

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

A TURLEY PUBLICATION | www.turley.com

February 20, 2025 | Vol. 46, No. 43 | 75¢

www.countryjournal.turley.com

BLANDFORD

Library Legislative Breakfast held Feb. 14

By Mary Kronholm
Correspondent

Library Director Nicole Daviau represented the Western Massachusetts Library Advocates Friday, Feb. 14 at the Library Legislative Breakfast at the West Springfield Library.

She is the immediate past president of the organization and addressed the critical need and affirmative library use in many areas. Multiple library organizations' representatives, West Springfield officials and state officials spoke as well, reinforcing the importance of libraries building community and this year's legislative agenda theme, Empowered by Libraries.

The gathering heard from a young artist, who has her own gallery and now teaches young people, as the direct result of learning conversational English through the ESOL program at the West Springfield Library. Tatiana Bukalova thanked the library and acknowledged the tutor who worked with her.

Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioner Vice Chair Tim Cherubini reinforced the empowerment theme and community building through the services libraries provide. "Libraries have impact," he said. He also spoke about the requested line item funding for the agency and the importance



Porter Memorial Library Director Nicole Daviau, center, with Mass Board of Library Commissioner Vice Chair Tim Cherubini and MBLC Head of Library Advisory and Development/Government Liaison Rob Favini at Friday, Feb. 14 Library Legislative Breakfast at the West Springfield Library.

Turley photos by Mary Kronholm

"Library's have impact."

Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioner Vice Chair Tim Cherubini

of supporting bills now before the state legislature addressing the "challenges facing public libraries and digital resource collection" and others "protecting against attempts to ban, remove or restrict library access to materials."

Central/Western Mass Automated Resource Sharing (C/W Mars) secretary Laura Bovee and At Large member Alex Reczkowski referenced the importance of the organi-

zation and said there are now 165 members, most recently joined include Russell, Chester and Montgomery. Membership gives access to over 10 million collection items.

Mass Center for the Book Executive Director Courtney Andree addressed the group regarding the Center's separate line item in the state budget and

LIBRARY, page 6

HUNTINGTON

Parent complaints continue

By Wendy Long
Correspondent

The regular monthly meeting of the Gateway Regional School Committee was held in the Gateway Performing Arts Center on Wednesday, Feb. 12 at 7 p.m.

Over 100 parents, students, staff, administrators and school committee members attended. Typically, the first 15 minutes of a school committee meeting allows for public input on items not listed on the agenda. As the first order of business, Chair Jason Forgue proposed extending that time period to 30 minutes, which was unanimously approved.

Jeana Briggs, who serves on the school committee but also has two children at Chester Elementary School, was the first parent to speak. She said that Substitute Principal Mark Folta has been a godsend and she is grateful he is in their school. Admitting that Folta is "probably not seeing any of us at our best," she also commended Director of Pupil Services Kurt Garivaltis, who took in her concerns and sat in a chair outside her son's classroom to observe.

COMPLAINTS, page 2

HILLTOWNS

Rural state legislators hosted joint town hall style event

By Wendy Long
Correspondent

About 50 people from Huntington and its surrounding hilltowns attended a joint town hall style event at Stanton Hall on Tuesday, Feb. 11 at 5 p.m.

State Senator Paul Mark and State Representative Nicholas Boldyga addressed the group and answered questions. "Thank you for not having anything to do on a Tuesday night," opened Mark, who represents 57 cities and towns in Berkshire, Hampden and Hampshire counties. Mark not only holds the largest legislative district in Massachusetts, his district covers an area larger than the state of

Rhode Island. Even holding a meeting in each of his cities and towns each week, Mark would not be able to cover his entire district in one year.

Democrat Paul Mark is the first state senator to have first served in the House of Representatives since 1962. He described having a great working relationship with the six state representatives who cover his senate district, regardless of party affiliation.

Representative Nicholas Boldyga said that the Huntington event had one of the highest attendances he's seen at a town visit. Boldyga's own district-originally covering Southwick and Agawam grew in the last redistricting with

the addition of seven hilltowns. He agreed with Mark's assessment of their ability to work together, despite different party affiliations.

"We always get along when we work on local issues," Boldyga said. "Paul and I are on two very different political spectrums and we disagree greatly on big national issues. We rarely ever vote the same, but we can have conversations about the issues, our working relationship is good." He added that the country, as a whole, needs to figure out how to have similar civil conversations.

Mark explained that the state legislature started a new term as of Jan. 1. They are still in early days, having elected a Speaker and

Senate President. Next week, they expect to vote on the rules for this session.

About 4,000 bills were filed in the first two weeks of January. The next step will be to get committee assignments and begin hearing testimony on the bills. At the same time, the state is beginning its annual budget process. Both the House and Senate will hold hearings throughout the state and remote testimony-available since Covid-will still be taken, Mark said.

Brian Forgue, a member of the Gateway Regional School Committee and Chester Finance Committee Chair, was the first to ask a question. Referring to bills HD 3619 and SD 2178, Forgue said

these bills would take the funding of Rural School Aid outside of the annual budget appropriations process. In 2019, a special commission on equity between funding for rural schools and their urban counterparts found that rural schools in Massachusetts were collectively underfunded to the tune of \$60 million.

Despite the evidence presented by the Commission, only \$1.5 million was appointed in the first year of Rural School Aid. In Fiscal Year 2022 it was \$5.5 million, in FY23 they were able to triple it to \$15 million. Last year saw a modest increase to \$16.5 million.

TOWN HALL, page 2



Massachusetts Senator Paul Mark, from left, and State Representative Nicholas Boldyga held an open forum at Stanton Hall on Tuesday, Feb. 11 at 5 p.m.



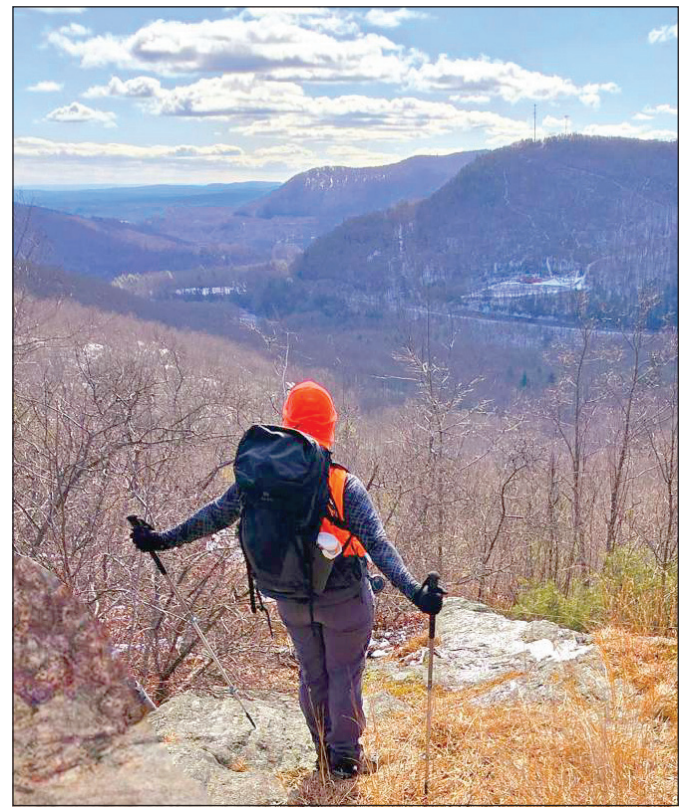
It was a full house. About 50 area residents attended the legislative forum at Stanton Hall on Feb. 11. Turley photos by Wendy Long



Becket.....7	Goshen.....6	Northampton.....7	Public Notices.....11
Blandford.....6	Great Barrington.....7	Obituaries.....11	Puzzle Page.....8
Chester.....6	Hilltowns.....2	Opinion.....4	Schools & Youth.....5
Chesterfield.....8	Housatonic.....6	Otis.....7	Westhampton.....5
Classifieds.....10	Huntington.....2, 3, 5	Pittsfield.....6	Worthington.....7



HILLTOWN HIKING ADVENTURES



Crampons and cleats are usually necessary hiking on the icy rocks toward the summit.

This is one of the Hilltown Hikers favorite views on the trail.

Stephanie and her dog, Cybil, look east towards the Pioneer Valley. Submitted photos

Hilltown Hikers take to their favorite trail

Western Massachusetts Hilltown Hikers recently trekked Shatterack Mountain in Russell on a section of Unkamit's Path (white dot) the Hilltown west to east long distance ridge trail for 800 feet of elevation gain switch backing with views east and west down the Westfield River Valley.

Many vistas include "the rock" painted Hilltown Hikers orange, and the blue rock, fish rock and grand views of the village of Russell. The Hilltown Hikers came down on rock face into the Moose Meadow Valley and Shatterack Brook to catch a few of the waterfalls.

This 3.77 mile technical loop with several rock scrambles is our #1 favorite Hilltown trail. The mountain encompasses both Russell

and Montgomery and is part of the Tekoa Mountain Wildlife Management Area. It has an elevation of 1,138 feet towering over the village of Russell.

Two painted rocks are perched on the hillside, they can be seen from Main Street in Russell and the colors change here and there, currently one is blue and the other orange. Along the trail heading east, hikers come upon "fish rock" so shaped and painted like a fish.

Pitch pine and amazing rock face make this mountain unique and the gateway to the Hilltowns. Parking is available just after the Russell Main Street bridge adjacent to Hull Lumber on Station Road, park on the shoulder of Montgomery Road.



This view is looking east with Tekoa Mountain to the left and Mount Nero to the right.



The trails continue down the valley across Shatterack Brook and up to Tekoa Mountain.



The Western Massachusetts Hilltown Hikers head down the mountain towards Shatterack Brook. This offers rock face scrambling and panoramic views.

LOWER PRICES TO BOOST YOUR BUDGET!		INFLATION PRICE BUSTERS		PRICES IN RED ARE AT OR BELOW LAST YEAR'S PRICES!	
USDA INSP. FROZEN BONE-IN CENTER CUT PORK CHOPS	\$2.49 lb	USDA INSP. FRESH BONELESS BEEF TENDERLOIN CUT FREE	\$10.10 lb	USDA INSP. FRESH BONE-IN BEEF CHUCK STEAK or ROAST.	\$5.99 lb
USDA INSP. FRESH COUNTRY STYLE PORK RIBS	\$1.94 lb	USDA INSP. FRESH BONELESS CHICKEN BREAST	10 LB BAG..... \$1.99 lb	USDA INSP. FROZEN CORNISH GAME HENS TWIN PAK..	\$2.49 lb
USDA INSP. BONELESS MCKENZIE'S CLASSIC 1/2 CARVING HAM	\$1.99 lb	USDA INSP. FRESH BONE-IN BEEF PORTERHOUSE or T'BONE STEAK	\$7.99 lb	USDA INSP. KAYEM ALFRESCO ROAST GARLIC CHICKEN SAUSAGE	11 OZ..... 99c ea
USDA INSP. SLICED IN OUR DELI REDUCED SODIUM DILUSO HAM	\$3.99 lb	USDA INSP. GROUND FRESH DAILY DIET LEAN GROUND BEEF	5 LB BAG \$4.99 lb	USDA INSP. IQF FROZEN COOKED SHRIMP 31/40 COUNT	1 LB BAG..... \$6.67 lb
USDA INSP. SLICED IN OUR DELI MONTEREY JACK CHEESE	\$4.44 lb	SOUP'S ON!		90 Meat Outlet 90 Avocado St. Springfield 413-737-1288 www.90meat.com We reserve the right to limit quantities.	
USDA INSP. FROZEN PORK STOMACH	\$2.99 lb	SALE DATES: 2/20/25-2/26/25		HOURS: Mon. - Wed. 8-4 Thurs. 8-6 • Fri. 8-6 • Sat. 8-3	
USDA INSP. FROZEN BEEF BONE FOR SOUP	\$1.99 lb	BUY DIRECT FOR SAVINGS • SELECTION • SERVICE			

Adventure tours of Warren
Share the Adventure with us!

Think Spring!

April 27	.....Some Like it Hot at PPAC.....	\$120
May 23	.....7-Night Bermuda Cruise.....	from \$1699
June 10-12	.....Hampton Beach Getaway.....	\$529
June 28	.....Boston Harbor Lunch Cruise.....	\$175
July 12	.....Escape to Rockport.....	\$110

Share the Adventure with us soon!
For further information call Randall at (413) 436-5357 or email adventuretours@att.net or go to www.adventuretoursofwarren.com