

Country Journal

Devoted to the Needs of the Hilltowns

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Middlefield, Montgomery, Otis, Plainfield, Russell, Sandisfield, Westhampton, Williamsburg, Worthington

A TURLEY PUBLICATION | www.turley.com

April 17, 2025 | Vol. 46, No. 51 | 75¢

www.countryjournal.turley.com

HUNTINGTON

Students steal the show at state house

By Wendy Long
Correspondent

A contingent of Gateway students and staff traveled to the Boston State House on April 8 to testify before the Joint Committee on Ways and Means about the need to equitably fund rural schools.

Eighth graders from Christopher Mosher’s social studies class at Gateway Regional School and fourth graders from Chester Elementary School advocated for changes to the Chapter 70 formula.

A list served letter was released statewide after the hearing from Julie Kelley, Research Analyst at the Massachusetts Association of Regional Schools. She wrote, “The fourth grade Gateway students completely stole the show though, by testifying that less than 50% of districts benefit from the current funding formula and 50% is a failing grade. That comment immediately hit home to everyone in attendance and was extremely impactful.”

Eighth graders spoke about their personal experiences in attending a school that doesn’t have



A contingent of students, staff and parents from the Gateway Regional School District traveled to the State House on Tuesday, April 8 to testify on the need for rural school aid. Submitted photo

STATE HOUSE, page 3

BLANDFORD

Select Board hear from other boards about BESS

By Mary Kronholm
Correspondent

The Select Board heard from the Conservation Commission, Assessors, Planning Board and Zoning Board of appeals and others regarding potential Battery Energy Storage Systems in Blandford at last week’s meeting.

There are two locations being put forward on North Blandford Road on both sides of the road near or adjacent to the electric sub-station near George Millard Road. One is a 200-watt facility which means 200 units.

The concern most discussed was possible fire; the town’s volunteer firefighters are not equipped to work a battery storage fire. Another concern is that both locations are in “the footprint of Springfield Water and Sewer Commission,”

or near watershed areas that could affect Cobble Mountain Reservoir. Water Resources Manager Nicole Sanford from Springfield Water and Sewer Commission was at the meeting. The locations are 2.4 miles from the reservoir, according to Sanford, who said she had “more questions.”

Conservation Commission Chair Dick Gates told the board that Eversource is doing soil borings around the sub-station, indicating “geotechnical work,” possibly “looking to expand that facility.”

According to Gates, the battery storage units are about the size of a tractor trailer shipping container. “They could be lithium batteries...we don’t know,” he said. As far as firefighting, there are “standards that must

BESS, page 6

HILLTOWNS



Line ‘em up. Canoes are put into place for the start of the Classic Race at the MassDOT Maintenance Yard off of the green bridge in Huntington. The 70th annual wildwater race will take place Saturday, April 19. File photo

Wildwater races to be memorable

By Wendy Long
Correspondent

Saturday, April 19 will mark the 70th anniversary of the Westfield Wildwater Races, where canoeists, kayakers and even stand up paddle boarders will take part in what is the longest continuously running race in the country.

Online race registrations stopped on Wednesday, April 16, but racers can still sign up on race day with a \$75 registration fee. “Every year we’re getting better at it,” said Race Chairman Harry Rock, when talking about the months it takes to put

this day together. “Every year we learn new ways to improve safety and efficiency. It must be safe. It must be fun. It must be memorable.”

Both the expert and classic races start in Huntington. Expert racers will gather at Knightville Dam with their first paddler starting at 9:30 a.m. The Classic Race starts at the MassDOT maintenance yard under the green bridge on Route 112 at 11 a.m. There will be a racer meeting there at 10:30 a.m.

Rock says that this year’s race will be the safest one in the group’s

seven decade history, building upon improvements planned between Huntington Police, Russell Police, the Massachusetts State Police Barracks and local fire departments. Once again, there will be an Incident Command Center at Russell Police Headquarters to coordinate any needed emergency response.

As in the past, Hilltown Community Ambulance will have a dedicated ambulance positioned along the race course to respond if necessary. Westfield Police Cadets

WILDWATER, page 2

HUNTINGTON

Too much to complete: select board to meet next week

By Wendy Long
Correspondent

Agendas at recent select board meetings have been extremely packed and the Wednesday, April 9 meeting was no exception.

Although the board typically meets every two weeks, Town Administrator Jennifer Peloquin suggested fitting in an extra meeting on Wednesday, April 16 beginning at 4:30 p.m. to wrap up important items. This meeting will precede an All Boards meeting for updates on new policies, the budget, grants, cybersecurity and

transitioning to a new pay week effective July 1. The all boards meeting will begin in Stanton Hall at 6 p.m.

Pole hearings

Two agenda items were put to rest at last week’s meeting, concerning the installation of two new poles belonging to Eversource and Verizon on Blandford Hill Road and the installation of underground lines on a section of that road. This was a continuance of Jan. 29 public hearings, during which concerns were raised over the location of the poles and trenches.

Electrical design engineer Matt Pronovost was back, along with property owners Andrew Pavlica and Allen Pavlica, to present updated plans. These were approved by the select board, but the Pavlica brothers also raised concern about another pole on the road. It will be looked at but cannot be part of this project, which is already budgeted for. Chair Roger Booth and member Bill Hathaway voted unanimously and signed the required paperwork; member John McVeigh was not present.

SELECT BOARD, page 3



Brothers Allen Pavlica and Andrew Pavlica attended the public hearing continuance regarding utility poles and underground wires on Blandford Hill Road; to the right is electrical design engineer Matt Pronovost. Turley photo by Wendy Long



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GOSHEN

Quilt to be raffled at spaghetti dinner, fundraiser

GOSHEN – People are invited on Saturday, April 26 for a spaghetti dinner and raffle fundraiser hosted by the Goshen Open Space Committee at the Goshen Town Hall, 42 Main St.

Spruce Corner Restaurant will cater the dinner.. Doors open at 4:30 p.m. for purchase of raffle tickets. Dinner is served at 5:30 p.m.and raffle drawing is at 6:30 p.m.

Raffle prizes include local maple syrup, portrait painting (\$500 value), quilts of assorted sizes, themed baskets, gift cards to local venues and much more.

Tickets will also be available for their annual quilt raffle. This year’s hand-crafted quilt encompasses strips on the diagonal surrounded by a turquoise and yellow lattice. The color scheme will brighten any room it is displayed in. Tickets are \$5. The quilt will be on display. The full/queen size quilt was pieced and donated by Lorraine Brisson and professionally quilted by Sue’s Quilt Studio, Chester, Vermont.

The mission of the Re-imagine Goshen Center project is to create a vibrant town center that provides a recreational, cultural and social gathering place that welcomes people of all ages and abilities; promotes community pride through beautification of our town center and provides a landscape to encourage physical activity and social gatherings.

Renovations to the existing park, will begin this spring, include drilling a well, construction of a utility shed and installation of hard-scaping.

The Open Space

Committee extends its gratitude to all sponsors, donors and volunteers, who have supported this exciting project. They look forward to future collaborations with community members. While they have community preservation funding and Community Project Funding from the Massachusetts state legislature, every donation helps them reach their financial goal.

To register, people should mail a check with email address (for confirmation) to Town of Goshen, Open Space Committee, 40 Main St., Goshen, MA 01032. They should make check payable to: Town of Goshen and include in the Memo: Re-imagine Goshen.

To learn more about the Re-imagine Goshen Center project or to donate, people may visit thewebsite at www.goshen-ma.us/departments/open-space-committee/. For inquiries or to volunteer, they



This full/queen quilt with diagonal strip blocks in a turquoise lattice and piano key border will be raffled at the Re-imageine Goshen Center fundraiser spaghetti dinner and raffles on Saturday, April 26

Submitted photo

may send an email to reimag-goshen01032@gmail.com.



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.

HILLTOWNS

Public Health District hosts health fair

HILLTOWNS – The Western County Public Health District will host a Health Fair at the Southwick Town Hall Auditorium on Friday, May 16 from 9:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

People are encourage to bring a non-perishable item for the Community Food Pantry. There will be information on home health, inde-

pendent/assisted living, the state’s 911 program, health insurance, food insecurity and massage therapy.

Local maple syrup will be available to purchase.

Also, present will be the nutrition program from the Food Bank with the “Smoothie Bike”.It is possible to blend smoothies while pedaling.

PLEASE RECYCLE THIS NEWSPAPER

WILDWATER

will again be stationed along the river, kayakers will be posted near the portages and four rescue kayakers positioned with the Russell Fire Department at the Hill and Dale Rapids with throw ropes to pull in capsized paddlers.

A dedicated radio frequency continues to be in place for all of these teams, which was set up by the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency; the ZELLO Push to Talk app will be on the phones of volunteers, who aren’t issued radios.

Last year saw a medical emergency as one paddler finished the race in Woronoco. Based on that experience, the Classic Race finish line in Woronoco will

have a medical station this year with a triage registered nurse to assess the physical condition of paddlers coming off the river and provide immediate care if needed. The Russell Fire Department rescue truck will also be staged at the finish line to immediately assist if needed.

Safety for racers was also covered in depth at the two race clinics held on Sunday, April 6 and Saturday, April 12. Racers were taught about proper clothing, safe boat setup, basic stroke techniques, how to run the rapids and what to do if they capsize.

Experienced paddlers also guided people down the river to learn more about the Classic Race: how to navigate the rapids, where to

MassDOT announces I-90 repair work

The Massachusetts Department of Transportation announces multiple construction operations on I90 eastbound and westbound for bridge painting and repair, tree trimmin, and guardrail work.

The work will take place now through Friday, April 18.

In West Stockbridge, bridge painting work will occur on I90 eastbound and westbound at mile marker 1.3, utilizing lane closures now through Friday, April 18 from 7 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

each day. Bridge repair work will be conducted on I90 eastbound between mile markers 2.0 and 3.0, utilizing lane closures now through Friday, April 18, from 7 a.m.-3 p.m. each day.

Guardrail work will occur on I90 eastbound between mile markers 0.8 and 2.0, utilizing lane closures, now through Thursday night, April 17 from 7 p.m.-5:30 a.m. the following morning, ending Friday morning, April 18 at 5:30 a.m.

In Blandford tree trim-

ming work will be conducted on I90 eastbound at mile marker 31.0, utilizing lane closures now through Friday, April 18 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, trav-

elers are encouraged to: Download the Mass511 mobile app 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. Dial 511 and select a route to hear real-time conditions. Follow @MassDOT on X (formerly known as Twitter) to receive regular updates on road and traffic conditions.

from page 1

enter and exit the two portages and how to find the calmer option: a by-pass to the Hill and Dale Rapids.

Race partners were also advised to have a “capsize plan” if their boat dumps, which includes things like swimming to the Route 20/ road side of the river, hanging onto one’s paddle and not standing up in the water until one’s hand is touching bottom. Personal floatation devices are required for all paddlers and helmets are required for all kayakers and stand up paddle boarders.

Air floatation devices/bags are highly recommended for canoes and kayaks to assist with self rescue if they capsize. Participants should have a bailer and spare paddle in the boat, and two 8

foot lines attached to each end of their canoe. These lines can be coiled up and taped down to help pull their boat to shore if needed.

Spectator parking and viewing

Saturday, April 19 is also an important and fun day for spectators. Families, friends, and general enthusiasts are advised to consider the following viewing locations. People may park at the Hilltown Community Health Center and cross Route 20 to watch the racers pass the pull off. Please note that parking at the pull off is for volunteers and race officials only and will also be used for expert racers to load their boats as they finish.

Another recommend-

ed viewing spot is near the Main Street Bridge in the center of Russell; please park on Frog Hollow Road. They can also park and view at the Whipperton pull off on Route 20, which is across from the old Whipperton golf course.

The Hill and Dale Rapids is one of the most exciting places to watch the Classic Race. This location promises some of the most exciting action and spills, but involves a steep hillside that requires good footwear and physical condition. People must park at the Russell VFW and walk down Route 20 to the pull off near Countryside Woodcraft. They will have to climb over the guardrail and then descend a steep hill to get

to the river. Take care to not send rocks crashing down to people below or trying to come up. Sensible footwear such as good hiking boots is helpful. Keep in mind that it will be cooler by the river so make sure to have warm layers.

Race celebration

Strathmore Park on Route 20 will be open to racers, families, friends and the public in the afternoon. An awards ceremony will take place there once everyone is off the water and accounted for. Alcohol is not allowed at this event. There will be at least two food trucks and a DJ for music, along with face painting for children. Awards should be announced around 3 p.m.

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CHESTER

Hamilton Memorial Library announces upcoming events

CHESTER – During April School Vacation on Tuesday, April 22 Laurel Lenski is back for a special child friendly even at Hamilton Memorial Library, 195 West Main St.

Her joyful energy is contagious and always gets the fun going through creative play, perfect for engaging children in meaningful skill building. Her programs are generously sponsored by the Massachusetts Cultural Council.

On Wednesday April 23, children may drop in between 1-6 p.m. for the open LEGO bin. They will get their imagination and creative juices flowing by making their own creations. LEGO idea books will be available to help inspire.

Falconer’s Journey in Mongolia

People are invited to a special slideshow presentation by Massachusetts falconer Erin Shanley as she shares her experiences living, hunting with golden eagles and riding horseback through remote, breathtaking landscapes with the nomadic Mongolian Eagle Hunters on Saturday April 26 at 11a.m. in the Chester Town Hall. People should RSVP by calling 413-354-7808. This program is generously sponsored by the Massachusetts Cultural Council.



Cornerstone Christian Church held their first ever Easter Egg Hunt in downtown Chester. Children are seen gathering eggs with a variety of goodies at Chester’s Memorial Park. Following the egg hunt everyone returned to the church community room for delicious snacks, ice cream, crafts and fellowship. The Cornerstone Christian Church holds services every Sunday beginning at 10 a.m.

Submitted photo

HUNTINGTON

SELECT BOARD

Community Compact grant

Water and Sewer Commission Chair H. Daniel Oliveira, Commissioner Karon Hathaway and Administrative Coordinator Laura Driscoll met with the board to discuss a \$157,000 Community Compact IT grant for a Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition system at the water plant. A series of votes had the board unanimously accepting the grant, declaring Pelouin the authorized signatory and having the project managed by the water & sewer department.

They also authorized Pelouin to sign a contract with Tighe & Bond, once the state grant comes back signed. Two other items-a senior tax workoff and a water issue at the fire station-were deferred until next week’s meeting.

Full time Fire Chief

Talks continued with Fire Chief Joshua Ellinger, who has proposed making his position full time in the coming Fiscal Year. The select board feels that the town cannot afford to include the full time salary in the general budget. This would also make the position eligible for health insurance and there is already some concern over that line due to a number of currently open positions. Ellinger had drafted a warrant article on this for consideration at

Annual Town Meeting; if it passed, it would be a ballot question for a 2-½ override on an election to be held by Sept. 1.

This position would then have to be posted and go to the most qualified candidate and could eventually be in jeopardy if area towns decide to regionalize their fire departments. Ellinger expressed concern over putting an undue burden on the taxpayers but the board recommended he take time to think about it before withdrawing the article. If Ellinger does pull the warrant article, he would like additional compensation for his current duties, saying that new reporting requirements have increased his work load.

Live parking sign

Police Chief Robert Garriepy presented a recommendation to MassDOT to replace the “live parking only” signs on Route 20 rest areas with signs stating “live parking only from June 1 through Sept. 1.” This proposal was worked out with Russell Police Chief Kevin Hennessey and the two determined that those months are when most complaints occur. It would restore spring and fall river access for fishermen, which the public has strongly advocated for.

Search committee

Garriepy and Pelouin

also gave an update on the search committee for a new police chief. Joseph Simonowicz of the Army Corps of Engineers is unable to serve on the committee. Pelouin was appointed to the committee in his place. Agreement was reached on making sure applications are reviewed with names removed to avoid bias.

Other business

In other business, the board approved the May 10 town election warrant and approved a Community Development Block Grant for \$1,250,000 that includes funding for improvements to Woronoco Village and support for the HCHC Family Center, Southern Hilltowns Adult Education Center, Southern Hilltowns Domestic Violence Task Force and the Food Pantry.

Finally, people are requesting permit fee refunds but Booth was not in favor as a number of town employees already work on these applications and the fees help defray the costs of their time. He moved that fees, unless caused by an error by the town, will not be returned. This was unanimously approved but will be double checked against Mass General Law.

Most remaining items were deferred to the additional meeting scheduled for April 16 from 4:30-6 p.m.

STATE HOUSE

enough funding. One student described moving to Gateway from a larger district and realizing how fewer opportunities were available to him in comparison. Another student athlete talked about only having the chance to play from among six sports teams in the entire year and how this lack of opportunity affects students’ physical and mental health.

One spoke about being frequently late to school because her bus route is an hour long. The student who spoke last concluded, “All kids deserve a fully funded school. Kids should not be treated differently because of zip codes.”

When the students ended, State Representative Kelly Pease spoke to the panel. Pease told his colleagues, “As a former Gateway graduate and now representing the Hampshire Regional School District, I can tell you that all of these

Smidy was justifiably proud of her students. “It was incredible to see our students advocate for school funding-they were well spoken, passionate, and direct in their request to the committee,” Smidy reported.

A dozen eighth graders, seven fourth graders, and one 10th grader went with staff members Chris Mosher, Mikayla Menin, Karen Leis, Bill Brown, Cheryl Miller Harper, Susan Rhodes, Ashley Therrien and Lyn Thomson, along with Superintendent Smidy.

After the testimony, the students got a tour of the State House from Gateway alumnus Joey Pisani, who attends Suffolk University in Boston.

Anyone wishing to view the testimony may go to the homepage of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means and click on the 4/8/25 webcast. Gateway students appear at the 1:10 and 1:33 marks.

CHESTERFIELD

4 Seasons Club to host fishing derby on May 11

CHESTERFIELD – The Chesterfield 4 Seasons Club will hold its annual fishing derby on Sunday, May 11 from 9 am.-noon at Bisbee’s Pond.

This annual event is held for children ages 14 and under. This has been a successful event for the past 37 years, which is completely run by volunteers and donations provided.

The Chesterfield 4 Season’s is grateful for any and all donations provided. Any of the following items are needed: fishing supplies, prizes, gift cards or monetary donations are appreciated.

Monetary donations are used to purchase prizes. Food and beverages are provided to children and families at no cost to them.

No donation is too small and the 4 Seasons thanks people for their support. Checks should be made payable to Chesterfield Four Seasons/Kids Derby, P.O. Box 48.Chesterfield, MA 01012.

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OPINION

GUEST COLUMN

SOCIAL SECURITY
Matters
By Russell Gloor



Will my Social Security increase if I keep working after applying?

Dear Rusty:

I am going to be 67 in a few weeks and I plan on working for another year or two.

According to Social Security, they count the best 35 years to come up with your benefit. I currently have 30 years, with 2024 and 2025 taxes yet to be filed. If I take my benefit now, will I get an upward adjustment after filing my taxes for those years or do I need to wait to apply for SS until after filing my taxes to get credit for those years?

Signed: Still Working

Dear Still Working:

Whenever you claim your Social Security benefit, SSA will look at your lifetime earnings record on file at the time as received from the IRS and calculate your “Primary Insurance Amount” using that record on file. They will use your highest earning 35 years to do that calculation and, if you do not yet have 35 years, they will use “zero \$\$” enough times to make it 35 years. In other words, your benefit will always be calculated using 35 years, whether you actually have 35 years of earnings on record or not.

However, Social Security revisits your earnings record whenever additional information is received from the IRS, so if file your taxes and add the additional year’s income after you start your Social Security benefits, you will get credit for those additional earnings. Essentially, you will be replacing one of the “zero \$\$” years originally used to calculate your benefit amount and Social Security will recalculate your monthly amount to reflect that, resulting in an increase to your monthly benefit.

Thus, as long as you

work and earn and report your earnings to the IRS, Social Security will update your record and automatically give you a higher benefit if warranted by your more recent earnings. That recalculation usually happens later in the year after April 15, but Social Security will make any increase retroactive to the beginning of the calendar year, so you will get any higher benefit effective with January.

So, since you have already reached your Full Retirement Age, you can (if you wish) apply for Social Security now and be confident that Social Security will give you credit for any additional earnings after you apply. And for clarity, if you choose to wait beyond your full retirement age to claim, you will earn Delayed Retirement Credits (DRCs), which will continue to increase your monthly benefit amount until you are 70 years of age. DRCs will add 8% to your PIA for each full year you delay (.667% for each month you delay past your FRA).

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 ssadviser@amacfoundation.org. Russell Gloor is a Social Security advisor for AMAC.



GUEST COLUMN

Urgent need for better treatments for GBS

By Lisa Butler
Guest Columnist

Five-year-olds can be goofy. That was my first thought several years ago when my son stumbled and fell to the ground. But when he failed to get up and told us that his legs hurt, my husband and I grew worried. By the time we got him to a doctor, his mystery sickness had progressed. He couldn’t walk down the hall to the exam room without bracing himself against the wall.

It’s difficult to describe the sheer terror I felt in that moment. His body was seizing up, but he remained aware of his surroundings. Worst of all, there was nothing I could do to fix it.

Eventually we learned that we were among the thousands of American families affected each year by Guillain-Barré Syndrome or GBS, a rare, debilitating neuromuscular condition that can strike anyone at a moment’s notice.

Despite GBS’s life-altering impact, treatment options today are limited, outdated and often inadequate. Developing more effective therapies for this terrible disease should be an urgent public health priority.

Just diagnosing GBS is a challenge. An initial battery of tests on our son revealed nothing. His paralysis progressed rapidly with-

in hours he could not stand or lift his arms above his waist. A spinal tap 24 hours after the onset of symptoms showed elevated protein levels. At that point, our doctor knew it was GBS.

GBS doesn’t discriminate. Everyone from young children to the elderly can fall victim. GBS typically strikes without warning and moves at lightning-fast speed. Some patients experience only mild to moderate symptoms, while others lose the ability to chew, swallow or even breathe without a ventilator. Ultimately, about one in 20 people with the condition die from it.

Since the disease moves at such a fast clip, it’s critical to identify and treat it promptly. Sadly, however, patients who show up at the emergency room with symptoms of GBS are often told that they’re suffering from stress or dehydration and sent home. In many such cases, the muscle weakness keeps intensifying and patients end up back at the hospital practically paralyzed.

Despite abundant progress in many other disease areas in recent years, there is still no therapy approved specifically for GBS in the United States. The two commonly used to treat GBS, intravenous immunoglobulin and plasma exchange, have to be administered in a number of courses and can take

weeks to take effect.

With the current standard of care, 40% of GBS patients will still need to be admitted to the ICU. One-quarter will require mechanical ventilation. Close to one-fifth can’t walk within one year of treatment and about half experience pain for upwards of three years following recovery.

The good news is that scientists could be on the verge of a paradigm-shifting breakthrough. As we speak, researchers are working overtime to develop therapies that, for the first time, specifically target GBS. One experimental treatment has shown the potential to cut total recovery time and thus the amount of time the disease has to progress, in half.

These advancements offer hope that, one day, patients of all ages whether they’re five or 85 will have access to faster, more effective treatments for GBS. With better treatments, we could finally ease the burden of this terrifying, debilitating disease.

Note: Lisa Butler is president and CEO of GBS | CIDP Foundation International, a global non-profit organization supporting individuals and their families affected by Guillain-Barré syndrome, chronic inflammatory demyelinating polyneuropathy and related conditions. (gbs-cidp.org).

GUEST COLUMN

Vacation plans, anyone?

Many people plan trips over April vacation! Not me, I am planning an escape to the garden.

I have been chomping at the bit to do some gardening in spite of this crazy, post-winter weather we are having. Can you believe it snowed twice last week?

Maybe a dusting at your house, but Saturday’s snowfall was a despicable four inches! At least forecasts for this upcoming week are improving, and I’m hoping that vacation week’s are even better.

While it’s best to wait until Memorial Day to sow bean and squash seeds, as

in the
Garden

by
Roberta McQuaid



well as transplant your tomato and pepper seedlings into the garden, there are many veggies that thrive in cooler spring temperatures. Here is a re-cap of a column from a few years back, outlining the veggie seeds that can be sown in the garden now:

Beet seeds can be plant-

ed as soon as the soil can be worked. Sow them close together and thin to three inches apart for full size beets – use the culled greens in salad. For a pretty beet try Chiogga for its alternating stripes of pink and white; pick early for best quality.

More interested in beet

greens than beets themselves? Beautiful Bull’s Blood grows well throughout the summer months without getting bitter.

Carrots will also grow well under cool conditions, although they may take longer to come up. Keep them moist to hasten germination. Experts recommend sowing fast-growing radish seeds to mark carrot rows as well as provide shade (and therefore moisture retention).

I’ve also heard of folks covering rows of carrot seeds with burlap or straw for the same reason. For the longest, straightest roots, be sure the seed bed is deep and rock-free. Thin twice, with an

ultimate spacing of one inch apart.

Amazingly enough, carrots come in all shades of yellow and orange, purple and red, even white. Try Yellowstone, Atomic Red, Purple Haze and White Satin for an extremely colorful coleslaw.

Lettuce is one of the best crops to start now. In fact, it won’t germinate at all when soil temperatures top 75 degrees.

Sow your seeds every couple of weeks for a continuous supply throughout the summer. Get creative with lattice or interplant with

GARDEN, page 5

Country Journal
TEAM



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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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Ellenor Downer
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Subscriptions
www.turley.com

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

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Country Journal welcomes election letters to the editor

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.

GREAT BARRINGTON

‘Get on Board’ set for April 29

G R E A T BARRINGTON – April is Volunteer Month and the Nonprofit Center of the Berkshires is hosting a “Get on Board” event in partnership with Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation on Tuesday, April 29 from 8:30-10 a.m. in the lobby of the Tina Packer Playhouse at Shakespeare & Co.

The purpose of this coffee networking event is to

connect nonprofits to community members who want to use their time, talent and treasure to serve on a nonprofit board. The Nonprofit Center of the Berkshires also provides a personal matching service to help strengthen nonprofit boards. Both nonprofits and community members fill out a form identifying their needs and skills respectively. A team of volunteers reviews

the confidential information and connects potential candidates to local organizations.

Those who have never served on a board can access “Intro to Board Service” videos free on the NPC web site. For more information about the event or to fill out the interest form, people may visit <https://npcberkshires.org/join-a-board/> or call 413-441-9542.

EASTHAMPTON

bankESB nominates VIPS for grant

EASTHAMPTON – bankESB announces it has nominated the Volunteers in Public Schools of Westfield for a Massachusetts Bankers Association Charitable Foundation grant, resulting in the organization receiving a \$1,000 award.

Each year, the MBA Charitable Foundation provides grants to nonprofit organizations across Massachusetts, with recipients nominated by member banks. bankESB proudly nominated VIPS of Westfield in recognition of its dedication to enhancing educational opportunities and supporting students and educators in the Westfield Public Schools.

“We are thrilled to support the Volunteers in Public Schools of Westfield and their invaluable work in enriching education for local students,” said Matthew Sosik, bankESB president and CEO. “Their efforts make a lasting impact in our community, and we are proud to have played a

role in securing this well-deserved grant.”

VIPS of Westfield works to foster partnerships between the community and the school system, providing vital resources such as tutoring, mentoring and program support to benefit students of all ages. The \$1,000 grant will help the organization continue its mission of engaging volunteers and enhancing educational programs in Westfield’s public schools.

“Community partnerships are an integral part of Westfield Public Schools, and through Volunteers in Public Schools, our community makes a difference to our students,” commented Chris Tolpa, WPS Title I Supervisor and VIPS president of the Board. “Without the kind of support that bankESB gives in time and generous donations, many of the positive initiatives we plan for our students could not be done. We are grateful for bankESB, and other

organizations like them who understand the role education plays in the betterment of our society.”

As a community-focused bank, bankESB is committed to supporting local organizations that make a difference. The bank’s nomination of the Volunteers in Public Schools of Westfield aligns with its mission to contribute to the well-being and success of the communities it serves.

For more information about bankESB and its community initiatives, people may visit www.bankESB.com.

The Volunteers in Public Schools of Westfield is a nonprofit organization dedicated to strengthening public education by engaging community volunteers in supporting students and educators. Through mentoring, tutoring, and program support, VIPS develops and implements programming to respond to the needs of Westfield Public Schools.

OPINION

GARDEN

other crops to give lettuce a break from sun and heat.

When all your friends are complaining that their salads are bitter, you’ll be rewarded for your efforts with sweet greens. Look for seeds that suit your season. Consider New Red Fire or Slobolt for growing in the summer months; Tango or Lollo Rossa for fall and winter season extension.

Parsnips, like carrots, take a long time to come up and need consistent moisture in order to germinate. Try some of the tricks I mentioned above or just be diligent with the hose.

Old Sturbridge Village grows two great heirloom varieties – Hollow Crown and Student. Harvest some after a few hard frosts in the fall, but hold on harvesting the rest until early spring.

You will be in for a sweet surprise.

Peas have been a favorite plant of mine for the last several years. Sow them now and provide support for all but the dwarfest varieties.

I plant them around the perimeter of my garden up against the fence, and will utilize “pea brush” for another row or two within the garden.

Be on the lookout for cut worms – in my garden they nearly always decimated my crop. If you see pea seedlings cut off at the soil line, gently cultivate around your plant and dispose of the chubby green or golden caterpillars.

Oregon Giant is a great snow pea, with flat pods perfect for stir fries. Tall Telephone (aka Alderman) is nearly six feet tall under optimal conditions, and yields upwards of 30 pounds of peas per one hundred foot row.

Spinach is another crop that must be started early to ensure success, and a crop I can’t quite seem to master. I was never satisfied with the meal or two I ate before the plants bolted – I wanted more!

So instead of growing regular spinach, I now grow

New Zealand Spinach. It isn’t a true spinach, nor does it resemble one, but it can be grown throughout the summer and substituted for cooked spinach in nearly any recipe.

Soak the large seeds overnight before sowing to hasten germination. Pinch off and use the waxy leaves when they reach two or three inches long. New Zealand spinach also freezes extremely well.

Enjoy these earliest days in the garden; I know I will! The best vacation ever spent.

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.

from page 4

MIDDLEFIELD

Election takes place May 3

MIDDLEFIELD – There are five candidates running for Finance Committee.

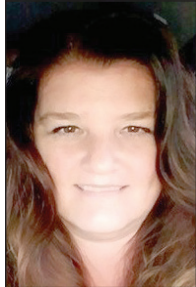
Candidates include Brandt LeBeau, Adair Laurel, Noreen Suriner, Don Trask and Kerri Trask. Three of the candidates provide statements and photos for this week’s edition. The other two did not respond to an email.



Noreen Suriner



Don Trask



Karri Trask

Noreen Suriner

My name is Noreen Suriner, and I am running for Finance Committee in Middlefield.

The Finance Committee is an important part of town government. It helps establish spending goals for each year’s budget and makes recommendations to the Select Board about expenditures. My experience in town finance comes from serving as a Select Board member and chair from 2010 to 2013.

As an ordained priest in the Episcopal Church, I have overseen my church’s budget and worked closely with both the Budget Committee and Vestry (governing board). At one point, I was elected to serve as Trustee for the Church Pension Fund, which oversees investments and assets.

I grew up in Middlefield Schools (now the Senior Center and then the Town Hall) and participated extensively in local 4-H groups. After retiring from full-time ministry, I returned to Middlefield and built my home. I still serve part-time at a small congregation, St. Luke’s in Lanesboro. All my siblings live in Middlefield and my brother Wayne, who manages the Town Transfer Station, resides with me. My family, church, 4-H and the town have all shaped the person I am today.

Currently, I serve as the Town Moderator and am running for that position again. I deeply care for our beloved town and its residents.

During these uncertain times, many federal funds and programs are being reduced or eliminated, and taxpayer income is limited, making these times even more challenging. To address these challenges, I wish to bring my experience to the Finance Committee and serve the town with fiscal accountability, compassion and vision. I respectfully ask for your vote.

Please vote on May 3. Thank you.

Don Trask

It could be time for some new faces in town government.

After growing up in a neighboring Hilltown, I started a career that brought me all over the county. None of those places felt like home. Fifteen years ago, I brought my family back to the Hilltowns. As a Middlefield resident for ten years now, I hope to give back to the community that I call home.

I am a current member of the Ad-hoc Capital Planning Committee. I am a regular attendee at all Finance Committee and Select Board meetings.

In 25 years as a Mechanical Project Engineer and Technical Program Manager, I have learned skills in project and capital planning, cost estimating, scheduling, finance track-

ing and report and managing teams to deliver results.

I have used these skills managing all aspects of large multi-year programs for space, defense and commercial companies. I believe my experience can be a great addition to the Middlefield Finance Committee. Vote Saturday, May 3

Karri Trask

I am currently a member of the Finance Committee.

I was appointed after volunteering to take the place of a member that had moved out of Middlefield. I am also a member of the Capital Planning Committee.

The professional skills that I will bring to the Finance Committee are:

I am a highly accomplished and organized Financial Analyst/Accountant with over 25 years of experience.

I have advanced fiscal research and analysis skills, with experience in financial reporting, tax preparation and auditing.

I frequently manage multiple projects simultaneously while meeting deadlines under pressure.

I have expertise in GAAP accounting principles and tax laws.

As an eight-year member of the Middlefield Community, I will work to encourage Fiscal Responsibility while prioritizing the needs of all the citizens of Middlefield.

Congregational Church to hold Easter service and dinner



MIDDLEFIELD – The Middlefield Congregational Church will be holding an Easter Church Service on Saturday, April 19 at 5 p.m at the Church.

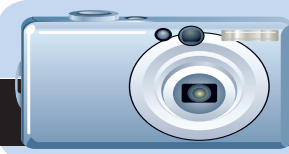
A Shepherd’s Pie dinner will be held after the service. All are welcome, and desserts are always appreciated.

Middlefield hosts Open Meeting Law presentation on April 23

MIDDLEFIELD – The Town of Middlefield will be hosting an Open Meeting Law presentation by Attorney Michael D’Ortenzio, Jr., who is from K.P. Law.

This will be held in the Middlefield Town Hall on April 23 at 6 p.m.

All neighboring towns are welcome.



Send Us Your Photos!
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NORTHAMPTON

Ruth Griggs named Jazz Hero by Jazz Journalists Association

NORTHAMPTON – Northampton Jazz Festival Board President Ruth Griggs has been named a Jazz Hero by the Jazz Journalists Association in its 25th annual recognition of “activists, advocates, altruists, aiders and abettors of jazz” across the United States.

Griggs has led the Northampton Jazz Festival since 2017, when she reformed the festival board, reinstated its 501(c)(3) nonprofit status and planned the first festival since 2015, which took place in 2018 at various venues throughout

downtown Northampton.

The Jazz Journalists Association, convened in 1987, is a nonprofit organization with 250 international members that provides creative and educational resources to individuals that forward the great American art form known as jazz. The association offers events, podcasts, webinars, promotional and educational resources, and master classes to musicians, promoters, educators, broadcasters, journalists, photographers and writers in the genre of jazz.

Since 2001, the Jazz

Journalists Association has identified and hailed individuals from local jazz communities across America who go beyond their basic responsibilities to sustain and expand on musical activities. The association believes Jazz Heroes are essential to the health of the overall jazz ecosystem and supports local efforts to celebrate them. The 2025 Jazz Heroes campaign



Ruth Griggs

is concurrent with the 30th Annual Jazz Journalists Association Jazz Awards for jazz musicians.

Griggs of Northampton, was also named a Difference Maker by BusinessWest in 2022 for her decades-long career as a marketing strategist and her leadership of the Northampton Jazz Festival, which has become a respected organization, attracting thousands to down-

town Northampton each September.

A virtual gala celebrating the 29 Jazz Heroes of 2025 will be held on Thursday, April 17 and an in-person presentation of Griggs’ Jazz Hero certificate will be held locally at a later date.

Said Griggs, “I am honored and humbled to stand alongside this impressive group of national Jazz Heroes—many of whom are my own heroes for all they do ‘to preserve and perpetuate this great American art form,’ to quote Max Roach.”

The Northampton Jazz Festival is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation founded in 2011 and is funded by local businesses, organizations, foundations and individuals which makes it possible to provide free live music to the general public. The Festival is Friday, Sept. 26 and Saturday, Sept. 27, with several other jazz events planned in May, June and September. For more information about the Northampton Jazz Festival, people may visit northamptonjazzfest.org or email info@northamptonjazzfest.org.

BLANDFORD



Christopher Moylan was elected Delegate to the Massachusetts Democratic State Convention in September at the Mass Mutual Center.



Lisa Goodrich was elected Alternate to the Massachusetts Democratic State Convention in September.



Vice Chair Krissy Wales and Secretary Kate Goodrich man the check-in table.

Turley photos by Mary Kronholm

Democrat Town Committee elects delegate and alternate

By Mary Kronholm
Correspondent

BLANDFORD – The Democratic Town Committee held their regular meeting Saturday, April 12 at 10 a.m. at the Town Hall.

The meeting began with the caucus for a delegate and an alternate to the Massachusetts State Democratic Convention at the Mass Mutual Center in Springfield on Saturday, Sept. 13. Vice Chair Krissy Wales conducted the caucus.

The group elected Christopher Moylan as the delegate and Lisa Goodrich as the alternate. Both will attend the convention.

The focus of the convention will be to vote on the party's platform for the next four years.

Chair Lloyd Martin

encouraged all members to attend the convention, if possible, to become "energized."

The regular meeting continued after the caucus with reports from the "No Kings Rally" in Boston and Northampton; those who went were impressed with the crowds. Pam Dirschka said the Hilltowns were represented and Blandford's committee is reaching out to other communities in the Third Hampden district.

Martin reported that he had a telephone call from Lt. Gov. Kim Driscoll who praised the work of the committee.

Debbie Lundgren gave a treasurer's report, stating that there are three anonymous donors, who have pledged \$20 a month each for 12 months; she also reported on the efforts

of the Climate Leader Community Committee.

Beth Lanzoni reported on the library's expansion plan; Lisa Goodrich spoke about the Hilltown Cares group and the need for the Committee's own website for communication purposes. Pam Dirschka reported that there are now 28 members of the Committee and that the Committee can have up to 35 members.

Moylan told the group he is demonstrating with a new Indivisible group in Westfield on Tuesday afternoons from 4-5 p.m.; a No Kings weekly vigil at Main and Elm streets.

Chair Martin reminded everyone of the Town Election Saturday, June 14.

The next meeting is Saturday, May 10 at 11 a.m. at the Town Hall. The meetings are open to the public.

COA holds Easter luncheon

BLANDFORD – The Council on Aging monthly luncheon Friday, April 11 was a prelude to an Easter Sunday dinner.

COA board member Joann Martin, responsible for menu ideas and food preparation created multi-colored deviled eggs as a special side for the baked ham, scalloped potatoes and tossed salad meal. That was followed by individual lemon merengue pies.

After all had eaten, Highland Valley's registered dietitian Brandon Walton discussed food safety.

Some of the things he spoke about included directions on storing leftovers. For instance, people shouldn't allow food to cool before it goes into the refrigerator. And don't let food sit out for more than two hours, especially if it's over 90 degrees.

And when shopping, it is important not to select meats or seafood in an open package; and don't buy eggs with cracked shells. He did say it was best to leave the eggs in their cartons and not keep them in the refrigerator door.

He had lists of dos and

don'ts for food safety and a bingo game based on food safety. Bingo claimers had a choice of a magnetized bag clip or what Walton referred to as "bologna," a

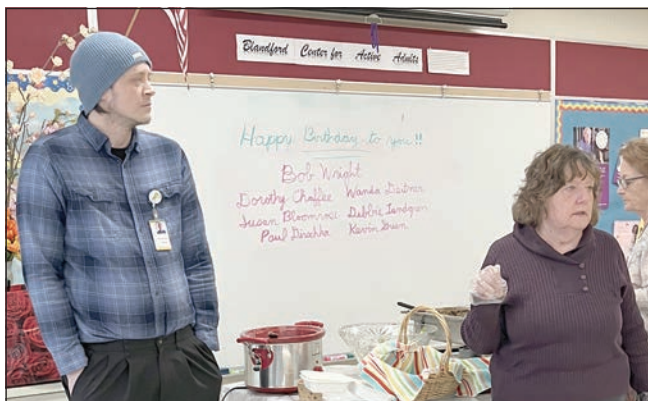
round, sandwich meat colored rubber jar opener.

And some diners had the good fortune to take home an extra lemon merengue pie.



George Forish, left, with Bob Twyman wait for the luncheon buffet to start.

Turley photos by Mary Kronholm



COA Director Margit Mikuski introduced registered dietitian Brendon, Walton who spoke about food safety.

Jeff Allen resigns from Select Board

By Mary Kronholm
Correspondent

BLANDFORD – Select Board Chair Cara Letendre announced board member Jeff Allen had resigned his position effective Monday, April 7.

She read from his letter, "I regret having to resign but the time has come. I feel that I am not able to effectively serve the town of Blandford or our townspeople. I appreciate the support from the voters. I am not a person, who steps away from a position, however, I am unable to continue performing this job

effectively."

Letendre said, "Unfortunately Jeff will not be with us for the next two months and T.J. and I will work as a board because it's less than two months before the election."

Town Administrator Cristina Ferrera said that the timeline is, "less than 100 days before the (annual town) election." The timeline is from the Mass General Laws, Ch. 41, sec. 10. Town Election is



Jeff Allen

June 14.

Ferrera said that because Allen "resigned after the deadline, he will still appear on the ballot; he does not wish to run."

According to the town's Municipal Schedule, the last

day to withdraw a nomination was March 10.

Town Clerk Doris Jemiolo confirmed that when Allen gave his resignation notice he asked that his name not appear on the ballot.

Licensed massage therapist offers self care workshop May 7

BLANDFORD – People will learn some simple and easy ways to maintain their health.

Paula Sharon, licensed massage therapist, will present an in-depth self-care workshop on Wednesday, May 7 at 6:30 p.m. at the Blandford Town Hall.

The Tolland resident's

presentation will include information about understanding the body and some simple exercises to improve posture, balance, strength, and flexibility. She will focus on creating an effective healthcare team, building habits you cannot live without, encouraging attendees to find new ways to

approach health maintenance and offering useful, easy to implement self-care tips.

This workshop is sponsored by the Western Hampden County Public Health District. For more information, people may email MaryAnn Deming at: mdeming@southwickma.gov or call 413-361-8069.

BESS

from page 1

be met" he said, as set forth by various firefighting organizations.

There are new regulations by the state for permitting these facilities, which, according to Gates, would take towns like Blandford out of the loop. "The bill has passed, but they are writing the regulations now," he said. The regulations are expected to come out later this year.

Chair Cara Letendre asked, "What can we do to protect the town?" Gates said, "We can't stop it. But there may be ways to mitigate" the facilities said Gates.

Discussion between Sandford and Gates brought out that green energy projects of a certain size take away responsibility from Zoning and Conservation. She said she had "more questions."

Concerns about fires: she wanted to know if "fire suppression or cooling systems were engineered into the facility. Where would a water supply come from to control a fire, and what about runoff," were part of her questions.

Gates cited Hubbardston's bylaws, but stringent bylaws would not help the town if the state is involved.

Conservation Commission member Colleen Doyle said that if the town were to "beef up" bylaws that could be applied telling the company (installers) of requirements, but the installers would have to comply with the bylaws.

It was suggested that all the information be put on

the town's website.

Gates said that this is an opportunity to "figure out what these projects can do for Blandford," and added that there a not a lot of details available.

Paul Martin did say that there is a potential for considerable tax income for the town generated from the battery facilities. He said that the permit application fees are considerable and property taxes as well.

Water contamination is also a concern. The project "illustrates the tension between state-level decision-making and local governance..."

The group will meet again at the Wednesday, May 7 Select Board meeting and the town's legislators. State Sen. Paul Mark and State Rep. Nicholas Boldyga, will be invited to participate.

Town Administrator Cristina Ferrera presented a written memorandum on the challenges and considerations for municipalities regarding state – controlled BESS permitting.

There may be a "significant boost in tax revenue," but the "centralized state permitting process may limit municipal autonomy in negotiating terms that best serve local interests."

Citing Westfield's project, she said that Westfield residents have expressed concerns and the "City Council unanimously opposed the project, emphasizing the potential override of local zoning regulations by state authorities."

Water contamination is also a concern. The project "illustrates the tension between state-level decision-making and local governance..."

Her memorandum recommended that Blandford advocate for local authority, establish clear zoning regulations, facilitate public forums to educate residents and collaborate with neighboring towns.

She included limitations of local bylaws due to "state and federal preemptions" meaning that town's cannot ban BESS installations nor create overly restrictive zoning bylaws, impose stricter fire protection or installation standards that those already set by the State Fire Marshal.

Nor can towns impose requirements "that exceed state or federal environmental laws or prevent participation in state sponsored energy programs. And while the town can set a "temporary moratorium" it "must be justified.

She concluded that while it is possible to regulate BESS through zoning and safety, towns must comply with the state laws, building codes and energy policies. Anything that would "effectively prohibit BESS, impose unreasonable restrictions or conflict with state authority" would likely be challenged and overturned.

WESTFIELD

Alzheimer's support group meets April 30

WESTFIELD – The Alzheimer's Association Support Group meets Wednesday, April 30 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 may call 413-568-0000 or email reception@armbrookvillage.com. Groups are held on the last Wednesday of the month.

Email the Country Journal at
countryjournal@turley.com

Scouting America to hold Pintwood Derby

WESTFIELD – The Western Massachusetts Council of Scouting America announces the Pintwood Derby, an exciting and unique fundraising event set to take place on Thursday, April 24 at Bright Ideas Brewing, 109 Apremont Way, starting at 5 p.m.

This community-driven event will feature a fun and competitive Pinewood Derby race with handcrafted cars, designed and built by local enthusiasts and supporters. Attendees will have the opportunity to cheer on their

favorite racers while enjoying the vibrant atmosphere, local craft beer, and delicious food.

Proceeds from the event will support Scouting America - Western Massachusetts Council's mission to provide life-changing programs and outdoor adventures for local youth. Funds raised will help ensure continued access to local Scouting programs, leadership development opportunities, and community involvement initiatives throughout the region.

"We're incredibly excited to bring the Pintwood Derby

to the Westfield community," said Dave MacWilliams, event chair. "This is a great opportunity for supporters to have some fun while making a meaningful impact on youth development and the Scouting program in our area."

The event is open to the public and will kick off at 5 p.m. Car kits are available for purchase at the Western Massachusetts Council Service Center and participants are encouraged to get creative with their designs. Tickets and additional event

information can be found by visiting wmascouting.org/PintwoodSpring25.

As one of the nation's largest and the most effective youth development organizations, the BSA has served young men and women for more than 100 years. The mission of the BSA, now Scouting America and the Western Massachusetts Council is to inspire young people to make ethical and moral choices, become self-reliant, and take a prominent role in civic engagement over their lifetimes.

SCHOOLS & YOUTH

Amy Mason becomes Gateway’s new business manager

By Wendy Long
Correspondent

HUNTINGTON – The Gateway Regional School Committee went into executive session during their Wednesday, April 9 meeting to negotiate the terms of a contract with their new business manager.

When they emerged, Chairman Jason Forgue announced that Gateway teacher Amy Mason has been selected as the district’s new Business Manager. Mason will replace Assistant Superintendent Stephanie Fisk on July 1; Fisk is retiring after 36 years of employment with Gateway.

Mason is well known to district and central office staff because she is currently the teacher and coordinator of Gateway’s program that serves visually impaired students. She was selected by a search committee that formed to find Fisk’s replacement.

In an interview the next day, Mason admitted that she had long been interested in finance and budgets, stemming back to work she did in medical office billing as a younger adult. “The biggest thing I’m looking forward to

is the great opportunities to move the district forward,” Mason said, adding that she intends to work from the position to help hone the focus of everyone including Central Office staff on instruction.

She has served on the Barr Foundation’s team, which led Gateway to that specific objective. “We want to uplevel staff skills and get students excited about learning at Gateway,” Mason said. Mason also noted that Superintendent Kristen Smidy has been studying the current structure of the Central Office and looking at changes to help office staff better support students, staff and families; ways that are more integrated and connected to the community as a whole.

Mason, who will move from leading the visually impaired program that she developed at Gateway, says the future of the VIP program is in good hands. “I believe the program’s future is very bright. We have a really solid foundation with staffing, including an onsite brailist and two trained paraprofessionals,” Mason said. She noted that two of the staff are about to finish degrees as teachers of the visually

impaired and all three staff are familiar with the students and district.

It’s possible that the new program coordinator could be drawn from these current staff. Mason will also be available to mentor the new coordinator. “Students will continue to thrive,” she said. Mason herself has two children attending school in the district and has noted as both a parent and a colleague that the Gateway staff consistently goes above and beyond.

“I would really like for people to know that I’m aware that there’s been some history of things being rocky at times in Gateway’s history. But I feel very positive about the direction that our district is headed and being part of this change. I’m really excited to see the students in the district thrive. I’m really excited about the future,” Mason said.

In other business, Chester Elementary School parent Alicia Swendsen addressed the School Committee during the public input portion of the agenda, asking for an



Amy Mason

update on the investigation into the Chester Principal, Vanna Maffuccio, who is currently out on leave. Forgue said the investigation was complete, the report has been delivered and results will be forthcoming. Swendsen turned in two public records requests for copies of the report.

In new business, the committee ran through its annual slate of votes for a number of items to be in place in Fiscal Year 2026; all were unanimously approved. These included participating in the National School Lunch Program, approval of the student activities accounts, authorization to incur temporary debt, approval of the third quarter budget transfers; approval to participate in school choice and confirming the school committee meeting schedule for the coming school year.

Only a couple of questions on these items were raised, the first being whether or not there would be Federal funding for the school lunch program. Smidy responded

that the school committee’s two student representatives, Theodore DeAngelis-Page and Ana Holmes, asked the State Secretary of Education about this issue, who affirmed that the state would consider continuing to fund the program if needed.

Another member asked how often the district had incurred temporary debt and Fisk responded that the last time was in 1982. Temporary debt could theoretically be needed if a town assessment or other revenue came in late.

The committee also approved the last day of the current school year as June 17. “I feel like we’re jinxing ourselves a little bit here,” Chair Jason Forgue said. “It did snow yesterday.”

During committee communications, legislative liaison Brian Forgue said that this budget is expected to be tough with many things up in the air due to the uncertainty around federal funding. At Senator Paul Mark’s Breakfast in the Berkshires, Forgue said that the general thought is Rural School Aid will come in at \$16 million, which is far short of the \$60 million proposed a number of years ago.

Also up for discussion

was a notice from the Massachusetts Association for School Committees saying that the federal government is asking all school districts to sign a statement assuring that they are following Title VI requirements around admissions. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color and national origin in programs and activities receiving Federal Funding. The state is currently advising that individual districts not sign.

But Jason Forgue, Smidy and member Lisa Dana stated that it seemed risky to poke the bear and that the letter should be signed because the district already complies and intends to continue to comply. “I want to be clear: we will continue to welcome all students and continue to protect them and keep them safe,” said Smidy, later adding that she did not want to make a decision that might impact over \$700,000 in federal funding.

In addition to announcing Mason’s appointment as Business Manager, Forgue announced that the ratification of both the custodian and secretary union contracts took place during executive session.

WORTHINGTON

Upcoming election has contest for Select Board one-year term

WORTHINGTON – There are two candidates for a one-year term to the Select Board.

The term fills a vacancy on the Board. Candidates are Walter Fritz and Deborah Rocque. The town election will be held on Saturday, May 3. Their candidate statements are list below.

Walter Fritz

My name is Walter Fritz and I am running to fill a one year vacancy on the Select Board.

I grew up in Worthington and have strong ties to the town. My children also grew up here and attended the R.H. Conwell Elementary School. In my younger years I re activated Worthington Boy Scout troop 710 and was troop leader for several years.



Walter Fritz
Candidate for one-year term on Select Board

I was Chairman of the Board of Health for eight years and during that time was in charge of closing the landfill that was previously on Dingle Road and was instrumental in the development of our current transfer station.

I also served 12 years as Worthington’s Animal Control Officer during which time I worked with the Select Board to draft the current by-laws pertaining to dogs. Until I retired I was a certified State Waste Water Operator and as such was responsible for all the monthly testing and reporting for the Maples Senior Housing here in town.

Fifteen years ago I retired as Vice President of Texon USA, based in Russell and Director of

Manufacturing of Texon International. In that capacity I was responsible for scheduling production for all of Texon’s cellulose manufacturing plants around the world. In mills with unions, I was the company’s negotiator. I was also responsible for all yearly multi-million dollar budgeting for these plants, as well as determining returns on equipment investments, which were then presented and approved at formal budget meetings with the British Bankers who owned Texon. It was during this part of my job that I learned the difference between needs.. and “wants.”

If elected I promise to fight for the needs of Worthington’s taxpayers, keeping in mind that “wants” are not always “needs.” I also promise to bring some good old-fashioned Worthington common sense and fiscal responsibility to the table.

Thank you for your consideration.

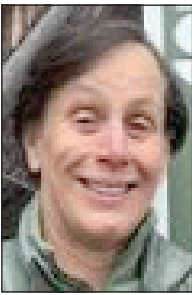
Deborah Rocque

Deborah Rocque is a candidate to fill a one year vacancy on the Select Board.

I moved to Worthington five years ago to become one of the new owners of Justamere Tree Farm. I love the farm, I love the town and I especially love the community of Worthington.

I am running for Select Board because I want to give back and support our town. Worthington’s rural character appealed to me from the moment I arrived. Growing up in a small town, I understand the value of close-knit communities and the importance of preserving our small-town qualities.

Justamere Tree Farm has allowed me to run a



Deborah Rocque
Candidate for one-year term on Select Board

sustainable business that provides jobs for locals and has helped me get to know the people of Worthington. Running Justamere also helped me understand the needs of our community especially balancing the increasing cost of much needed services with the need to keep taxes and other costs in check.

I have nearly 25 years of public service at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. I dedicated my career to protecting rural spaces and conserving wildlife. I recently retired from federal, public service in a senior leadership role, where I managed multi-million-dollar annual budgets, had broad supervisory experience, developed federal

policy and regulations and oversaw numerous federal contracts. Much of my work involved extensive coordination and collaboration across broad groups and state agencies to reach mutually beneficial decisions, skills that I intend to employ to benefit our town.

Both my federal career and running the farm require innovation, adaptability, and vision; all qualities I will bring to the Select board. I will work tirelessly to balance our town’s fiscal responsibilities with the need to support and improve our community services, ensuring that we maintain a high quality of life without placing undue financial burdens on our residents. I look forward to the opportunity to contribute positively to our town and ensure it remains a great place to live for generations to come.

Thank you for your support.

HAYDENVILLE

Haydenville church to hold soup and bake sale

HAYDENVILLE – The Haydenville Congregational Church, 143 Main St., Route 9, is having its annual Easter soup and bake sale on Saturday, April 19, the Saturday before Easter from 10 a.m.-3 p.m. at the church.

There will be a range of baked goods from the popular hot cross buns to pies, breads, cookies, quick breads and muffins.

Stews, chili, mac-n-cheese and a variety of soups will be available in Earth-friendly soup con-

tainers to bring home for serving or freezing. A share of all proceeds will go to benefit the Center for New Americans, which works to help immigrants in the community.

The church is also inviting the community to services and festivities on Easter Sunday, April 20. Worship service will be at 10 a.m., festive hats and bright clothes encouraged. This will be followed at 11 a.m. with an Easter egg hunt and a community potluck brunch.

Find it in the

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PUBLIC NOTICES

LEGAL NOTICE of PUBLIC MEETING WILLIAMSBURG CONSERVATION COMMISSION

The Williamsburg Conservation Commission, in accordance with MGL Chapter 131, Section 40, the Wetlands Protection Act, will hold a public meeting on: **Wednesday, May 7, 2025 at 7:00 p.m.** at the Williamsburg town offices, 141 Main St, Haydenville, MA to review a: **Request for Determination of Applicability** submitted by: Samuel Prickett.

The subject area or activity is located at: 67 Chesterfield Road, Williamsburg, MA. 04/17/2025

Notice of Chester Planning Board Hearing Relative to a Proposed Zoning By-Law Amendment Pursuant to M.G.L. c. 40A, § 5

The Planning Board of the Town of Chester will hold a public hearing to discuss a proposed amendment to the town’s zoning by-laws. The public hearing will be held as follows:

Place: Chester Town Hall, COA Room in the basement 15 Middlefield Road, Chester, MA 01011

Date: 8 May 2025

Time: 6:00 PM

The subject matter of the proposed new bylaw entitled “Age Restricted Residential Developments”, proposed modification of the table of uses and a proposed amendment to Chapter 3.3 Intensity Regulations Section 3.3.1. is as indicated below. The complete text relative to the proposed bylaw and proposed amendment is available on the town’s website (townofchester.net) and for inspection during regular business hours at the following place:

Place: Chester Town Hall

Article Number Subject Matter of Proposed Amendment Sufficient for Identification

TBD Section 5.5: Age Restricted Residential Developments

The purpose of the proposed bylaw is to add a new Section 5.5: “Age Restricted Residential Developments” to the town’s zoning by-laws. The bylaw details the requirements and restrictions within the Town of Chester for age restricted residential developments

Chester Schedule of Use Regulations Amendment

To adopt an amendment to Table 1; Chester Schedule of use Regulations of Chapter 3.0 Schedule of Regulations to re-

vises “Multi Family Homes” to “no age restriction” and add a land use classification of “Age-Restricted Residential Development” allowed by special permit only in the following zones; Residential, Agricultural Residential and Mixed-Use Village Business and not allowed in Industrial.

Zoning Bylaw Amendment - Chapter 3.3 Intensity Regulations

To amend Chapter 3.3 Intensity Regulations, Section 3.3.1 to; 3.3.1 A dwelling hereafter erected in any district shall be located on a lot having not less than the minimum requirements set forth in the table 2, and no more than one dwelling shall be built upon such lot except by Special Permit for age-restricted residential developments. No existing lot shall be changed as to size or shape so as to result in the violation of the requirements set forth in Table 2.

Town Of Chester Planning Board

04/17, 04/24/2025

TOWN OF BLANDFORD NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

In accordance with Massachusetts General Law, Chapter 40A, Section 5, the Blandford Planning Board will hold a

Public Hearing at the Blandford Town Hall, 1 Russell Stage Road, Blandford, MA 01008 at **6:00 PM on Wednesday, May 7, 2025.** The nature of this hearing is to present and discuss proposed zoning bylaw amendments.

Article

To amend the Blandford Zoning By-Law by:

1. Making amendments to Section X - Floodplain District to reflect the new flood maps and requirements for participation and compliance with the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP).

2. Add new Section XII -Accessory Dwelling Units to adopt local zoning regulations.

Any person interested or wishing to be heard should appear at the time and place designated. If unable to attend please submit comments, in writing, to the Blandford Planning Board at 1 Russell Stage Road, Blandford, MA 01008. Failure to make recommendations on the matter for review shall be deemed lack of opposition thereto. A copy of the proposed articles is available for review at the Blandford Post Office and Town Hall.

Paul Martin, Chair

Blandford Planning Board

04/17,04/24/2025

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OBITUARY

Neil S. Wheeler, Sr., 96



Neil S. Wheeler, Sr., 96, previously of Huntington, passed away peacefully on March 28, 2025 surrounded by his loving family.

Neil was born Aug. 11, 1928, to Charles and Viola (Stannard). He grew up in Chester joined the Merchant Marines at age 16 and later served in the USMC, 1st Marine Division. A skilled marksman, he was a small arms instructor at Parris Island, Quantico and the U.S. Naval Academy. He served in the Marines until 1952.

Neil was the American Legion District 2 Sergeant-at-Arms and a member of the Forty and Eight veterans association. He instructed hilltown youth in the NRA Junior Rifle Club.

He served as Hampshire



County Sheriff, town assessor, an elected Huntington Constable and a Police Officer. He worked for Northeast Utilities for 30 years. He enjoyed a long retirement.

He was predeceased by sisters, Murial and Phyllis, and brothers, Allen, Bruce and Charles Jr.

Neil is survived by Grace (Barr), his wife of 73 years; children Neil Wheeler Jr. and his wife Pat, Gary Wheeler and his wife Mary, Marie Pease and her husband Tim, Laurie O'Brien and her husband Clyde, and Bill Wheeler; seven grandchildren and 13 great-grandchildren; brother Robert Burkholder and his wife Mary, brother-in-law Tony Anziano and sister-in-law Janice Wheeler; best friend Leonard Alexander and

many nieces, nephews, and dear friends.

Neil enjoyed traveling the country, golfing, watching baseball and walking every day well into his 90s. He was a Civil War historian and visited many of its battle sites. He loved trains and the railroad.

His family would like to thank Hospice of the Berkshires and the staff of the Craneville Place Nursing Home for their compassionate care and family support.

Calling hours will be on Saturday, May 3 from 10-11 a.m. at Firtion-Adams Funeral Home in Westfield, with funeral service to follow.

Donations in Neil's memory may be sent to The Chester Foundation, P.O. Box 743, Chester, MA 01011 or Hospice of the Berkshires, 877 South St., Suite 1W, Pittsfield, MA 01201. www.firtionadams.com.

DEATH NOTICE

WHEELER, NEIL S. SR.

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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. Exceptions will be made only when the family provides a death certificate and must be pre-paid.

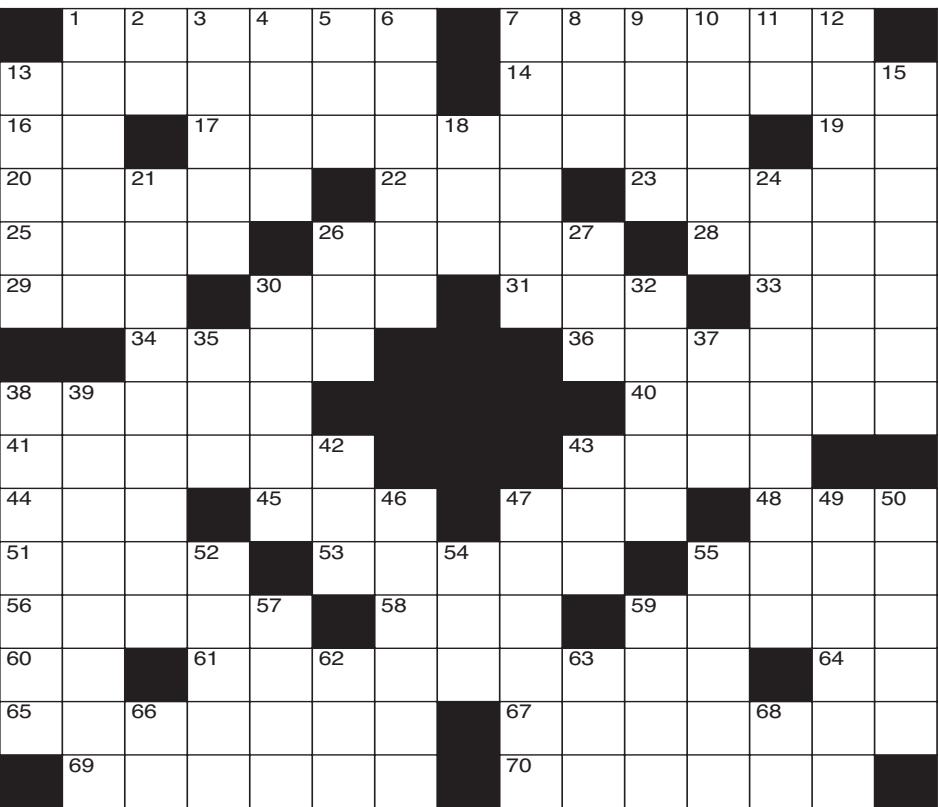
NOTICE

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.



Featuring more than 40 artists from Western MA and Northern CT. Oils, acrylics, watercolors, wood carvings, sculpture, photography, mixed media, and more. Live art demonstrations. Book authors, Joe Adomavicia and Gail Olmsted, from Book Club on the Go, will showcase and sign their books. Southwick Historical Society exhibit and photo essay. Musical performances each day.

Southwick Town Hall • 454 College Highway, RTS 10 and 202
www.southwickma.org/cultural-council



CLUES ACROSS

- 1. Dark blacks
- 7. Construct a wall to confine
- 13. Most inappropriate
- 14. A type of board
- 16. Sacred Hindu syllable
- 17. Flatterer
- 19. The Granite State
- 20. Tears down
- 22. China's Chairman
- 23. Former Houston footballer
- 25. Periods of time
- 26. Expressed pleasure
- 28. World alliance
- 29. A Brit's mother
- 30. Television network
- 31. Brother or sister
- 33. Type of spirit
- 34. ___ Ladd, actor
- 36. A medium oversees it
- 38. One time province of British India
- 40. Wrong

CLUES DOWN

- 41. The highest parts of something
- 43. Insect
- 44. Baseball stat
- 45. A way to use up
- 47. Where wrestlers compete
- 48. It helps elect politicians
- 51. As fast as can be done
- 53. Genus of legumes
- 55. Samoa's capital
- 56. Monument in Jakarta
- 58. Former French coin
- 59. Exploiters
- 60. College sports official
- 61. Uninterrupted in time
- 64. Stephen King story
- 65. Marked by no sound
- 67. Weathers
- 69. Denouncements
- 70. More beloved

CLUES DOWN

- 1. Winged nut
- 2. It cools a home
- 3. Kisses (French)
- 4. Oxford political economist
- 5. Keyboard key
- 6. Leaf pores
- 7. Agrees with publicly
- 8. Not around
- 9. Czech city
- 10. Muscle cell protein
- 11. Greek letter
- 12. Movements
- 13. Ned __, composer
- 15. Popular series Game of __
- 18. Exclamation that denotes disgust
- 21. Helper
- 24. Gift
- 26. Up in the air (abbr.)
- 27. Treat without respect
- 30. Trims

- 32. Slang for lovely
- 35. City of Angels
- 37. Guitarists' tool
- 38. Island nation
- 39. Delivered in installments
- 42. A baglike structure
- 43. Cooking vessel
- 46. Gets in front of
- 47. Wounded by scratching
- 49. More breathable
- 50. Medical dressings
- 52. Indiana hoopster
- 54. Married Marilyn
- 55. An ancient Assyrian city
- 57. Congressmen (abbr.)
- 59. Approves food
- 62. Ventura's first name
- 63. Between northeast and east
- 66. Atomic #71
- 68. Email designation

THIS WEEK'S HOROSCOPES

ARIES

Mar 21/Apr 20

Expect some valuable insight regarding your future to emerge in the next few days, Aries. It won't be difficult to set plans in motion when you have the right people on your side.

TAURUS

Apr 21/May 21

Taurus, take a breather and give some careful thought to your recent experiences and your expectations going forward. You will benefit from this in the long run.

GEMINI

May 22/Jun 21

You are focused on your work, Gemini. However, distractions are beyond your control right now and will pull your attention away from what matters to higher-ups.

CANCER

Jun 22/Jul 22

Romantic endeavors are a little hard to plan and consider right now, Cancer. Just stick to what your intuition is telling you and you will come out just fine in the end.

LEO

Jul 23/Aug 23

Leo, you might be called upon to be a mediator for friends or loved ones who need a fresh set of eyes. Keep a cool demeanor and a level head and you can lead them to a resolution.

VIRGO

Aug 24/Sept 22

Virgo, you are drawn to creative projects, but avoid using them to put off other endeavors. These distractions will only delay the inevitable and then you'll be pressed for time.

LIBRA

Sept 23/Oct 23

Libra, carefully schedule your time this week, as you cannot afford to get behind on your assignments at work or in school. You also have many important appointments on the calendar.

SCORPIO

Oct 24/Nov 22

Someone comes to you for advice this week and wants you to keep their situation private. You need to help them without betraying their request for confidentiality.

SAGITTARIUS

Nov 23/Dec 21

It is possible your mind will wander this week, Sagittarius. You might not be able to focus on the tasks at hand, and will need to focus extra hard to limit distractions.

CAPRICORN

Dec 22/Jan 20

Capricorn, pay attention to detail in all things that you do. Be mindful of this when tending to professional and personal matters.

AQUARIUS

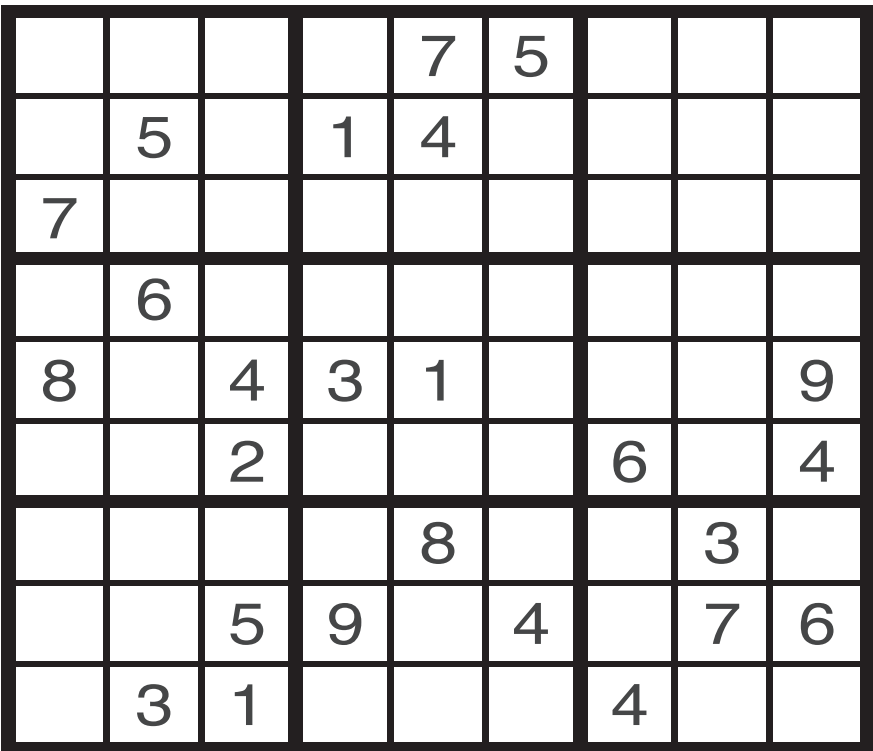
Jan 21/Feb 18

Aquarius, the simplest resolution is often the best one. Keep this mind when tackling a perplexing problem in the days ahead.

PISCES

Feb 19/Mar 20

Pisces, you are eager to sail through your to-do list, and certain tasks need to be postponed to address those that are high-priority. Rearrange things accordingly.



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!

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&
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Tim Fedora grabs ash logs from tricky places on the property in his claw.



The new crosswalk leads to the sidewalk and the Historic Chester Railway Museum across the street.



The main entrance to the Granite Saw property is completely cleared of all invasives.

There is an Amazing transformation at Western Massachusetts Hilltown Hikers Chester Granite and Polishing Works property in Chester on Prospect Street.

For the last two weeks volunteers have been cleaning brush, burning brush, chipping dead wood. They thank Ridgeline Tree Service for the crane truck, chipper and some heavy equipment to clean out invasive species, dead ash trees. Now the front entrance is so welcoming

The land renewal project at the Chester Granite Saw has been the most tedious so far. The lot, after being abandoned for eighty years has grown in with forest in between and all around the historic factory.

In order to save the machinery, all had to be cleared including the invasive species of vines and brush, some even going through the concrete pads for the old buildings. Volunteers have been cutting down the dead ash trees on the three acre parcel for the last six months. The Emerald Ash Borer has done

great damage to the ash trees in the hilltowns, leaving these trees still standing yet hollow inside and a danger to falling with high winds.

The emerald ash borer is an invasive wood-boring beetle from Asia which is responsible for the death and decline of tens of millions of ash trees in North America. It lays its eggs in the bark crevices of ash trees, the eggs hatch and the larvae burrow into the tree where they feed. This feeding is what damages the trees.

The emerald ash borer has been found in 37 states to date. The emerald ash borer is difficult to detect early when pest populations are small because damage to the trees is hidden under the bark. It was first detected in North America in 2002 in southeast Michigan.

All the work on this property is funded by donations. Please support the ongoing restoration efforts of our non-profit The Hilltown Hikers in preserving this historic landmark for all, it's donors like you who fund projects like this to preserve Hilltown History for generations to come.



Dead ash victim to the emerald ash borer was dangerous as most stood hollow inside.



Ridgeline Tree Service used the chipper to make wood chips to be used on the walking path.



Most of the work on the street frontage had to be done without machines because of the power lines and close proximity to the historic equipment.



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Grandparents
& Friends
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