million leaders, innovators, planters, and supporters united by their bold belief that a more hopeful future can be shaped through the power of trees.

For more than 50 years, they've answered critical need with action, planting more than half a billion trees alongside their partners. And this is only the beginning.

The Arbor Day Foundation is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit pursuing a future where all life flourishes through the power of trees. Learn more at [arborday.org](http://arborday.org).

## Join the Sturbridge America250 Parade on June 27

STURBRIDGE – The Sturbridge America250 Committee is moving forward with plans for a parade and festival on Saturday, June 27 – rain or shine.

The parade will step off from the Old Sturbridge Village Museum Education parking lot at 10:30 a.m. It will proceed on the OSV access road to Route 20, then to Route 131 and

end at the Town Common.

Bill Emrich will emcee the parade. The parade will include marching bands, entertainers, antique cars, floats made by local businesses, and area groups.

Bob Briere, recognized by many as the town's historian, is the parade Grand Marshall. Virginia Jalbert, the town's oldest resident at 101, is the guest of honor.

There is still time for businesses or groups to get involved – with a float, vintage car, or marchers. Children are invited to decorate their bikes or

scooters and ride in the parade (helmets are required and a parent/guardian must walk alongside their child throughout).

Anyone wishing to participate can email [sturbridge250@gmail.com](mailto:sturbridge250@gmail.com).

Following the parade there will be a Festival on the Common. This festival will include historical reenactors, entertainers, patriotic music, a reading of the Declaration of Independence, a cherry-pie eating contest and other participatory activities and food trucks.

## Annual plant, bake, craft and tag sale this weekend

HARDWICK – The Tri Parish Community Church welcomes the public to its 20th annual plant, bake, craft and tag sale Saturday, May 16 and Sunday, May 17 from 10 a.m.- 3 p.m. on the beautiful Hardwick common.

The sale will feature traditional, favorite, and connoisseur perennials, plus selected annuals, heirloom vegetable plants and herbs. There is a wonderful variety in plants offered through Inishowen Farms of North Brookfield, Stillman's Farm and Howe's Farm & Garden both of New Braintree, and "homegrown lovelies" from private gardens.

A delicious assortment of home-baked desserts and breads will also be sold.

The church will be holding a drawing featuring the "best" of the plant sale. No purchase is necessary to win.

Several outdoor activities and games will be available for children.

A number of craft vendors have rented space on the common for the event. The Friends of the Stone Church will also be on hand, highlighting their preservation of the Stone Church Cultural Center in Gilbertville, as well as the upcoming programs that are offered at the center.

The Tri Parish Community Church's Pastor, Duncan Washburn, will lead a brief prayer service Sunday morning on the common in lieu of the 10 a.m. Sunday worship service.

The proceeds from the plant and bake sale support the operational expenses of the church. Come spend the day enjoying all that Hardwick has to offer while supporting the fund-raising efforts of the church.

Browse the plants and vendor booths, connect with old friends, visit the Hardwick Historical Society, open from 10 a.m.- 2 p.m. both days, and the 1906 Paige Memorial library which will be open from 9 a.m.-1 p.m. Saturday. Both buildings are located near the common, a short walk from the plant sale venue.

Bring your bicycle and tour some of the great riding routes in the east-Quabbin area and scenic vistas preserved through the East Quabbin Land Trust such as the Mandell Hill property located just one mile east of the Hardwick common (the church will hold your plants for you), and top it all off with a bite to eat at Mimi's Coffee House overlooking the common.

All are welcome. This is a rain or shine event.

## Amateur radio operator club hosts meeting on May 26

WEST BROOKFIELD – Local amateur radio operators and the public are invited to the next Quaboag Valley Amateur Radio Club meeting, Tuesday, May 26 at 6:30 p.m. at the West Brookfield Senior Center, 73 Central St.

This month's program the club will be discussing their plans for Field Day on June 27-28.

ARRL Field Day is the most popular annual on-the-air amateur radio event in the U.S. and Canada, held on the fourth weekend of June. It acts as a combined emergency communication exercise, community open house and technical

competition.

Operators set up temporary, often off-grid stations to simulate disaster response while making as many radio contacts as possible. It is primarily an emergency preparedness exercise designed to teach operators how to set up stations in less-than-optimal conditions (e.g., tents, parks) when using standard infrastructure. Operators use generators, batteries, or solar power. It is open to the public.

All are welcome to attend. For more information about the club, upcoming events, or licensing opportunities, visit [www.QVARC.com](http://www.QVARC.com).

## Asparagus chowder returns to First Congregational Church

WEST BROOKFIELD – On Saturday, May 16 during the town of West Brookfield's Asparagus, Heritage and Flower Festival on the town common, (10 a.m.-3 p.m.), the First Congregational Church, UCC, 36 North Main St., will offer their famous asparagus chowder from their Chow-

der Tent located on the church lawn.

Hot chowder by the cup, cold chowder by the quart to take home, yummy brownies and cold drinks will be available from 10 a.m. until it runs out. Inside and outside dining is available.

Call the church for more information at 508-867-7078.

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USDA INSP. SLICED FROM OUR DELI VIRGINIA HAM	\$4.44/lb	USDA INSP. FROZEN FARM RAISED TALAPIA FILLETS	\$3.99/ea	USDA INSP. FRESH COAST TO COAST KITCHEN MINI EMPANADAS PIZZA, HAM, CHEESEBURGER	\$2.99/ea
USDA INSP. SLICED FROM OUR DELI PROVOLONE CHEESE	\$4.44/lb	USDA INSP. STOREMADE BONELESS CAROLINA GOLD MARINATED CHICKEN THIGHS	\$3.69/lb	USDA INSP. STOREMADE BONELESS KOREAN BBQ MARINATED PORK BUTT STRIPS	\$3.35/ea

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## - community -

# Quabbin Regional School District where we are

*From the desk of the Quabbin Regional School District Superintendent Colleen Mucha*

BARRE – The fiscal year 2027 budget process began in the late fall of 2026, well before the district had any idea of how funding may change or stay the same at the state or federal level.

However, Quabbin Regional School District understood that it would be another challenging year with such volatile costs of goods and services. The first FY 27 budget proposal was \$43,887,444 and it included several reductions from the start.

At that time, only one position had been added and it included one reduction. It also included reductions based upon cost savings measures such as revisiting contracts like special education transportation.

At this time, the budget was reduced to

\$42,545,128.53.

### Where have we been

By 2024, after the COVID 19 pandemic, the ESSER funds had fully expended and expired. We knew we would need to make some difficult decisions over the next few years.

QRSD worked tirelessly to build a more sustainable budget foundation while protecting student learning outcomes. The district prioritized fiscal responsibility through a combination of proactive planning and strategic reductions.

In the way of proactive planning, QRSD has utilized Rural School Aid to build “programs” that are allowing them to keep their own students in the district. These programs include therapeutic classrooms, lan-

guage based classrooms and their New Horizon Academy – Alternative High School program.

Quabbin has several successful programs such as the Lifeskills programs and Autism programming for many years. If they were unable to provide these educational opportunities for our students, the cost for an out of district placement per student is substantial.

Most day placements are \$60,000/year plus transportation. Some are well above \$100,000/year plus transportation. Not only are these programs good for students, as they are able to stay in the district with their peers, but they make financial sense.

As for strategic reductions, QRSD has been carefully watching student enrollment and interest.

One of the challenges with declining enrollment is that while we may have a decrease of 25 students, for example, that does not equate to being able to reduce one teacher because oftentimes those students are from different grade levels and attend different schools.

In the past two years, the QRSD reduced 14 positions and for FY 27 SY we are reducing an additional 20 positions. These reductions were a necessary step to address ongoing budget challenges following the loss of federal aid and lower than promised state aid.

The tremendous increase in costs of goods and services is also playing a significant role.

These reductions will help to ensure the district’s spending is aligned with

long-term resources.

### Where we are going

The Quabbin Regional School District is committed to sustainable financial management and with a proactive approach we will address potential deficits before they escalate.

With the FY 27 budget, we identified necessary reductions that we believe will allow us to weather any future unexpected increases and costs. QRSD will continue to monitor spending closely, seek to increase revenues, and keep our focus on student learning.

These budget decisions are difficult and they directly affect students, staff, programs and the morale. Many of their employees live right here in the five communities and with reductions like

these, they take a toll.

The administration is aware that the budget landscape remains challenging and that more difficult decisions are anticipated over the next few years. By beginning the budget process early and making reductions strategically, QRSD is working to maintain its financial health while ensuring its core mission, student learning, remains the top priority. In the last article in this series, the district will address Frequently Asked Questions related to topics like: Net School Spending, Transportation, Per Pupil Spending and more. Should people have a specific question, they may [cmucha@qrsd.org](mailto:cmucha@qrsd.org) and the superintendent will try to get it answered in the next article.

### SCHOOL COMMITTEE FROM PAGE 1

present a reduced budget to voters at the annual town meeting to be held on Tuesday, June 2 at 6:30 p.m. She said they were able to “very painfully” cut approximately \$500,000 from the proposed FY 27 budget to date.

Cofske said there are still unknowns in the budget, which total about \$300,000.

Cofske spoke about short and long-term goals to address the town’s financial situation, including the establishment of financial policies.

“Policies need to be put in place because that’s when it stops,” she said of the gap.

Cofske said in the long-term, the town will work to develop economic goals, and continue to monitor departmental spending, which she said is “bare bones to begin with.”

Cofske said to date, there is about \$17,000 remaining in free cash and another \$276,000 that has been certified by the state.

### State funding

Cofske said the state’s Unrestricted General Government Aid is still at the same rate it was in 2008, despite inflation.

Superintendent of Schools Stephen Duff said the Senate recently released its version of the FY 27 budget, and that it doesn’t include any

increases in Chapter 70 funding or charter school reimbursements.

“It was the exact same budget that the House budget had,” Duff said.

### Quaboag FY 27 budget

Director of Finance & Operations Nicole Gonçalves said the school district has been operating on a “shoestring budget” for many years.

“Every nickel counts,” she said.

Without the passage of an override in the town of West Brookfield, the school district will move forward with March 30 version (version 3) of the FY 27 budget. She said both towns would need to approve the budget to move forward.

Gonçalves said the state’s funding formulas need to be corrected, but she said that process could take years, and would not help the towns now.

Lamica said West Brookfield’s “cuts would need to be deeper” if the school budget was put forward.

Warren Board of Selectmen member and former Finance Committee member Ray Kopacko said his town would not be able to afford the assessment put forward by the School Committee’s budget.

“Warren cannot do the requested budget,” he said. “The money simply is not there.”

### School district support

Duff said the last thing that anyone wants is to see one of the schools in the district close, or see a reduction in staff. He said supporting the staff is the best way to benefit the students.

“We fight and fight and fight for our teachers,” Duff said. “Everybody here contributes in a small way.”

Several parents spoke during the public comment period, including Jordan Brooks, who has been a strong advocate for West Brookfield Elementary School staying open.

Brooks attended the school himself as a child, and all of his children have also gone there. He thanked the School Committee members who voted against the motion to close the school.

Jeanne, another parent who also attended West Brookfield Elementary School herself, spoke prior to the meeting about the support her children and her family received from the school staff after experiencing a house fire.

“That’s what a small community does,” she said.

Doreen Piechota said a West Brookfield Community Advocacy group has been formed to find ways to help support the town and its needs.

“We have been working tirelessly,” she said. “We are continuously writing the state.”

## Mystics & Makers returns with psychic fair and market

BROOKFIELD – Following the success of their 2025 Enchanted Market, Spiritology by Candace and Lulu’s AvalonRose Cottage are proud to announce the return of Mystics & Makers with a brand-new spring event: Mystics & Makers: The Spring Awakening Psychic Faire & Market, taking place on Saturday, May 16, from 10 a.m.-6 p.m. at the Brookfield Rod & Gun Club, located at 56 Webber Road.

This unique community event will bring together herbal and wellness vendors, artisans, crafters, psychic readers, holistic practitioners, energy healers and metaphysical merchants from throughout the region for a full day focused on creativity, spirituality, wellness and handmade offerings.

Attendees can explore intuitive readings including tarot, mediumship, and palmistry; experience holistic and energy healing services; shop handcrafted artisan goods, crystals, candles, herbal products, jewelry and

metaphysical wares; and enjoy delicious food offerings in a welcoming atmosphere designed to support small, local businesses and community connection.

Unlike traditional vendor fairs, Mystics & Makers focuses specifically on the growing interest in holistic wellness, spiritual exploration, handmade craftsmanship, herbalism, metaphysical traditions, and alternative healing practices.

“We were incredibly grateful for the overwhelming support and positive response we received from our Enchanted Market last October,” said Candace Ouillette Gaumond, founder of Spiritology by Candace and co-host of the event. “People are looking for spaces where they can connect with community, support local makers, explore holistic wellness, and experience something meaningful and unique. This event was created to bring all those elements together in one place.”

Lauren “Lulu” Ayer, co-owner of Lulu’s AvalonRose Cottage and co-host of Mystics & Makers, shared similar enthusiasm about the event’s continued growth.

“There is something truly special about gathering people together who are passionate about creativity, healing, spirituality, and handmade artistry,” said Ayer. “The response to our first event showed us how much this type of gathering resonates with the community. We are excited to continue growing Mystics & Makers into a seasonal tradition that celebrates local talent, connection, and inspiration.”

Following the success of last year’s event, the organizers have announced plans to host two Mystics & Makers Faire & Market events annually, including the return of The Enchanted Market planned for Oct. 17 and a special event on Oct. 31, The Enchanted Witches’ Gala.

## St. Aloysius celebrates 10th year with chicken BBQ fundraiser

HARDWICK – St. Aloysius Catholic School in Gilbertville is celebrating 10 years. Please join them on Saturday, June 6 at St. Mary’s Church Hall in Ware, from 1-4 p.m., for

a chicken barbecue, sponsored by the Knights of Columbus Council #183. There will be a DJ, all sorts of fun for the kids, basket raffles, a 50/50 and more. Tickets are \$25 for a chick-

en dinner or \$5 for a hot dog and chips.

Purchase tickets by calling the school at 413-477-1268 or by reaching out to Megan Morrison by phone or text 978-751-1211.

## Kindergarten registration is now open at NBES

NORTH BROOKFIELD – North Brookfield Elementary School is excited to announce that

kindergarten registration is now open for the 2026-2027 school year.

Please contact Katelin

at North Brookfield Elementary School by calling 508-867-8326 or emailing [kgaines@nbschools.org](mailto:kgaines@nbschools.org).



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### 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](mailto:Highway@newbraintree.gov).**

A.A./E.O.E.

# - opinion -

## Rhubarb, a perennial fruit worth growing

Recently I was chatting with a coworker who has a dozen varieties of rhubarb.

Yes, rhubarb. He asked if I wanted a division or two.

Although I love all things old, and this fruit (yes, fruit) is considered about as old-fashioned as they come, I politely declined. Rhubarb and I don't particularly get along.

But, that doesn't mean I'll knock anyone who can eat it and not visit the bathroom. All the more power to them.

Read on for some rhubarb trivia that just may earn you a prize on your next cruise.

Back in the day when everyone made time for baking, or baked out of necessity, rhubarb was indispensable in the garden. Today, most folks figure they can buy what they need when they long to make a strawberry-rhubarb pie or some preserves.

I say, "Why buy it, when it is so easy to grow?" And, as an added bonus, it may just out live you!

Rhubarb was featured

on a cooking show and a lengthy discussion evolved between the celebrity cooks about whether it was a fruit or a vegetable. I never did hear the resolution, but did a little research of my own.

Apparently, rhubarb is a vegetable but after a court decision in 1947 it is legally a fruit and was not subject to taxation of the time.

The best time for planting rhubarb is early through mid-spring. If you are lucky enough to know someone with an established patch, it is very likely they will give you all of the divisions you need and then some.

You can also purchase roots or small potted plants from local nurseries. For an average family of four, plan on two or three divisions.

Rhubarb will do best in a spot in the yard that is in full sun or light shade. Most gardeners locate it separately from or at one end of the main vegetable garden.

Since we are dealing with

a perennial plant, think carefully about where you site it- you may have to live with your decision for decades! Amend the soil



with lots of organic matter prior to planting; the richer the better.

Finished compost or aged manure fit the bill just fine, and since rhubarb prefers slightly acidic soil, you'll want to hold the lime.

If you are getting divisions from a friend's garden, ask for some from the outer portion of the patch - these roots will be the least fibrous and most eager to thrive. Keep as much soil as possible around them during transport to prevent dehydration.

If you can't transplant

them the same day dig a quick hole somewhere else in the garden and "heel them in." Your other alternative would be to pot up the divisions.

In either case, water well until you can plant them attentively.

When it's time for your plants to make their way to a permanent spot, dig holes two to three feet apart. The depth of the holes will depend on the size of the divisions you have and how big their roots are.

Plant them at the same depth they were growing in your friend's garden or in the pot you bought them in. If you are planting roots, go by the buds - they should be planted about two inches below the soil surface.

During the first growing season our emphasis should be on root building. For that reason be sure that you water well and keep weeds at bay.

Do not pick stalks until the following spring, but do break off any flower buds

that form. Once your patch has established itself there is no stopping it! All you'll need to do to maintain it is provide a topdressing of compost or rotted manure each spring and weed as needed.

Of course, you will also want to pick as much as you can! No knife is needed: simply hold the stem near the base and give it a quick pull along with a gentle twist.

Use only the stem since the foliage is known to be toxic.

The patch will need dividing every 5-10 years; the perfect time to offer up divisions to your friends!

*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.*

QUABOAG CURRENT

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### SOCIAL SECURITY Matters By Russell Gloor

#### I'll be 70 on New Year's Day. When should I apply for Social Security?

Dear Rusty:

I was born on Jan. 1, 1958, so I believe Social Security considers me to be 70 as of December 2027. I'm planning on filing when I turn 70 to maximize the payment. I'm not sure if I should start in December, with the first payment in January 2028. Or should I start in January with the first payment in February 2028? I know I can start anytime, however I don't want to file before the maximum payment, even by one month.

Signed: Wanting Maximum Benefit

Dear Wanting:

You are correct that if your birth date is Jan. 1, 1958, you are entitled to your full age 70 benefit in December 2027. So, if you claim your SS benefit to start in December 2027 you will get your maximum benefit amount and you will receive that payment in January 2028 (on the second Wednesday). Basically, anyone born on the first of any month is considered to have been born in the previous month for SS benefit purposes.

You can apply for your benefits up to four months

prior to your birthday month and SS usually suggests applying about three months in advance to give them time to process your application. When you complete the application, you will specify the month you wish your benefits to start, so applying early does not present a problem. You can either call SSA at 1-800-772-1213 to make an appointment to apply over the phone or you can apply online at www.ssa.gov/apply.

The one thing you might want to do is put the following in the "Remarks" section of your application for SS benefits: "I do not wish to receive any retroactive Social Security benefits. I want my benefits to become effective with the first month of my age 70 eligibility (December 2027 because I was born on the first of January)."

Including that remark will ensure that your benefit will be the full maximum amount you are entitled to at 70 years of age, without any reduction. And I congratulate you on

See SOCIAL SECURITY PAGE 10



#### Farming in Zambia

By Felicia Smith

My partner Floyd Kelley and I spent most of January 2026 in Zambia, a country about the size of Texas in South-Central Africa.

Since my Peace Corps service there from 2015-2017, we try to return every two years to visit with my host family (the family chosen to host me during the two years in my assigned village), and other people we've met over the years.

Zambia is a relatively new country as compared to the U.S., only gaining independence in 1964.

Most things in Zambia feel like traveling back in time. Locks are opened with skeleton keys. People swath their babies in cloth diapers. Most soda is still made with cane sugar and comes in refillable glass bottles.

Despite this, sometimes going there feels like taking a leap into the future, and not in a good way.

The soil has already been vastly over-farmed, leading to desertification in most places. There are rivers of trash flowing through the city, despite plastic packaging from China being relatively new to Zambians.

He said that it strips the soil of nutrients and biodiversity, and that there were some types of grass that used to grow here that don't anymore. Because the soil has been plowed and stripped of nutrients over and over again since adopting the ways of "conventional" farming, it's now necessary to apply fertilizer to the soil to make any crops grow.

My host family traditionally farms tobacco for a living, but this year the heavy rains washed the fertilizer from the soil. So now the tobacco is pale and struggling, while the grasses growing beside it are healthy and taller than I am.

Seeing all this perfectly good but wasted grass, Floyd thought it was a no-brainer for Zambians to convert the freely available resource into nutrition and money for the household via cattle.

How else can you get something from nothing, he says? And Zambians could really use something.

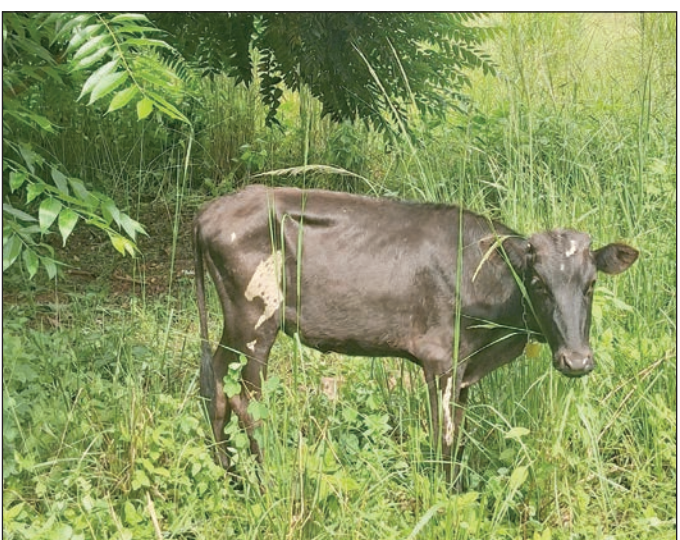
Poverty grows each year, as prices continue to soar. Gasoline is regularly around \$5.44/gallon, if you can believe it. Here, where many people can barely afford food or fertilizer, most certainly can't afford to drive.

And since there are only two (albeit long) paved roads throughout the country, people still travel by ox-cart, similar to how we used to travel by horse.

Our faith in bringing back the fertility of the soil currently lies in livestock which, in addition to providing transport, can live off the grass that grows so

See COMMUNITY PAGE 10

#### This summer...



This is a photo of the Kelly the dairy cow in Zambia.

SUBMITTED PHOTO

#### 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.

#### Quaboag Current OBITUARY POLICY

Turley Publications offers two types of obituaries. One is a free, brief **Death Notice** listing the name of deceased, date of death and funeral date and place. The other is a **Paid Obituary**, costing \$275, which allows families to publish extended death notice information of their own choice (with a word limit of up to 500 words) and may include a photograph.

**Death Notices & Paid Obituaries** should be submitted through a funeral home to: obits@turley.com.

Exceptions will be made only when the family provides a death certificate and must be pre-paid.

- community -

# Brookfields Lions Club awards local scholarships

**NORTH BROOKFIELD** – The Brookfields Lions Club has awarded five scholarships totaling \$5,000 to local high school graduates, according to club president, William Cass.

Each year, the Lions award scholarships of up to \$1,000 to students who live within the club's service area, and attend one of five local high schools: David Prouty High School, Spencer; North Brookfield High School, North Brookfield; Quabbin Regional High School, Barre; Quaboag Regional High School, Warren, and Tantasqua Regional High School, Sturbridge.

"We're proud to support these students as they begin the next chapter of their education," said Cass. "Each of them has demonstrated hard work, commitment to their education, and the potential to make a meaningful

difference in the lives of others. The Brookfields Lions Club is honored to help invest in their future."

Madison DeCelle, of Brookfield, attends Tantasqua Regional High School, where she is a member of the National Honor Society and the National Art Honor Society. She is the daughter of Amanda DeCelle.

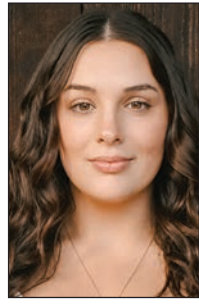
Madison will be studying fashion design and marketing at Lasell University, in Newton.

Willow Anderson is the recipient from East Brookfield, and also attends Tantasqua Regional High School. She is the daughter of Eric and Ellen Anderson.

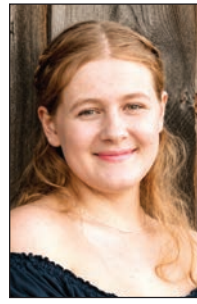
Willow will be attending The College of the Holy Cross, Worcester, where she will be studying language in the hopes of someday working as a government interpreter.



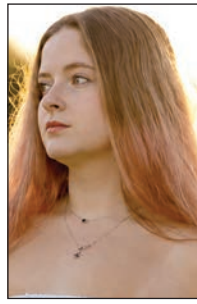
Madison DeCelle, Brookfield



Willow Anderson, East Brookfield



Hunter McQueston, New Braintree



Emily Black, North Brookfield



Gianna Lindsey, West Brookfield

Hunter McQueston, of New Braintree, attends Quabbin Regional High School, where she is a member of the National Honor Society and Navy Junior Reserve Officers Training Corps. She is the daughter of Michael and Jessica McQueston.

Hunter will be attending the University of Maine at Orono where she will major in nursing.

Emily Black, of North

Brookfield, attends Quabbin Regional High School. She is the daughter of Cassie Hobbs and Andrew Black.

Emily will be attending Nichols College, Dudley, where she will be studying criminal justice with an eye toward being a criminal psychologist.

Gianna Lindsey is the recipient from West Brookfield, where she attends Quaboag Regional High School. She is the daughter

of Eunice and Craig Lindsey.

Gianna will be attending Western New England University where she will be studying law.

To be eligible for a Brookfields Lions Club scholarship, applicants must be a resident of one of the Brookfields or New Braintree. The student's high school guidance director must confirm the student's class rank and sign the ap-

plication, and the completed application must be submitted before the high school's spring break.

To receive the scholarship, recipients must demonstrate that they are enrolled as a full-time college student and have earned passing grades.

As the world's largest, youngest and most active service organization, the mission of Lions Clubs International is to empower volunteers to serve their communities, meet humanitarian needs, encourage peace, and promote international understanding. Members of the Brookfields Lions Club are dedicated to service and support in the communities of Brookfield, East Brookfield, North Brookfield, West Brookfield and New Braintree.

## C4R hosts birding paddle on May 16

**BROOKFIELD** – Join C4R for a special Birding on the Quaboag paddle on Saturday, May 16 from 8:30-11 a.m.

The Quaboag Marsh offers a special habitat for spring birds. Participants will listen for and perhaps see the American Bittern. Meet at the Route 148 state boat launch, then park nearby. Limit is 15 paddlers.

RSVP required by emailing chicopeewatershed@gmail.com.



SUBMITTED PHOTO



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Shown are Lake Wickaboag Preservation Association members and volunteers who assisted in the recent event.

## Success, sunshine and gratitude

**WEST BROOKFIELD** – On April 25, the Lake Wickaboag Preservation Association of West Brookfield coordinated members and

volunteers in a gathering to clean up the shorelines and roadsides around the lake.

The LWPA is grateful to all the volunteers who joined

in the effort, filling many bags to help improve and preserve the natural environment and beauty of the area.

### N BROOKFIELD FROM PAGE 1

which recognized him for "13 years of faithful and honorable service on the Board of Selectmen in the town of North Brookfield."

Petratis said there is "an amazing crew in North Brookfield," and he said they also deserve recognition.

"Any recognition that I get I accept for everybody else, because I couldn't have done it without all of you," he said.

### Downtown parking

Gilman said a plan has been developed to identify time-limited parking spots for the downtown area. He said the board has been working with local businesses and he credited Mark Terkanian for helping to create this plan.

Gilman said North Main Street missed a state project for paving, and the installation of the time-limited parking spots will be delayed until later this year.

"We have not forgotten about the issue. We remain committed to improving the parking situation and working with local business and will continue to move forward as conditions allow," he said.

### Appointment

The board appointed Mary Cormier to the position of Program Assistant at the Senior Center at the recommendation of the Council on Aging.

Board of Selectmen Vice-Chair Ralph Kay said they are "looking forward to what you can bring to the Senior Center and Council

on Aging and look forward to working with you and helping us to expand what we provide in the town for services."

Cormier said she has a background in the art business, property and she enjoys working with senior citizens. She also has knowledge of computers.

"I'm looking forward to it," Cormier said of starting the position.

### School highlights

Board of Selectmen Clerk Peter Orsi read school district updates provided by Superintendent Timothy McCormick. McCormick's report stated that the school district continues to expand high-quality learning opportunities for students through partnerships.

One of these partnerships is with the One8 Foundation, and staff recently attended a meeting that was part of the rollout of the new Investigating History curriculum for the next school year.

McCormick stated the school district is also exploring Early College opportunities with Quinsigamond Community College.

The updates noted that successful student-led parent/teacher conferences were attended by over 120 families.

The students have been active in community service by participating in two recent food drives to restock the school district's food pantries.

Sixth graders recently attended Outdoor Classroom; demonstrating strong character, teamwork and engagement and hands-on learning.

### Recognition

The board received a letter and a donation from a resident commending the North Brookfield EMS and first responders for response to a medical emergency.

"North Brookfield can be thankful for the professional and knowledgeable individuals who protect our town," the letter stated.

### Reorganization

As this was the first Board of Selectmen's meeting since the annual town election, the board reorganized. Gilman was selected to serve as chair, Kay as vice-chair and Orsi as clerk.

### Spending requests

The board approved spending requests from the Fire Department in the amount of \$474.66 to purchase plywood for repairs to the burn building at the

training center; the Highway Department in the amount of \$1,062 for repairs to an outrigger piston, \$6,040 for tires for four trucks and \$550 for a brake booster and master cylinder; and the Veterans Department in the amount of \$775 for training at the MVSOA June conference.

### Code Red contract

The board signed the annual contract for the town's Crisis24 (Code Red) notification system in the amount of \$3,970.68. This phone service can be used to notify residents of emergencies, as well as provide general information.

### Mad Brook Road easement

The board approved the use of \$20,000 from Chapter 90 funds to pay BSC Engineering to draft an engineering plan for the Mad Brook Road bridge replace-

ment.

### Mini-grant for Senior Center

Council on Aging Director Courtenay Rivera said she applied for a mini-grant through Healthy Quaboag to purchase a commercial-grade refrigerator for the Senior Center.

The current refrigerator is a few years old, but is residential-grade.

The board approved the grant application in the amount of \$3,000.

### Election results

Town Clerk Tara Hayes read the results of the annual town election: Selectman, Peter Orsi, 418 votes; Board of Assessors, Brandon Avery, 437 votes; Board of Assessors (to fill a vacancy for two years), Tina Floria, seven write-in votes; Board of Assessors (to fill a vacancy for one year), James

Arcese, two write-in votes; School Committee, Nancy Waldron, 113 write-in votes; School Committee, Michelle Thayer, 77 write-in votes; School Committee (to fill a vacancy for one year), Michelle Petratis, 56 write-in votes; Water Commissioner, Richard Kennan, 366 votes; Water Commissioner (to fill a vacancy for two years), Donald Gillette, 412; Board of Health, Ethan Melad, 357 votes; Cemetery Commissioner, Kirk Burnham, 416 votes; Library Trustees, Carol Kelley, 404 votes and Noah Caouette, 74 votes; Planning Board, Karen Hubacz, 410 votes; Planning Board (to fill a vacancy for four years), Sadie Kiley, 388 votes; Housing Authority, Darlene Lavin, 401 votes; and Southern Worcester County Regional Vocational School District, Donald Gillette, 417 votes.



**Saturday, May 16th**  
7pm-11pm

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# - community -



TURLEY PHOTOS BY PAULA OUIJETTE

Wings of Song community chorus rehearsed at St. Joachim Chapel recently to prepare for the “Spring and Summer in the British Isles” concerts to be held on Saturday, May 16 at 7:30 p.m. in St. Joachim Chapel, 16 Church St., Fiskdale and on Sunday, May 17 at 3 p.m., at Elm Street Congregational Church, 61 Elm St., Southbridge.



“Spring and Summer in the British Isles” features songs from England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales from the 13th-20th centuries.

## WINDS OF SONG FROM PAGE 1

on Sunday, May 17 at 3 p.m., at Elm Street Congregational Church, 61 Elm St., Southbridge.

Admission is free, with a freewill offering taken at intermission. As always, socializing and refreshments will follow each concert.

As always with Wings of Song, there’s something here for everyone. Also for everyone is the sweet balm of tuneful melodies, and syllan and pastoral scenes.



Musicians performed alongside the chorus.



Chorus members performed “Here Comes the Sun” by The Beatles.



Wings of Song community chorus has members from Massachusetts and Connecticut.



The accompanist joined the chorus members at rehearsal.



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Love, Mom & Dad



# SPORTS

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Whitney Reno fields a grounder and heads to tag first base.

## Indians in action

**NORTH BROOKFIELD** – Last week, North Brookfield softball was in action, the Indians are looking to make the state tournament season and currently sit at 3-5 on the season with games against Parker Charter and North High School coming up in the next couple of days. Both games will be played at home.

TURLEY PHOTOS BY GREGORY A. SCIBELLI



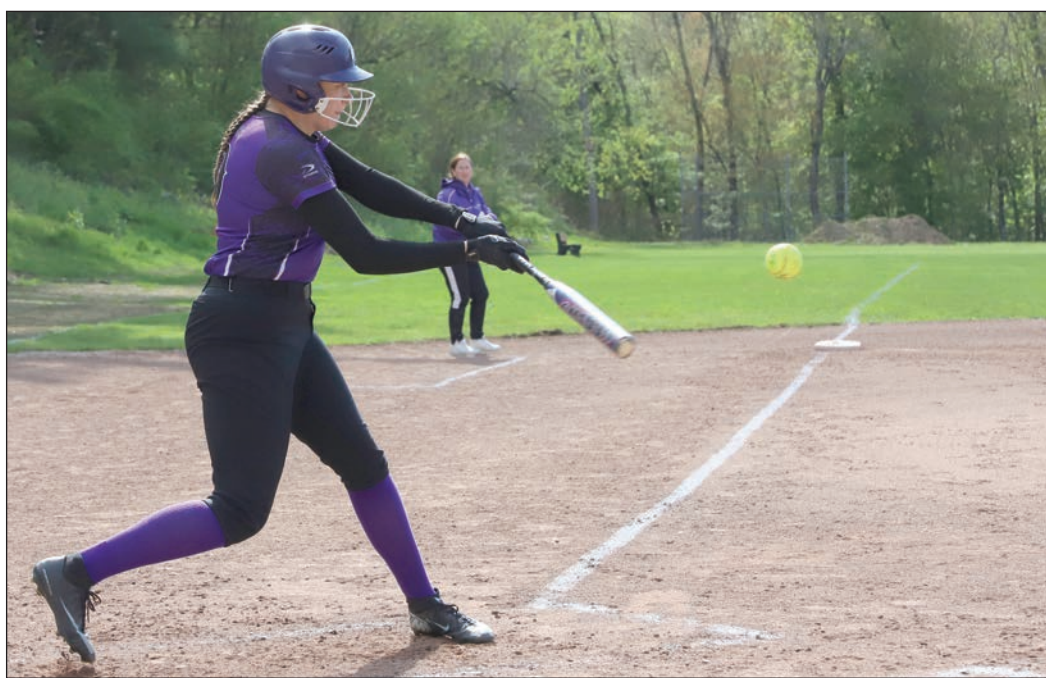
Abby Lindberg sends a pitch away.



Milcalia Ayala sends a throw back into the infield after cutting off a throw from center.



Sophia Dufresne fires a throw.



Olivia Holmes squares up a hit.



Hope McCoy leads off first.

## Pioneers score first win of season



**SPRINGFIELD** – Last Monday afternoon at Forest Park, Pathfinder baseball defeated host Sci-Tech 14-1 for their first win of the regular season. The Pioneers are 1-12 with just a few games remaining in the regular season.

TURLEY PHOTOS BY GREGORY A. SCIBELLI

Brody Wetnicka hustles for first base.



Brennan Peterson makes a throw on the run.



Kyle Beaudry reaches out to get the loose ball.

TURLEY PHOTOS BY GREGORY A. SCIBELLI

## Boys lacrosse keeps winning

**MONSON** – Last Saturday afternoon, Monson got another big win, defeating visiting McCann Tech 15-1 to improve to 8-3 on the season. Monson has also won five straight games with some tough challenges coming through in the next two weeks. Monson will make the state tournament, but will be fighting to also get into the small Western Mass. tournament that will be held prior to states. Monson will face Saint John Paul II on Saturday, May 9 at 1 p.m. on the road.



Parker Libs holds the ball back



Dom Menard heads up the field.



Ian Sauri Nieves cleanly fields a grounder to second.



Dayne Shanley leads off second.



Aiden Girard smothers a grounder to third.



Isaac Summers gets ready to turn and fire at the goal.



Landon Couture is pursued by the opposing defense

# - community -

## BROOKFIELD FROM PAGE 1

iar,” and the only thing she was not familiar with was Harbormaster. She said it is important for an interim town administrator to be a consistent steady hand in supporting the town.

Select Board member Beth Coughlin asked Robinson if she was comfortable with the annual town meeting process, and she said she has written 25 warrants. She said she would review old warrants in the town, and talk to town counsel to review how the town often does it.

Robinson also said she would also have conversations with the accountant regarding the budget, since it's an important part of town meeting.

Select Board member Richard Chaffee asked Robinson if she was aware of the “turmoil” in town, and how she would address it.

Robinson said she had done some research on Facebook and Google, but the internet does not bring all of the information. For town employees, Robinson said she would meet with them in group settings, and try to work on and understand concerns, with a potential of bringing in an outside facilitator.

For citizens, Robinson said it is important to build trust with the community, since town government impacts residents most. She said that she would hold open office hours to let residents meet her and make them feel welcome.

Robinson said she would be “very involved” in the day to day operations, by

bringing confidence to the advisory committee and understanding dollars. Robinson said she could answer questions at the annual town meeting.

Robinson was asked how she would handle a challenging situation. She said that she would sit down and de-escalate the situation, and work to solve it.

The board asked what she saw the work schedule and role with the select board like. Robinson said she estimated about three days a week, but town government is a 24/7 operation and would be available for phone calls after hours.

Robinson said she would meet with each board member individually to talk about concerns and priorities, and she would learn how they run meetings. She said that she would take day to day instructions from the chair, and send out weekly reports to keep the board informed.

### David Snowdon III

The board interviewed Snowdon on May 5. He said that he was previously an assistant town manager in Shrewsbury, and has experience with long-term financial planning.

He was asked what he sees the town meeting process looking like. Snowdon said it is relationship driven, with residents involved, and is not a place to be overly technical. He said success is determined before the town meeting by educating residents.

Snowdon said he has done some initial research on issues in Brookfield, including school funding. He said the town has a small tax base, and it is important

to make trade-offs visible, since people personally feel the effects of funding.

Town Accountant Laurie Bartkus asked Snowdon how he sees his role with the financial team. Snowdon said he can bring a “strong aspect” to the team, as he has experience with consulting.

He said that during his time in Shrewsbury, the town got a AAA bond rating, which was a “boom for the community.” Snowdon also said one of his strongest areas is budgeting, and that he has experience filling a role as a finance director.

Snowdon said he is Massachusetts Certified Public Purchasing Official certified, and has experience with procurement, working on large contracts.

Snowdon said he sees his relationship with the select board as a partnership, with clarity and structure, where the board sets the direction. He said he would entrust town counsel for certain issues, and has experience working with counsel for finances, warrants and policies.

When asked about navigating tough situations, Snowdon said the position is impactful, and there should be informational sessions to build trust in the process. He also said there are different priorities on the select board, and there should be alignment on those.

### Eric Weiss

Weiss was interviewed by the Select Board on May 6. Weiss said he originally applied for the position back when the town was looking for an interim town administrator in January.

Weiss said he has experi-

ence working in town government, serving on various committees, including chairing the capital planning committee in Belchertown. He said that he has over 30 years of experience with budgeting and budgeting software, and has directed organizations.

Weiss said he was a member of the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, and has had a lot of contact with the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission in his career, and has knowledge on grants.

Weiss said he got familiar with the town by watching a recent meeting between the Select Board and Advisory Committee about the fiscal year 2027 budget. He said it's important to have a smooth budget cycle and stay on top of the process, and said he is a problem solver with strategic plans.

When asked about procurement, Weiss said he is not MCPPO certified, but he has experience writing specs, and is comfortable with the process. He said he ran a procurement organization in Amherst.

Weiss said that in the role, he would not pretend like he knows everything about the town's process, as there are some things more complex than others. He said there may be some things he needs to be taught, but is a good listener.

He said he would not be pushy, but would apply himself to help.

For budgeting, Weiss suggested a zero base budget may be beneficial, saying it is an informative tool, but

time oriented. He said he did a zero base budget in Belchertown, and has “never had a bad outcome.”

When asked about town meeting, Weiss said he would look into the budget, and said he has helped the moderator answer questions at previous town meetings. He said there was a special town meeting in another town where he had to present the case for the school requesting money for fuel, and said that is part of being an official.

After Weiss' interview, the board deliberated between the three candidates.

### Select Board delays appointment

At the May 6 meeting, the Select Board decided to defer appointing an interim town administrator until May 13.

The deliberation began with Coughlin making a motion that the board appoint candidate Robinson, which was seconded for discussion. Coughlin said she thought Robinson had the strongest experience in the role, was honest, and well prepared for the interview.

Coughlin said she also thought the other candidates were well qualified.

Select Board Chair Sarah Campbell said she liked all three of the candidates, and was not sure who she liked best and would choose.

Bartkus also said all three candidates had good experience, but leaned toward Weiss for his personality and grant experience, saying Robinson may not be the best fit.

Chaffee said town meeting is coming soon, and the town can't get through it without legal counsel,

which has fees. Chaffee said he would be in favor of using the money in the budget allocated for the town administrator for legal fees, and would not be in favor of appointing anybody at this time. Bartkus also said she had some concerns about bringing someone in at this time, because collaboration would be difficult at this time, and there is no time to train a newcomer with town meeting so close.

Coughlin said that would not be a good decision for the long term health of the town, and said it would not make sense to not take advantage of the talent pool that had been presented to them, saying they have had a dearth of talent, but now have a wealth of talent.

Campbell said she understood Chaffee's point, but had concerns about what would happen after the town meeting.

Coughlin said the board could always choose to pick a candidate today, but specify a later start date, either closer to or after the annual town meeting, but said it would be beneficial to have the candidate present for the lead-up to town meeting. Coughlin also said it would be beneficial for the new town administrator to sit through a town meeting in an official capacity, and preferred Robinson to start within the week.

“We're stepping over dollars to pick up a nickel,” Coughlin said about not appointing someone.

Campbell said the board members are not on the same page, and she wants the decision to be made together. The board decided to delay an appointment until May 13.

## W BROOKFIELD FROM PAGE 1

library and the elementary school.

Ballot question 1A was for a \$1.6 million override, which would have preserved local services, and the

Quaboag Regional School District's budget. Question 1B was for the preservation of local services, but a reduced budget for the QRSD.

Both questions on the ballot failed, according to unofficial results posted to the West Brookfield web-

site (wbrookfield.com), with question 1A receiving 497 yes votes and 624 no votes. Question 1B received 501 yes votes and 604 no votes.

### Other election results

Henry Brogna was elected to a term on the Board of

Selectmen, running unopposed, receiving 808 votes. Jason Paquette was elected to the Board of Health, running unopposed, and receiving 849 votes.

Cassie Paolucci was elected to the Common Committee, running unopposed, and receiving 904 votes. Janet Foley and Jane Higgins were each elected to

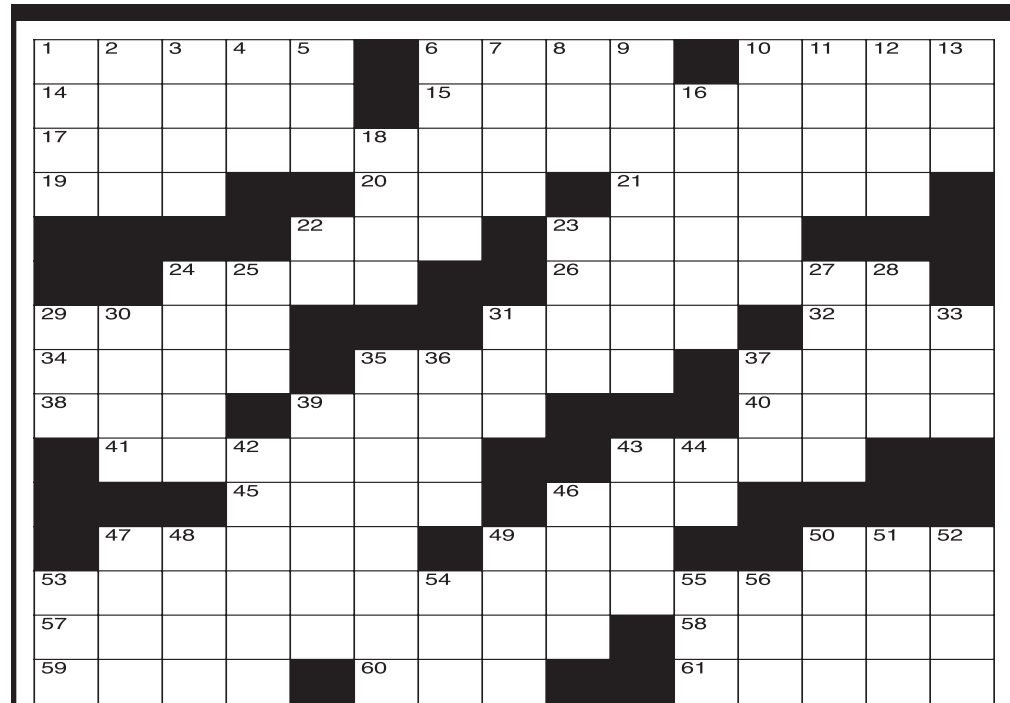
the Library Board of Trustees, receiving 780 and 751 votes respectively.

Philip Guerin was elected to the Water Commissioners, running unopposed, and receiving 767 votes.

Matthew Peloquin was elected as the QRSD school committee member from Warren, running unopposed and receiving 534

votes. Philip Landine and Travis Mathieson were each elected as the QRSD school committee members from West Brookfield, receiving 607 and 639 votes respectively.

There were no candidates on the ballot for Assessor, Planning Board, or Housing Authority.



### CLUES ACROSS

1. Notable casino destination
6. Current units
10. Roman military unit
14. American lizard
15. Fates
17. The Yankees have lots of these
19. Unhappy
20. Mimic
21. Remove from the record
22. Where cargo ships dock (abbr.)
23. A way to fight
24. Turfs
26. Contract
29. Country along the Arabian peninsula
31. Tree species
32. Pituitary gland secretion (abbr.)
34. Perfect
35. “Partner” to groans
37. Jewish calendar

### CLUES DOWN

1. Animal jaws
2. Small water buffalo
3. An appliance has
- month
38. Work wrestlers work
39. Egotistical
40. Potted plants
41. Containers
43. Large, flightless birds
45. Part of a book
46. American spies
47. Pancakes made of buckwheat flour
49. Swiss river
50. Disfigure
53. Have surgery
57. Formal withdrawal
58. Early English council
59. Area units
60. 2,000 lbs.
61. Siskel and \_\_\_

### one

4. Every
5. Largest English dictionary (abbr.)
6. Very skilled
7. No more than what is specified
8. Tire measurement
9. Towers
10. Forward
11. Jacob \_\_\_, American journalist
12. Vale
13. Former CIA
16. Middle Eastern nation
18. Exhausts
22. South Dakota
23. The complete duration of something
24. Kids love him
25. Singular
27. Cod genus
28. Mild yellow Dutch cheese

### 29. Resistance unit

30. Ancient kingdom near Dead Sea
31. Cast out
33. 60-minute periods
35. Most worn
36. European river
37. Atomic mass unit
39. Items of food
42. Body parts
43. Ireland
44. Partner to Pa
46. Sammy \_\_\_, songwriter
47. Dutch settler
48. Full-grown pike fish
49. Sun or solar disk
50. Minute arachnid
51. From a distance
52. A monthly expense
53. Young women's association
54. Brazilian state
55. Air freight provider
56. Pointed end of a pen

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### NOTE EARLY DEADLINES:

May 22 issue deadline is **Friday, May 29.**  
June 1 issue deadline is **Friday, June 5.**

# - community -

## WSU presents 2026 Adjunct Professor Excellence in Teaching Award

**BROOKFIELD** – Worcester State University presented Joseph J. Klimavich, APR, with the university's Adjunct Professor Excellence in Teaching Award during the Worcester State University Employee Service Recognition Celebration held May 5, in the Gene J. and Julianne DeFeudis Wellness Center.

The award recognizes adjunct faculty whose teaching is challenging, motivating, and student-centered, helping students succeed both academically and personally. This year's award – the fifth annual presentation – was given to Klimavich, a public relations professional and educator who has taught at Worcester State University for a combined total of 18 years while continuing a professional career in communication.

Klimavich teaches courses in public relations, interpersonal communication, public speaking and related communication disciplines. His teaching philosophy centers on the belief that communication is not simply an academic subject, but a practical skill students will use throughout their personal and professional lives.

His classes emphasize experiential learning through case studies, collaborative exercises, applied assignments and real-world communication challenges.

A PRSA-accredited public relations professional, Klimavich has held communication leadership roles in the banking, healthcare and insurance industries. He also recently led the effort to reactivate the Greater Worcester Chapter of the Public Relations Society of

America.

Drawing on those experiences in the classroom, Klimavich works to connect communication theory with real-world organizational practice while encouraging students to think critically about how communication shapes relationships, workplaces and communities.

Klimavich's connection to Worcester State extends beyond the classroom. An alumnus of the university, he has served on the Alumni Advisory Board and, in 2013, received the university's Distinguished Alumni Award in Education, the highest non-degree honor Worcester State presents to alumni.

For eight years, he also performed with the Worcester State Chorale, traveling with the ensemble to Portu-

gal, Germany and Italy.

In his spare time, Klimavich enjoys participating in film projects shot throughout central Massachusetts. He has appeared as a background actor in the Apple TV+ series "Defending Jacob", as well as the series pilot, "Hollywood", and the locally filmed horror film, "Birthrite". A former student also cast him in a featured role in the short film, "Madigan's Again".

And, together with his wife, Barbara, he is a costumed volunteer with the Old Sturbridge Village Singers.

Klimavich lives in Brookfield where he operates an independent public relations consulting practice specializing in media relations, social media, graphic design, crisis communication and storytelling.



SUBMITTED PHOTO  
Joe Klimavich, APR with Worcester State University President Barry M. Maloney

### PATHFINDER FROM PAGE 1

expansion in Western Massachusetts, building on decades of success at Pathfinder Tech and opening new doors for students."

To ensure that the new campus preserves its local roots and maintains a strong connection to the community, Pathfinder will invite Belchertown residents to help select a name for the new campus through a community survey.

In addition to creating new educational opportunities, the Cold Spring location is expected to create new educational opportunities, generate local job growth, and strengthen community partnerships by preserving a valuable community asset and addressing the increased need for skilled career training.

"This is truly a win-win," added Duda. "We're expanding opportunities for students, creating jobs, and keeping an important school building in Belchertown alive with purpose. The excitement will only continue to build as we move closer to opening our doors in 2026."

Duda emphasized that the expansion is intended to significantly increase access to career technical education opportunities for students throughout the district's nine member communities.

"If a student from Palmer, Monson, Belchertown, Granby, Ware, Warren, Oakham, Hardwick, or New Braintree wants a Career Technical Education, now is the time to apply," Duda said. "Pathfinder Tech will have a seat and space available for you next school year beginning in September. We are ready to prepare students for direct entry into a high-wage career, college, military service, or any other aspirations they may have."

This 150-seat expansion is possible thanks to the Cold Spring expanded campus in Belchertown, and represents the single largest student expansion in the district's history. Duda reported that this initiative is being completed without incurring debt to the nine member towns, as well as without major capital requests, and without immediate impacts to local taxpayers assessments.

This strategic initiative is being accomplished solely through strategic financial planning, along with grant funding secured from the commonwealth.

"Support for this planned

expansion has been comprehensive and widespread," Duda said. "Senators, state representatives, and elected officials from all nine member communities have signed on in support of this creative, forward-thinking, and affordable approach to increasing access to career and technical education opportunities for students throughout the region."

Now in his fifth year as superintendent and his 20th year serving the district, Duda has made strategic long-term planning into a strength of his leadership. In recent years, the district has received record levels of grant funding. These include over \$5 million in competitive grant funding to increase student access, purchase equipment, renovate facilities, and add square footage to support expansion efforts, and an additional \$1.5 million to support new adult and continue education programming, and to help keep the campus active and vibrant during the evenings and weekends when it's used by adult learners.

Compared to other school districts in the region that are struggling with budget cuts, declining enrollment, and closures, Pathfinder is a notable exception, with its record levels of enrollment, carrying no debt, and requesting no major capital funding from its nine member towns.

Duda described Pathfinder as a model for what's possible in education throughout the region. As a graduate from Pathfinder himself, Duda said he understands firsthand the life-changing opportunities this model of education can provide students. While some districts in the region are attempting to replicate aspects of Pathfinder Tech's programming, Duda emphasized that Pathfinder already belongs to the nine member communities



Governor Maura Healey spoke about how Career and Technical Education provides students with hands-on learning for skilled jobs and great careers.

and exists to serve their students.

"Pathfinder Tech is already your school," Duda noted. "It belongs to the students and families of our nine member towns."

"There's no need for member school districts to waste money, time, and resources on introductory elective type career courses like the ones occurring in the towns of Palmer and Monson," Duda said. "You don't need to try to duplicate with an introductory version of what we offer. Instead, remember that Pathfinder Tech is already the town's school, and students are now guaranteed to have a seat available for them to attend."

Duda recommended that the towns "encourage students to apply and take advantage of the career and technical education already available to them, should that be the desired educational model they want to

pursue."

In addition to Governor Healey, the event was attended by Lieutenant Governor Kim Driscoll, Secretary of Education Stephen Zrike, and Commissioner of Education Pedro Martinez, as well as several addi-

tional cabinet members, mayors, and state and local officials.

Pathfinder Tech plans to continue pursuing funding sources to support the expansion, including the recently announced \$100 million CTE Capacity Ex-

pansion Grant Initiative from the Healey-Driscoll Administration.

Pathfinder Tech is currently accepting applications for the 2026-2027 school year. Prospective students can apply at PathfinderTech.org.



SUBMITTED PHOTOS  
Pathfinder Superintendent Eric Duda (left) shakes hands with Governor Maura Healey at the press conference in Marlborough

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# New Braintree Police Log

During the week of May 4-11, the Hardwick New Braintree Police Department responded to nine building/property checks, 26 directed/area patrols, nine radar assignments, two traffic controls, four emergency 911 calls, four citizen assists, one assist other agency, one scam, one motor vehicle investigation, one animal call and nine motor vehicle stops in the town of New Braintree.

**Monday, May 4**  
10:49 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Hardwick Road,

Written Warning  
7:31 p.m. Medical Emergency, West Brookfield Road, Transported to Hospital

**Tuesday, May 5**  
3:16 p.m. 911 Safety Hazard, West Road, Negative Contact  
5:35 p.m. Assist Citizen, Hardwick Road, Officer Handled  
5:41 p.m. Assist Other Agency, Gilbertville Road, Services Rendered

**Wednesday, May 6**  
10:42 a.m. Scam, West

Road, Spoken To  
2:31 p.m. Assist Citizen, Barre Road, Officer Handled

**Thursday, May 7**  
9:43 a.m. Assist Citizen, Ravine Road, Officer Handled  
1:12 p.m. Assist Citizen, Memorial Drie, Officer Handled  
3:51 p.m. 911 Misdiagnosis, West Road, Spoken To  
4:15 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Ravine Road, Criminal Complaint

**Friday, May 8**

9:23 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Barre Road, Written Warning  
7:25 p.m. Motor Vehicle Investigation, Hardwick Road, Services Rendered

**Saturday, May 9**  
5:01 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Ravine Road, Written Warning

**Sunday, May 10**  
11:25 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop, Hardwick Road, Written Warning  
2:26 p.m. Medical Alarm, Barre Road, Patient Refusal

# - legals -

## NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING Removal of Public Shade Trees Town of West Brookfield, Tree Warden

Pursuant to Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 87, Sections 3 and 4, a public hearing will be held on **Tuesday, May 26, 2026 at 6:00 pm** in the Library of the West Brookfield Elementary School, 89 N Main St, West Brookfield, MA 01585, to consider National Grid's proposed removal of the following public shade trees, which include 42 non-hazard trees and 40 hazard trees:

Species	Diameter	Location (Pole Spans)	Hazard (H) or Non Hazard (NH)
<b>BEAMAN RD</b>			
Maple	20", 22"	3 to 3.1 (New Pole)	H
Maple	20"	Across from 3 to 2	NH
Ash	23"	2 to (across from) 1	H
Ash	11"		
	10"x2, 9"	2 to (across from) 1	H
Hickory	20"	2 to across from) 1	NH
Ash	12"	2 to (across from) 1	H
Hickory	19"	2 to (across from) 1	NH
<b>COY HILL ROAD - Referencing Proposed Pole Locations</b>			
Maple	17"	12 to 11	NH
Ash	8"	12 to 11	H
Ash	10"	12 to 11	H
Ash	10"	12 to 11	H
Ash	12"	12 to 11	H
Maple	30"	12 to 11	H
Maple	8"	12 to 11	NH
Maple	6"	12 to 11	NH
Hickory	12"	11 to 10	NH
Oak	12"	11 to 10	NH
Oak	42"	10 to 9	H
Oak	37"	9 to 8	H
Oak	27"	9 to 8	NH
Maple	19", 11"	8 to 7	NH
Maple	28"	7 to AF 6	H
Maple	25"	7 to AF 6	H
Ash	14"	AF 7 to 6	H
Maple	8"	AF 7 to 6	NH
Maple	10"	AF 7 to 6	NH
Maple	10"	AF7 to 6	NH
Maple	18"	6 to 5	H
Birch	7"	6 to 5	NH
Maple	19"	6 to 5	H
Maple	10"	5 to 4	NH
Oak	15"	4 to 3	NH
Maple	6"	4 to 3	NH
Oak	10"	1 to 50.50	NH
Ash	10"	1 to 50.50	H
Maple	9"x3	1 to 50.50	H
<b>W MAIN ST (RT 9)</b>			
Oak	11"	AF 49.5 to 49.25 (New Pole)	NH
Oak	13"	AF 49.5 to 49.25 (New Pole)	NH
<b>PIERCE RD</b>			
Oak	9"	49.25 to 1	NH
Oak	11"	49.25 5o 1	NH
Maple	19"	49.25 to 1	NH
Oak	16"	49.25 to 1	NH
Oak	32"	1.5 to 2	NH
Ash	17"	16 to 17	H
Pine	24"	20 to 21	NH
Maple	7"x2	21 to 22	NH
Maple	13"	21 to 22	NH
Maple	16"	21 to 22	H
Maple	12"	21 to 22	H
Oak	14"	23 to 23.84	NH
Aspen	12"	23 to 23.84	NH
Hickory	7"	28 to 28.5	NH
Ash	15"	30.5 to 31	H
Oak	12"	30.5 to 31	NH
Hickory	14"	30.5 to 31	NH
Ash	18"	(across from) 31 to	H
Ash	14"	(across from) 31 to	H
Ash	13"	(across from) 31 to	NH
Hickory	17"	(across from) 31 to	NH
Ash	12"x2, 20"	(across from ) 31 to	H
Ash	10"	At 31.5	H
Ash	14"	(across from) 32 to 33	H
<b>RAGGED HILL RD</b>			
Maple	34"	59 to 59.5	NH
Maple	8", 7"	59.5 to 60	NH
Maple	8"	59.5 to 60	NH
Maple	15"	60 60 60.5	NH
Maple	40"	60 to 60.5	H
Maple	45"	61.5 to 62	H
Maple	42"	62 to 62.5	H
Ash	9"	62 to 62.5	H
Maple	36"	62 to 62.5	H
Maple	9", 5"	At 62.5	NH
Maple	41"	At 63	NH
<b>LYON RD</b>			
Ash	35", 30"	63 to 63.5	H
Maple	26"	63.5 to 64	H
Basswood	8"	65.25 to 65.5	NH
Maple	9"	65.25 to 65.5	H
Maple	8"	65.25 to 65.5	H
Oak	40"	65.25 to 65.5	H
Maple	22"	66 to 66.5	H
Oak	27"	66 to 66.5	H
Oak	21"	AF 73 to 73.5	H
Maple	8"	73.5 to 74	NH

# Trustees present multi-site art and landscape exhibition

BOSTON – This summer, The Trustees of Reservations will launch its first-ever multi-site Art and The Landscape outdoor exhibition, bringing together three New England artists in a shared exploration of art and place.

"The Land Tells Our Stories" will unfold across multiple Trustees' landscapes in Massachusetts with installations opening on June 1. "The Land Tells Our Stories" will be on view until Oct. 31.

Through site-responsive installations, the artists featured in "The Land Tells Our Stories" explore themes of belonging, environmental change, cultural storytelling, and the layered ways landscapes hold and reveal generational memory.

The installations will appear at Castle Hill on the Crane Estate in Ipswich, Moose Hill Farm in Sharon, and Rock House Reservation in West Brookfield. A process gallery at Fruitlands Museum will bring the work and ideas of these three artists into dialogue together.

Curated by Tess Lukey (Aquinnah Wampanoag), Associate Curator of Native American Art at the Trustees of Reservations, the exhibition features new installations by artists Posey Moulton, May Babcock, and Ella Mahoney.

"With 'The Land Tells Our Stories', I wanted to

invite artists to engage directly with the landscapes that have shaped so much of Massachusetts' cultural and environmental history. Each artist approached their site as both a source of inspiration and a collaborator, responding to the land's ecology, histories, and layered meanings. By bringing contemporary art into these distinct landscapes, we hope to open space for reflection, dialogue, and a deeper connection to the places we steward," said Lukey.

"The Trustees began its celebrated Art and the Landscape initiative in 2016, inviting artists to develop site-inspired commissions at Trustees properties across the state. Now in its tenth year, we are proud to be evolving this series by working with multiple artists across several Trustees properties for this iteration," shared Sarah Moulton, Museum Director and Chief Curator, deCordova Sculpture Park and Museum.

At Castle Hill in Ipswich, "Second Wind" by Maine-based artist Posey Moulton rises on a hillside overlooking the neighboring Great Marsh – the largest saltwater marsh in New England that is now threatened by sea level rise, climate change, and development.

Responding to this dynamic landscape of tidal creeks and architectural

wonder, the work features motifs from the scallop shell reliefs of Castle Hill to the ornate ironwork of the Crane Estate's Italian Garden. Lace-like steelwork, a gold-leafed tidal creek, and sculpted sea wrack surround the fan-shaped form, inviting visitors to pass through, pause, and reflect.

Moulton's work builds imaginative, participatory worlds that invite collective creation. Her large-scale, tactile installations transform everyday materials into immersive environments that inspire curiosity, connection, and environmental awareness. Her practice thrives at the intersection of sculpture, performance, and social engagement.

Moose Hill Farm is home to rare, wild American chestnut trees that were once abundant across eastern North America and are now nearly extinct due to a century-old blight. For Seaside Chestnuts, May Babcock, a multiracial artist of Taiwanese-Chinese descent based in Pawtucket, Rhode Island, envisions an installation of 11 Chestnut trees – American, Chinese, and hybrid varieties provided by The American Chestnut Foundation.

Each young tree will be encircled by seaweed-like sculptural "protectors" made from farm fencing and locally gathered papermaking plants from the surrounding landscape.

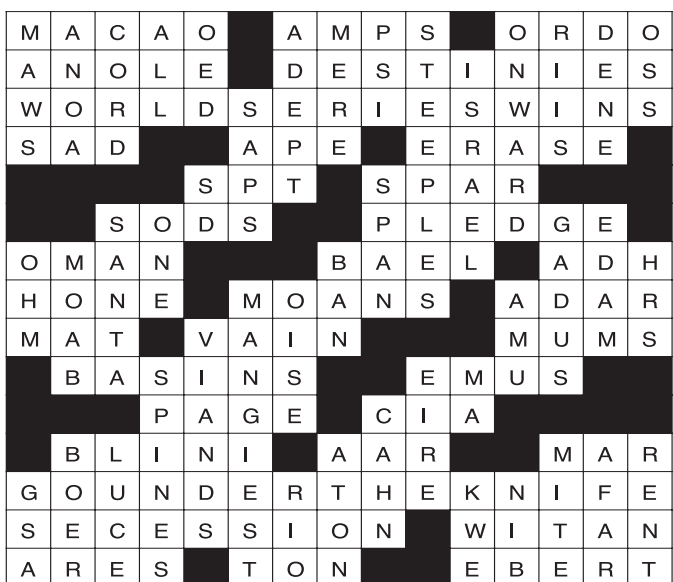
These forms both shelter the saplings as they grow and evoke nearby coastal ecologies, referencing the fact that this Trustees landscape lies along a projected future coastline should polar ice caps fully melt.

Babcock said she sees kinship in these resilient hybrids that are symbols of survival, regeneration, and future ecologies. As an interdisciplinary artist whose work engages papermaking as a relational practice shaped by land, water, and time, Babcock draws connections between ecologies shaped by displacement and adaptation, finding resonance between human histories and the migration of plants across continents.

Ella Mahoney's "Moshup's Hand" responds to the dramatic cave-like rock formations of Rock House Reservation, a landscape shaped over millennia by glacial movement and geological upheaval. Mahoney's recent work features large-scale silk installations that evoke the movement and memory of Northeastern coastal environments.

Suspended across the massive stone enclosure, the silk-based sculpture invites visitors to walk beneath it and look upward, as if witnessing Moshup – the great being of Wampanoag people and neighboring tribal oral tradition – reaching

See EXHIBIT PAGE 12



## SOCIAL SECURITY FROM PAGE 4

choosing a strategy which maximizes your monthly benefit and will likely provide you with the most in cumulative lifetime Social Security benefits.

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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](http://amacfoundation.org/programs/social-security-advisory) or email us at [ssadvisor@amacfoundation.org](mailto:ssadvisor@amacfoundation.org). Russell Gloor is a Social Security advisor for AMAC.

## COMMUNITY FROM PAGE 4

effortlessly, and then deposit manure back onto the soil, recharging it with the vital nutrients it so badly needs to be able to retain moisture.

The cow we named Kelly continues to grow big and strong, eating all the grass on my host family's compound. We continue to remain hopeful about the future of farming in Zambia, and look forward to visiting again in 2028 to see what changes, if any, Kelly Cow has made to the Chule Farm.

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### WANTED!

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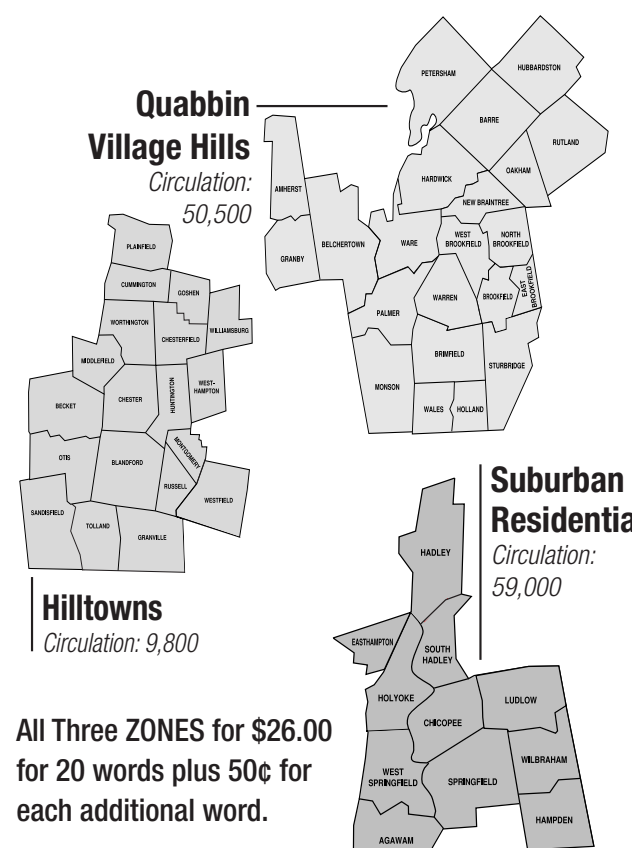
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## New Braintree celebrates its 275th anniversary and U.S.'s 250th

**NEW BRAINTREE** – The 275th Anniversary Committee is hard at work planning a spectacular 2026 to celebrate New Braintree's 275th Anniversary and America's 250th Anniversary.

The committee is planning to have three major events to celebrate throughout 2026, and they want you – neighbors, friends, and family – to be a part of every one.

The first event is on July 5 from 3-5 p.m.: Kick off the summer with the U.S. Air Force Heritage of America Band. This free community concert will be held under the newly constructed pavilion.

Grab your lawn chairs, blankets, and favorite snacks for an unforgettable afternoon of music. There may even be an Air Force fly over.

The second event will be

on Oct. 3: Old Home Day Our classic town celebration will kick off with a parade at 1 p.m., farmer's market, kids' games, live music, and a bonfire in the evening.

Enjoy the beer and wine tent and plenty of local food. The committee is seeking volunteers and sponsors to make this day a success. Have an idea or want to lend a hand? Email us at [newbraintree275@gmail.com](mailto:newbraintree275@gmail.com).

The third and capstone event will be on Dec. 31: The 275th Anniversary Gala from 6 p.m.-1 a.m. – Dust off your dancing shoes and get your fancy clothes ready.

The committee will close out the anniversary year with a New Year's Eve Gala in the Town Hall. It's the ultimate way to ring in 2027 and celebrate the legacy of the special town and people who call it home.

## Congregational Church hosts annual Strawberry Festival

**NEW BRAINTREE** – The New Braintree Congregational Church is hosting its annual Strawberry Festival on Saturday, June 13 at 5:30 p.m. at the New Braintree Town Hall, Memorial Drive.

Come enjoy this family-style meal of baked ham, baked beans, potato salad, coleslaw, rolls and beverages followed by strawberry shortcake for

dessert. Tickets are \$20 for adults; \$12 for children ages 5-10, children 4 and under are free. There will be one sitting. Make your reservations by calling 508-410-7424 or 413-477-6653.



### EXHIBIT FROM PAGE 10

across the land.

Composed of three sculptural elements – the hand, the ripple, and the rays – the work brings light, movement, and sounds into dialogue with this natural shelter. Through this environmentally sensitive installation, Mahoney, who is Aquinnah Wampanoag, honors the enduring Native presence embedded in the land, revealing stories and sovereignties that colonial histories have long tried

to erase. Mahoney lives in Brooklyn, New York and Aquinnah, Massachusetts.

“Working with Ella Mahoney on this installation at Rock House Reservation has been especially meaningful to me because we both come from the Aquinnah Wampanoag community,” said Lukey. “Ella brings a perspective rooted in lived cultural knowledge and shared memory, and her work invites visitors to pause and reconsider the stories often attached to this landscape. Through

her installation, she creates space for the enduring presence and voices of the Wampanoag people to be felt here -- reminding us that the land carries histories far deeper and more complex than many of us were taught. As a curator, it's powerful to see an artist from our own community shaping how these stories are held, shared, and experienced in this place.”

At Fruitlands Museum in Harvard, the Seasonal Gallery will offer visitors a behind-the-scenes look at

the development of “The Land Tells Our Stories”. Sketches, material studies, research images, and process documentation will reveal how each artist approached their site and translated ideas about place into installation.

The gallery will also feature a short documentary film about the project, offering visitors an opportunity to hear directly from the artists as they reflect on their shared exploration of landscape, history, and storytelling, and discuss

the creative decisions that shaped the works installed across the Trustees' properties.

“The Land Tells Our Stories” is commissioned by Art and The Landscape, an initiative of The Trustees. Art and The Landscape commissions are site-specific, designed to help tell the story of treasured places of The Trustees and tie together threads of art, nature, community, and history.

Lead support for Art at The Trustees is provided by Rich and Gabrielle Coff-

man, Jo Goldman, Marjorie and Nicholas Greville, Patrick Pedonti and Pamela Pedonti, Janet and David Offensend, Kathleen O'Hara, Diana and McKelden Smith, Valentine Talland and Nagesh Mahanthappa, and Dr. Sophie V. Vandebroek and Dr. Jesus del Alamo.

Additional support for Moshup's Hand is provided by The Coby Foundation, Ltd. In-kind support for Seaside Chestnuts is provided by the American Chestnut Foundation.

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