

# 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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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

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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



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# HILLTOWNS

## TOWN HALL

from page 1

“What actions do you plan on taking this session to ensure that Gateway and other regionals are prepared for the 21st Century?” Forge asked, noting that to date neither official had co-sponsored these bills.

Mark responded that they used to have two weeks to co-sponsor bills, but that is no longer the case and assured Forge that he is committed to Rural School Aid. Boldyga said he supports it as well, noting that both of them grew up in rural towns. They bring other legislators out to Western Massachusetts when they can-two years ago to a Maple Tapping in Granville, last year to a ski day in Hancock (population 700), to which a senate colleague quipped, “Why does this town even exist?”

Huntington Selectman John McVeigh asked if the state could look at removing prevailing wage requirements for communities under 6,000, with regard to Chapter 90 funding for roads and infrastructure. Chair Roger Booth added that it was even bigger than Chapter 90. “We could have gotten a boiler for \$15,000, but with prevailing wage costs it came to \$25,000. Nearly 25% of Huntington’s roads are dirt and their maintenance is costing the towns a lot of money. But they are prevented from grading and tarring the roads due to costs.” Mark announced a “Beacon Hill in the Berkshires” event on Saturday, April 5 and encouraged town officials to attend, as well as reach out to Anne Gobi, Director of Rural Affairs on this issue.

Huntington Town Clerk Michelle Fieldstad-Booth offered that the Governor is looking at trying to increase housing, but the majority of people who live here are retired. Jobs in town are few and far between, so young families require before and after-school care to ensure their children are safe while parents commute to and from work. Yet Gateway Regional School District lost a wonderful after-school program grant because, as a smaller district, they did not have the required numbers of

children attending each day.

Mark responded that it is really hard to come up with a formula on funding that works for towns the size of Chester and Huntington. “The problem is, in the end where the people are they have the most say.” Boldyga added that every community feels that they are not getting their fair share but asked why all the road money is going to communities where nobody drives?

Brianna Sloane of Huntington asked how their constituents could support them. Boldyga responded that it is great when you email us, but if you also emailed and called the committee chairs and Governor, it would matter. The point was echoed by former State Senator Donald Humason, who encouraged people to call the Governor’s office in Springfield. Boldyga agreed, adding that select board members should be bothering the Massachusetts Municipal Association every day of the week.

When Erin Judge of Middlefield asked how to know when to make such calls, Mark answered that people could go on the state website and “follow” a bill to receive notifications on when committee hearings are coming up.

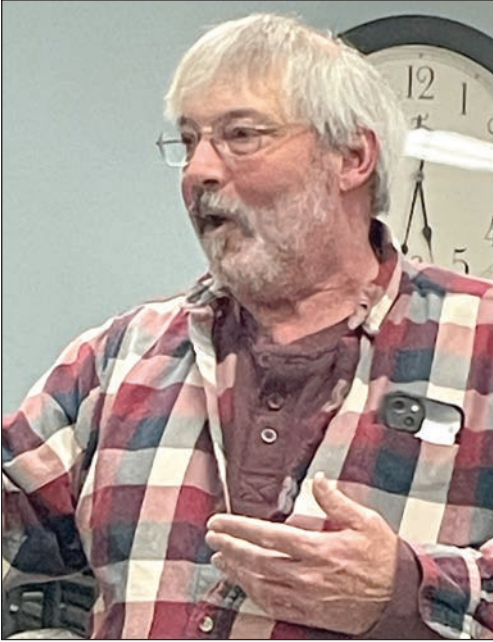
Council on Aging Chair Kat Peterson expressed her concerns about pedestrian safety on Route 20 especially now that it is an alternative turnpike for tractor trailer trucks between Westfield and Lee. “Crosswalks are barely visible, sidewalks are barely passable and children do not have a clear access from downtown Huntington to Gateway,” Peterson said, adding that the equipment that clears the sidewalks breaks down because the sidewalks are in disrepair. Booth added that when the Select Board approached MassDOT to get flashing lights at Gateway, downtown and the library for bus stops, they were instructed to get a lawyer and ascertain a right of way. “Department of Transportation irks me to no end. They are not a help, usually. Their solutions are not what we need,” Booth said.

“It’s as if they know if they push back on the smaller towns, we’ll walk away.” Both Mark and Boldyga thought they might be helpful on this issue and encouraged the Select Boards to call them to discuss this further.

Christine Bresnahan of Middlefield, who works with vulnerable populations, is worried about what is happening at the national level. Employed by Hilltown Community Health Centers, Bresnahan said they’ve already had a day where Medicare funds did not come into the health center due to the new president and Elon Musk’s DOGE efforts. Mark said that the state had \$9 billion saved that can be used to backfill funding in an emergency. But 25% of the state’s revenue comes from federal funding. “If we lose half of that, we can’t sustain things indefinitely. The fear and concern is real. But I think we’re all committed to people having enough to eat and kids not being in the street,” Mark said. “It’s a chaotic moment. But Massachusetts is Massachusetts and we’re not changing.”

In response to Erica Wells of Huntington asking how citizens can help maintain financial viability for our towns and bring new people in, Mark responded, “We could double all of your funding and it still wouldn’t cover it,” adding that he would happily support local efforts to reduce costs and overhead if somebody found a model that works. But the economic heyday of the mills and paper industry of yesteryear is gone. “I don’t know if we’ll ever get those back,” Boldyga said. Another resident talked about the difficulty of filling empty storefronts with viable, sustainable businesses.

McVeigh raised unfunded mandates as the final issue of the night. Small municipal police and fire departments are being inundated with impossible mandates that no one has the resources to put into place. “The only thing we manufacture in Massachusetts is law,” said Police Chief Robert Garriepy. “These unfunded mandates are killing us.”



**Huntington select board Chair Roger Booth spoke about issues like prevailing wage, lack of Rural School Aid and unfunded mandates that are financially crippling small towns.**

*Turley photos by Wendy Long*

Booth added the same was true for part-time town clerks trying to meet all of the state regulations. McVeigh asked that regulations be determined by the size of the towns. Booth added, “If a ballot question comes up and you don’t care, kill it.” Garriepy pointed out that the state gave Hilltown Community Ambulance funding for life packs. “But if you can’t afford to get the ambulance out the door, the life packs aren’t worth anything.”

Boldyga had to leave for another appointment at 6:20 p.m. and Mark concluded the event shortly afterwards. “The reason I do these is to learn how we can help you be better advocates, educators and communicators,” Mark said. “If I can’t help this town, I don’t want to do this job.”

# HUNTINGTON

## COMPLAINTS

from page 1

Briggs also said the entire Chester Elementary School staff has been nothing but grace under fire during this tumultuous time. As a school committee member, she said she has worked with Superintendent Kristen Smidy and there is no one better than her. “But the way this has been handled has left a black hole. To see our kids getting sucked into this crisis; measures should have been in place to have avoided this while respecting privacy,” Briggs said. “Our kids didn’t deserve this.”

Tasha Strong reiterated many of the positive attributes about Principal Vanna Maffuccio, who was placed on a leave of absence on Dec. 20, that were discussed at the previous week’s special school committee meeting. Strong described Maffuccio’s leadership, communication and passion for the students. “We won’t settle for anyone less than Vanna,” Strong said.

Parent Alicia Swendsen raised several questions around the leave of absence and resulting investigation. She also said that Folta’s administrative license appears to have expired.

A difference from last week’s meeting was that even more people spoke up on behalf of Superintendent Kristen Smidy. Former School Committee Chair Sarah Page said she had full confidence in Smidy. Referencing the school committee, she said, “Please remember that these men and women are volunteering their time to the community. I feel for them: their morale, their mental stamina. It’s time to know that your voices have been heard and it’s time to let them do their jobs.”

Gateway alum and Littleville parent Michael LaBranche said he had been supported by Smidy when he worked in one of Gateway’s summer programs. He pleaded with attendees to work together to continue to build a strong and supportive Gateway community. CES employee Misty Robitaille asked that the situation be resolved as quickly as possible, while urging everyone to be respectful of each other.

CES student Sofia Stone reported that she had been sexually harassed by a classmate and that other classmates had been subjected to racial harassment. “I have a separation agreement that has been broken several times,” Stone said. “Please help us. Our school is not a safe place anymore.”

Forge assured Stone that he heard her and wants to look into this situation further. He also asked Swendsen to email him with her specific questions, and he would try to get answers for her.

Next on the agenda was a combined statement to the school committee from Gateway Regional Principal Dr. William Sullivan and Littleville Principal Melissa McCaul. Sullivan opened by stating that they had chosen to remain silent at last week’s meeting, “allowing the community to voice their thoughts and concerns without our positions influencing the conversation,” Sullivan said. “After listening to those perspectives, we believe it is necessary to



**Littleville Principal Melissa McCaul and Gateway Regional Principal Dr. William Sullivan presented a joint statement assuring CES parents that they understood their concerns, but confirming their trust and support in Superintendent Kristen Smidy.**

*Turley photos by Wendy Long*

address the community tonight.” He also acknowledged that parents were frustrated by a lack of information but told them to understand that the process will take time to unfold.

McCaul then spoke, assuring everyone that they too, deeply respect and appreciate Maffuccio’s work and have built a strong professional bond with her over the past three years. She also raised the added challenge of Chester Elementary School being separated from the main Gateway campus, “which can create a sense of isolation during such uncertain times.”

McCaul and Sullivan announced that they will be asking some of their school counselors to make time at Chester to provide students with any additional support they may need. McCaul also explained that their role, as principals, “is to be instructional leaders while upholding policies and procedures with integrity and fidelity...It is important to note that simply following policy does not mean we are indifferent to the impact it may have on our students and staff...It means we are doing our jobs with the integrity and professionalism expected of us.”

“The process being followed may seem unclear or distant,” McCaul said, “But personal attacks, accusations of vendettas, and assumptions of ill-intent will not expedite or change this process-in fact, they could hinder it,” McCaul said. The two affirmed their support and respect for the School Committee and for Smidy.

Sullivan concluded that they understood the frustration that parents were expressing. “However, having worked alongside Superintendent Smidy every day, we can say with complete confidence that all her decisions are made with professionalism, integ-



**A Gateway Regional School District parent testifies to the school committee on the loss of Principal Vanna Maffuccio at Chester Elementary School on Feb. 12**

rity and accountability,” Sullivan said. “We have full trust in her ability to guide, inspire and lead. She is, and will continue to be, the leader this district needs and deserves.”

Briggs said she appreciated their willingness to help. “But that help should have been there on day 1. It impacted our children so severely. And nobody cared until we came here last week and demanded it.”

Moving to regular agenda items, Forge announced that Gateway 6 – 12 Health Teacher Abbey Keeler is the 2025 Pioneer Valley Excellence in Teaching Award winner.

Gateway’s official budget hearing will be the first week of March, but preliminary numbers show a 1.57% increase to \$18,254,669. This budget presumes that Chapter 70 will increase to \$104 per student (up from \$75); that Rural School Aid will come in at \$971 thousand; that Medicaid will continue to be funded, and that the district will continue to receive federal and state grants at or close to current levels. Free breakfast and lunch for all students is expected to continue in Fiscal Year 2026.

Assistant Superintendent Stephanie Fisk had to build next year’s budget while grappling with several major budget increases, particularly insurances which rose \$188 thousand and salary obligations, expected to rise \$340 thousand due to Cost of Living and step increases (for higher education attainment and years of service). Towns have been asked to confirm that the students on their enrollment lists still live in their communities. Based on a Feb. 1 census, a first look at town assessment comparisons shows Blandford (3.67%), Chester (3.55%) and Montgomery (3.62%) each increasing by over 3.5%. Middlefield (decreasing by 8.91%), Russell (up .47%) and Huntington

(up 2.51%) showing savings or more modest gains. These numbers will be firmed up with the official March 1 census. Overall, Gateway enrollment is projected to decrease by 12 students next year.

Forge urged advocacy with state legislators for Rural School Aid, citing a report in 2019 that called for \$60 million to make up for rural school funding inequities. This year, Rural School Aid is at \$16 million. “If that \$16 million were \$60 million, it would be a game changer for our towns,” Forge said, while reminding the committee of the advantages to the member towns if the regional were rewritten to include an alternative assessment option. This method would rely on average student census changes and stabilize the swings in town assessments from year to year. Two towns refused to approve the proposed change the last time it was in play.

When asked if she saw anything that would impact positions, Smidy replied that a number of staff are paid by grants and Rural School Aid. “We didn’t know how much we were getting in Rural School Aid this year until early December,” Smidy said, adding that positions that should have been full year were hired four months into the year, which was not ideal.

“We do not project a shortage, but we are at the skin of our teeth,” Smidy said, adding that several other districts have already announced cuts for the coming year. Smidy gave credit to Assistant Superintendent Stephanie Fisk for her last Gateway budget before she retires later this year.

In other business, the committee passed a number of non-discrimination policies and had a first read of three new policies that will be approved at the next meeting. Unanimous approval was granted for the annual music department trip to a Broadway show. By opting to take no action, the committee held their Massachusetts Virtual School Cap to 1%, the lowest level allowed.

With MCAS no longer a requirement for graduation, the committee had to approve a local competency determination for members of the Gateway Class of 2025. Dr. Sullivan has recommended having students pass a minimum of two years of English Language Arts, Mathematics and Science classes. He would like to raise the bar for future years, but there is no time for the Class of 2025 to meet higher standards. This was unanimously approved.

Among the final communications of the meeting, Smidy said that she understands that there are concerns over Maffuccio’s leave from Chester Elementary School. She proposes that an outside investigator come in and manage the process in order to dispel any concerns over bias or vendettas.

The next meeting of the Gateway Regional School Committee will be a virtual meeting on Wednesday, Feb. 19, where the sole agenda item will be whether or not to secure an outside investigator.

The meeting adjourned at 8:40 p.m.



HUNTINGTON

Advocates, agencies and police train in new Domestic Violence law

By Wendy Long  
Correspondent

HUNTINGTON – On Wednesday, Feb. 12, 30 domestic violence allies, advocates and representatives from local agencies and state/local police gathered at Gateway Regional High School for training in the new domestic violence legislation on Coercive Control.

This new law went into effect in August 2024 and broadens the ways that victims and survivors of domestic violence can seek legal relief. Among those attending were Major Michael Habel from Troop B of the Massachusetts State Police and representatives from all six Western Massachusetts State Police barracks.

Unlike other criminal activities, domestic violence is usually not a sudden, isolated or unexpected incident, according to the Office for Victims of Crime. It is often preceded by a pattern of the abuser increasingly isolating and controlling his/her victim. Last year, Massachusetts became the seventh state in the United States, along with several other countries, to create a law recognizing the dangers of these behaviors and increasing the ability of a victim to obtain a restraining order.

Previously, the law recognized criminal behavior related to domestic violence as “attempting or causing physical harm to the victim; placing the victim in fear of imminent serious physical harm, and causing the victim to engage in involuntary sexual relations by force or threat.” These are all criminal acts that can result in a police arrest, incarceration, and justify the court issuing a (209A) restraining order.

The new coercive control law adds civil complaints to domestic violence law. A perpetrator who commits at least three of the following acts has established a legally defined “pattern of behavior.” As outlined by John Sofis Scheft of Law Enforcement Dimensions, LLC, these include “isolating the victim from friends, relatives, or other sources of support; depriving the victim of basic needs; controlling, regulating or monitoring (including by the use of technology) the victim’s activities, movements, communications, finances, economic resources or access to services; compelling the victim to avoid or engage in a specific behavior or activity (including a crime); threatening to harm the victim’s child or relative; threatening to abuse an animal connected to the victim; intentionally damaging the victim’s property; threatening to publish sensitive personal information about the victim including sexually explicit images or using repeated court actions not based in law or good faith.”

Scheft details a second type of coercive control, which only requires one act to meet the new law. These include “harming or attempting to harm the victim’s child or relative; committing or attempting to commit abuse to an animal connected to the victim; or publishing or attempting to publish sexually explicit images of the victim.”

Esther Tutor, Esq. from Community Legal Aid provided an overview of the coercive control law at the training. She emphasized that each of the above complaints requires intent on the part of the perpetrator. She also noted that the use of repeated court actions not based in law or good faith requires a finding by the court. It is considered a coercive act because the perpetrator knows the survivor will show up in court at a specific time.



State and local police, local agencies, allies and advocates attended the training on coercive control hosted by the Southern Hilltowns Domestic Violence Task Force. Courtesy photo by Donna Larocque

With the new law, Massachusetts becomes the 49th state to criminalize revenge porn.

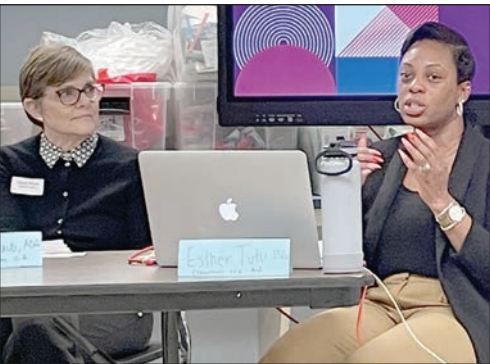
According to Tutu, the statute does not specify how many acts establish a “pattern” but the 209A application for a protective order requires documenting three separate acts of coercively controlling behavior. Each act must take place in separate times and have a specific beginning and end. In other words, a perpetrator committing three acts in the same visit would only count as one act,” said Tutu.

Tutu said the rules of evidence are relaxed with restraining orders but victims still need to testify in detail, which can be re-traumatizing. As a result of the new law, the 209A complaint packet has also changed. Applicants need to show three separate incidents of coercive control and the application has to be completed fully. By definition, the law applies to family or household members who are or were married to one another, are related by blood or marriage, are or were residing together, or who have a child together.

Five other panelists were on hand to answer questions from the audience: ADA Erin Aiello of the Domestic Violence/Sexual Assault Unit (DV/SA), Sandra Straub, Chief of the DV/SA Unit, and Katie Rosewarne, Director of DV/SA Projects of the Northwestern District Attorney’s Office and ADA Dana Parsons of the DV/SA Unit and Tina Simmons, Director of DV Victim Services in the Hampden County District Attorney’s Office.

They emphasized that, even though these are civil complaints, they can lead to earlier access to a restraining order; if that order is violated, it becomes a criminal matter. Police responding to a call that does not rise to these standards might also probe the possible victim by asking if anything has happened in the past to make them afraid. Police attending concurred, saying that was something they could do. If they find grounds, police also have the authority to issue an emergency protective order.

Parsons noted “We’ve always seen signs of coercive control in these cases, but now it’s a law so that we don’t have to say we can’t do anything until he hits you.” Simmons added that it’s clear to her that judges have been getting consistent training on the new law and are clearly listening differently to victims in court.



Sandra Straub, Chief of the DV/SA Unit from the Northwest District Attorney’s office, from left, looks on as Attorney Esther Tuto from Community Legal Aid fields a question during the training on the state’s new coercive control law. Turley photo by Wendy Long

stronger.” But Moran emphasized that advocates cannot over rely on the law as a means to end DV. “We still have to do prevention, we have to do education,” she said.

Moran talked about officers of the Massachusetts State Police often rotating between barracks. When they serve in large municipal areas, domestic violence is typically handled by large, full time local police departments who can track residents’ complaints over time. But when they work in small towns out of the Russell barracks, they may encounter DV calls for the first time, she said. And DV calls are the most dangerous calls law enforcement can face.

Huntington Police Chief Robert Garriepy noted that the challenge for the hilltowns is that three different police departments might respond to three different coercive control incidents for the same couple. For example, a Russell officer might respond to an incident at the Russell Inn. The next day, the Massachusetts State Police (MSP) might handle a call about an incident at the home. Garriepy might later respond to a third call concerning custodial rights at the school. “None of us will know about the other two incidents,” Garriepy said, adding that their data systems do not ‘talk’ to each other. This will be a challenge for this law,” he said.

Moran agreed with Garriepy’s assessment. “I think that is a really good point and I think it makes DV much more dangerous for police. We have to keep talking about this,” she said. “The state doesn’t differentiate in their training for MSP in rural areas. Our state police have been good. They were all there yesterday and they are vital partners.”

COA announces upcoming events

HUNTINGTON – The Huntington Council on Aging will be hosting the following events at Stanton Hall, 26 Russell Road, Huntington.

A presentation on health care advocacy and health care proxies and blood pressure checks will be provided by the Hampshire Public Health Preparedness Coalition’s nursing team on Wednesday, Feb. 26 at 1 p.m. There will be a discussion on Wednesday, March 4 at 11:30 a.m. about creating a “We are One” program that would provide a daily call to seniors to check in on them.

On Wednesday, March 5 at 1 p.m., Sue Maxwell will lead a free jewelry beading class. Reservations are required by Monday, Feb. 24 for the class. Board games will be played on Tuesday, March 11 at 1 p.m.

The annual St. Patrick’s Luncheon will be held on Saturday, March 15 at 11:45 a.m. and will feature a sit down meal and music. Reservations are due by Friday, March 7. The Hilltown Memory Café is held weekly at 2 p.m. The weekly café provides seniors with activities while their caregivers participate in a support group. The café is open to all with and without memory issues.

The café is made possible by a grant from Highland Valley Elder Services through funding under the Federal Older Americans Act and by a grant from the Huntington Cultural Council, a local agency which is supported by the Mass Cultural Council, a state agency. All events are free and open to residents of any community. For more information, people may call Crystal Wright-Partyka at 413-685-5283.

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OPINION

GUEST COLUMN

SOCIAL SECURITY  
*Matters*  
By Russell Gloor



Reader asks about claiming Social Security when I have a Health Savings Account

**Dear Rusty**  
*I have reached my full retirement age (66 plus 8 months) and plan to apply for Social Security this month, but I've seen articles, which say that when I apply, I must also take Medicare Part A. This, even though I am continuing to work and am covered by my employer's health insurance (a high deductible plan). I contribute bi-weekly into an Health Savings Account. I've read that Medicare back dates Part A coverage by six months, which suggests I would have had to stop contributing to my HSA six months ago.*  
*If this is true, will I need to pay penalties and such to the IRS? I'm not able to find anything else about this topic and I'm wondering what you might have to say. I have my wife and two children on my employer's HDHP. We contribute \$6,000 annually to our HSA and my employer contributes \$1,250 on Jan. 1 each year. We can live without the HSA, but the taxes and IRS penalties concern me.*

**Signed: Wanting to Claim SS (but concerned)**

**Dear Wanting to Claim**  
I'm afraid that what you've read is correct – it is mandatory for you to take Medicare Part A (inpatient hospitalization coverage) when receiving Social Security benefits after age 65. Medicare Part A is free to you and even though you are still covered under your employer's creditable high deductible healthcare plan and can delay taking Medicare Part B, you must take Medicare Part A to collect Social Security after 65. Medicare and your employer's plan will coordinate healthcare benefit payments.

That does, however, also mean your Health Savings Account will be affected because, as you have found, Medicare will backdate your Part A coverage by six months. And because Part A is not a high deductible plan (a requirement for HSA), any contributions you make after the effective date of Part A will be subject to an IRS penalty, and your HSA contributions won't be considered tax-exempt. This will mean the IRS will likely assess a 6% excise tax on any contributions made after your Part A effective date and you'll need to pay income tax on those contributions.

What you may wish to consider is stopping your HSA contributions now and waiting an additional six months or so to claim your Social Security benefits (to get beyond the HSA penalty phase). This would have the advantage of avoiding the IRS penalty on your HSA contributions and would also increase your Social Security benefit due to Delayed Retirement Credits. You earn DRCs at the rate of .677% for each month beyond your FRA that you wait to claim, which means an SS benefit about 4% higher if you wait six months longer to claim SS.

*The Association Mature Citizens Foundation and its staff are not affiliated with or endorsed by the Social Security Administration or any other governmental entity. This article is intended for information purposes and does not represent legal or financial guidance. It presents the opinions and interpretations of the Association Mature Citizens Foundation's staff, trained and accredited by the National Social Security Association. To submit a question, visit [amacfoundation.org/programs/social-security-advisory](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.*

Correction

An article on senior circuit breaker tax credit that appeared in a previous issue of Country Journal had the wrong date. It will be held Thursday, Feb. 20 at 3 p.m. in the Hilltown Community Development Cooperation conference room, 387 Main Road, Chesterfield.

CHECK OUT ALL THE



[www.turley.com](http://www.turley.com)



LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Comments on paper's new look, federal workers

First let me commend you and the Turley folks on your new look.  
To my old eyes, the new layout seems more readable and more importantly reflects a continuing commitment to our Hilltowns.  
That said, I would like to address your readers who voted for an administration that would run government like a business. Most would agree that business principles should have an important role in government management. But what kind of business principles?  
Managing employees runs the gamut from principles of democracy giving workers a role in management, to simple brutal sweatshops. In my opinion, the current approach to our government workforce leans heavily towards the sweat shop side of the spectrum. The current acting approach of the new administration treats our workforce

as if they were the sole source of all waste, fraud and abuse in our government. Simply put federal workers are being treated as scapegoats and with contempt. With such an attitude from management, what can we expect from the diminished and reviled workforce?  
Work to Rule is a labor reply to disagreements with management. Working to rule does the job full stop. No extra efforts period. With the government work force much reduced and the survivors defamed, expect interchanges between ourselves and the various services we have grown to expect to be sullen and delayed, if not ignored.  
For better or worse, we get what we vote for. Thank you,  
**Richard Mansfield**  
*Worthington*

GUEST COLUMN

Leave it to fate



I never thought I would say this, but I am out of ideas for this week's column. Every topic I come up with has been covered at one time or another. So, as the snow falls every so furiously outside, I am going to resort to the "stick your finger in the gardening encyclopedia, and see where it lands" trick.  
I'll leave the topics of the week to fate.  
Here goes: For the first topic, my finger landed on a funny picture of geranium plants with their rootballs wrapped in newspaper hanging from the beams in someone's basement. I have written before about my success in bringing my geranium plants inside for the winter and placing them in a south facing window.  
Just yesterday I was looking at the plants more closely, knowing that soon enough, I will be snipping the tips to take some cuttings. But I digress, the picture I saw is just another way to overwinter your geranium plants, especially if you don't have a sunny window or a lot of indoor gardening space.  
Many old timers used to talk of this method a lot and had great success with it. You could either try and pot the plants up ahead of time or go right from the basement to the outdoors after the threat of frost has passed and after a thorough hardening off process, of course.  
Second topic: My finger landed on the herb Lovage (*Levisticum officinale*). I have started lovage from seed nearly every year for the last 30 years.  
This celery substitute is always on the list of transplants needed for the herb garden at Old Sturbridge Village. Lovage seed is not viable for long, so new seed is needed each year, or germination will be sparse.  
The plant is considered a perennial, meaning it will return year after year, but in my experience, the best foliage production will be in the first year. The flowers are "umbells" like dill and fennel but flowers only take away from foliage production, so they are best snipped off.

The hollow stems are used in place of celery in soups and stews. My mom always enjoyed drying the leaves for use during the winter months.  
Topic three: Hostas! I was never a big fan of Hostas until I had a yard that had substantial amounts of shade. These versatile plants are a perfect companion for many shade loving perennials, especially if they are planted in fertile soil with ample moisture.  
Like other perennials, Hostas need a period of dormancy to succeed, so they will do well in our climate, and down to Zone 8 or so. Most varieties are grown for their foliage only; I find it funny that some gardeners snip off the flowers as they begin to form, saying that it actually takes away from the look of the plant.  
There are so many types to choose from and in colors ranging from grass-green to yellow and even blue-gray! Some are variegated or splashed with color.  
Leaf sizes range from minuscule to huge! One pest that loves Hosta leaves is the slug. To lessen their interest in the plant, be sure to remove decomposing foliage.  
Use any number of traps, homemade or otherwise to keep your plants damage free.  
And the last fate-filled topic is: Chile peppers! There are all kinds of hot peppers out there for the gardener to experiment with. You might think that growing instructions may differ for fire-hot peppers, but they are grown in the same manner as regular bell peppers.  
Start the seeds inside, or purchase transplants. Warm the soil ahead of installing the plants, and don't overdue it fertility-wise. Provide supplemental water if the summer gets droughty.  
Harvest when the peppers turn color, and do so wearing gloves being ever mindful not to touch your eyes. I had always heard that a milk bath should help ease the sting of an accidental burn; others say ingesting starchy food does the trick.  
Well, I hope this unconventional column was an enjoyable read. It's never too late to pull out a reference book or two for some interesting factsoids.  
*Roberta McQuaid graduated from the Stockbridge School of Agriculture at the University of Massachusetts. For 33 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](mailto:pouimette@turley.com) with "Gardening Question" in the subject line.*

Election letters to the editor welcome

The Country Journal welcomes readers to participate in this year's election campaigns by writing letters to the editor for publication on these pages. Letters of up to 250 words from local residents endorsing candidates on the ballot or discussing campaign issues should be sent to *The Country Journal*, care of Turley Publications, 24 Water St., Palmer, MA 01069, faxed to 413-289-1977 or emailed to [countryjournal@turley.com](mailto:countryjournal@turley.com). Please include a daytime telephone number for verification purposes (it will not be printed). Letters must be received by **noon Friday** to be considered for the

following Thursday's newspaper. No attack letters will be printed. No letters written by candidates supporting their own candidacy will be printed. If the volume of letters received is larger than the space available in the newspaper, or if the letters become repetitive, the newspaper reserves the right to print a representative sample. No endorsement letters will be printed in the last edition before the election. For more information, call 413-283-8393.

Campaign news

As part of its election coverage, the newspa-

per plans to print stories about contested races for Congress, state Senate, state House, district attorney and Governor's Council during the weeks leading up to the election, as well as a question-and-answer voters guide. In order to ensure fairness to all candidates, no political press releases will be printed, nor will reporters cover political rallies or fundraisers.  
Candidates who wish to further publicize their candidacy, beliefs and events may contact advertising, 413-283-8393 about paid advertising in *The Country Journal*.

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## HUNTINGTON

# Select Board seeks free cash numbers

By Wendy Long  
Correspondent

HUNTINGTON – The Huntington Select Board met on Wednesday, Feb. 12 with Chair Roger Booth, members John McVeigh and William Hathaway and Town Administrator Jennifer Peloquin all present.

First up was Town Accountant Richard Buley, who reported that all reports have been into the state for a month and a half. To date, he has had no word back about the town’s Free Cash. Buley said he will reach out if he has not heard anything by the end of February.

Buley also said that the auditors have only been in one day thus far, due to weather. They are expected back for another full day.

McVeigh asked about the use of personal emails, expressing concerns over security. Buley informed him that his work email stopped working and he switched to personal email until his computer was updated. He reached out to Northeast IT, who formatted a new computer last summer but apparently did not upgrade Microsoft Office at that time. Buley is back on the town system. Booth urged him to let Peloquin know if this happens again. Peloquin will follow up with town employees to ensure everything is working well.

### Updating mandated policies

Peloquin has begun the process of updating mandated policies. She had prepared a draft of a new Bloodborne Pathogen Exposure Control Plan that had gone out for review with several town departments. In discussions, it was unclear if all departments-in particular highway department, fire, police, and water/sewer plant, who needed an eyewash station had them. The protocol also includes at risk employees receiving the Hepatitis B Vaccination at no personal cost. The town has



Town Accountant Richard Buley met with the Huntington select board on Feb. 12

Turley photo by Wendy Long

an account with Berkshire Medical Center and Holyoke Hospital and they will bill the town for employees, who are vaccinated there.

### Winter weather closures

Another policy that Peloquin has started working on concerns town hall and town department closures during winter weather. After discussion, it was decided that town hall will close whenever the state declares an emergency and there is no requirement among staff to use a vacation or personal day.

If Gateway closes, Town Hall will be closed to the public. Employees will have the option of coming in if they can, working from home or taking a vacation/personal day.

The Huntington Public Library will be closed to the public any weekday that Gateway closes and will close if Gateway has a 2-hour

early release. The library will operate on its regular hours if Gateway has a delayed start. Saturday closures will be determined by the Library Director and Trustees.

Staff can work at the library when it is closed to the public, as long as they are able to safely get there. Staff will endeavor to make-up missed hours within one full pay period. The library will be closed if the parking lot is not plowed. Pelican will work with the Transfer Station and Water/Sewer Department to determine their closing policies.

### Tax work off program

Also on the agenda was the selection of Tax Work Off Program Applicants. There were more applicants than the 14 slots available this year. The board opted to include all veterans who applied and then draw from a hat for the remaining recipients. This program allows senior citizens and veterans to volunteer for the town and receive up to \$500 (at the rate of \$15/hour) their last quarter tax bill.

### FY 2026 Budget

Select board members had their first look at budget requests for FY’2026. Peloquin had each department’s request tabbed in a binder; she will compute totals by the next meeting. She has not received numbers from the school yet, but is in the process of verifying Huntington’s student census, to ensure they still live in town. Other budget issues discussed included possible certification bonuses, options around Neb’s Well (the pump of which has possibly frozen and may no longer be usable), and the request to make the fire chief full time. Peloquin has begun polling surrounding towns about fire chief hours and pay, whether they’d consider a shared or regional chief. This will be revisited at the Wednesday, Feb. 26 select board meeting.

# COA plans to provide senior daily check in calls

HUNTINGTON – The Huntington Council on Aging will hold a discussion on Wednesday, March 4 at 11:30 a.m. at Stanton Hall about creating a “We are One” program that would provide a daily call to seniors to check in on them.

Residents interested in receiving the daily calls or volunteers interested in making the calls are encouraged to attend to provide their input on the program. All volunteers will have to complete an application and pass a criminal history check. For more information, people may call Caregiver Support/Outreach Coordinator Crystal Wright-Partyka at 413-685-5283.



## WESTHAMPTON

# Westhampton Library announces upcoming news, events

WESTHAMPTON – The Westhampton Public Library, 1 North Road, is open Monday and Thursday from 2-8 p.m., Tuesday and Wednesday from 9 a.m.-noon and 1-5 p.m. and Saturday from 10 am.-1 p.m.

People may visit the town website or Facebook or Instagram @ WesthamptonPublicLibrary for library updates. To place a request for curbside pickup, they should email westhampton@cwmar.org or call 413-527-5386.

Ongoing programs (holiday may impact schedule) are: computer classes with Bob Miller second and fourth Mondays from 10 a.m. -noon, knitting group Mondays at 6 p.m. and yoga Mondays at 6 p.m.

Yoga is drop-in, first-come, first-served and registration is not required. People may check Facebook and the town calendar for updates on yoga at the library.

Other ongoing programs include: Scrabble group Tuesdays at 2 p.m., book group fourth Tuesdays at 7 p.m., walk-in wellness clinics with Westhampton’s Public Health Nurse first and third Wednesdays from 10-11:30 a.m. and coffee and chat Wednesdays from 10 a.m.-noon.

Ongoing activities for children and teens include: CFCE Playgroup Tuesdays at 10 a.m., Story Time Wednesdays at 10:30 a.m. and CFCE eating healthy together and after school fun Thursdays at 3:30 p.m.

CFCE Family Yoga Classes with Lorrie will be held Saturday, March 1 and Saturday, April 5 from 10:30 a.m.-noon. People should email Jessica at jloud@col-



laborative.org to register.

On Saturday, March 15 from 10:30-11:30 a.m. people may join Jessica from Hampshire Regional School District and Angela from the EFC CFCE Playgroups for a morning of play and conversation about nutrition, easy healthy meals and the joys and struggles of feeding little ones. Registration is required by emailing Jessica at jloud@collaborative.org.

There will be a fun activity every Thursday this month after school. LEGO Club meets the first Thursday; Craft Club second Thursday; Nintendo Switch Happy Hour third Thursday; Comics Club fourth

Thursday and Teen Craft Night third Thursdays at 6 p.m. This month’s craft is a cloud light. Materials are limited to eight participants and registration is required by emailing Emily at ewayne@cwmar.org. Special thanks to the Friends of Westhampton Library and the Lyn Keating Program Fund for sponsoring all teen crafts.

Jim Crowell of Hatfield is the artist for February and March. Now retired from professional cabinetry and finish carpentry, Jim continues to make, creating sculpture vessels, and has relief wall pieces that reflect his deep interests in nature and the natural world. Birch bark is his primary material.

With this body of work, Crowell combines his skills as a woodworker with his artistic vision.

On Saturday, March 8 from 10:30-11:30 a.m. Chris and Katie LaFond will provide Irish music. They will perform a whole set of music dedicated to the spirit of Ireland. With harp, flute, guitar and voice, Chris and Katie delight and rouse the spirit with a mix of traditional and modern Celtic and American music that reconnect to Celtic heritage and to the Earth.

Katie is a graduate of the Hartt School of Music and also holds a Master’s Degree in Flute Performance from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. She is a music teacher by day and a super fiber magic-worker by night.

Chris plays multiple stringed instruments with Celtic harp as his focus for the last twenty-five years.

One or both of them perform at festivals, celebrations and gatherings up and down the East Coast and occasionally beyond.

Westhampton Permaculture Club will hold its inaugural meeting on Thursday, March 27 from 7-8 p.m.

All are invited. Permaculture is “an approach to land management and settlement design that adopts arrangements observed in flourishing natural ecosystems. It includes a set of design principles derived using whole-systems thinking. It applies these principles in fields such as regenerative agriculture, town planning, rewilding, and community resilience.” Its goal is “permanent” as opposed to throw-away culture.

## SCHOOLS & YOUTH

# Horace Smith Fund scholarship application due March 15

WESTFIELD – The Horace Smith Fund, celebrating its 125th anniversary, will be awarding \$310,000 in scholarships and fellowships to residents of Hampden County, who have also graduated from an eligible high school or private school.

This year 20 scholarships, three fellowships and one William R. Rooney Award for students with special needs will be presented to recipients at the June 19 Awards Night ceremony at Storowton Carriage House in West Springfield.

Scholarships are offered not only to graduating high school seniors, but also to students already in college or those wishing to return to college. Scholarships of \$12,000 are distributed as \$3,000 annually and renewable each year until graduation. Fellowship awards of \$15,000 are distributed as \$7,500 annually and renewable for one additional year to students pursuing a

full-time graduate degree. Students must maintain at least a B average to renew.

Recipients are selected on a variety of criteria, including academic records, merit and financial need. Of great importance is a personal written account of why the student feels deserving of financial assistance. Applicants must submit their transcripts and, if applicable, college entrance exam scores or graduate degree specific tests, and three letters of recommendation.

Completed applications must be received either electronically or be mailed to The Horace Smith Fund, 16 Union Avenue, Suite 2K, Westfield, MA 01085 no later than Saturday, March 15. Applications are available at local high school guidance offices, college financial aid offices and on-line by visiting www.HoraceSmithFund.org or by calling 413-739-4222.

### COLLEGE NOTES

# Colleges and universities announce Chancellor’s, President’s, Dean’s lists

**CHANCELLORS’ LIST**  
**University of Massachusetts Lowell**  
Lowell  
Jacob Robbins of Huntington, senior mechanical engineering major

**PRESIDENT’S LIST**  
**Champlain College**  
Burlington, Vermont  
Owen Conner of Westhampton

**Goodwin University**  
East Hartford, Connecticut  
Lisa Neveu of Blandford

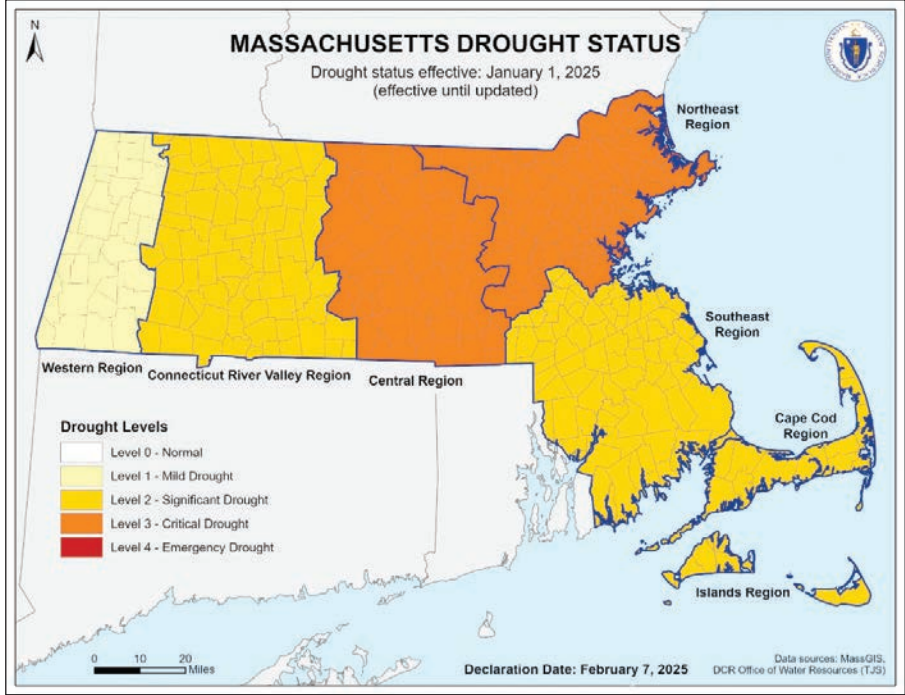
**DEAN’S LIST**  
**Goodwin University**  
East Hartford, Connecticut  
Brook Russo of Westfield  
Ryan Taylor of Westfield

**Salve Regina University**  
Newport, Rhode Island  
Camille Bruno of Westfield  
Daniella Ferreira of Westfield  
Delaney Marek of Westhampton  
Kasimir Supinski of Cummington  
Moira Tirrell of Westfield



## BLANDFORD

STATE STILL REMAINS IN DROUGHT CONDITION



The update on drought status indicates Blandford and all of Hampden County is still a significant drought condition. A Feb. 7 release from the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs indicates the area still has its previous drought status. The Blandford Water Department Superintendent Gordon Avery said there are no restrictions in place for water users at this time.

*Courtesy map from Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs*

# Town to purchase hybrid van for Council on Aging

By Mary Kronholm  
Correspondent

BLANDFORD – There was standing room only at the Feb. 10 Select Board meeting.

Deb Lundgren addressed the board regarding the upcoming purchase of a Council on Aging vehicle. She expressed a preference for an all-electric vehicle, but the Board, hearing from the Council on Aging that the need for a vehicle is urgent, decided to move forward with the purchase of a hybrid van.

### Climate Change Leader Community

Lundgren also brought to the board the proposal that the town move towards becoming a Climate Change Leader Community. Certification as a Climate Leader Community would provide access to grant funding to the town for the study, design, construction and implementing energy efficient activities, including but not limited to energy efficiency measures and projects, according to the state website.

This designation would also give the town the opportunity to obtain energy management services, adopt energy efficiency possibilities and site possibilities for construction of renewable energy generating activities on town property. Ferrera said, “They want to see more energy efficient strides made in town.”

Further, in order to be a Climate

Leader Community, there must be a group, a Sustainability Committee that would advise the town proactively on energy efficiencies. If anyone is interested in participating in such a local group, Select Board member Theodore Cousineau suggested they contact the Town Administrator or the Select Board. This committee formation will meet one of the six criteria for the town to become a Climate Leader Community.

First and foremost, the town must be, and is, a Green Community in good standing. Other criteria include Be a Green Community in good standing, commit to eliminate on-site fossil fuel use by 2050, create a municipal decarbonization roadmap, adopt a zero-emission vehicle first policy and adopt a specialized opt-in building code.

### Other business

In other business, the board signed an interim loan agreement with the Massachusetts Clean Water Trust for the Water Department and another contract with Wright-Pierce Engineering for services for the water storage tank project on North Street. This project is partially funded by One Stop for Growth, a state funded reimbursement grant of \$350,000.

The board hired Jasmine Ortega to the open position of Water Department Assistant at \$19 an hour for 14 to 16 hours a week, according to Water Department Superintendent Gordon Avery.

## LIBRARY

how the Center also empowers libraries and library patrons with a statewide impact. The Center celebrates its 25th year this year and continues to collaborate with libraries for programming.

State Sen. John Velis and State Rep. Kelly Pease spoke about their own library experiences and advocacy for libraries. West Springfield Library Director Eileen Chapman was the emcee for the event, introducing speakers and thanking the library staff for their work in accomplishing a successful event.



State Senator  
John Velis



Tim Cherubini

from page 1

## HOUSATONIC

# Berkshire Pulse receives grants from Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation and local cultural councils

HOUSATONIC – Berkshire Pulse, South County’s dynamic dance and performing arts education center located in downtown Housatonic, announces recent grants awarded from the Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation and several Local Cultural Councils, a re-granting program of the Massachusetts Cultural Council in support of its Winter and Spring 2025 School and Community Programs. Berkshire Pulse’s School programming aims to engage a diverse range of students, enriching their school experience both during and after the school day.

“We believe everyone should have the

opportunity to create and express themselves. Thanks to generous financial support, we can expand our programs and reach communities that might not otherwise have access to these opportunities,” says In-School and Community Program Manager Veronica Bone, “With schools eager to engage students and people craving connection and community, the demand for our programs has grown significantly in recent years. This spring alone, we are partnering with 11 schools and 7 community organizations.”

“Our grant partnerships are the lifeblood of Berkshire Pulse, guaranteeing our ability to bring creative arts classes to thousands of

children in Berkshire County,” says Grants Manager Benjamin Court, “We are immensely grateful to work with BTCF, MCC and all local cultural councils, who have been steadfast Pulse partners for many years.”

Berkshire Pulse is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to building and strengthening community life through diverse and accessible programming in performing, movement and creative arts. By promoting participation in these educational and health-sustaining activities, we enrich the lives of families and individuals of all ages throughout the region. People may visit <https://berkshirepulse.org/> for more information.

## CHESTER

# Water supply discussion on Feb. 24

CHESTER – Discussion of the Drinking Water Grant for the region, administered by Pioneer Valley Planning Commission’s chief environmental planner Patty Gamberini, will take place at the Chester Town Hall, 15 Middlefield Road, Monday, Feb. 24 at 10 a.m.

Staff from PVPC, the Kestral and Hilltown Land Trusts and the Boutt Geology Lab at UMass Amherst will

engage in this two hour conversation to hear concerns on specific drinking water challenges to water source protection including forestry, climate, land use and unprotected lands, followed by a strategy session. This opportunity comes at a critical point in the 113 year history of the Chester Water District. Education gleaned from this collaboration will help look over the horizon to create their water future.

## GOSHEN

# Town Clerk lists census and dog license information

GOSHEN – Town Clerk Kristen Estelle reminds residents to return the 2025 Annual Street Listings that were mailed to each household in early January.

Residents that did not receive one can find printable blank copies on the Town Clerk webpage at [www.goshen-ma.us/annual-street-listing/](http://www.goshen-ma.us/annual-street-listing/) or email the town clerk at [clerk@goshen-ma.us](mailto:clerk@goshen-ma.us) to receive another. They should fill out information for everyone who lives in their house, sign and return to Goshen Town Clerk, 40 Main St., Goshen, MA 01032. Responding to the street listing will keep people on the active voting list if they are registered to vote.

The Town Clerk announces dog owners should register their dog(s) before licenses expire Monday, March 31. Neutered and spayed dog licenses cost \$5 each to register;

intact dogs are \$10. Dog licensing forms were mailed with the street listings. They can also be found by visiting

[www.goshen-ma.us/dog-licenses/](http://www.goshen-ma.us/dog-licenses/).

To register dog(s), people can: stop by during Town Clerk office hours on Mondays from 8 a.m.-2 p.m. and 6-8 p.m. They should bring cash or check, valid rabies certificate and spaying/neutering certificate, or mail the dog license form, fee(s) and certificate(s) along with a stamped self-addressed envelope for the return of the license(s) and tag(s) to: Goshen Town Clerk, 40 Main St., Goshen, MA 01032. They may also drop the paperwork off in the town clerk drop box, located to the left of the door to the town offices.

People may email Town Clerk Kristen Estelle at [clerk@goshen-ma.us](mailto:clerk@goshen-ma.us) or call 413-268-8236, extension 107 with any questions.

## PITTSFIELD

# BEAT hosts speaker on two rare butterfly species set for March 12

PITTSFIELD – Jessica Duffy will speak on “A Tale of Two Butterflies: Two Rare Pierid Butterflies of the Berkshires and Combined Threats” at the March Berkshire Green Drinks event on Wednesday, March 12 at 6 p.m.

This free hybrid event will take place online via Zoom and in person at Hot Plate Brewing Co., 1 School St. The in-person social gathering will begin around 5:15 p.m.; the presentation and Zoom meeting will start at 6 p.m.

Duffy will discuss two rare butterfly species found in the Berkshires: the Veined White (*Pieris napi oleracea*) and the West Virginia White (*Pieris virginianensis*). She will review the natural history of the butterflies, discussing the plants they rely on and the pressures the Veined White and West Virginia White butterflies face due to two species of parasitoid wasps that were initially released to help combat the invasive Cabbage Butterfly (*Pieris rapae*).

Additionally, Duffy will talk about the threat that invasive garlic mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*) poses to the West Virginia White population by crowding out its native spring host plant and potentially acting as an “egg sink.”

In early spring 2025, Berkshire Environmental Action Team will ask for volunteers to join Jessica Duffy in surveying the study area for these butterflies. The environmental nonprofit will also start organizing volunteer garlic mustard pulls in the study area. This volunteer work will aid Duffy’s research on these two rare butterfly species by monitoring whether butterfly populations change from year to year as they bring down the garlic mustard concentrations from spring pulling.

People may learn more and RSVP by visiting <https://tinyurl.com/March2025-Berks-Green-Drinks>.

Jessica Duffy is currently working as a medical coder in the Berkshires. She has her Master’s degree in Entomology from UMass-Amherst, where her thesis focused on the Veined White and the West Virginia White butterflies-specifically on threats they face from the two parasitoids mentioned above. After graduating, Jessica worked with the U.S. Forest Service in Mississippi (The Southern Hardwoods Lab in Stoneville) before working as an Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (USDA) Officer at Logan Airport in Boston. She lived in Boston for about 20 years before the pandemic hit, which created a window of opportunity that brought Jessica and her family to the Berkshires.

Berkshire Green Drinks is an informal gathering on the second Wednesday of the month that is free and open to everyone with any environmental interest. A guest speaker talks about an environmentally related topic for approximately 30 minutes beginning at 6 p.m.; the presentation is followed by a discussion and question and answer.. The drinks aren’t green, but the conversations are. Everyone is welcome and encouraged to join and bring along questions.

Berkshire Green Drinks is sponsored and organized by the Berkshire Environmental Action Team. This month’s Berkshire Green Drinks event is co-sponsored by Hot Plate Brewing Co. For more information regarding Berkshire Green Drinks, people may email Chelsey Simmons at [chelsey@thebeatnews.org](mailto:chelsey@thebeatnews.org) or call 413-464-9402.



Veined White (*Pieris napi oleracea*)



West Virginia White (*Pieris virginianensis*)



## OTIS

# Election information announced

OTIS – Town Clerk Lyn O’Brien reminds voters the Caucus takes place Tuesday, April 15; the Annual Town Meeting on Tuesday, May 20 and the Town Election on Tuesday, May 27.

Both the caucus request form and the nomination papers are available now from the Town Clerk. Candidates can run at the Caucus and fill out nomination papers or they can do one or the other. Candidates should inquire with the Town Clerk they you are interested in running by either emailing [clerk@townofotisma.com](mailto:clerk@townofotisma.com) or 413-269-0100, extension 112. The deadline is Tuesday, April 8 at 5 p.m.

# Clickers to be used at next meeting

OTIS –The town has purchased town meeting clickers and they will be used at the next annual or special town meeting.

The clickers were purchased primarily to boost voter participation. Many voters do not want to raise their hand to vote on articles thinking they are being judged by their neighbors and friends. Some business owners don’t come to Town Meetings because they feel raising their hand publicly to vote may affect their business. The clicker system provides anonymous voting with the press of a yes or no button.

There was a great deal of discussion and several meetings with the Select Board before purchasing the clickers. Security was a huge concern. Meridia, the company where the clickers were purchased, is not connected to the internet. The system only works in close-range reception using Proprietary RF Communication Protocol.

The clickers can be used indoors and outdoors. Chase Chapdelaine has volunteered to run the clicker system during the meetings. Both Chapdelaine and Town ClerkLyn O’Brien had training and tested

The offices up for 2025 are as follows: one Assessor for three years, one Cemetery Commissioner for three years, one Finance Board Member for two years, one Finance Board Member for three years, one Library Trustee for three years, one moderator for one year, two Planning Board Members for five year terms, one School Committee Member for three years, one Select person for three years, one Tree warden for one year and one Town Clerk for three years.

The Town Clerk reminds residents to return their 2025 street listing form. Dog license renewal forms are also available.

tested the clickers throughout the building.

Voters will be a clicker and a colored card at Town Meeting. At the beginning of the meeting, a fun test question will be presented and everyone will have the chance to try their clicker. The voting will be open for a set amount of time so everyone has a chance to vote.

During this voting time if a voter accidentally hits a wrong button on the clicker or want to change his or her vote, they can. There is a little display screen on the clicker to confirm how they voted. The results of the vote will display once the voting has closed. The clickers will also expedite majority warrant articles and those more complicated warrant articles that require a 2/3rd or 4/5th vote. They will give more transparency and accountability.

The town of New Marlborough and Lee currently use the clickers and like them. Around 80 other towns throughout the state use electronic voting at meetings. A representative from the company will be at the first meeting to make sure everything goes smoothly.

## GREAT BARRINGTON

# Dr. John Lloyd named W.E.B. Du Bois Center Interim Director

GREAT BARRINGTON – The W.E.B. Du Bois Center for Freedom and Democracy announces the appointment of Dr. John D. Lloyd as its Interim Director.

A seasoned executive with over two decades of leadership experience in the nonprofit sector, Dr. Lloyd brings a wealth of expertise in organizational strategy, financial management, and community engagement to this role. As Interim Director, Dr. Lloyd will oversee the Center’s strategic initiatives, strengthen partnerships and continue to advance the legacy of W.E.B. Du Bois by promoting scholarship, civic engagement and social justice advocacy.

Dr. Lloyd is the principal of Agile Consulting Group, a management consulting practice specializing in nonprofit strategy, financial management, board development and executive transition services. Through his extensive career, he has successfully guided numerous organizations through periods of transformation, stabilizing leadership teams and fostering sustainable growth.

His interim leadership roles at organizations such as Community Healing Network, InReach and Domestic Violence Ended have showcased his ability to enhance operational efficiency and advance mission-driven objectives. His leadership approach is deeply rooted in fostering collaboration, driving mission-driven impact, and enhancing operational efficiency to support long-term organizational success.

A Massachusetts native, Dr. Lloyd holds a Doctorate in Organizational Learning and Development from the University of Pennsylvania, a Masters in Business



Dr. John Lloyd

Administration from Bentley University and a Bachelor of Science from Plymouth State University. A dedicated educator, Dr. Lloyd also serves as an adjunct faculty member at Bentley University, where he teaches strategic management and human dynamics in organizations. His commitment to education and leadership development is further reflected in his extensive experience in training and facilitation for nonprofit boards and executives.

“We are thrilled to welcome Dr. John Lloyd as interim Executive Director for the W.E.B. du Bois Center for Freedom & Democracy, here to lead the way as we take a deep dive into our organization and plan for the future,” shared John Speer, President of the Board of the W. E. B. Du Bois Center for Freedom and Democracy. “John has a stellar reputation for effective leadership and we know that he is the right choice for this next phase of growth. We’re looking forward to the journey ahead.”

For more information about the W.E.B. Du Bois Center for Freedom & Democracy and its offerings, people may visit <https://www.duboisfreedomcenter.org/>.

The mission of the W.E.B. Du Bois Center for Freedom and Democracy is to educate the public about the life and legacy of civil rights pioneer W.E.B. Du Bois and the rich African American heritage of the Berkshires. Located at the former Clinton A.M.E. Zion Church in Great Barrington, where he was born and raised, this vibrant center of Black thought and remembrance constitutes the first museum and living memorial in North America dedicated to Du Bois’ life and legacy.

## NORTHAMPTON

# Cardiologist James Arcoleo, DO offers heart healthy actions

NORTHAMPTON – The heart is the hardest working muscle in the body, beating 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year.

According to the American Heart Association, the average heart beats 100,000 times a day, sending around 2,000 gallons of blood through the body. It does all this work automatically, silently and in the background.

The heart may be strong and powerful, but like any part of the body, things can sometimes go wrong. Heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States for both men and women.

Said Cardiologist James Arcoleo, DO, of Hampshire Cardiovascular Associates and Cooley Dickinson Hospital, genetics and factors beyond one’s control can play a role and environmental and lifestyle factors are also important. Arcoleo discusses how to keep the

heart healthy through lifestyle choices as well as nutrition, exercise and sleep tips.

Coronary artery disease is one of the most common heart conditions, affecting 20 million Americans, according to the American College of Cardiology. It happens when plaque, made up of cholesterol and other substances, builds up in the coronary arteries.

This buildup can cause heart attacks. The good news is that healthy lifestyle habits can help ward off coronary artery disease. “Heart disease is preventable,” said Dr. Arcoleo. “There are important steps all of us should take to help prevent heart disease from developing.”

Cholesterol plays an important role in the body, helping to send chemical signals and move molecules in the blood stream. The liver produces cholesterol using building blocks from our diet. Too much, however, can contribute to clogging the arteries. To reduce cholesterol levels, Arcoleo recommends the following: Consume foods that help lower cholesterol, including healthier oils (i.e. olive oil instead of butter), low-fat dairy, lean proteins, whole grains, fruits, and vegetables. Avoid the worst foods for high cholesterol: red meat, full-fat dairy, baked goods and sweets and fried food. Balance your plate. One-quarter should be lean protein (plant-based, fish or skinless poultry), half with non-starchy vegetables, and the rest whole grains and healthy fats. Limit your portions; use smaller plates. Listen to your body; don’t overeat or snack mindlessly. Drink plenty of water. It’s especially important for athletes and other active adults to stay hydrated, since they lose water through sweating.

A life-long advocate of exercise, Arcoleo starts each day with a 40-50-minute run on a treadmill. He said some of the benefits of exercise include: lessening inflammation in blood vessels and throughout the body, lowering cholesterol, reducing blood pressure, losing or maintaining body weight and combating stress, depression and anxiety

Beyond diet and exercise, there are other health and lifestyle factors that can affect the risk of heart disease. Arcoleo offers other lifestyle tips to help reduce the risk of heart problems:limit alcohol use, quit smoking and get adequate sleep.

He also recommends being proactive about your heart health. Schedule an annual physical with a primary care provider, who can suggest preventative health screenings and check for signs you need to see a cardiologist. Be aware of family health history. Manage any chronic conditions, such as diabetes or kidney disease, which can affect heart health.

## BECKET

# Athenaeum lists upcoming events

BECKET – The Becket Athenaeum, 3367 Main St., which serves Becket and Washington, will provide a seed library with over 100 varieties of free vegetable and flower seeds.

There is a new program created by and for teens at the athenaeum on Thursdays, Feb. 27 and March 13 from 5:30-7 p.m. Local teens will have an evening of crafting and connection with pizza for dinner. They may either bring their project or enjoy a library provided craft. This program is supported by a grant from the Becket and Washington Cultural Councils, which are supported by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency.

# Chris Merenda presents final songwriting workshop Feb. 22

BECKET – The Becket Arts Center, 7 Brooker Hill Road, will hold the last session in its three-part songwriting workshop with Chris Merenda on Saturday, Feb. 22 from 1-4 p.m.

Merenda is an instrumentalist and lead singer, who has performed with Arlo Guthrie and the Whiskey Treaty Roadshow among other groups. Budding artists as well as seasoned professionals will benefit from this collaborative musical experience. All that’s needed is an instrument, pencil and paper.

Workshop participants will have the opportunity to join Merenda in his public concert at the Becket Arts Center that evening, Feb. 22 from 7-9 p.m. Cost is \$50 for the workshop. Members pay from \$25 to \$45. Tickets for the concert: \$20; \$10 for members. For information and to register, people may visit [becketartscenter.org](http://becketartscenter.org).



Chris Merenda

## WORTHINGTON

### WORTHINGTON SENIORS ENJOY VALENTINE’S CELEBRATION



The Worthington Council on Aging’s Valentine’s Potluck was held Monday, Feb. 10. It was a wonderful way to celebrate Valentine’s Day with great food, friends and neighbors. The highlight of the luncheon was the R.H. Conwell Elementary students handing out heartwarming Valentine cards to all and the six students, who recited poems. Cards were also distributed to the Maples Senior Housing residents. Shown are Pat Kennedy, Jay Dreschnack and Deb Dreschnack.

Courtesy photo by Ed Pelletier

# COA to hold St. Patrick’s luncheon

WORTHINGTON – The Worthington Council on Aging invites Worthington seniors 60 and over to a St. Patrick’s corned beef and cabbage luncheon catered by the Chesterfield General Store/Cafe on Monday, March 10 at noon in Town Hall.

The Rolling Scones will delight you with lively Irish music. This luncheon is by

reservation only by calling 413-238-1999. Deadline to sign up is Friday, Feb. 28. Seating is limited.

Worthington Fire Department representatives, Janine Modestow and Nancy Brown, will describe how to get free property markers. This initiative is a joint effort of the COA, Fire Department and town volunteers.



# CHESTERFIELD

## Town Clerk announces election information

CHESTERFIELD – Nomination papers are now available for the Monday, May 5 annual election.

Elected positions to be on the ballot are listed below, showing the current office holder. All are for three year terms unless notified otherwise.

Positions are: Select Board, current holder Donald Willard III; Assessor, current holder Edward Severance; Board of Health, current holder Kirke Henshaw; Library Trustee, current holder Amy Gavalis; Planning Board, current holder Frederick Drake; Planning Board, current holder Sarah Hamilton; School Committee Chesterfield/Goshen, vacant; Hampshire Regional School Committee, current holder Laura Somes; Constable, current holder Jeffrie Young and Tree Warden for one

year, Christopher Ryan appointed until this election.

For those Chesterfield residents, who are not registered to vote, they may visit the town offices or may register online by visiting to [www.sec.state.ma.us/OVR/](http://www.sec.state.ma.us/OVR/). They must register by April 25 This also will register you to vote in the Annual Town Meeting, which will be on May 12.

The election date is May 5. To have their name appear on the election ballot, candidates must pick up nomination papers from the clerk’s office and collect at least 25 signatures from registered voters from Chesterfield.

Nomination papers are available now and need to be returned to the Town Clerk by on Monday, March 17 by 5 p.m. Any reg-

istered voter of Chesterfield may run for any elected position on the ballot. People should either email [townclerk@townofchesterfieldma.com](mailto:townclerk@townofchesterfieldma.com) or call 413-296-4741 the Town Clerk to make an appointment to get their nomination papers or to register to vote.

The annual town street listing has been mailed to each household and needs to be returned to the clerk’s office. People, who did not receive a street listing form, should email the clerk’s office at [townclerk@townofchesterfieldma.com](mailto:townclerk@townofchesterfieldma.com) or call 413-296-4741.

Dog licenses are also due for the current year. There will be a rabies clinic on Saturday, April 5 from 10 a.m.-noon at the Fire House on North Road for dogs and cats Residents from other towns are welcome.

## CDC holds program on senior circuit breaker tax credit

CHESTERFIELD – Denise Leduc, retired Finance Director for the Community Development Corporation will present an in person discussion on senior circuit breaker tax credit on Thursday, Feb. 20 from 3-4:30 p.m. at the Hilltown Community Development Corporation, conference room, 387 Main Road.

Seniors over the age of 65 can get a senior circuit breaker tax credit on their tax return in Massachusetts even if they do not need to file a Massachusetts tax return.

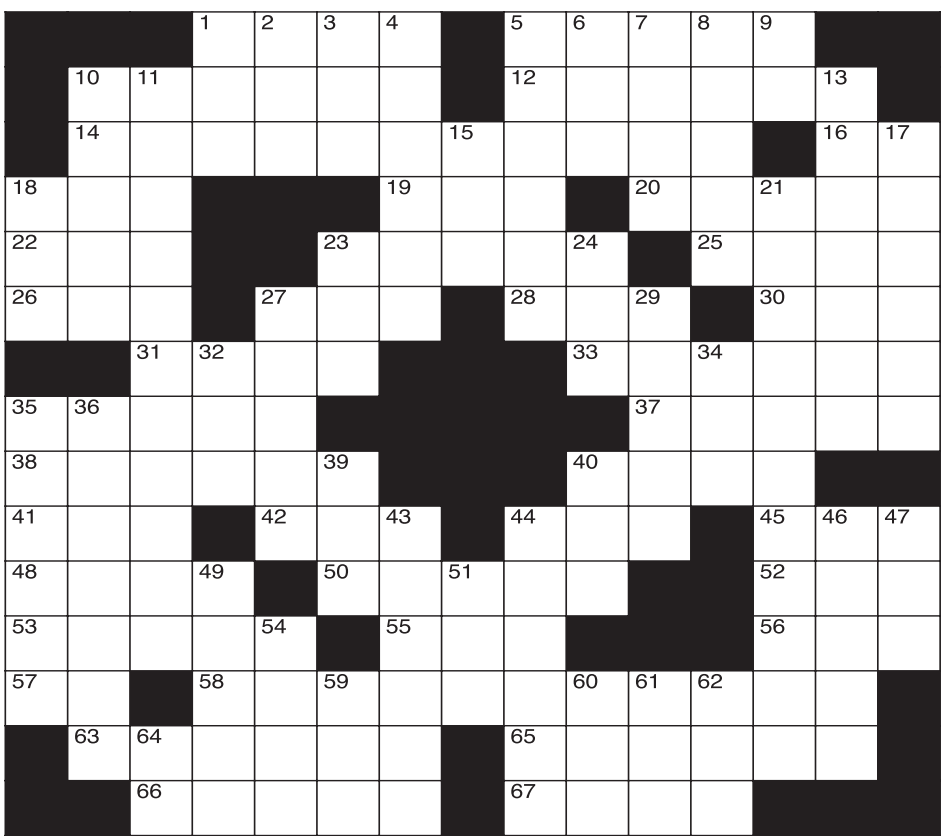
File and include Schedule CB to receive up to the maximum of \$2,730 for 2024. This is a refundable credit, which means even if a person does not owe Massachusetts taxes they can get this money sent to them. To be considered, 2024 total income for a single cannot exceed \$72,000 and head of household \$91,000 and \$109,000 for married filing a joint return.

More information is available by visiting [Mass.gov](http://Mass.gov) on Senior Circuit Breaker Tax Credit. For questions, people may call Joan Griswold at 413-296-4536, extension 102.



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### CLUES ACROSS

1. Tropical Asian plant
5. Yankees’ slugger Judge
10. Helps to preserve food
12. Plant disease
14. One who predicts
16. Equally
18. Burundian franc
19. Pouch
20. Arizona city
22. Surround
23. Hard, heavy timber
25. Witnessed
26. They \_\_\_\_\_
27. French river
28. A way to drink
30. Small constellation
31. Peruse a written work
33. Type of hound
35. Plant of the goosefoot family

### CLUES DOWN

37. Evade or escape
38. A way to confine
40. Volcanic crater
41. Weekday
42. Women’s service organization (abbr.)
44. Local area network
45. Sensory receptor
48. Posted
50. Tibetan pastry
52. Licensed for Wall Street
53. Very willing
55. Golf score
56. Consume
57. Touchdown
58. Tends to remind
63. In a way, smoothed
65. Poke holes in the ground
66. Herbaceous plants
67. Taiwanese river

### CLUES DOWN

1. Body art
2. Boxing’s GOAT
3. Film for posterity (abbr.)
4. Prayer
5. Calculating machine
6. Keyboard key
7. Outburst
8. Man-eating giants
9. New Hampshire
10. Type of sword
11. Counting
13. Pants style
15. Political action committee
17. U.S. government legislative branch
18. Civil Rights Act component
21. Contractors take one
23. Spanish soldier
24. A person’s brother or sister

27. Expressed pleasure
29. Song of praise
32. Shock treatment
34. Patti Hearst’s captors
35. Counteract
36. Goes over again
39. Popular Dodge truck
40. Male adult
43. A part of a river where the current is very fast
44. Rope used to lasso
46. Become less intense
47. Subway rodent
49. Lead alloy
51. Japanese honorific title
54. Advise someone
59. Famous NYC museum
60. Ocean
61. Cathode-ray tube
62. Cologne
64. It starts with these two

## THIS WEEK’S HOROSCOPES

### ARIES

Mar 21/Apr 20

Aries, impulsiveness may cause friction with loved ones this week, so avoid rushing into decisions. Keep an open mind when others come to you with their thoughts.

### CANCER

Jun 22/Jul 22

Much of your to-do list this week will focus on your home life. Take a break from the hustle and spend time bringing order and balance to spaces in your home.

### LIBRA

Sept 23/Oct 23

Sometimes you have to give yourself a pat on the back when others are not offering the feedback you need, Libra. You are doing a great job and learning along the way.

### CAPRICORN

Dec 22/Jan 20

You are doing quite well in your professional life right now, Capricorn. But in terms of home life, there are definitely some areas that can use improvement. Focus on those things.

### TAURUS

Apr 21/May 21

Taurus, expect some clarity regarding a recent financial decision this week. You’ll get the answers you need about budgeting and other investments you’ve been mulling over.

### LEO

Jul 23/Aug 23

Your words carry a lot of weight right now, Leo. Be very careful about the opinions you offer and the stories you share. By the weekend you may be called upon for some advice.

### SCORPIO

Oct 24/Nov 22

You often keep your cards close to the vest, Scorpio. Others may be surprised to learn a project you have been working on for some time has come to fruition.

### AQUARIUS

Jan 21/Feb 18

Aquarius, you could be feeling a strong urge to declutter personal spaces, such as the garage, closets or even your home office. Find the time to start sorting through belongings.

### GEMINI

May 22/Jun 21

This week you may be tempted to overcommit to social endeavors, Gemini. Keep your boundaries in check, especially if you are having difficulty telling other people, “no.”

### VIRGO

Aug 24/Sept 22

Virgo, if you have been thinking about making some sweeping financial decisions, now is the time to take action. Putting things off for another day can wreck long-term plans.

### SAGITTARIUS

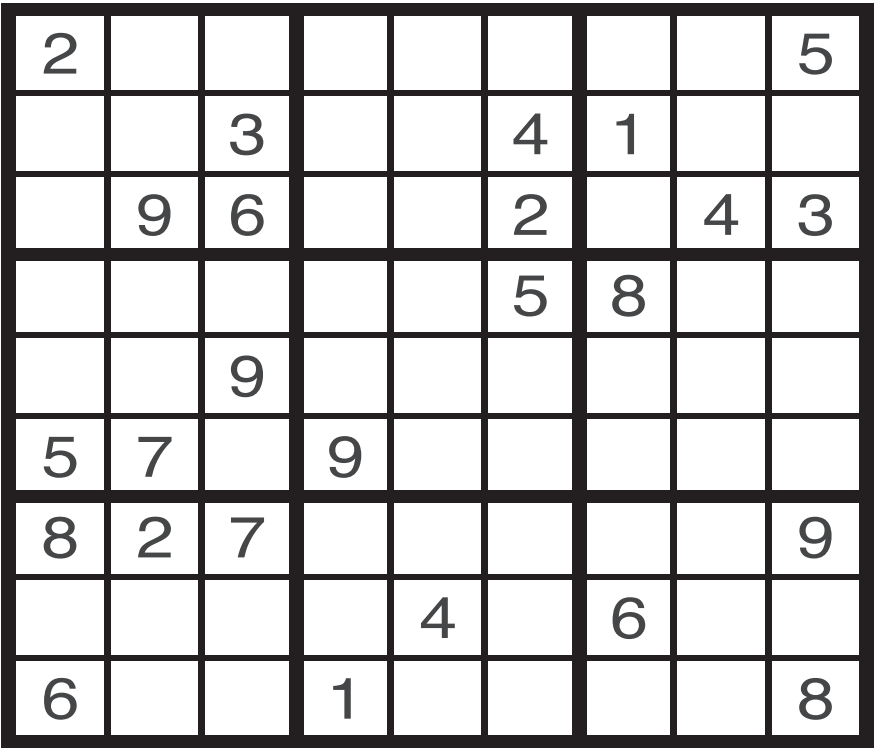
Nov 23/Dec 21

Personal ambitions are at the forefront of your mind, Sagittarius. However, you may be placing too much importance on financial matters rather than the other rewards from hard work.

### PISCES

Feb 19/Mar 20

All it may take is a simple conversation to clear up some persistent misconceptions, Pisces. Figure out when to schedule that talk and afterwards you will feel better.



## SUDOKU

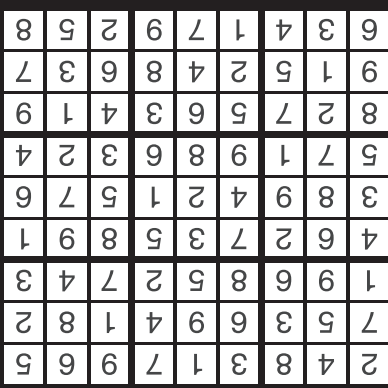
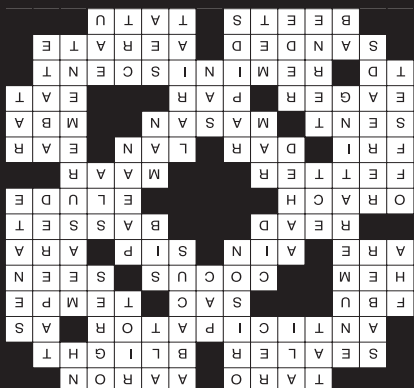
### Here’s How It Works:

Sudoku puzzles are formatted as a 9x9 grid, broken down into nine 3x3 boxes. To solve a sudoku, the numbers 1 through 9 must fill each row, column and box. Each number can appear only once in each row, column and box. You can figure out the order in which the numbers will appear by using the numeric clues already provided in the boxes. The more numbers you name, the easier it gets to solve the puzzle!

### Fun By The Numbers

Like puzzles? Then you’ll love sudoku. This mind-bending puzzle will have you hooked from the moment you square off, so sharpen your pencil and put your sudoku savvy to the test!

## answers



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REGION

Freedom Credit Union collecting donations for shelter

SPRINGFIELD – During February, Freedom Credit Union is inviting the community to donate money at any of its branches throughout western Massachusetts to help make sure shelter animals are well taken care of as they wait for their forever families.

The money collected goes to the Foundation for TJO Animals and the Franklin County Regional Dog Shelter. “We all love our pets, and it’s heartbreaking to know some animals haven’t always gotten the care they deserve,” said Freedom Credit Union President Glenn Welch. “These shelters give adoptable pets a second chance. We’re proud

to support that mission.”

Every month, Freedom Credit Union collects donations for a different charity. Money collected through the end of February will support these two shelter organizations and the work they do for the health and welfare of all animals including stray, lost and unwanted pets.

The Foundation for TJO covers costs for sick and injured animals that need extra help with medical treatments and rehabilitation at the Thomas J. O’Connor Animal Control and Adoption Center. The funding pays for a veterinarian five days a week, two part-time

veterinary technicians providing general help in the shelter, as well as medical and dental care for the animals.

The mission of the Franklin County Regional Dog Shelter is to protect and improve the lives of stray, lost and unwanted dogs by offering a safe, welcoming facility, providing care and enrichment and finding a home best suited for each animal. Donations support extra veterinary care and services to get dogs back on their feet and into loving homes.

“When animals need expensive medical treatments, they’re less likely to be adopted,”

said Welch. “We hope our support gives the pets at these shelters the opportunity for a bright future.”

Originally chartered in 1922 as the Western Massachusetts Telephone Workers Credit Union and renamed in 2004, Freedom Credit Union is a nine-branch, full-service financial institution. Freedom Credit Union has conveniently located Massachusetts branches in Chicopee, Feeding Hills, Greenfield, Ludlow, Northampton, Turners Falls, West Springfield and two in Springfield, as well as a Loan Production Office in Enfield, Connecticut.

National Eating Disorders Week begins Feb. 24

AMHERST – As Eating Disorders continue to rise, Happy Valley Nutrition, Western Massachusetts only specialized eating disorder group practice of registered dietitians, is leading efforts to raise awareness during National Eating Disorders Awareness Week, which begins on Feb. 24.

With eight registered dietitians specializing in eating disorders, disordered eating and body image concerns, Happy Valley Nutrition serves as the region’s primary resource for specialized nutrition counseling. The practice offers both in-person services at their Amherst location and telehealth appointments throughout Massachusetts and beyond.

“Eating disorders are serious conditions that can be life-threatening,” says Amanda Mittman, Registered Dietitian and owner at Happy Valley Nutrition. “In our practice, we see that nobody is immune to eating disorders or disordered eating. From children to older adults, we see a wide range of people who are struggling with their relationship to food and

their body.”

Eating Disorders Awareness Week was established in the 1980s to bring attention to the prevalence of eating disorders, reduce stigma, and provide education on prevention and treatment.

Happy Valley Nutrition distinguishes itself through its client-focused approach and commitment to accessible care. The practice accepts most major insurance plans, often resulting in no out-of-pocket costs for nutrition counseling services. They also offer sliding scale options.

While the practice works with all types of eating disorders, their registered dietitians also have other specialties, such as diabetes and blood sugar management, gastrointestinal conditions and menopause.

For more information about eating disorder treatment options or to schedule a consultation, people may call Happy Valley Nutrition at 413-437-0278 or visit [www.happyvalleynutrition.com](http://www.happyvalleynutrition.com).

EACC supports two new vacant storefront projects

BOSTON –The Massachusetts Economic Assistance Coordinating Council approved two projects for participation in the Economic Development Incentive Program, a program that seeks to create new jobs and help businesses grow by offering credits to lower taxes in exchange for job creation.

The EACC has approved two new Vacant Storefront Projects in Western Massachusetts that will receive EDIP refundable tax credits of \$10,000 each. The awardees are LaBonte and Banas LLC D/B/A Toasted in Northampton and Comfort Bagel in Westfield.

The awardees, CMZ USA LLC in Brockton and Nye Lubricants Co. Inc. in Taunton, are both manufacturers expanding in Gateway Cities. They will receive a total of \$1,890,000 in state tax credits for their projects that are expected to create 125 net new jobs, retain 40 jobs statewide, and leverage approximately \$14.5 million in private investment. Both of this round’s applicants are manufacturers with projects in Gateway Cities.

“This round of awards through the Economic Assistance Coordinating Council

will support small businesses that bring economic energy to our communities and manufacturers seeking to expand their footprint in Massachusetts,” said Economic Development Secretary Yvonne Hao. “We are proud to offer this vital economic development tool that helps make our state the best place for businesses to launch, grow and succeed.”

LaBonte and Banas LLC doing business as Toasted in Northampton is a breakfast and lunch restaurant featuring a full café bar with barista drinks. The EACC awarded Toasted \$10,000 in EDIP state tax credits and the business also received a \$10,000 municipal grant from the city of Northampton.

Comfort Bagel in Westfield has a shop in Holyoke and is opening a second, larger location in Westfield with its own dedicated kitchen. The EACC awarded Comfort Bagel \$10,000 in EDIP state tax credits and the city of Westfield provided the business with \$14,265 in funds through Community Development Block Grant, a federal program that supports community development activities to build stronger and more resilient communities.

Marjorie Trusted to speak at Clark

WILLIAMSTOWN – On Tuesday, March 4, the Clark Art Institute’s Research and Academic Program presents a talk by Marjorie (Holly) Trusted of the University of Glasgow, Scotland / Center for Spain in America Fellow titled “Who Was Luisa Roldán?”

This free event takes place at the Clark Art Institute, 225 South St., in the Manton Research Center auditorium at 5:30 p.m. In recent years, the extraordinary wood and terracotta sculptures of Luisa Roldán (1652-1706) have attracted much attention; a number have been acquired by major museums in the United States. Her training and stylistic development in Seville and Cádiz, as well as her later activity at the court in Madrid,

reveal a web of interconnections.

She nevertheless remains an enigmatic figure; her statues and groups arguably affected the evolution of sculpture in baroque Spain, yet many details of her life are still unknown. As a woman sculptor, she was clearly exceptional. This lecture discusses her work, as well as the challenges of studying such an artist, many of whose works are still in enclosed convents in Spain.

Accessible seats available; for information, people may call 413-458-0524. A 5 p.m. reception in the Manton Research Center reading room precedes the event. For more information, people may visit [clarkart.edu/events](http://clarkart.edu/events). Admission to the Clark is free January through March 2025.

Clark hosts small town film series

WILLIAMSTOWN – On Thursday, March 6, the Clark Art Institute, 225 South St., kicks off its new Small Town film series with a free screening of “The Magnificent Ambersons” (1942) at 6 p.m. in the Manton Research Center auditorium.

Spanning the turn of the nineteenth century into the twentieth, Orson Welles’ “The Magnificent Ambersons” follows the declining fortunes of a wealthy family through its spoiled young heir, George (Tim Holt). This twisting family saga is propelled by nostalgia, jealousy and disappointed hopes. As the

Ambersons fall, the small town they were once the talk of begins to change too, absorbing the shifts of the new century. Adapted from Booth Tarkington’s 1918 Pulitzer Prize-winning novel of the same name, this was only Welles’ second feature film. (Run time: 1 hour, 28 minutes)

Accessible seats are available. People may call 413-458-0524 or visit [clarkart.edu/events](http://clarkart.edu/events) for more information. The next screening in this series is “George Washington” (2000) on Thursday, March 13 at 6 p.m. in the Manton Research Center auditorium.

FCU donates more than \$194K to charities

SPRINGFIELD – Throughout 2024, Freedom Credit Union contributed financial support to dozens of local charitable organizations throughout the four counties of western Massachusetts, donating more than \$194,000.

Additionally, Freedom employees recorded over 600 hours of volunteer time in 2024. “Our members and staff are passionate about supporting our community,” said Freedom Credit Union President Glenn Welch. “In 2024, we were proud to increase our donations over 2023. This year, we’re asking our members to deepen their engagement by nominating local charitable organizations for us to support.”

The 2024 total donated includes: more than \$130,000 through corporate giving initiatives, over \$11,000 in member and employee donations through Freedom’s Month of Giving campaigns and more than \$53,000

through local branch and department discretionary fund donations.

Supported organizations include: Alzheimer’s Association; Baystate Foundation – Rays of Hope; Baystate Health; Boys and Girls Clubs of Chicopee, Ludlow and Springfield; Children’s Advocacy Centers – Franklin County and Hampden County; Clinical Support Options (Friends of the Homeless)

Cooley Dickinson Hospital; Elms College; The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts; Gandara Center;

The Gray House; Greater Springfield and Pioneer Valley Habitat for Humanity; Greenfield Community College; Make a Wish; Miracle League of Western Massachusetts; National MS Society; New North Citizens Council; Ronald McDonald House; Shriner’s Hospital; Spirit of Springfield; Springfield Jazz Fest; Springfield

Museums; Springfield School Volunteers; Stanley Park of Westfield; Town of Ludlow 250th celebration; Town of West Springfield 250th celebration; Western New England College; Westover Galaxy Community Council and YMCAs in Springfield and Greenfield.

“Freedom was founded on a cooperative, not corporate, spirit,” noted Welch. “We know that the financial health of our members is entwined with the financial health of our community, so our charitable efforts remain ongoing. In January, we raised funds for the Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless and throughout the month of February, we are asking the community to support two Pioneer Valley animal shelters—the Foundation for TJO Animals and Franklin County Regional Dog Shelter—in their work for our furry and feathered friends. Stayed tuned for more opportunities all year long.”



Gas prices increase a penny

WESTWOOD – The price for a gallon of regular unleaded gasoline across the Northeast is holding steady thanks to falling oil prices and a 12th straight week of rising gasoline inventories.

Regional supplies of gasoline rose by 3.5 million barrels last week as cold, wintry weather kept a lid on gasoline demand, which isn’t unusual for this time of year. Supplies now stand at 700,000 barrels above the 5-year average and 2.2 million barrels higher than the comparable week last year.

The price of crude oil, which accounts for more than half the cost to produce gasoline, fell last week by about 3% after President Donald Trump’s 10% tariff on Canadian oil imports was delayed by 30 days.

While supply and demand helps keep prices in check in the snowy Northeast, early signs of spring are popping up in petroleum markets. Mere weeks remain before U.S. refiners begin to transition to production of summer-blended fuel, which is more expensive to produce than the gasoline served to

motorists in the winter. The higher costs are beginning to appear in futures markets, with prices for March delivery of gasoline climbing last week by about 2.5%.

“Petroleum markets are in the midst of the winter doldrums as Americans drive less than any other time of year,” said Mark Schieldrop, senior spokesperson for AAA Northeast. “Production has held steady all winter, which is keeping supplies up and prices down – for now.”

The average gas price in Massachusetts is up a penny from last week (\$3.02), averaging \$3.03 per gallon. Today’s price is three cents higher than a month ago (\$3.00) and 13 cents lower than this day last year (\$3.16). Massachusetts’ average gas price is ten cents lower than the national average.

AAA Northeast’s Feb. 10 survey of fuel prices found the current national average up four cents from last week (\$3.09), averaging \$3.13 gallon. Today’s national average price is seven cents higher than a month ago (\$3.06) and five cents lower than this day last

MassDOT announces bridge painting

BECKET/WEST STOCKBRIDGE – The Massachusetts Department of Transportation announces bridge painting operations on I-90 eastbound and westbound.

In Becket, bridge painting will occur on I-90 eastbound and westbound at mile marker 18.4, utilizing lane closures now through Friday, Feb. 21 from 7 a.m.-3:30 p.m. each day. In West Stockbridge, bridge painting will be conducted on I-90 westbound at mile marker 1.3, utilizing lane closures now through Friday, Feb. 21 from 7 a.m.-3:30 p.m. each day.

Drivers traveling through these areas should expect delays, reduce speed, and use caution. Appropriate signage and messaging will be in place to guide drivers through the work areas. All scheduled work is weather dependent and subject to change without notice.

For more information on traffic conditions, travelers are encouraged to dial 511 and select a route to hear real-time conditions or visit [www.mass511.com](http://www.mass511.com) to view live cameras, travel times, real-time traffic conditions, and project information before setting out on the road. Users can subscribe to receive text and email alerts for traffic conditions. Follow @MassDOT on X, formerly known as Twitter, to receive regular updates on road and traffic conditions.

Corrections policy

If you notice a factual error in our pages, please let us know, so that we can set the record straight. Email information to [countryjournal@turley.com](mailto:countryjournal@turley.com), or call us at 413-283-8393.

Corrections will be printed in the same section where the error originally occurred.



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This is a benefited position with a salary range of: \$52,000.00 - \$75,733.00.

The successful candidate shall be highly motivated, self-disciplined, possess a community policing philosophy and live in or near Worthington.

This position has the potential to be elevated to Police Chief.

Send letter of interest, resume and three references with relevant contact information to:  
**Worthington Police Department P.O. Box 247 Worthington, MA 01098**  
Or via email to:  
**sboard@worthington-ma.us**  
Subject line: Employment

Responses will be accepted and reviewed until the position is filled.

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**ALL REAL ESTATE** advertised herein is subject to the Federal Fair Housing Act, which makes it illegal to advertise "any preference, limitation, or discrimination because of race, color, religion, sex, handicap, familial status, or national origin, or intention to make any such preference, limitation, or discrimination." We will not knowingly accept any advertising for real estate which is in violation of the law. All persons are hereby informed that all dwellings advertised are available on an equal opportunity basis.

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# OBITUARIES

## Veronica “Ronnie” (Mihlek) Avery, 86

Veronica “Ronnie” (Mihlek) Avery, age 86, of Blandford, passed away peacefully on Feb. 9, 2025.

She was born on Oct. 26, 1938, the second of nine children to Manley Sr. and Bernice Mihlek. She was educated at Westfield Public Schools. She married Melvin Avery of Chester Hill and they lived and raised their family in Huntington.

Veronica loved all animals and frequently



donated to animal shelters. She loved to cook, spend time with family and enjoyed listening to old country musicians such as Ray Price, Merle Haggard and Patsy Cline.

She will be deeply missed and is survived by her three sons; Marc, Ken and Lloyd and four grandsons: Jacob “Jake”, Cole; Tyler and Evan Avery.

Services to honor her life and memory will be private.

## Ann Quimby Southworth, 93

Ann Quimby Southworth, age 93, passed away on Feb. 9, 2025 with her loving family by her side, after a multi-year struggle with dementia. Born in Springfield, she was the daughter of the late Mary (Bruyn) and Horace Alonzo Quimby. She was a graduate of Classical High School and 1952 graduate of Mount Holyoke College where she obtained her Bachelor’s Degree. She was a wonderful mother, chief organizer and professional volunteer.

Ann found joy in many things, being a wife and mother were number one. She was a natural competitive athlete and enjoyed skiing, golfing, paddle tennis and tennis. She was a multi-decades golf champion at Longmeadow Country Club and The Blandford Club and was inducted into the Western MA Golf Hall of Fame. Her tough, kind and fair demeanor made her a wonderful coach, who ran the children’s golf program at The Blandford Club, a platform tennis instructor and someone, who engaged the neighborhood to keep the backyard ice rink ready for action.

Ann was a passionate volunteer; she was the first woman elected Selectman for the town of Longmeadow in 1978. She was President of the Junior League and Chestnut Knoll/ Glenmeadow, as well as President of Connecticut River Conservancy (CRC) and she took action to help reduce water usage by spearheading “A Brick In Every Tank” effort for toilet tanks, she also was an enthusiastic and successful fundraiser for The White Church of Blandford, continuing her Aunt Gertrude’s efforts leading the first development office at Mount Holyoke College. Ann kept busy throughout her life; she was focused on living and was ready for the next moment; her motto was, “what are we doing next?” She was always accompanied by her beloved Golden Retriever dogs.



In later years she enjoyed chair yoga/exercise at the East Longmeadow and Longmeadow Senior Centers. Ann always found peace tending to her gardens at her beloved summer home in Blandford, both flower and vegetables. She and John enjoyed entering their flower arrangements and vegetables in the Blandford Fair. Her family gave her much happiness, spending time together in work and play.

Besides her parents, Ann is predeceased by her devoted husband, John H. Southworth; her brother, Irving Quimby and son-in-law, David Bourdeau. She leaves to cherish her memory, her children: David Southworth and his wife Ann M. of Springfield, Polly Southworth and Peter Southworth both of Longmeadow; six grandchildren: John Southworth, Emily Bourdeau (Tommi Hurme), Daniel Bourdeau (Angeliky Santos), Blair Southworth, Story Hungahunga (Apollo) and Hallie Southworth and two great-grandchildren: Valtteri and Helmi Hurme. Her friend Jill Hartnett was a great companion and care-giver.

To celebrate and honor Ann’s life visiting hours will be on Thursday, Feb. 20, 2025 from 4-7 p.m. at Forastiere Smith Funeral & Cremation, 220 N. Main St., East Longmeadow. On Friday, Feb. 21, 2025 a funeral service will be at 11 a.m. at South Congregational Church, 45 Maple St., Springfield. Burial will be held privately for the family in Springfield Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, donations maybe made to Blandford Historical Society – The White Church Fund, 2 North St., Blandford MA 01008 or to South Congregational Church, 45 Maple St., Springfield MA 01105. For more information or to share a memory or condolence, please visit [www.forastiere.com](http://www.forastiere.com).

## DEATH NOTICES

### AVERY, VERONICA “RONNIE” (MIHLEK)

Died Feb. 9, 2025  
Services to honor her life and memory private

### SOUTHWORTH, ANN QUIMBY

Died Feb. 9, 2025  
Visiting hours Feb. 20 from 4-7 p.m. at Forastiere Smith Funeral and Cremation, 220 N. Main St., East Longmeadow  
Funeral service Feb.. 21 at 11 a.m. at South Congregational Church, 45 Maple St., Springfield

## Country Journal 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 and may include a photograph. **Death Notices & Paid Obituaries** should be submitted through a funeral home to: [obits@turley.com](mailto:obits@turley.com).

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# PUBLIC NOTICES

### Gateway Regional FY ‘26 School Budget Public Hearing

In accordance with Chapter 71 Section 38N of the Massachusetts General Law the public hearing for the 2025-2026 Gateway Regional School District budget will be held in the Performing Arts Center at the Gateway Regional Middle/High School Complex located at 12 Littleville Road, Huntington, MA 01050 on **Wednesday, March 5, 2025 at 7:00 p.m.** Reference: Massachusetts Newspapers Publishers Association website: [masspublicnotices.org](http://masspublicnotices.org)  
02/20/2025

### GOSHEN CONSERVATION COMMISSION

In accordance with the second paragraph of Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 131, Section 40, the Goshen Conservation Commission will hold a public

hearing: On **Monday March 3, 2025 at 6:00 p.m.** in the Back Room of the Goshen Town Offices, 40 Main St., Goshen, MA 01032 regarding a **Request for Determination of Applicability** filed by the Department of Conservation & Recreation under the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act, (G.L. C 131, Sec. 40) for the resurfacing of an existing roadway within the Daughter’s of the American Revolution State Forest.

For further assistance, please contact the Conservation Commission (413) 268-8236 X451. All interested people are invited to the public hearing.  
02/20/2025

### TOWN OF RUSSELL REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS PUBLIC SOCIAL SERVICE PROGRAMS

The Town of Russell, as lead community for the FY 2025

Southern Hilltowns Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) application, is seeking proposals from qualified social service organizations and agencies to include in the application. Activities eligible for funding include a range of social services that meet the needs of low and moderate-income residents in the Towns of Chester, Huntington, Middlefield, and Russell. Agencies providing the following services are encouraged to submit proposals; adult education/GED preparation, literacy programs, job training, domestic violence prevention, services for seniors, emergency food, family/youth activities and other social service programs.

The Town of Russell may choose to fund all, any or none of the proposals submitted. Agencies or organizations identified for inclusion in the Town’s grant proposal will be required to submit additional information

as part of the full CDBG application to be submitted to the Massachusetts Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC). Programs funded by EOHLC will begin in the summer of 2024. The Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC) is assisting the Town in the coordination and administration of its community development programs. Please contact Joseph Hagopian to receive a request form or with any questions regarding this program at (413) 781-6045 or [jhagopian@pvpc.org](mailto:jhagopian@pvpc.org).

All proposals must be submitted by mail, fax or e-mail to the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, 60 Congress Street – 1st Floor, Springfield, MA 01104, fax 413-732-2593, or [jhagopian@pvpc.org](mailto:jhagopian@pvpc.org) by 2:00 p.m. Thursday, March 6th, 2025.  
02/20/2025

## NOTICE

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

## Public Notice CHANGES

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# 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.

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MONTEREY JACK CHEESE

\$4.44  
lb

USDA INSP. FROZEN  
PORK STOMACH

\$2.99  
lb

USDA INSP. FROZEN  
BEEF BONE FOR SOUP

\$1.99  
lb

USDA INSP. FRESH BONELESS  
BEEF TENDERLOIN  
CUT FREE

\$10.10  
lb

USDA INSP. FRESH BONE-IN  
BEEF PORTERHOUSE  
or T'BONE STEAK

\$7.99  
lb

USDA INSP. GROUND FRESH DAILY  
DIET LEAN  
GROUND BEEF

\$4.99  
5 LB BAG

USDA INSP. FRESH BONE-IN  
BEEF CHUCK STEAK or ROAST

\$5.99  
lb

USDA INSP. FRESH BONELESS & SKINLESS  
CHICKEN BREAST

\$1.99  
10 LB BAG

USDA INSP. FROZEN  
CORNISH GAME HENS

\$2.49  
TWIN PAK

USDA INSP. KAYEM ALFRESCO  
ROAST GARLIC  
CHICKEN SAUSAGE

99¢  
11 OZ

USDA INSP. IQF FROZEN  
COOKED SHRIMP  
31/40 COUNT

\$6.67  
1 LB BAG

90 Meat Outlet

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