

Country Journal

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A TURLEY PUBLICATION | www.turley.com

June 18, 2026 | Vol. 48, No. 8 | 75¢

www.countryjournal.turley.com

BLANDFORD

Cemetery Commissioner responds to complaint

By Mary Kronholm
Correspondent

Board member and Cemetery Commissioner Ted Cousineau responded to George Reichert's complaints of the lack of cemetery maintenance in the town's burial grounds.

Reichert spoke of broken headstones, headstones listing or fallen, and general care plus the removal of downed trees.

Cousineau said the downed trees were all dead or dying ash and threatened gravesites. Most of the headstones that are broken, were broken years ago because of inappropriate and improper attempts to correct listing stones.

At the time the approach was to cement the area around a stone, but frost heaves dislocated stones and they fell.

The stones need a deeper concrete foundation and some of the headstones weigh as much as a ton or more requiring special equipment the cemetery does not have.

Families of the deceased have been informed of needed foundation work and some families have provided funding for that purpose. Cousineau said this could be as much as a \$5,000 to \$7,000.

Reichert would like to see a plan outlining care and maintenance of the town's cemeteries. He said he found only three meeting minutes for the commission during the last year with little or "no information."

Reichert maintained, "work needs to be done" and he suggested asking for volunteers to help. "We do not have enough tax dollars to do what needs to be done," he said and added that the cemetery commissioners "need to ask" for volunteers.

Cousineau reminded Reichert of the liability issue. "The families own the stones," he said, and proposed a paid position for

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CHESTER



Hero Marguerite opens the Chester Theatre Company's 2026 season by reprising her role as Rory in the play, "A Hundred Words for Snow," which opens June 23 at the CenterStage Theatre at the '62 Center for Theatre and Dance in Williamstown. The role earned Marguerite the Berkshire Theater's Outstanding Actress in a Play award last year, for her performance at CTC.

Photo submitted

CHESTER THEATRE SHOWS 'A Hundred Words for Snow'

By Wendy Long
Correspondent

The Chester Theatre Company opens their 2026 season with a production of "A Hundred Words for Snow," a one-woman play by Tatty Hennessy, at Williams College's '62 Center for Theatre and Dance as part of their Summer at the '62 Center performance series.

"A Hundred Words for Snow" follows a 15-year-old girl named Rory who, upon discovering that her father had been planning a trip for the two of them to the North Pole just before his unexpected death, decides to carry out his plan and embark on the journey herself. Layered, complex and as beautiful as snowfall, Hennessy's play is an epic Arctic adventure about adolescence, grief, love and being an explorer in a melting world.

The production is directed by Chester Theatre Company co-artistic direc-

"So much of it reminded me of the ups and downs that so many of my teenage friends and I were navigating, but blown up to a scale that reflects how huge that time in your life feels."

- Tatty Hennessy



tor Michelle Ong Hendrick and stars Hero Marguerite, who also happens to be Ong Hendrick's daughter as Rory.

The mother-daughter duo, however, are not new to the play as "A Hundred Words for Snow" was staged at Chester Theatre Company last summer with the same creative team. The 2025 production was named as one of the 10 Best of the Year in the Berkshire Eagle and Marguerite, who is currently a student in the UCSD MFA Acting program, received Berkshire Theater's Outstanding

Actress in a Play award for her role.

Upon first reading the script last year, Marguerite recalled feeling drawn to the play because of how much of herself she saw in her character.

"There's a lot about Rory that reminds me of who I was at fifteen," she said. "So much of it reminded me of the ups and downs that so many of my teenage friends and I were navigating, but blown up to a scale that reflects how huge that time in your life feels."

She also felt that "this

script had the potential to allow audiences to talk about grief and loss in a way that is kind of taboo in a lot of western cultures."

Being a one-woman show, "A Hundred Words for Snow" poses the fundamental challenge for the performer of juggling various elements, from learning a large amount of text and choreography to sharpening accents. Marguerite found that "the biggest challenge was really allowing [her] self to come through the character."

"Rory feels very close to me in some ways, and at first I think I kind of resisted letting my own self through into the performance because it felt really vulnerable, like I was really letting people into my story, not just Rory's," she said. "But it just didn't work and I kept bumping up against this feeling of sort of hiding inside the performance, so I had to let go of that fear."

SHOW, page 2

SCHOOLS & YOUTH

Committee hears racism allegations

By Wendy Long
Correspondent

About 20 members of the community attended the June 10 meeting of the Gateway Regional School Committee to speak about allegations of racism at Gateway Regional School.

The issue had reached a boiling point the previous week, when 2026 graduate Ashley Tacke described an incident she'd experienced while a student. She said she reported the incident to school administrators and said that nothing was done to the perpetrators, who she said were known to many students and included one person, who was already an adult.

Tacke had posted the incident on the Parents of Gateway Regional Students Facebook page, which resulted in a great deal of community controversy, disturbing content and the page administrator pulling the post. It was not available for review at press time.

Reportedly, the incident occurred during a class fundraiser at Red Robin in Holyoke, in March that Tacke drove herself to and attended.

As she drove to school the following day, she noticed writing on her back windshield. While nobody speaking at the school committee explicitly said what was written, it reportedly said "I hate (racial slurs)."

Ashley, who is Caucasian, said she reported the incident to Dr. William Sullivan, Principal who she said was appalled. A number of people were called to the office.

Tacke described the incident as a hate crime, part of an ongoing pattern of harassment from a group of her classmates that had happened to her over all four years and had been previously reported, and as actually endangering a child who was driving around Western Massachusetts with that language on her car.

Also speaking were her parents, Andrew and Carla, along with a number of other parents and current and former students.

Andrew said that the school said the event in question was not school-sponsored although the Principal had been among those attended. He said that disciplinary action either did not happen or was not reported to the community.

He said that he had reported the inci-

RACISM, page 8

BLANDFORD

Shartrand wins Select Board seat, Jemiolo takes Water Commissioner slot

Corinne Shartrand won the contest for Select Board member with 194 votes in a three way race.

The town election took place Saturday, June 13 with 405 ballots cast.. Cara Letendre, incumbent, received 182 votes. Third candidate for the slot, Bradley Curry, received 29 votes.

Shartrand said, "Thank you, Blandford. I'm honored by your trust and committed to working for every resident. Now, let's move forward together." The second



Corinne Shartrand



Stephen Jemiolo

contest on the ballot was for Water Commissioner and that slot was won by Stephen Jemiolo with 220 to Bill Levakis's 131 votes.

Kim Bergland received 11 write-in votes for the Planning Board.

All other positions were uncontested. They included Assessor

Stephen Jemiolo; Board of Health Pat Lombardo; Cemetery Commissioner Pete Sparks; Library Trustee Byam Stevens; Municipal Light Plant Peter Langmore; Planning Board Scott O'Connor; School Committee Katherine McDonough; and Town Clerk Doris Jemiolo.



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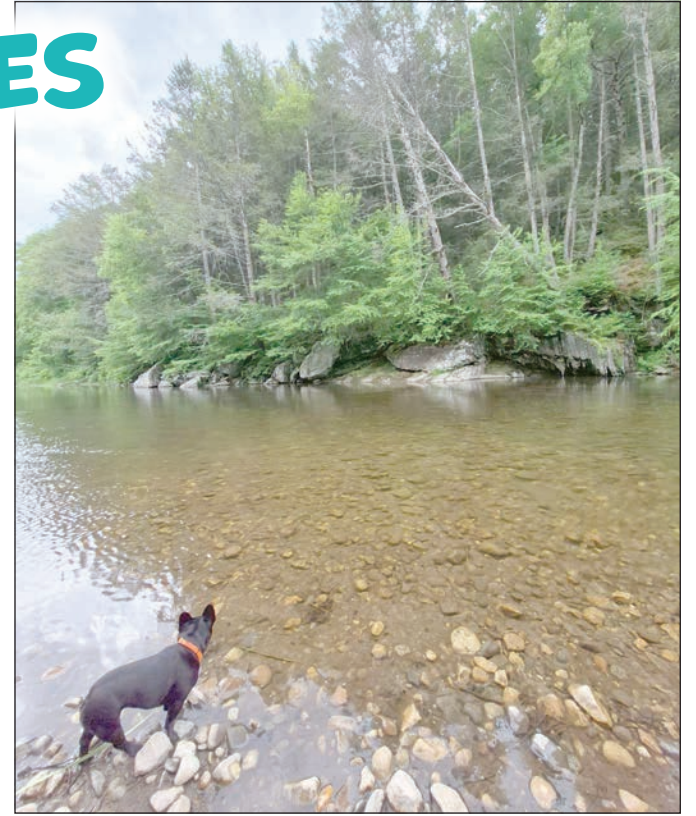
HILLTOWN HIKING ADVENTURES



Stephanie is always in charge of the campfire.



They spent most of the time floating in the lazy East Branch of the Westfield River.



Frankie the Frenchie hikes on the island.

Hilltown Hikers spend weekend camping

The Western Massachusetts Hilltown Hikers spent an off the grid camping weekend at Indian Hollow Campground in Chesterfield with great company, food, hiking, exploring and most importantly relaxing.

The lazy East Branch was where they floated every afternoon and some fell asleep enjoying the wildlife and paddling to the beautiful sights on the river.

They lost one tent, saw Jupiter and Venus in the June night sky, climbed up to the overlook pinnacle trail, explored Dead Branch Forest and enjoyed every minute of all three nights of campfires.

These group camping events are open to the public whether a first timer or seasoned camper. The Indian Hollow Campground is available for rent to groups like non-profits and other civic groups.



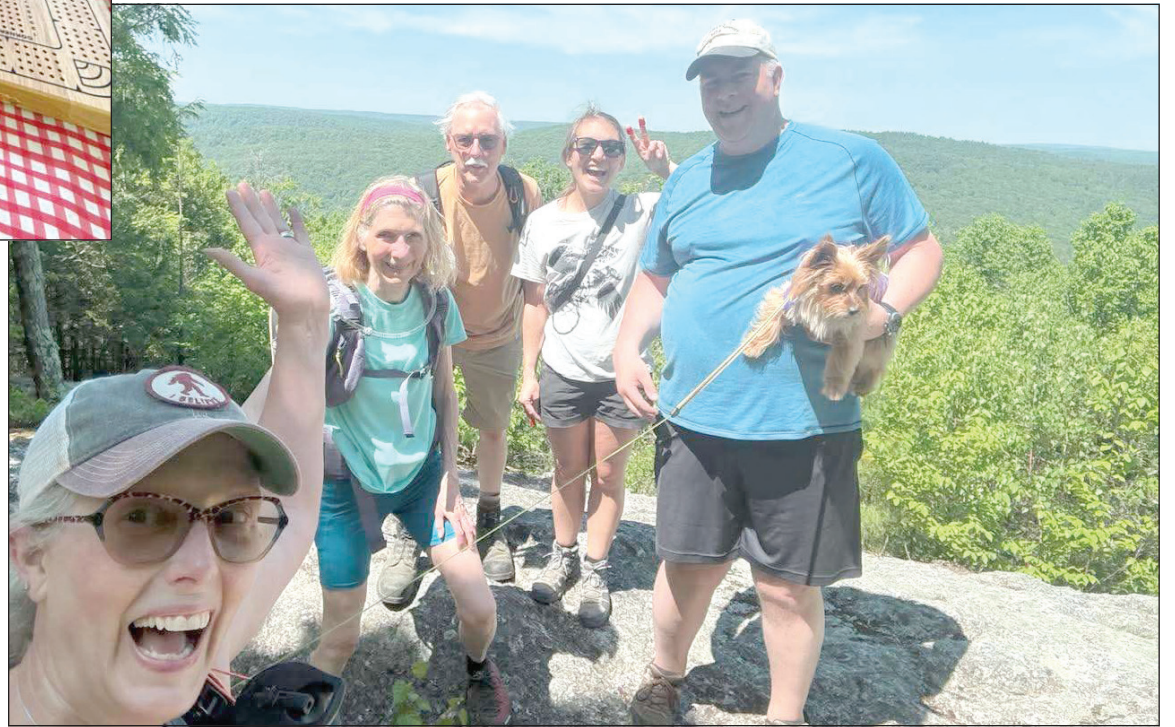
Cybil attempts to help play cribbage.



A crabapple tree provided shade from the heat for the camping Hilltown Hikers.



Hilltown Hikers cross the Dead Branch.



Hilltown Hikers are shown at the Pinnacle Trail.

Submitted photos

Send Us Your Autumn Event Information

Turley Publications will print your Autumn event **FREE OF CHARGE** in our **Autumn Fest Supplement** which will be published **September 9, 2026.**

Total circulation of 85,000 reaching over 200,000 readers in the Pioneer Valley.

Deadline for Calendar submissions is August 19.

Community Autumn Events

Event Should Be Non-Profit & Open to the Public

FREE Calendar Listings Reaching over 200,000 Readers in the Pioneer Valley

Event Name _____

Date/Time _____

Location _____

Description _____

Cost _____

Contact name & phone number for more information _____

MAIL YOUR LISTING INFORMATION TO:

**Turley Publications, Attn: Jamie Joslyn, 24 Water Street, Palmer, MA 01069
or email* them to: jamie@turley.com**

***Be sure to indicate "Autumn Event" in the subject line of your email.**