

Country Journal

Devoted to the Needs of the Hilltowns

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A TURLEY PUBLICATION | www.turley.com

March 6, 2025 | Vol. 46, No. 45 | 75¢

www.countryjournal.turley.com

HUNTINGTON

Fire Chief proposes full time

By Wendy Long
Correspondent

Fire Chief Joshua Ellinger, who also serves as the town's representative to the Hilltown Community Ambulance, met with the Select Board on Wednesday, Feb. 26 to discuss his full time fire chief proposal and the Fiscal 2026 budget for HCA.

Ellinger shared a recent financial report and notes that HCA is looking at putting in living quarters for their overnight staff, which raised discussion about permits and a septic system. HCA has also switched to Volunteer Firemen Insurance Services, Inc. to insure their ambulances, which Select Board member John McVeigh thought could yield substantial savings. Select Board Chairman Roger Booth expressed concern over anticipated Federal revenue cuts through Medicare, which Ellinger said he would look into.

In discussing the full time fire chief proposal, Select Board member Bill Hathaway asked if there was enough work for 40

FIRE CHIEF, page 2

CHESTER

CHA/Hikers enjoy Snow Day

The Chester Hill Association and Western Mass Hilltown Hikers hosted Snow day with glorious views of Gobble Mountain and Round Hill.

It was a day where adults play like kids. Dogs and children enjoyed sleds, inner tubes, snowmobiles,

cross country skiing and snowshoeing snow sports on Chester Hill with comfortable temperatures and perfect snow conditions.

The group thanks Nate Bolduc for grooming the hill and trails, Rich and Shelley Holzman for hosting, corn chowder by Karen

McTaggart and all the cookies that were donated.

Snow Day is a long standing Chester Hill Association tradition to bring folks outside in winter and where everyone is welcome. The group popped every inner tube except one on that hill.



The group is geared up to hit the sledding hill.

Submitted photos



Jim White and his granddaughter came to Chester from New York for some deep snow sledding.



Frank from Hancock gets a lift back up the hill from Nate.



Lee Meyers, from left, Jan Sutton, Muriel Hall from Chester Hill Association and Karen McTaggart Vice President of Hilltown Hikers served up corn chowder, hot cocoa and cookies.

HUNTINGTON

Select board acts on lengthy agenda

By Wendy Long
Correspondent

The Huntington Select Board started their meeting at 4:30 p.m. due to the lengthy agenda that included seven specific appointments.

The meeting was held in Stanton Hall, due to one agenda item, the managing evening office hours for the

public, involved all town department heads. Chairman Roger Booth and board members Bill Hathaway and John McVeigh were all present.

Appointment and resignation

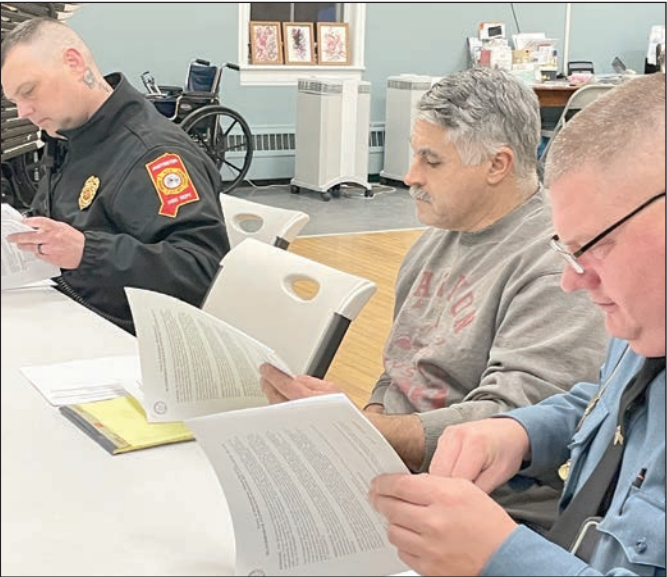
In the first half-hour, the board tackled several items including the appointment

of Helen Crosby-Garcia to the North Hall Advisory Committee and accepting the resignation of Deresa Helems from the Planning Board. While Helems resignation was accepted, the board asked for an executive session with Helems to discuss this further; she has agreed to stay on the Zoning Board.

Bloodborne Pathogen Exposure plan

Fire Chief Joseph Ellinger was joined by Police Chief Robert Garriepy, Board of Health Chairman George Peterson and Water and Sewer Commission Chair H. Daniel Oliveira to review and approve the new Bloodborne Pathogen Exposure Control Plan. The fire department was hit for this at a recent followup inspection due to a work injury, with a response required by Monday, March 10. All department heads and the select board signed the new policy, which includes 24 pages citing related regulations. The signature page will need to be resubmitted annually. This

SELECT BOARD, page 2



Fire Chief Joshua Ellinger, from left, Water and Sewer Commission Chair H. Daniel Oliveira and Police Chief Robert Garriepy review the final draft of the town's Bloodborne Pathogen Exposure Control Plan, which was approved Feb. 26.

Turley photo by Wendy Long

BLANDFORD

Blandford and Chester renew Inter Municipal Agreement

By Mary Kronholm
Correspondent

Chester and Blandford Select Boards met Monday, Feb. 24 to review the shared police services Inter Municipal Agreement.

Both boards agreed that the arrangement works well and extended the contract for another five years. An additional change, other than dates, will have the two towns meeting twice a year rather than quarterly unless there is a need. Pioneer Valley Planning Commission arranged for a feasibility study which, when accepted, resulted in the two towns joining forces to create the combined Chester/Blandford Police Department in 2019.

Highway Department

Highway Superintendent Rene Senecal praised the efforts of the department employees during the recent storms and this was echoed by the board and Town Administrator

Cristina Ferrera.

Board of Health

The Board of Health reported that as soon as Title V requirements have been met, the house at 106 Main Street will be listed for sale. Board of Health member Jennifer Girard said that it is more important than ever before that the town start enforcing dumpster permits, both handler and resident. There are three trash haulers that service town residents and only one has completed the permit process.

Transfer Station

The Swap Shop at the Transfer Station should be completed by this summer. Construction materials have been purchased. The Board of Health applied for a grant to fund a new compactor for the Transfer Station.

Budget

Town Administrator Ferrera told the board the budget work was ready

to finalize. The town still needs to have figures from the Gateway Regional School District. Going forward, according to Ferrera, "the budget process needs to start in November, not in December or January. It's just not workable." She would also like to make sure all departments have all the tools and information to budgeting correctly.

Other business

"I don't want to see another vendor contract signed by any department," she said. "The vendor signs the town's contract."

Ferrera has templates for standard business goods and services and engineering services contracts.

There are also new forms for those departments wanting to apply for grants. The Approval to Apply for Grant forms are available from Ferrera. It is important, according to Ferrera, that the town be aware of all grant applications so requirements can be met.



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HUNTINGTON

Library presents ‘A Day in the Life’

By Wendy Long
Correspondent

HUNTINGTON – The Huntington Public Library will launch a new monthly series in March called, “A Day in the Life,” which will feature a local speaker, who shares their unique experiences.

In honor of Women’s History Month, the March speaker will be Air Force Reserves Veteran Brenda Chaloux, who will speak at the library on Saturday, March 15 at 2 p.m. about a day in the life of a flight medic.

Chaloux served for 22 years as a flight nurse in

the Air Force Reserves and retired as a Lt. Colonel. In the military, she was deployed to Qatar, Macedonia, Kosovo and Washington D.C., where her role was the management, care and transport of American wounded warriors from originating facilities to more definitive care, other bases or home.

Chaloux has also worked in the private sector as a nurse, nurse supervisor and nurse manager.



Brenda Chaloux

er. She holds a Masters in Business Administration in Healthcare Administration and a Doctorate in Nursing Practice/ Nurse Practitioner. Her current position is as the Family Nurse Practitioner at the Gateway School-Based Health Center, which is run by Hilltown Community Health Center, a position she’s held since 2016.

The library will also showcase books about women in the military at this event, for interested readers.

Library Director

Amanda Loiselle envisioned the monthly speaker’s series after an international program called “The Human Library,” which started in Copenhagen, Denmark in 2000. It is now active in over 80 countries and allows the public to hear about life experiences that are different from their own.

The Gateway SBHC provides routine and preventive health care, same day sick visits, first aid, emergency care, vaccines, rapid in-house testing, behavioral health counseling, nutrition services, a full range of dental care and optometry services to students and staff at school.

Assembly of God to hold spaghetti dinner

HUNTINGTON – The new weather delayed date for the free spaghetti dinner with all the fixings on Saturday, March 15 at 5:30 p.m. at Pioneer Valley Assembly of God, 63 Old Chester Road.

People may win a prize

for most festive Valentine apparel. The will also be auctioning delicious homemade desserts, all proceeds will benefit their Youth Group. People must register by Sunday, March 9 at www.pioneervalleyag.org/love or call 413-667-3196.



FIRE CHIEF

hours a week. Ellinger said that since he’d last met with the Select Board, he’d had to do quality control on 29 calls that they had (review reports, log, and send off to the state). Ellinger was on 19 of those calls. He’d also put together five new policies, done a financial monitoring review for FEMA, applied for three more grants, documented the respiratory protection program logs and checklists, and onboarded four new recruits-all done during his hours after work and on weekends. “I’m just doing this work when I should be spending time with my family. I would like to not sacrifice that anymore,” Ellinger said. “We really should be treating the fire department like the service it is.” Ellinger has also

had to take time off from his regular day job and has no more days available until May.

Booth expressed the monetary issue, saying the increase to \$80,000 plus a family insurance plan that Ellinger would now be eligible for would be another \$20,000. Booth sees the only way forward is to create a shared fire district between the surrounding towns; each town could maintain its own personnel and equipment, but they would share a chief. Ellinger agreed, saying he’d known for years that this needs to happen. “I’m not shy about it,” Ellinger said. “I’m in.”

The Select Board agreed the next steps will be meeting with the Finance Committee, looking at put-

ting the increase onto a warrant article at Annual Town Meeting, and letting the voters decide. Ellinger felt this was fair. “We’ve missed seven calls since the last time we met. The taxpayers are paying for a service that they are not getting.”

Gateway Regional School District

Gateway Regional School District Superintendent Kristen Smidy shared six updates at the Wednesday, Feb. 26 Select Board Meeting. Gateway Superintendent Smidy discussed Department of Environmental Protection water testing results last fall, which may have been caused by a sink in a middle school science room. The science room sink has been replaced.

Results from water testing are posted on the district website and Gateway did not face any additional costs for corrective actions.

She also reminded the board that there are two key Central Office positions retiring in June: Assistant Superintendent Stephanie Fisk (36 years) and Treasurer Deb Kuhn (28 years). They are currently looking at filling those positions to allow some time to work with the outgoing staff. Smidy reminded the board that the Human Resource position has time earmarked (.2 FTE) to offer support to the member towns if they request it. Gateway Regional School District is looking at grants and working with Mass Hire to provide no cost Driver’s Education to students at the school.

In addition, Superintendent Smidy announced that the district received a preschool expansion grant and the school district is now able to offer Pre Kindergarten five days a week. The grant can also

support a community member, who wishes to open their own state certified day care. Interested people should reach out to the school district.

Gateway Regional School District will hold their annual budget hearing on Wednesday, March 5 at 7 p.m. at Gateway Regional School in the Gateway Performing Arts Center. Their budget reflects a 2.01% increase to the towns overall, although individual town increases/decreases will vary based on the March 1 student census. Smidy thanked Select Board Chairman Booth for volunteering to serve on the negotiation team for the custodian contract. Select Board member McVeigh will do a training on the use of fire extinguishers for Gateway staff.

Booth asked about the status of the Chester Elementary School position and Smidy acknowledged that she cannot share any information. He also asked how they would fund the independent investigator

approved last week. Smidy said they would push out the start dates for the new Central Office staff and use those savings. Booth also shared that he’s received negative feedback about continued payments toward a new roof.

Finally, Superintendent Smidy announced that she has been approached by the Farmington River Superintendent, who said they are having difficulty getting a regional agreement in place. She was asked if it would be viable to send Otis children to Chester Elementary School. Smidy said changing Gateway’s Regional Agreement has been problematic over the “one man, one vote,” but Booth noted the students might be tuitioned in without changing the agreement. If this were to happen, an additional 70 students would go to Chester, whose current enrollment is 114 students. Booth said he’d also heard rumors that Becket might be closing their elementary school.

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SELECT BOARD

new protocol requires eye washing stations at each department and Booth shared possible stations that meet the policy’s requirements.

FY 16 budget

Town Administrator Jennifer Peloquin shared updates on the Fiscal Year 2026 budget. Since the last meeting, the state has provided preliminary aid numbers and estimated receipts. Peloquin shared that department requests put the town over the levy limit by \$183,783. The Select Board recommendations had the town over by \$131,791.

Peloquin met with the Finance Committee for 2 ½ hours last week. The committee’s next meeting is on Wednesday, March 19, with the understanding that the Select Board needs their input by the end of May. Vocational school numbers show 14 applications thus far with eight graduating, raising the vote budget by \$45,000 and students still have until April 1 to apply. The board questioned the library’s budget numbers and their assertion that the state mandates that 19% of their total budget be earmarked for materials. The Veterans Services budget shows \$10,802 for assessment plus another \$35,000 for veterans services. Peloquin explained that the town does get reimbursed for the veterans expenses although it’s slow in coming.

Nebbs Road

Board of Health Chairman George Peterson and Secretary John Bergeron were also asked about the status of Nebbs Well on Route 66. Peterson

said the well was fixed in the fall and locked because it is not used in winter. They will test the water a month before the well reopens and remove the lock if the water passes.

Evening hours

The board met with all board chairs and town hall department heads to discuss evening availability for the public. Pre-covid, each department had a representative at town hall on Wednesday evenings. However, since returning from remote work, departments are at town hall on different evenings. After discussion, it was determined that each board and department will set hours for the public on one night a week. The next round of tax bills will include information on these evenings and hours.

Board of Assessors

Board of Assessors Chair Christine Stochlinski and Harald Scheid from Regional Resource Group discussed Chapter 61 and other general taxation issues. These included a delay in Chapter 61 property purchased by Roxanne Pinn being taxed at the lower rate and a question as to whether or not The Retreat at Norwich Lake, owned by the Timothy Hill Christian Camp, DBA the Timothy Hill Children’s Ranch, was still a tax exempt property. The Timothy Hill Children’s Ranch is advertising rooms for rent to the public and should it still qualify as a tax exempt property. A third issue was a number of tax bills having incorrect information when the Collector prints out the quarterly

bills. Assessor said they had resolved the Pinn property matter and that they would look into the correct status for the Retreat at Norwich Lake.

When the Collector has reported past discrepancies, the Assessors have looked into their data, which has been found to be correctly updated but is not transferring to the Collector. It is believed that the Assessors and Collectors software might no longer be compatible. The town is using Softright as their collection software, which Sheid recommended be replaced with Vadar Systems Software.

Select Board Booth asked that, as the Assessors resolve complaints like Pinn’s, they get back to the resident with an explanation and copy Town Administrator Peloquin. Assessor Chair Stochlinski will be at the Wednesday, March 12 meeting to update the board on these issues.

Other business

In other business, all remaining ARPA Projects are on hold while waiting for spring. The board approved hiring Adam Guyette as the sidewalk snow removal operator at the rate of \$19/hour. Hannah O’Connell has asked for permission to resume fitness classes at Stanton Hall, which were closed down during Covid. Booth asked to put her on an upcoming agenda to discuss this further.

After 7 p.m., the board moved into executive session to discuss the deployment of or strategy regarding security personnel or devices and did not return to public session.

from page 1

BLANDFORD

COA to hold St. Patrick's
Lunch and March breakfast

By Mary Kronholm
Correspondent

BLANDFORD – On Friday, March 14 at noon the Council on Aging will hold their annual St. Patrick's Day luncheon in the COA room at Town Hall.

Once again chef extraordinaire Joann Martin will be donning the green in the kitchen as she prepares a feast of corned beef and cabbage with carrots and potatoes accompanied with Irish Soda Bread and a featured green dessert, Crème de Menthe cake. The festivities will be as Irish as they can get.

The March breakfast on Friday, March 28 will feature a selection of quiche, sausage, roasted vegetable or a traditional Quiche Lorraine with an apple muffin. There is no charge for either meal, but a suggested \$5 donation per person is welcome to help keep the program going.

To reserve a spot for

either or both events, people call the COA at 413-848-4279, extension 400 to leave the name and number of people attending. Blood pressure checks are available after lunch or breakfast.

First Fridays are Game and Gab at the COA room at Town Hall starting at 2 p.m. Anyone can participate and play various games, such as cards, board games or dice. This is a good time for socializing and laughter.

Local artist Susan Racine conducts a water color painting on the first Tuesday of the month at 10 a.m. Monday mornings at 11:30 Heidi Taberman conducts balance, strength and flexibility training, free to Blandford residents. Out of town residents have a \$5 fee. Taberman provides a thorough workout with the use of various equipment, such as Hula hoops, stretchy bands, dumbbells, body bars, tennis balls and even big bouncy balls. A portion of the class is



At last year's Council on Aging St. Patrick's Day luncheon Select Board member T.J. Cousineau donned his Irish garb.

Submitted photo

seated, but standing exercises are also incorporated that lead to better balance.

COA Director Margit Mikuski said, "Everyone is welcome at all our events and programs."

Library announces March events

By Mary Kronholm
Correspondent

BLANDFORD – Library Director Nicole Daviau announced the March library programs and events at the Porter Memorial Library.

All month long in March there will be a Seed Swap. People may bring in seeds, vegetable or flowers, they don't need to swap for others they do want. It's a great way to trade and think ahead to spring and get ready for the gardening season.

Every Tuesday from 4:30-5:30 p.m. Book Squirms with stories, songs and sensory play for preschoolers and their siblings takes place. Every Wednesday from 10:30-11:30 a.m. Book Squirms

with stories, songs and sensory play for preschoolers and their siblings takes place.

On Thursday, March 6 at 6:30 p.m. there is a Library Building Committee meeting. This is a public meeting to discuss and vote on items for the planned library expansion. All town residents are welcome to listen in and hear about the latest progress.

On Friday, March 14 from 4:30-5:30 p.m. the Pokemon Club meet. There will be a Pokemon craft, card trading and maybe a battle or two.

On Saturday, March 15at 11 a.m. Communi-Tea Reads takes place. The library's



Nicole Daviau

adult book club is reading "The Thursday Murder Club." People may stop in and pick up a copy and then join the discussion. New members can join at any time.

On Saturday, March 29 at 10 a.m. Caregiver Coffee Club meets. People may drop in time for caregivers to relax, socialize and enjoy a cup of coffee.

The library is open Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 2-6 p.m.; Wednesday from 10 a.m.-6 p.m. and Saturday from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. For more information, people may call the library at 413-848-2853.

WESTHAMPTON

School holds preschool/
kindergarten registration

WESTHAMPTON – Preschool and kindergarten registration for Westhampton Elementary School will take place in March.

In March, Westhampton Elementary School will register preschool and kindergarten students for fall 2025. Residents in Westhampton, who have a child five years old by Sept. 1, 2025 can register for kindergarten. If they reside in Westhampton and have

a child three or four years old by Sept. 1, 2025, they can register for preschool. Flexible scheduling may be available for non-special education preschool students and parents will be responsible for tuition.

Westhampton Elementary School may have the potential of limited school choice slots for kindergarten through sixth grade for the upcoming school year, 2025-2026. Additional information

about the school choice program and registering for preschool and kindergarten is available by visiting the website at www.westhamptonelementaryschool.org.

If parents or guardians want to register their child for preschool or kindergarten at Westhampton Elementary School or apply for one of the potential school choice openings via lottery, they may call the school at 413-527-0561 and ask to speak to Ashley.

MIDDLEFIELD

Rabies clinic set for March 15

MIDDLEFIELD – All Hilltown dogs and cats are welcome to the Middlefield/Chester rabies clinic on Saturday, March 15 from 1-3 p.m. at the Middlefield Town Hall on Skyline Trail.

Dr Sharon Lynch of Hilltowns Veterinary Clinic will be the veterinarian. Pet owners should bring their current rabies certificate if possible. Shots will be \$20 per pet. All

pets must be leashed or in a carrier. Middlefield dog licenses will also be available. People may call Middlefield/Chester Animal Control at 413-354-0975 with any questions.

TOLLAND

Music series lists events

TOLLAND – Music in the Hills, an acoustic music series, is a free coffeehouse style monthly event with light refreshments.

On Saturday, March 15 at 6:30 p.m. Andy and Judy Folk Music will take place at the Tolland Public Safety Complex, 204 West Granville Road, in the Community Room. On

Saturday, April 5 at 6:30 p.m. the series features Les Sampou American, blues and country.

The programs on March 15 and April 5 are funded in part by a grant from the Tolland Cultural Council, a local agency, which is supported by the Massachusetts Cultural Council.

STOCKBRIDGE

Stockbridge Grange hosts
community dinner March 9

STOCKBRIDGE – The Stockbridge Grange will hold a community dinner Sunday, March 9 featuring corned beef, cabbage, potatoes and carrots with dessert choices of chocolate cream or lemon meringue.

Dinner is \$15 per person and take out only with

noon-1:30 p.m. pick up at the Stockbridge Grange Hall at 51 Church St., Stockbridge. Orders may be made by calling either 413-243-1298 or 413-443-4352.

Grange dinners are held to raise money for non-profit projects and building maintenance.

Country Journal

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GUEST COLUMN

SOCIAL SECURITY

Matters

By Russell Gloor



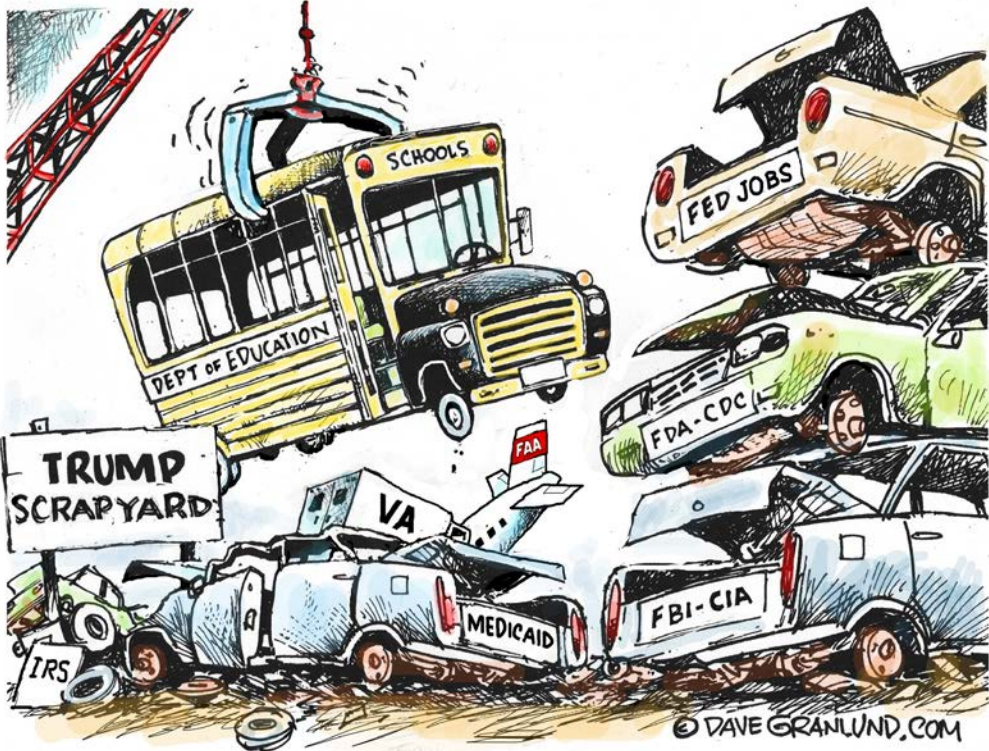
Should I wait until age 70 to claim Social Security?

Dear Rusty:
I am a married woman, at my full retirement age and the primary earner in my marriage.
How do I know if I should take my Social Security now or wait till 70? I will lose quite a bit if I take it now. How will it affect my taxes if I take it now while still working a full-time job?
Signed: Undecided

Dear Undecided:
As you apparently already know, waiting until you are 70 to claim Social Security will result in you getting your maximum possible monthly SS retirement benefit. After your full retirement age, you get about 8% more each year you delay claiming up to age 70. But deciding exactly when to claim should consider both your financial needs and, importantly, your life expectancy.
If you don't urgently need the money now and your life expectancy is at least "average," then waiting until age 70 to claim is usually the right choice. But if you urgently need the money or your life expectancy is less than average (mid-80s for a woman your current age), then claiming before age 70 is usually prudent.
Regarding taxation, Social Security benefits may be taxable if your combined income from all sources exceeds the threshold for your IRS filing status. If you file taxes as "married/jointly" and your combined income including your work income exceeds \$32,000, then half of the SS benefits you received during the tax year becomes part of your taxable income.
But if your combined income is over \$44,000, then up to 85% of your SS benefits becomes taxable

income (the thresholds are lower for those who file as a single). So, your full-time work income will likely affect how much of your Social Security benefits are subject to income tax by the IRS.
In the end, only you can decide when you should claim Social Security. Taxation of benefits may be a factor to consider since you are still working full time (thus more of your SS benefits will be taxable). But waiting longer to claim results in a higher benefit for the rest of your life (your SS retirement benefit will be .667% more for each month you delay, up to age 70). If the "rest of your life" is a long time and you don't urgently need the money, waiting is often the right choice. If not, claiming earlier may be wiser.
If you want to get a more personalized estimate of your life expectancy, I suggest you use the tool we use here at the AMAC Foundation: www.socialsecurityreport.org/tools/life-expectancy-calculator/.
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 or email us at ssadvisor@amacfoundation.org. Russell Gloor is a Social Security advisor for AMAC.

OPINION



GUEST COLUMN

And just like that it's spring

Well, maybe I am getting a bit ahead of myself. This coming weekend the days will feel a little longer because of Daylight Savings, when we "spring forward" an hour.
The evenings will begin to lure us outside after supper, maybe for a walk or just a look-see around the yard. For me, one sign of "spring" is starting my pepper seeds indoors.

They are the earliest transplants I grow at home, and I am so excited to get started!
Regular readers of the column may remember that I love growing peppers. Perhaps it is because I have the perfect spot- stone edged raised beds – that contain the heat and help them to grow quite successfully.
By week's end my pepper seeds will have been sown in moist lightweight seed starting mix and placed on bottom heat. Seventy-eight to 80 degrees is perfect for germinating pepper seeds; at those temps I expect to see sprouting in eight days or so.
Once they sprout, I will place the flats within inches of my shop lights and adjust the lights as they grow. When the second set of leaves form, known as the "true leaves," the pepper seedlings will find their way into six packs or their own two inch pot.

By late April or early May, they will be given a larger pot once more; usually a four inch pot will do. After a hardening off period, I will transplant them into the ground once it has warmed considerably- usually by June first.
A couple weeks prior to that I provide black plastic mulch on top of soil to get it pre-heated and ready for these tropic loving plants.
Although there are over 20 species of pepper, just one is known to American gardeners. It goes by the Latin name *Capsicum annuum*.

Five categories of peppers fall under this heading, but I typically grow only the sweet types.
Green when immature, sweet bell peppers ripen to a rainbow of colors: yellow, orange, red, purple, ivory and even chocolate brown. We eat them in the green stage more so than when fully ripe, and that's a shame. A little patience and a week or two longer in the garden will yield a sweet treat.
If I had to choose only one variety to grow it would be AAS award winner "Carmen," bred right in Maine at Johnny's Selected Seed. Numerous six inch by two and a half inch red peppers make an appearance beginning in late July and continue through the first frost.
Yes, I did say "late July!" If I'd dare to guess at the total yield of peppers per plant, one dozen would be a fair estimate. They are great fresh, frozen or fire roasted!

Renee's Garden sells a lovely little pepper by the name of "Yummy Belles." The description is accurate when they say that the plants are "highly productive" and "load up" with lots of little three to four inch bright orange peppers.
They call them snack peppers, and they are just that. Make a decadent snack by filling with veggie cream cheese, or stick to healthier eating by adding one or two to a personal

salad.
Paprika peppers also fall into the sweet pepper category. Fruits are up to six inches long and three inches wide at the top and come to a blunt point.
Dry and grind to make your own paprika spice in a coffee grinder. Indispensable when sprinkled on deviled eggs!
Frying or pickling peppers go by the names Sweet Banana, Sweet Hungarian, or Cubanelle among others. They are good candidates for frying because of their thin walls and scant water content.
Sweet Banana was noted in 1941 as an All American Selections winner and is still growing strong 60+ years later!
Pimento peppers are those used to stuff with green olives. My Italian husband just loves it when his sister Denise makes this holiday treat!
They grow a squat-ty three by four inches and are ripe when red or orange, depending on variety. Expect these to take a bit longer than the other types, a full 85 or more days from transplant to harvest.
If you too are a pepper lover, and want to see the earliest yields possible, get ready, get set, and get sowing those pepper seeds!

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 with "Gardening Question" in the subject line.



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, or call us at 413-283-8393. Corrections will be printed in the same section where the error originally occurred.

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. 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 newspaper 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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The Country Journal (USPS 483-550) is published every Thursday by Turley Publications, Inc., 24 Water St., Palmer, Mass. 01069. Telephone (413) 283-8393, Fax (413) 289-1977. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Turley Publications, Inc., 24 Water St., Palmer, Mass. 01069.



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ISSN NO. 0747-2471

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Editor
Ellenor Downer
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Subscriptions
www.turley.com

\$31 per year pre-paid (\$36 out of state)
Newsstand: \$.75 per copy

WEB

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Country Journal Deadlines CHANGED

Deadline has changed to **FRIDAY** at 3 p.m.



NORTHAMPTON

Homer Gallery hosts March art exhibit

NORTHAMPTON – Forbes Library, 20 West St. hosts artwork but Ruth LaGue, Caroline Jennings and David A. Russell Tuesday, March 4 through Saturday, March 29 in the Homer Gallery.

The Homer Gallery, located on the second floor of Forbes Library, is accessible to by stairs and elevator. Gallery hours are Monday through Thursday from 10 a.m.-8 p.m., Friday and Saturday from 10 a.m.-6 p.m. and closed Sundays and holidays. People may visit forbeslibrary.org/info/hours for any updates.

Ruth LaGue paintings celebrates the serene beauty of rural landscapes, with a particular focus on farmhouses and barns. These structures stand as timeless symbols of heritage and hard work, their weathered facades etched with the stories of generations.

Caroline Jennings (1949-2024) exhibit comprises work that grew out of her upbringing and early adulthood in small town Appalachia. The work explores the way in which hope grows out of hardship and isolation, and tries to express how a relatively isolated culture creates both bonds and separation. The exhibition will include oil paintings and works of handmade paper that incorporate poems/text by the artist and photographs made and developed by the artist's grandfather in the early 20th century.

David Russell is a painter and hand papermaker for over 30 years. Upon moving to Amherst, five years ago just in time for the pandemic lock-down, he found myself painting watercolors daily. The aspiration for physical and spiritual representation in wood characterizes my current work. His process starts with finding wood that has decayed to the point of being unrecognizable as wood or log in its' natural state.

Coolidge Museum list upcoming events

NORTHAMPTON – The Presidents Book Group usually meets on the fourth Monday of the month, but will meet Monday, March 31 at 6:30 p.m. this month.

This hybrid group meets in person in the Coolidge Museum located in the Forbes Memorial Library, 20 West St. or people may join via zoom. The book is from the American Presidents series, "James Buchanan" by Jean Baker or the University of Kansas Press book, "The Presidency of James Buchanan" by Elbert B. Smith. The book for the Thursday, April 24 book is "Lincoln" by David Herbert Donald. This is in print, large print, CD audio e-book and e-audio available in Libby and in a Boston Public Library e-card. BPL e-cards are free for all Massachusetts residents. To sign up, people should visit to <https://www.bpl.org/ecard/>

In this group, people will deepen their understanding of the American presidency as they trace the history of the presidency and follow how presidents, both celebrated and forgotten, grappled with slavery, economics, executive power and America's role in the world. This group is moderated by Bill Scher, Vice President of the Coolidge Museum Committee. To join the email list, people may email Coolidge@forbeslibrary.org.

The Herstory Book Group meets on Zoom on the second Wednesday of the month from 7-830 p.m.

This book group meets on Zoom on the second Wednesday of the month 7-8:30 PM

On Wednesday, March 12 the group will discuss Madam C.J. Walker. Participants may chose either <https://www.cwmars.org/Record/2092391?byA'lilia+Bundles+or+Madam+CJ+Walker:+The+Making+of+an+American+Icon> by Erica Ball. This group is moderated by Coolidge Museum Committee mem-



bers Leslie Skantz-Hodgson (Smith Vocational School Librarian) and Rob Weir (retired professor of history).

March is Women's History Month. For women's history month, the Coolidge Museum honor First Lady Grace Goodhue Coolidge. In 1929, Grace was chosen from over 2,000 nominations to be one of Good Housekeeping Magazine's 12 greatest American women. She was chosen for her outstanding place in the nation as a symbol of home and family at its best.

Thanks to many generous donors, the museum raised funds to hire exhibit design firm Design Division of Amherst to re-imagine the Coolidge Museum with new exhibits, improved archival storage and program space. The revitalization effort will greatly strengthen the museum's mission to give its visitors a well-balanced historical account of Coolidge's political and family life.

SUMMER CAMP GUIDE

The benefits of attending summer camp

Summer camp is something akin to a rite of passage for millions of youngsters each year. Many adults look back fondly on their experiences at summer camp, often crediting such times as formative periods in their lives. Summer camp benefits children in a myriad ways.

- Campers continue to socialize throughout summer. Socializing isn't just for the school year. While children in high school might be independent enough to come and go with their friends during summer break, kids who are still in elementary school or middle school might not be old enough to handle such freedom. That can make it hard to stay in touch with friends, which in turn can contribute to feelings of boredom and loneliness. Camp provides ample opportunities for young children to socialize during a time of year when they might not see their school friends as often as they're used to.
- Campers can expand their horizons. Though some summer camps are exclusive to residents of certain communities, many tend to feature children from numerous towns or municipalities. Such camps provide an opportunity for campers to expand their horizons by engaging with youngsters who come from different backgrounds.
- Camp can get kids off their devices. Modern children are growing up in a digital world, and parents know how hard it can be to get kids to put down their devices and get outdoors. But the key to making that pivot could be access to outdoor play spaces. Many summer camps are structured around outdoor play, making them a potentially invaluable ally as parents seek to help children cut back on the time they spend using their devices. Children who do not attend camp and live in households where both parents work or in single-parent households where Mom or Dad works may be forced to spend much of summer indoors, which could increase the frequency with which they turn to devices to occupy their time.
- Camp adds structure to summer days. Once a school year ends, the structure a school day provides vanishes into thin air. Couple that with extracurricular activities that go on hiatus during summer vacation, and kids accustomed to structure are left with little to do and no need to schedule their time.

There's no shortage of benefits to enrolling youngsters in summer camp, where kids can socialize, grow and get off their devices while engaged in structured but stress-free activities.

Camp by the numbers

Each year, campers of all ages head off to nearby recreation centers or travel to rural areas to claim their cabins and bunks. Here's a deep look at some of the statistics surrounding summer camps.

- 1,467:** The number of day camps in the United States run by the YMCA. - *YMCA*
- \$3.91 billion:** The peak market size of the summer camp sector in the United States in 2019, before stay-at-home-restrictions affected statistics in subsequent years. - *Statista*
- 14 million:** The average number of American summer camp registrants each year. - *American Camp Association*
- 1 week:** The most popular session length for summer camp, although the majority of independent camp operators offer four-, six- and eight-week sessions. - *American Camp Association*
- 50:** The percentage of respondents whose camps charge \$1,000 or more per session, with most programs costing between \$1,000 and \$1,500. - *CampMinder*
- 58 to 63:** The percentage of female staff members at overnight and day camps, respectively. - *American Camp Association*
- 200 to 300:** The average number of campers served each session. - *CampMinder*
- 7 in 10:** The number of camps that run 10 or more different programs. - *CampMinder*
- 79:** The percentage of camps that maintain a screen-free environment. - *CampMinder*

SUMMER CAMPS

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WILDERNESS CAMP

CREATIVITY CAMP

CODING CAMP

COUNSELOR IN TRAINING (CIT)

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Space is limited so don't wait!

WORTHINGTON

Friends of the Worthington Library to hold book/bake sale

WORTHINGTON – The Friends of the Worthington Library will host a book and bake sale at the Worthington Town Hall, 160 Huntington Road, on Saturday, May 10 from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. with a 9 a.m.

“Early Bird” admission of \$10. Admission at 10 a.m. is free. Items for sale include gently used fiction and non-fiction books, audiobooks and DVDs. Items for all ages are available including

picture books, young adult novels, and graphic novels. Books are priced at \$1 each. Baked goods are available by donation. Reusable bags are encouraged. Proceeds from the event will help fund children’s

programs, museum passes and wish list books for patrons of the Worthington Library. For more information or updates, people may visit The Worthington Library website at www.theworthingtonlibrary.com

or The Worthington Library Facebook page. The Friends of the Worthington Library is a volunteer-run committee established to support the Worthington Library in Massachusetts with programs and patron resources.

Rod and Gun Club holds quilt and bowl raffle

WORTHINGTON – The Worthington Rod and Gun Club will hold a quilt and bowl raffle with the drawing on Saturday, March 15.

The quilt raffle is a hand pieced and quilted Irish large lap quilt (54” x 68”) made and donated by Elodi McBride. The bowl raffle is a hand turned cherry bowl with turquoise inlay made and donated by John Marge. Donation is \$10 per ticket. There will be two drawings, first winner chooses which prize. People do not need to be present to win. People may call Vicki for tickets are 413-667-0085 or inquire with any club member..



Children’s books have a separate table.



Books at the Friends of Worthington Library sale are sorted by category.



The town hall will be the location for the book and bake sale on Saturday, May 10.

1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8	9	10		11	12	13
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55					56		57	58	59		60			
61					62					63				
64					65							66		
67					68							69		

CLUES ACROSS

- Cut a little bit off
- State with confidence
- River in NE Scotland
- Not narrow
- Lacking social polish
- Amount of time
- Frame
- Automobile
- Toadstools
- High school dances
- Utilize
- Challenged
- One-sided
- Showing extreme greed
- Potted plants
- Everyone has one
- Lake in Botswana
- E.T. rode in one
- Juniors' parents
- Small amount

- Mother of Perseus
- Ornamental box
- Gov't investigators
- Uncertain
- A cotton fabric with a satiny finish
- The vast grassy plains in S. America
- Your consciousness of your own identity
- Noted consumer advocate
- Spanish sports club
- Body part
- Tractability
- Woman (French)
- Ready and willing to be taught

CLUES DOWN

- Brushed aside
- Water sprite
- Ones to look up to
- Monetary units

- A number everyone has
- Marine invertebrate
- One who takes you to court
- Indicates outer
- Parallelograms
- Strains
- Cross
- A way to remove
- Some pages are dog-__
- Ukraine city
- A citizen of Denmark
- Summer month (abbr.)
- Hindu queens
- Jewelry brand
- Fictional rider of Rohan
- Wet dirt
- Russian city
- Observed

- Furious
- Drivers' licenses
- Musical composition
- Auction
- They __
- Women
- Inspire with love
- Japanese ankle sock
- Appears
- Old World lizard
- The leading performer
- Type of protein
- Pennsylvania town
- Art __: around 1920
- __ Blyton, children's author
- Abnormal breathing
- A place to sleep
- Muslim ruler title
- Depressed
- Gradually gave way
- Clear-thinking

THIS WEEK'S HOROSCOPES

ARIES

Mar 21/Apr 20

You might feel like you have extra energy to chase goals and take bold actions this week, Aries. Your natural drive will be strong. Find opportunities to assert yourself in new areas.

CANCER

Jun 22/Jul 22

Cancer, your focus could shift toward long-term career goals in the next few days. Work to identify a clear vision of where you want to go and the path to get there.

LIBRA

Sept 23/Oct 23

Relationships are especially important to you right now, Libra. Whether it is friendship, romance or business, your interactions with others are bound to be intense.

SCORPIO

Oct 24/Nov 22

This week requires heightened focus on daily routines and personal health. It's a good time to prioritize self-care and improving your habits. A shift in your environment might help.

SAGITTARIUS

Nov 23/Dec 21

Sagittarius, your creativity and passion are elevated this week. You feel ready to pursue personal projects since your inspiration is booming.

TAURUS

Apr 21/May 21

You may feel compelled to slow down and nurture your inner self this week, Taurus. Take time to reflect on your values and personal goals. If you have been feeling overwhelmed, get some rest.

GEMINI

May 22/Jun 21

You are in a social mode this week, Gemini. Your communication skills will take center stage, and it's a good time to collaborate or share ideas with others.

CAPRICORN

Dec 22/Jan 20

Family matters takes precedence and garner your attention this week, Capricorn. You may feel a desire to create a sense of stability in your personal space. That may translate to redecorating.

AQUARIUS

Jan 21/Feb 18

Communication is key this week, whether it's in social circles, at work or at home. You will engage in good conversation and exchange interesting ideas. Learn all you can along the way.

PISCES

Feb 19/Mar 20

Finances come into focus this week, Pisces. You may wonder how you can improve your financial situation and make smarter choices when it comes to money.

	9	3			1			
				9	2			
					5	6	1	
6			3			2		7
					5			
	4						9	5
			4				8	
1	2					9	5	
			4		7			

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

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SCHOOLS & YOUTH

Abbey Keeler receives Excellence in Teaching Award

By Wendy Long
Correspondent

Abbey Keeler, Health Education Teacher at Gateway Regional School, is this year's recipient of the Pioneer Valley Excellence in Teaching Award. Keeler was nominated by four different teachers for her work teaching health in grades sixth - 12th at Gateway Regional School. This marks Keeler's fourth year teaching at Gateway and she is the sole health educator for grades sixth - eighth, where students receive health annually and grades ninth – 12th, where students are required to complete one year of health education. Keeler first worked as a community health worker out of college. Gateway Regional School is her

first teaching position and is a closer match to her Bachelors Degree from Salem State University in sports and movement science. In June, she will complete a Master's in Education in skills-based health program from Cambridge College. Keeler says that teaching health comes with some challenges and she strives to make sure students feel safe and comfortable within the classroom. This is especially apparent with grades sixth – eighth. Keeler said, "I definitely do everything I can and I think having them for multiple years helps build those relationships." In addition to valuing her students, she said another great part of her job is her colleagues. "I love the people that I work with. I have

a lot of amazing coworkers here who are the reason I am in the position that I am," Keeler said. "Their support is unwavering." She also loves how every day is unpredictable. Gateway Regional School Principal Dr. William Sullivan praised the nomination, "Ms. Keeler is an extraordinary teacher who genuinely cares about each of her students, always going above and beyond to support their needs and growth. She is very involved in many aspects of school life and her impact is palpable. She is a team player who inspires her colleagues and students alike."



Abbey Keeler

Keeler holds several other roles outside of her classroom. She has worked in the afterschool and summer programs and is responsible for Gateway's Positive Behavior Implementation System that rewards good behavior at school. She recently stocked the PBIS store, where students who receive blue tickets for doing good deeds can turn them in for items like legos, gator gear, sketch books, art supplies and fidgets. She is also responsible for putting on field day and pep rallies. Keeler has been the Junior Varsity softball coach for the past three years. "I love it. It's great to see my

students in a different light outside of the classroom," Keeler said. "A lot of kids are new to the sport so the fun thing about JV is taking the pressure off of that competition. The feeling when it all comes together for a win is incredible." Keeler added that she is thrilled when athletes find their love for the game and become good at it, especially when they come together as a team. Pictures of Keeler's two dogs-a Bernice Mountain Dog and a pug-grace her classroom and the two pups frequently attend softball games. The Pioneer Valley Excellence in Teaching Award was launched in 2003 by the Harold Grinspoon Foundation in Springfield. It honors 100 teachers each year from Hampden,

Hampshire and Franklin Counties who are nominated by their peers and selected by their school districts. Gifts for winners include a cash prize along with an engraved plaque, significant course tuition incentives at eight participating colleges and universities and memberships to local YMCAs, the Springfield Jewish Community Center and New England Public Media. Keeler is humble about this achievement and quick to share credit with her colleagues. "The talent and the amount of teachers that are willing to put effort into this job, into this school...I think that's where we thrive," Keeler said. "There are a good chunk of people in this building that are really trying to make this the best opportunity for their students."

HRHS presents 'Something Rotten'

WESTHAMPTON – Hampshire Regional High School, 19 Stage Road, presents the hilarious musical production of "Something Rotten" with performances on Friday, March 21 and Saturday, March 22 at 7 p.m. and Sunday, March 23 at 2 p.m. All performances will take place at the Hampshire Regional High School auditorium. Ticket prices are general admission \$15 for adults, \$10 for seniors and children

under age 18 and \$5 for Hampshire Regional High School students and staff. HRHS students and staff may get \$5 tickets through the code available at HrHS or by visiting the main school office. Tickets are available by calling 413-437-5582, emailing hrhstickets@gmail.com, at the door or through this GoFan link: <https://gofan.co/app/school/MA23946>. There is a service fee for all tickets purchased online. The musical program

is grateful for the support of local businesses and organizations, with special thanks to Massachusetts Cultural Council and the Cultural Councils of Chesterfield, Goshen, Southampton, Westhampton, Williamsburg and Worthington for their financial support. "Something Rotten" is presented through special arrangement with Music Theatre International. All authorized performance materials are also supplied by MTI.



Gateway Education Foundation holds trivia night on March 22

HUNTINGTON – The Gateway Education Foundation, 12 Littleville Road, announces their fourth annual trivia night fundraiser that will be held on Saturday, March 22 at 7 p.m. with doors opening at 6 p.m. in the Blandford Town Hall. There will be an exciting trivia competition, fabulous raffle prizes, and a 50/50 raffle. All proceeds support the Funds for Learning Program. The mission of the Gateway Education Foundation is to fund educational endeavors that enhance and inspire students in the Gateway Regional School District. The 100% volunteer-run team is made up

of teachers, parents, school committee members, alumnae and community members. They support additional educational and engaging activities that would be difficult to accomplish within the school budget restraints. Volunteers are welcome. To date, we are proud to have funded over 120 projects totaling over \$125,000, benefiting students in pre-K through grade 12. These teacher mini-grants offer enriching opportunities for students so that they can learn, build confidence and thrive. Activities have included Model United Nations, school-wide musicals, STEM and robotics

activities, an interdisciplinary engineering study, team building activities for middle schoolers as well as numerous visits from authors, museums, ecologists, and storytellers. Tickets will be available online and at the event. People may save money by signing up as a table of eight. There will be an award for the most creative table theme. Snow date is Saturday, March 29. For more information on the event and the Gateway Education Foundation, people may visit www.gatewayeducationfoundation.org or email us at gatewayeducationfoundation@gmail.com.

OTIS
Students are eligible for scholarship

OTIS – The Otis Scholarship Committee encourages all graduating students from Otis to apply. This scholarship will be awarded to one or more Otis students graduating from a high school in Massachusetts, who plan to continue their education by attending a full-time advanced educational institution for two or more years. This will include technical schools, community colleges and four-year colleges or universities. Requirements for the scholarship include: must be an Otis resident, completed application, letter from the applicant and either postmarked, email or hand delivered no later than Tuesday, April 1. Mailing address is Otis Scholarship Committee, P.O. Box 237, One North Main Road, Otis, MA 01253. The letter must include: applicant's chosen career goal (intended major) and what led to this decision; the college(s)

they have applied to or have been accepted to -why selected that choice; how long the course of study will be; describe any extracurricular/volunteer/community service/sports and work and why they feel they deserve/need this award. They may include a student resume. The award will be announced at the Senior Awards Ceremony and given upon proof the student has completed the first semester by passing all subjects and has enrolled for the second semester. Fall schedule and grades along with the spring schedule/bill must include the student's name as well as the name of the school. This information must be postmarked, emailed or hand delivered no later than Jan. 312026. Checks are made payable to the student, not the school. If hand delivered, the applicant must have the Town Clerk date and time stamp their documents.

Lenny Alexander celebrates 99th birthday



Lenny Alexander

The Otis Council on Aging celebrated Lenny Alexander's 99th birthday on Monday, Feb. 24. His actual birthday was Friday, Feb. 21. He has been the holder of Boston Cane for several years, as the town of Otis most senior citizen.

Otis Library set to host cookbook club on March 21

OTIS – The Otis Library, will hold the March Cookbook Club on Friday, March 21 from 12:30-1:30 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room. This month fea-

tures "Make It Ahead" by Ina Garten, a Barefoot Contessa cookbook. People should stop by the circulation desk to pick out a recipe to make for the March meeting.

CHESTER

Hamilton Memorial Library lists events

CHESTER – Hamilton Memorial Library, 195 West Main St., will hold a winter social on Saturday, March 8 from 10 a.m.-noon. This is an opportunity to be around others for some conversation or just to get out of the house. There will be a warm beverage and light refreshments. Library staff will have a puzzle on the table and a deck of cards or bring along knitting, coloring book or other activity to enjoy while

chatting with friends. The Book Club meets on Wednesday, March 19 at 4:30 p.m. They meet every third Wednesday of the month. This month they will be discussing the mystery thriller, "Thin Ice," the first book in the Alaska Wild series by Paige Shelton and beginning the WWII historical fiction novel, "The Postmistress" by Sarah Blake. Light refreshments will be served. Extra copies are available.

Town Clerk announces census, dog license and election information

CHESTER – Town Clerk Terry Donovan is informing residents of Chester that the annual street listing (census) form and dog license forms have been mailed to each household and need to be returned to the Town Clerks office. Dog licenses are required each year for any dog six months or older with the current licenses expiring on Monday, March 31. Residents, who have not received the census or have questions about either form, should call the Town Clerks office at 413-354-6603 or email townclerk@townofchester.net. A rabies clinic will be held Saturday, March 15 from 1-3 p.m. at the Middlefield Town Hall, Skyline Trail, Middlefield. This is for all dogs and cats and is open to other town residents as well. The cost for vaccination is \$20. Middlefield dog licenses

will be available as well. Pet owners should bring their rabies vaccination certificate as well. Chester's Annual Town Election is being held Saturday, May 3 at the Town Hall from 9 a.m.-2 p.m. To run for office, people must be a registered voter of Chester and obtain nomination papers from the town clerks office. Nomination papers must be returned with at least 20 qualified signatures by Friday, March 14. The following positions will be on the Saturday, May 3 ballot. The positions listed are three-year terms unless otherwise noted and are: Select Board, Board of Health, School Committee, Moderator for one year term, Electric Light Commissioner, Water Commissioner for two year term, Water Commissioner for three year term and two positions for Library Trustee.



In honor of Dr. Seuss's birthday, the Hamilton Memorial Library held a special reading event. Guest reader Maryanna Broman read the favorite, "Horton Hears a Who."



Children make a craft as part of a celebration of Dr. Seuss's birthday at the Hamilton Memorial Library recently.



This is an example of the craft made by the children at an event held at the Hamilton Memorial Library in Chester. Submitted photos

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REGION



Joshua Garcia, Holyoke City Mayor, with Suzanne Parker, Executive Director for Girls Inc. of the Valley, unveil the Girl Day flag to which will be flown at City Hall to celebrate Engineering Week.



Girls Inc. of the Valley participants and staff came together in the City Council Chambers to celebrate E-Week.
Courtesy photos by Hilary Lynn Photography

Girls Inc. of the Valley hosted Girl Day 2025 at city hall

HOLYOKE – Girls Inc. of the Valley hosted Girl Day 2025, on Thursday, Feb. 20 at Holyoke City Hall as part of

Engineer Week celebrations. This event aimed to inspire and empower girls to explore careers in Science,

Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics through engaging activities, mentorship and educational experiences.

Girl Day aligns with DiscoverE’s nationwide initiative to spark interest in engineering and encourage girls to

imagine their futures in these impactful fields. Girls Inc. is proud to connect young participants with inspiring role

models and hands-on learning opportunities designed to build curiosity, confidence, and a passion for STEM.

PUBLIC NOTICES

Town of Williamsburg Planning Board Legal Notice
The Williamsburg Planning Board is herewith giving notice that it will hold a public hearing on **Monday March 24, 2025 at 7:00PM** at the Town Office Building, 141 Main Street, Haydenville, MA. The hearing is to consider proposed changes to Zoning Bylaw Section 9.1 on the topic of Accessory Apartments, also known as Accessory Dwelling Units. The changes are to align Williamsburg’s zoning with Chapter 150, Section 7 and 8 of the Massachusetts Acts of 2024. These changes will make Accessory Apartments permissible by right in all zones and owner occupancy will no longer be required. The full text of the proposed changes will be available in the Town Clerk’s Office and on the town website www.burgy.org

Stephen Smith
Planning Board Chair
03/06, 03/13/2025

Public Notice of Federal Funding: Historic Preservation Fund Paul Bruhn Historic Revitalization Grants Program
WITHIN THE TOWNS OF BLANDFORD, GOSHEN, and MONSON (HAMPDEN COUNTY, MASSACHUSETTS); HADLEY, SOUTHAMPTON, and WARE (HAMPSHIRE COUNTY, MASSACHUSETTS); AND HARDWICK (WORCESTER COUNTY, MASSACHUSETTS)
December 31, 2024
To: All interested Agencies, Groups and Individuals

This is to give notice that the Pioneer Valley Regional Ventures Center has provided \$650,000 in sub-grants through a competitive selection process for eligible historic preservation projects (Grantees) in the Hampden County Towns of Blandford, Goshen and Monson; the Hampshire County Towns of Hadley, Southampton, and Ware; and the Worcester County town of Hardwick. The Pioneer Valley Planning Commission will manage the program. These projects are being supported in part by a grant award by the National Park Service, Department of the Interior, through the Historic Preservation Fund Paul Bruhn Historic Revitalization Grants Program. For more information, visit go.nps.gov/grants. All properties are listed on the National Register of Historic Places and work will meet the *Secretary of the Interior’s Standards and Guidelines for Archaeology and Historic Preservation*. All activities undertaken on the properties during the grant period, regardless of funding source, are considered part of the Federal undertaking for Section 106 purposes. The Grantees shall comply with all applicable federal, state, and local procurement laws and requirements for the use of sub-grant funds to complete the projects. In accordance

with 2CFR200.318 and MGL c. 149A, the Grantees will conduct a formal procurement process to select a qualified contractor, or contractors, to complete the pre-approved scope of work.
The following entities and properties have received funding: Blandford Historical Society, 4 North Street, Blandford, \$70,000 for roof replacement; Town of Goshen, 42 Main Street, Goshen, \$89,000 for masonry repair, repairs to the main entry stairs, gutter installation, and kitchen ADA compliance; Town of Monson, 198 Main Street, Monson, \$100,000 for interior plaster repair and painting in the grand hall; Workshop13, 13 Church Street, Ware, \$100,000 for an interior lift to support ADA compliance to the second floor gallery; Porter-Phelps-Huntington Foundation, 113 River Drive, Hadley, \$100,000 for planning and stabilization of the Charles Porter Phelps House ell; Town of Southampton, 8 East Street, Southampton, \$96,000 for exterior masonry repointing and restoration of the historic main entrance steps; and Town of Hardwick, 32 Common Street, Hardwick, \$95,000 for repairs to the roof, exterior masonry, windows and bell tower, and exterior painting. Funding is intended to support the preservation of National Register-listed historic community anchor buildings and serve as a catalyst for commercial and social activity and greater investment to benefit local economies. Any individual,

group, or agency may submit written comments on the proposed activity or request further information by contacting Shannon Walsh, Historic Preservation Planner for the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, 413-657-5052, email swalsh@pvpc.org. 03/06/2025

TOWN OF HUNTINGTON Public Hearing Wednesday, March 26, 2025 5:00 PM Town Hall 24 Russell Road, Huntington Proposed FY25 CDBG Application
The Town of Huntington, in association with the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, will conduct a public hearing regarding the FY25 Community Development Block Grant Program. The hearing will take place at **5:00 PM on Wednesday, March 26th, 2025, in person at the Town Hall, 24 Russell Road, Huntington, MA 01050**. If the meeting is cancelled due to inclement weather, the hearing will take place during the rescheduled Selectboard meeting.
The public is encouraged to attend this hearing to discuss the town’s FY25 application to the Massachusetts Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities for up to \$850,000 in available Community Development Block Grant Funds. All persons with questions or comments regarding the grant application will have an opportunity to be heard. Those unable to attend can send

written comments to the Huntington Selectboard, 24 Russell Road, PO Box 430, Huntington, MA 01050, Attn: Jennifer Pelouquin.
The Town is encouraging input on community needs and projects which would benefit from grant funding. Projects currently being considered include the phase II construction of the Stanton Avenue Infrastructure Improvement Project, Blandford Hill Infrastructure Improvement Project, and a Town ADA Self-Assessment. Additional projects may be discussed and may be included in the grant application.
Persons who require special accommodations for the hearing should contact the town at least one week prior to the hearing date at (413) 512-5200. For further information contact Sarah Maroney at PVPC at (413) 781-6045 or smaroney@pvpc.org. 03/06, 03/13/2025

LEGAL NOTICE TOWNS OF RUSSELL Public Hearing Tuesday, March 18, 2025 6:30 PM in the Russell Town Hall, 65 Main Street, Russell, MA Proposed FY 2025 CDBG Application
The Russell Select Board will conduct a Public Hearing on **March 18, 2025, at 6:30 PM in Russell Town Hall, 65 Main Street, Russell, MA** regarding a proposed FY2025 application by the Towns of Russell, Chester,

Huntington and Middlefield to the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development for up to \$1,250,000 in Community Development Block Grant funds. The Town of Russell is the lead community. The projects under consideration include:
• Woronoco Village Construction Project (Russell)
• Housing Rehabilitation (Russell, Chester, Huntington, and Middlefield)
• Public Social Services (Russell, Chester, Huntington, and Middlefield)
If awarded, the Town of Russell will be responsible for administration of the grant program, with assistance from the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission.
All persons with questions or comments regarding the grant application will have an opportunity to be heard. Persons who require special accommodations to attend the hearing should contact the Town at (413) 862-3265 several days prior to the hearing. Those unable to attend can send written comments to Joseph Hagopian or Evan Mastroianni at PVPC at 60 Congress Street, Springfield, MA 01104, or jhagopian@pvpc.org and emastroianni@pvpc.org.
*In the event of a snowstorm, the Public Hearing will be held on April 1, 2025, at 6:00 PM in the Russell Town Hall, 65 Main Street, Russell, MA. 03/06/2025

LEGAL NOTICE TOWN OF HUNTINGTON ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS PUBLIC HEARING
The Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) of the Town of Huntington will hold 2 public hearings on **March 25, 2025 beginning at 6:00 pm** in Stanton Hall.
The first Public Hearing is scheduled for 6:00 pm for the Special Permit Application of Greyson Dice Lyon of 11 Circuit Road North, West Yarmouth, MA to operate a tattoo shop for select clients at property he co-owns at 25 Allen Coit Road, Huntington, Parcel# 508-83-0.
The second Public Hearing is scheduled for 6:15 pm for the Special Permit Application of Jonathan Groff of 38 Russell Road to operate a new trailer sales, repair, parts and possibly rental business at 38 Russell Road (former Smith’s Sled Shop), Huntington, Parcel # H3-28-0.
Both Special Permit Applications will be available to view **by appointment** in the office of the Selectboard during regular business hours, as well as at the Public Hearings.
See a separate Planning Board Public Hearing Notice in next week’s paper for a **Public Hearing the same evening for Zoning Bylaw changes**.
ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS
TOWN OF HUNTINGTON
03/06, 03/13/2025

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HILLTOWN HIKING ADVENTURES



At the ski tow, Liz holds a photo taken in the 1930s at the same location.



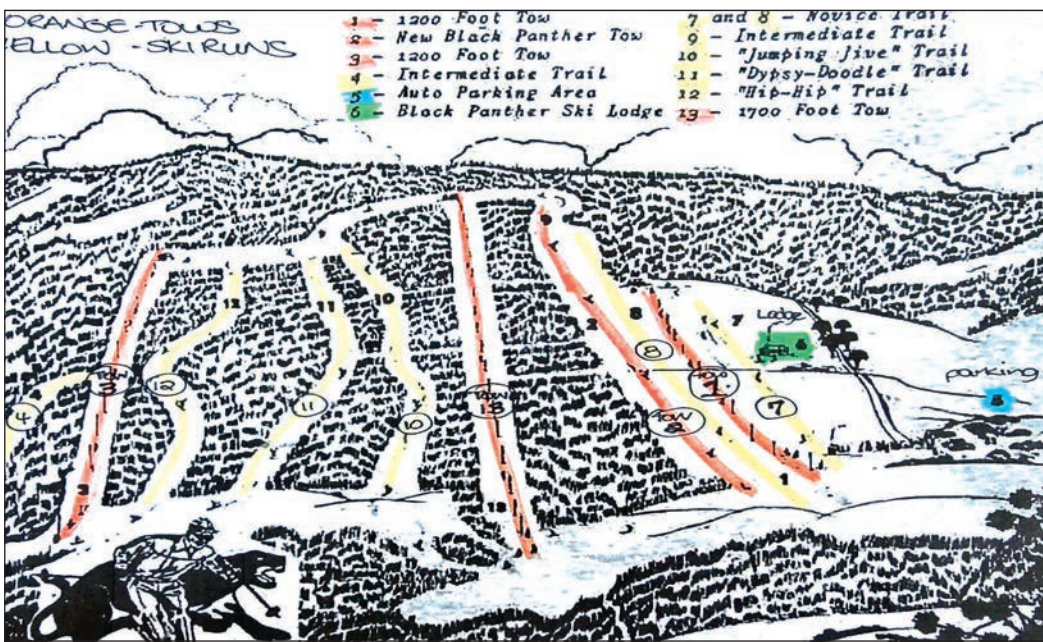
This is the Western Massachusetts Hilltown Hikers best attempt of the YMCA at the Black Panther site.

Hikers trek old ski area on snowshoes

Black Panther, the lost ski area which originated in the 1930s on the Burr Farm is now part of the Knightville Dam in Huntington.

Saturday's Western Massachusetts Hilltown Hikers toured the ski tows and ski runs complete with the documented history and a visit to Dexter Lyman's farm at the top of the hill. There was a special visit from hilltown historian Jeff Penn, who shared his incredible stories of the rope tow.

It was glorious weather to snowshoe and break the trail. They observed gorgeous views from above the Knightville flood plain in the bright sun and 30 degree temperatures.



This is a color coded map of the lost Black Panther Ski Area in Huntington.

Sbmitted photos



Greg is designated sweep for the group hike.

BECKET

MassDOT announces I-90 bridge work westbound

BECKET – The Massachusetts Department of Transportation announces it will be conducting bridge work utilizing lane closures on I-90 westbound at mile marker 18.4.

The work will take place now through Friday, March 7 during the hours of 7 a.m.-3:30 p.m. each day. Drivers traveling through this area should expect delays, reduce

speed and use caution. Appropriate signage and messaging will be in place to guide drivers through the work area. 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 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.

WESTFIELD

Alzheimer's Support Group scheduled to meet March 26

WESTFIELD – Alzheimer's Association Support Group will meet Wednesday, March 26 at 6 p.m. at Armbrook Village Senior Living and Memory Support Community, 551 North Road.

Caregivers and family members are invited to enjoy a light dinner and to

share their personal experiences and strategies for communicating with their loved ones. The public is welcome. To join this group, people should call 413-568-0000 or email reception@armbrookvillage.com. Groups are held on the last Wednesday of the month.



MONTGOMERY

Grace Hall Memorial Library lists events

MONTGOMERY – The Grace Hall Memorial Library, 161 Main Road, will host an author talk with Steven V. Cormier on his latest book "Sacrificial Land" Westfield River, on Saturday, March 8 at 1 p.m. at the Montgomery Town Hall, 161 Main Road.

Cormier will give a deep dive on the history and impact of the Westfield River and the former towns of Knightville, Indian Hollow and Littleville. This event is sponsored by the Montgomery Cultural Council.

On Thursday March 20 at 1:30 p.m. people may join the Montgomery Library and the Hilltown Community Ambulance as they present "Hands Only CPR" and AED Class in the Town Hall. Registration is required by either emailing montgomerylibrary@yahoo.com or calling 413-862-3894.

Cook Book Club will meet on Thursday, March 20 at 6:30 p.m. This month's theme is "Exploring your Culinary Heritage." People may prepare a family recipe from the homeland. The

library will have various cookbooks to explore, then on March 20 bring a dish to share with other cooks.

The library will host a no sew quilted Easter egg craft with Pieces to Patches Quilt shop is on Sunday, March 23 at 1 p.m. This is a fun holiday craft. Seats are limited, so people should sign up before Thursday, March 20. This event is sponsored by Library Friends. The library is open Tuesday from 10 a.m.-5:30 p.m., Thursday from 4-8 p.m. and Saturday from 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Athenaeum hosts art exhibit

WESTFIELD –The Westfield Athenaeum, 6 Elm St., announces the opening of an exhibit of the paintings of Kim Carlino, one of the most dynamic artists working in Western Massachusetts.

The exhibit opens on Monday, March 10 and runs through Saturday, May 3. The opening reception will take place on Tuesday, March 13 from 6-8 p.m. The exhibit and reception are open to the public and all are encouraged to come meet the artist and view the art. The Westfield Athenaeum Art Gallery is open Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m.-8 p.m. and on Friday and Saturday from 9 a.m.-5 p.m. The paintings featured in

the exhibit are for sale and the proceeds benefit the artist and serve as a fundraiser for the Athenaeum.

Kim Carlino is a painter, public artist, curator and podcast host of Artist & Place from Easthampton. She received her Bachelor of Fine Arts from the University of Massachusetts in 2011. Carlino has exhibited nationally and internationally including shows at the University Museum of Contemporary Art in Amherst, Site Brooklyn Gallery, Alfa Gallery in Miami, and was a UAE sponsored artist for the 2024 Ras Al Khaimah Art Festival.

Carlino has been creating public art since 2014 and has completed

ed numerous mural commissions, including works in Marshalltown, Iowa, Springfield, Colorado Springs, the NYC Department of Transportation and the Isenberg Project in Boston.

Carlino's work utilizes eco-geometric abstraction in order to explore themes of place, poetics and experience. She uses abstraction to synthesize daily experiences into visual renderings of relationships of color and form. She comments that "I look for ways to evoke the world around me in purely sensorial ways with no direct translation of these forms." Her work is bold, dynamic, colorful and yet inspires deep contemplation.



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