

Country Journal

Devoted to the Needs of the Hilltowns

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

A TURLEY PUBLICATION | www.turley.com

March 20, 2025 | Vol. 46, No. 47 | 75¢

www.countryjournal.turley.com

BLANDFORD

COA offers St. Patrick's Day fare

By Mary Kronholm
Correspondent

Once again Kitchen Cuisinière extraordinaire Joann Martin dazzled appetites for a traditional St. Patrick's Day feast of corned beef and cabbage with carrots, potatoes and a slice of her family's Irish Soda Bread.

The soda bread recipe is a long-held secret of her family; sweet rather than the savory variety that relies on caraway seeds for its flavor.

According to Martin, she prepared 40 pounds of

COA, page 5



Waiting for the ok to line up for corned beef and cabbage, from the left, Sue and Ron Racine, Peter Langmore, Dawn Schile, Co and TJ Cousineau. Turley photo by Mary Kronholm



Servers Deb Lundgren and Judith MacKinnon fill plates for Lucia Sullivan, followed by Mary Mangini and TJ Cousineau.



Wanda Deitner has her corned beef and cabbage.

HUNTINGTON

Gateway budget vote postponed

By Wendy Long
Correspondent

The Gateway Regional School Committee held their monthly meeting on Wednesday, March 12.

While they had enough members present to pass policies and hear reports, the big agenda item passing the Fiscal Year 2026 budget did not have the two thirds attendance required for a budget vote. It was a relatively small public turnout for a budget vote, with no town officials present and only ten people in the audience of the Gateway Performing Arts Center, most of whom were district administrators.

One parent from Chester Elementary School spoke during the public input session. She reported her son came home from school saying that two students entered his classroom, started screaming and throwing things around, with the rest of the class having to get behind the teacher's desk.

"When he told me that today, I didn't want to send him to school tomorrow," she said. She recognized that substitute principal Mark Folta "is

trying, but things are not in good shape." Her son also told her that students, who are causing trouble are being rewarded with an upcoming trip to Six Flags or by going out and playing basketball with Folta.

School Committee member Jeana Briggs, who also has a child at Chester Elementary School, responded, "I told her not to come tonight. You guys don't care" waving toward the rest of the committee. Parents have been coming to school committee meetings since February with concerns about the absence of Principal Vanna Maffuccio, who was placed on an administrative leave in December.

The School Committee held their annual budget hearing on March 5, to present the budget to town officials and the public and answer questions. Voting on the coming year's budget typically takes place the following week, but requires that 67% percent of the committee's seats vote in the affirmative, in order to pass. Superintendent Kristen Smidy later explained that Huntington

BUDGET, page 2

HUNTINGTON

HFD launches free app for the community

By Wendy Long
Correspondent

Fire Chief Joshua Ellinger and Assistant Chief John McVeigh announce a

new app for community use that will improve residents' ability to quickly communicate with responders in an emergency.

Called MyLocalSafety, the new app is free to all members of the community and Huntington Fire encourages everyone to download the app to their mobile devices. Also known as the MyLS app, this app allows users to securely upload information about their family, pets and property that emergency responders can access before they arrive on scene.

Each person is free to decide how much information to upload, but should

consider any particular needs of the elderly, disabled or children in the home that will help save valuable time. Residents can also provide information



about potential hazards to responders at the home, such as the location of propane or gas tanks, shut-offs for gas and electricity or any unique issues such as driveway gates, long or narrow driveways or the presence of solar panels on the roof. This information can greatly aid emergency personnel.

Huntington Fire will be holding several question and answer meetings this month to demonstrate how the app works and discuss the benefits. These will take place at Stanton Hall on Saturdays, March 22 and March 29

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HUNTINGTON

Select Board discusses canoe race, dog kennels

By Wendy Long
Correspondent

The Select Board met on Wednesday, March 12 at 5 p.m. in Town Hall, with Chair Roger Booth, members Bill Hathaway and John McVeigh, and Town Administrator Jennifer Pelouin all present.

Updates on events for this year's 70th Anniversary Canoe Race celebration and a new system for licensing dog kennels in town were among the agenda items reviewed. Kathryn Koegel updated the board on some of the special events leading up to the platinum jubilee race. An Eras Dance is planned for Saturday, April 12 at Stanton Hall from 6-9 p.m.

Music will cover the past 70 years and people are invited to dress up from their favorite era; a prize for best costume will be awarded. Part celebration and part fundraiser, \$20 per family is a suggested donation. Koegel said the committee has decided that the chicken dance will serve as the official hilltown dance at the event saying, "I think we need silly right now" Pizza

and punch (no alcohol) will be served.

Koegel said they have 130 racers signed up so far, but are short on sponsors. Police presence alone will cost \$9,000 on race day, Koegel said. Also, according to the race's Facebook Page, the first event of a three-part speaker's series will take place on Thursday, March 20 from 6:30-8 p.m. at Stanton Hall. The topic will be the Indigenous History of the Westfield River—a historical look at the first people to live along, fish, and paddle the Westfield River. This event is free, but a \$10 donation is suggested to support the canoe races.

Koegel is also part of a group that has also been working on restoring river access for the public. Booth said the Westfield River was once named the Number 1 fly fishing river in New England, and Number 10 in the country.

In recent years, pub-



Town Clerk Michelle Fieldstad-Booth

lic access to the Westfield River has been eliminated and Mass. Fish and Wildlife is no longer stocking the river as a result. A "Take Us To The River Rally" is planned for Sunday, May 18 and attendees should come prepared to discuss how trash can be managed if access is reopened. American Whitewater, Trout Unlimited and the Westfield River Fly Fishing groups will step up with others to do trash clean up, Koegel said. She has also spoken with a trash company that routinely travels up Route 20 and might pick up trash in exchange for publicity. Booth reiterated the need to get state officials together as part of planning a solution.

Koegel also said she was organizing a flash mob on the town green at noon on Saturday, March 29, where attendees will receive copies of the United States Constitution and take turns reading it aloud.

Fitness class request

Hannah O'Connell then met with the board to see if she could resume leading the fitness classes at Stanton Hall that had been disbanded during Covid. Booth explained that they are no longer letting businesses use Stanton Hall for business purposes.

Executive session

The board moved into executive session to discuss the deployment of or strategy regarding security personnel or devices.

Dog kennels

When they resumed, Town Clerk Michelle Fieldstad-Booth met to discuss a proposed plan for dog kennel licenses and inspections to meet "Ollie's Law," enacted last September. Dog kennels must be inspected annually with information submitted to the state by June 1. Huntington has eight or nine kennels that are known to the Town Clerk. Fieldstad-Booth and the board reviewed a proposed letter informing kennel owners

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HILLTOWN HIKING ADVENTURES



Karen, Stephanie and Ed stop for a photo above the Tyringham Valley.



Tom looks out at the third vista on the Cobble trail



The trailhead begins in a spacious old field looking at the Cobble.



A Western Massachusetts Hilltown Hikers stand on the infamous Rabbit Rock.



Melanie, Stephanie and Tom look out over the Tyringham Village with their canine friends.



Hikers go up and over Tyringham Cobble

Even the parking lot is beautiful.
Submitted photos

Tyringham Cobble on Jerusalem Road an amazingly beautiful geological treasure in the Tyringham Valley just outside of Lee.

Three miles of a main loop goes up and over the Cobble formation passing Rabbit Rock a sandstone

formation with a section of the Appalachian Trail sharing this path making options for hiking more mileage through cow fields to the North and along the fast moving Hop Brook heading South. Originally known as "Cobble Hill," Tyringham Cobble encompasses 206-acres of land and is managed by the Trustees of Reservations. In 2008, a section of the 2,175-mile-long.

Appalachian National Scenic Trail was re-routed over the summit ledges of the cobble. What's somewhat unusual about Tyringham Cobble is that the oldest rocks are found on top-not on the bottom as you would expect. Geologists conjecture that the cobble was dislodged from a nearby hill and flipped over during what can only be described as a violent or cataclysmic event. (Courtesy "Berkshire Destinations Christy Butler.")

It was later researched and found that it is actually a thrust fault, which is a break in the Earth's crust, across which older rocks are pushed above younger

rocks. In the early 19th century Cobble Hill was cleared of the forests to make room for agriculture and pasture land by Shaker settlers.

In the 1930s when Olivia Cutting James and a group of friends purchased parcels on the hill and surrounding pastures to protect it from development in response to a proposed ski area. James' group called themselves "The Cobblers" and they created an informal association of tenants in com her group donated their land in 1963.

Can you name all the Cobbles in Massachusetts? There are only a handful. This place is a must go anytime of the year, even the parking lot is beautiful.



It was 55 degrees as Western Massachusetts Hilltown Hikers trek through snow.



Cybill and Frankie, trail dogs, want to know why Stephanie is hugging this very large tree on the Appalachian Trail.

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Representative Richard Neal (District 1) (neal.house.gov)
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Representative James McGovern (District 2) (mcgovern.house.gov)
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