

Country Journal

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

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BLANDFORD

Select Board adopts Public Participation Policy

By Mary Kronholm
Correspondent

The Select Board approved a Public Participation Policy at the April 17 meeting along with implementing departmental meetings.

While not new information, the Public Participation Policy does adhere to the state's Open Meeting Law, MGL c. 30A, sections 18–25, and assures "fairness, efficiency, and a more productive meeting environment for both the board and the public," as stated by Town Administrator Cristina Ferrera in the memorandum recommending the formal adoption and enforcement.

The policy reads as follows: In accordance with Massachusetts Open Meeting Law, the public is welcome to attend and observe all open meetings of the Select Board. A designated Public Comment

period will be provided at the beginning of each meeting for members of the public to briefly speak on matters within the Board's jurisdiction.

Public input is limited to the Public Comment period (2-3 minutes) unless otherwise invited by the Chair. If people believe more time is needed to discuss their concern, please submit a request to be placed on the agenda in advance of the meeting. During the rest of the meeting, attendees are asked to refrain from speaking or raising hands unless the Chair explicitly invites public input.

Disruptions, side conversations or attempts to engage board members during official business may result in a request to leave the meeting.

The Select Board appreciates people's cooperation and their interest in

POLICY, page 5

RUSSELL

WWI Veterans plaque finds home

By Wendy Long
Correspondent



Horace Moses

Thanks to a \$9,500 Veterans Heritage Grant from the Massachusetts State Historical Records Advisory Board, the Russell Historical Commission has been able to secure a new home for a plaque honoring the employees of the Strathmore Paper Company, who served in World War I.

Originally arranged by the paper company's owner Horace Moses, the 150 pound tablet was once housed in a community building in Woronoco that Moses built for his employees and their families.

According to Sue Maxwell, who wrote the grant, the tablet moved to the VFW when the community building was demolished and eventually made its way to the selectboard office. It is dedicated to approximately 90 World War I Veterans who were employed at the Woronoco

and West Springfield mills during the war. Five of those individuals were killed in the war, but Maxwell said many returned to the area and resumed their work at the mills.

The plaque has now been mounted and installed in a permanent location at Strathmore Park and will be dedicated at the Council on Aging's annual picnic this spring.

Local historian Bob Kidd, who has written a biography on the life of Horace Moses, was asked to sum up the paper company founder's most significant achievements. This, he said, would not be an easy task as Moses' contributions were vast. "In addition to the paper mills, he was very involved in the "Eastern States Movement", which was similar to the model cities," Kidd said. "Farms, industry, banks and merchants joined together to form the Hampden County Improvement League which led to the Eastern States Exposition." Moses also helped form the Eastern States Farmers Exchange,

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HILLTOWNS

Wildwater races blessed with perfect weather

By Wendy Long
Correspondent

The 70th Annual Westfield River Wildwater Races, which included canoes, kayaks and stand up paddleboards, took place on Saturday, April 19 with warm temperatures and overcast skies, what many racers called perfect conditions.

There were 24 competitors in the expert race and 155 registered in the classic race. While there were plenty of new racers, there were also many faces that were familiar to hilltown wild water fans. Frequent winner Ed Hamel and his daughter

Mariah got off first in the expert race, which started at the base of Knightville Dam and ended at the Route 20 rest area across from the Huntington Health Center. According to Ed's wife Mary, they wanted an early start in order to get the boat back to the Mass DOT yard for the start of the classic race, which Ed was going to do with his grandson Max. Mariah reported that she used to race with her father when she was young and then resumed racing with him last year-when they tipped over three times. This year, thankfully, they stayed afloat.

"It was a nice day for a

race. Not too hot and not too cold," Mariah Hamel said. "It's a nice event and the volunteers have all worked really hard."

Also completing the expert race were long time friends Sam Cumming and Joseph Simonowicz. "We had a clean ride and no flipping," Simonowicz said. Simonowicz works for the US Army Corps of Engineers, which manages the flow of water for the race. Knightville and Littleville Dams are used for flood control and snow melt and spring rains are held back in anticipation of the annual canoe races. He explained that they started

releasing water yesterday at the rate of \$1,000 CFS (cubic feet per second) from Knightville Dam and 600 CFS from Littleville Dam.

Tim Gamble raced as a solo paddler in both the expert race and classic race. He was pleased with the expert course and landed saying, "She's dry. I didn't bail once."

Such was not the case for stand up paddleboarder Kim Toman, who also completed both the expert and classic races. As she reached shore at the end of the first race, she acknowledged that she had fallen off several times and said, "I drank a lot of water. I'm just glad I was able to leave some water in the river for the other racers."

Longtime racer (and for many years race organizer) Jeff Defeo completed his 50th race this year. Defeo said he started racing right out of high school in 1974. These days, it is the expert race only for him, admitting he no longer does the classic race because his knees can't withstand the portages.

The start of the classic race had a food truck from Connections Culinary Services preparing eggs and bagels for waiting paddlers. The classic race got off a bit earlier than expected with Carl Cignoni running



And for some, there was just nothing for it but to let the boat go over. Photo Courtesy of Eric Wallis

RACES, page 2

HUNTINGTON

All boards meeting to be held April 16

By Wendy Long
Correspondent

Nearly 25 people from Huntington town departments and boards attended the All Boards Meeting at 6 p.m. on Wednesday, April 16 at 6 p.m.

Representatives came from water and sewer, finance, the library, Council on Aging, Fire Department, Highway Department and Conservation Commission, among others. Select board Chair Roger Booth and Town Administrator Jennifer Peloquin walked through the agenda. Technical issues delayed the start to almost 6:15 p.m. Despite this, the agenda was covered and questions answered by 7:15 p.m.

Police Chief retirement

First was an update on the retirement of Police Chief Robert Garriepy, effective June 27. Garriepy will be staying on in some capacity after his retirement. A preliminary screening committee will include Gateway Assistant Superintendent Stephanie Fisk, business owner Darryl Fisk and Finance Committee member Eric Jensen. With Peloquin, this group will rank applicants using a blind review process.

Interviews will be done with representatives from the Fire Department, Highway Department, Water and Sewer Department and Peloquin. Other departments and boards are invited to submit questions to Peloquin that they want to have included in the interview. Final interviews will take place in an open meeting followed by negotiations that will take place in executive session; however, meeting minutes will be released once a candidate accepts a contract.

Grants

Also discussed was the uncertainty about state and federal grants. All boards and departments need to submit a list of their grants to include the source of funding, purpose, total, match (if required), and whether or not the project is complete. If completed, are payments still due to the town. If not complete, the estimated percentage of completion. From this point forward, all grant applications must be brought to the Select Board before submitting to review risk, assign a signatory authority, and ensure that tracking and filing responsibilities

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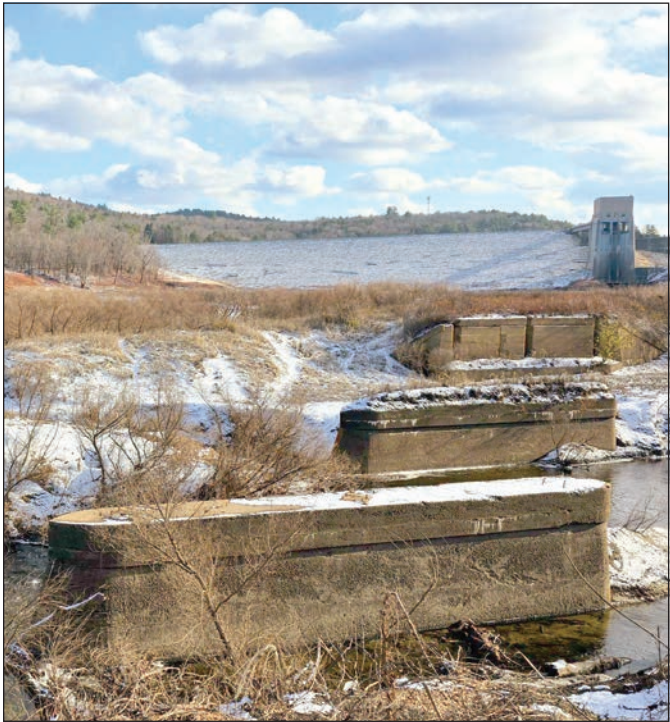


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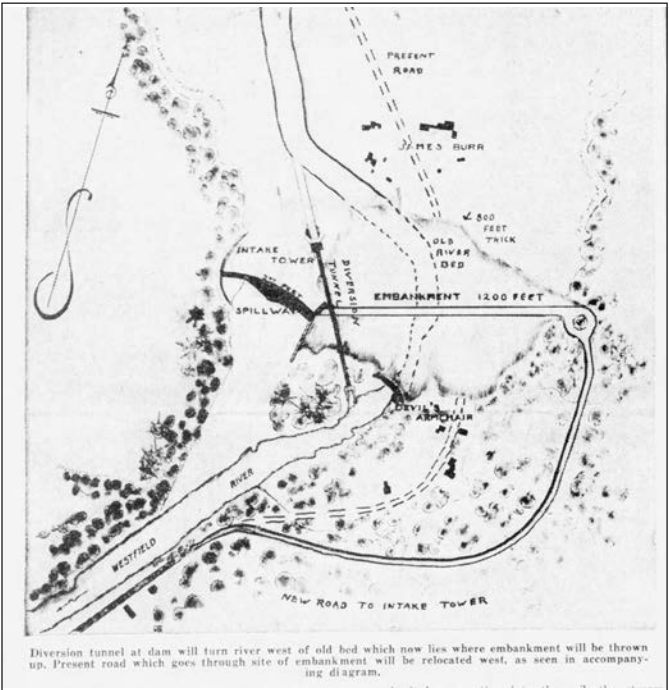
HILLTOWN HIKING ADVENTURES



This photo shows the poured concrete pillars. Submitted photos



The original Pitcher Bridge abutment is shown in this photo.



This map shows the original route of the East Branch with the new dam.

Looking back before the Knightville Dam

As the Hilltowns gets ready for the Wildwater Races lets go back in time to when before the Knightville Dam was created and the East Branch of the Westfield River flowed free.

The first Pitcher bridge across the East Branch of the Westfield River is rarely seen in the Knightville flood plain in Huntington. When the water levels are at record lows as they were early this past winter and before any water was backing up into the floodplain, Hilltown History reveals itself.

Being it a dry fall the river flowed almost like it did over 100 years ago following the original channel, which is rarely seen since the Knightville Dam was built and the water was backed up at its edge creating a flood plain pool of water.

All the bridge abutments (new and old) saw the sun this past winter, a rare event. Looking down into the floodplain one could see the original stone laid abutments from when Knightville was still a thriving village and

could see the newer Pitcher bridge built in 1927 and its poured concrete abutments.

This bridge existed prior to the Knightville Dam and was the main route connecting to old Cullen Road coming down from Norwich Lake. Long before 112 was a paved road, the Old Worthington Road would take travelers North to Worthington and the village of Knightville along the East Branch of the Westfield River was thriving.

Today, the old road is great hiking when it's above water of course. Only 10 years after the "new" Pitcher Bridge (poured concrete pillars) was built, the bridge was completed discontinued to be flooded under the creation of the Knightville Dam.

"Here Huntington will have to take the biggest loss, but the area involved is only a small percentage of the total area of the town. At the same time new values will be created in the relocation of the main road up the valley. The dam that closes the gap at Knightville will close as



The original Pitcher Bridge with some of the stone pillars is shown near the Knightville Dam.

well the new state road that was completed less than 10 years ago."

"After leaving Huntington center, the road crosses to the east bank of the river and continues along for several miles until it reaches the new concrete bridge, with the date 1927, about a half a mile north of the dam site at Knightville. Here it follows the main stream for a little over a mile until it branches off up the valley of the Little river to South Worthington."(From the Sunday Republican 1937)



This photo shows the poured concrete Pitcher Bridge.



Some of the Western Massachusetts Hilltown Hikers stand by the original stone abutment of the original Pitcher Bridge.

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