

"Our scientific power has outrun our spiritual power. We have guided missiles and misguided men." – Martin Luther King, Jr.

Country Journal

Devoted to the Needs of the Hilltowns

Becket, Blandford, Chester, Chesterfield, Cummington, Goshen, Huntington, Middlefield, Montgomery, Otis, Plainfield, Russell, Sandisfield, Westhampton, Williamsburg, Worthington

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HILLTOWNS

Winter scenes abound in the Hilltowns



This is a view of Chesterfield Gorge taken on Jan. 11.



The "ice beards" are along Route 112 in Knightville.

Turley photos by Kathryn Koegel

By Kathryn Koegel
Correspondent

With temperatures hovering in the 20s in the day and positively unspeakable at night, it was time to examine ice in the Hilltowns on a snowy January Saturday.

This correspondent checked out Littleville Lake. It was still not solid enough to skate or ice fish on, but the ice was moaning and cracking, leaving sheets of clear glass on the shore.

Along Rte 112 north of Huntington in Knightville, the Wild & Scenic Westfield River has streams that cascade off the hills to join up with the East Branch. It was cold enough that "ice beards" and stalactites and stalagmites had formed.

In Chesterfield it was snowing softly with the snow settling on ice flows that meandered down the

WINTER, page 2

CHESTER

Voters pass all articles at Special Town Meeting

By Wendy Long
Correspondent

A Special Town Meeting held Monday, Jan. 6, saw voters unanimously pass all eight warrant articles, spend over \$180,000 and complete all business within an efficient fifteen minute meeting.

With 22 attending, the town easily met its required quorum of ten voters. Select Board Chairman John Baldasaro, Vice Chair Andy Sutton and Clerk Craig Gauthier were present, as were Town Clerk Terry Donovan and Town Administrator Don Humason.

With the town moderator unavailable, Finance Committee Chair Brian Forgue stepped in and opened the meeting with the pledge of allegiance.

Article 1 called for the first year's payment of \$71,730.60 on a lease-to-own new police cruiser to come from the Police Cruiser Revolving Expenses Account. Baldasaro reminded voters that they had not seen a warrant article for a new cruiser for a dozen years or so, because a revolving account had

MEETING, page 6

RUSSELL

Russel residents look ahead to bridge repair and mill sites

Note: This is part two of a two part series. Part 1 appeared in the Jan. 16 edition.

By Kathryn Koegel
Correspondent

The biggest challenge to demolish the burnt wreckage may be the size of the project and the issue of the bridges.

All collapsed concrete, steel beams and the wreckage would have to be transported out via small trucks across the temporary one-lane bridge.

Donald Voudren, Jr, owner of collapsed Mill #1, who now has a demoli-

tion permit from Mass DEP, acknowledged the same problem in a select board meeting held in Russell on Thursday, Dec 12. "In order for me to redevelop Mill #1, you have to upgrade the water and sewer," he said. "The lines are old and come across the [closed] bridge."

Oksana Keeney notes that in the absence of a viable bridge for removal, she hopes that they would be able to transport some of the rubble via the freight train line that runs just behind mill #2. "We are hoping to use any means we can," says Keeney regarding demolition fund-

ing. "The next step is to get an LSP certificate by the state and determine what cleanup will entail." While they hope grants may be available to help with the cost, "we do not really know much about grants."

The Keeneys have spent over \$37,000 for fencing around the site, but still have challenges with trespassers. The site is simply too big and complex to entirely block off.

They installed security cameras and regularly have to call the police to either warn or arrest trespassers. "There

REPAIR, page 8



The Ellinger family live on Valley View Avenue with the wreckage of Mill #2 at the end of their street.

Turley photo by Kathryn Koegel



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HILLTOWN HIKING ADVENTURES

Hilltown Hikers and DCR host First Day Hike



Frank Kennedy of Hancock, from left, their canine pal, Cybill and Jim Moore of Pittsfield came to celebrate the 2025. Submitted Photos

The Western Massachusetts Hilltown Hikers co-hosted the Western Massachusetts First Day Hike with Department of Conservation and Recreation Department of Conservation.

They held this National Event with a short hike to beautiful Sanderson Brook Falls in Chester. Alec Gillman, Tom Skala, Travis Clairmont and all the DCR Rangers helped with with traffic control, handing out free First Day Hats and pins to attendees. They celebrated with a grape juice toast and had pictures taken in a photo booth.

The year 2025 marks the 250th anniversary of the American

Revolution, which started right here in Massachusetts. The Hilltown Hikers started the new year by joining the First Day Hike Revolution.

Massachusetts is a state of "firsts," including First Day Hikes, which started over 30 years ago in Massachusetts at the Blue Hills Reservation and quickly spread across the state.

Today, First Day Hikes is a national initiative hosted by America's State Parks in all 50 states. People are invited to kick off each new year by getting outside and experiencing the beauty of their state parks. This year, Chester was the only community in Western Massachusetts hosting an official First Day Hike.



This is a view of Sanderson Falls in Chester on New Year's Day.



Stephanie Brown of Agawam holds festively dressed dogs, Cybill and Penny.



Cybill has her picture taken in her New Year's gown.



Western Massachusetts Hilltown Hikers Board of Directors pose at Sanderson Falls.



DCR staff and Hilltown Hikers pose at Sanderson Falls in Chester on Jan. 1.



Karen McTaggart, from left, presents Greg Hayslett with a gift in honor of his wife, Sandy, who passed this past year.