

Country Journal

Devoted to the Needs of the Hilltowns

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BLANDFORD

BFPA seeks donation for new roof

By Mary Kronholm
Correspondent

The 2026 Blandford Fair is less than eight weeks away and the usual preparations are ongoing.

But an even bigger task might be completed soon to benefit the fair for years to come.

"If we can raise \$17,000 by this December, the agricultural hall will have a new roof for the 2027 fair," according to Blandford Fair Preservation Association President, Jacob Lemme. This non-profit organization is dedicated to improving the fair's buildings and grounds.

At its annual meeting this fall, the group will be four years old and will have raised \$53,000 for the roof so far. The successful completion of this first big fundraising project will hopefully pave the way for other exciting initiatives.

The BFPA stays in touch with current donors through a website, a Facebook page and with yearly letters. They are always looking for more donors.

Many area residents visited the BFPA tent last



Blandford Fair Preservation Association Director David Hopson with BFPA President Jacob Lemme and Clerk Michele Crane.

month during the town's 250th celebrations.

"It was a great opportunity to explain to potential donors about our goals and plans for the roof," said Lemme. There is some

urgency to the roof replacement because the adult exhibit hall on the second floor has sustained damage to its tin walls and ceiling, which can't be fixed until there is a new roof on the

building.

Over the last several years new, donated windows have been installed. That work will continue this year,

BFPA, page 7

HUNTINGTON

Subcommittee works on bullying policy changes

By Wendy Long
Correspondent

The policy subcommittee of the Gateway Regional School Committee met twice so far this summer to consider changes to the district's existing bullying policy.

This work came out of the June School Committee meeting where twenty parents, alumni and current students came to express concern on this issue, stemming from an incident posted to a social media page run by district parents.

Recent graduate Ashley Tacke described an incident she'd experienced at a class fundraiser in March.

Tacke had posted the incident on the Parents of Gateway Regional Students Facebook page after graduation, which resulted in a great deal of community controversy,

disturbing responses and the page administrator pulling the post.

The post described Tacke driving herself to the fundraiser at Red Robin in Holyoke. On her way to school the next day, she noticed writing on her back windshield, which reportedly said, "I hate (racial slurs)."

She stated that 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 over all four years.

The incident and had been previously reported. The most recent incident could have endangered her when driving around Western Massachusetts

POLICY, page 3

BLANDFORD

Select Board discuss Hazardous Mitigation Plan

By Mary Kronholm
Correspondent

Senior Land Use and Environment Planner from Pioneer Valley Planning Commission Derek Strahan met with Select Board Monday, July 6.

He presented highlights of the draft of the town's Hazard Mitigation Plan

which assessed natural hazard risks and an action plan to help "reduce the town's vulnerabilities."

The goal is to "minimize" loss of life and property damage due to naturally occurring hazards that include, but not limited to dam failure, drought, earthquake, flooding, severe seasonal storms etc.

Some things the town already does, such as using reverse 911 for emergency alerts, clearing culverts to prevent flooding, Zoning bylaws, protecting wetlands, regulating wireless communication towers, emergency shelters, wildfire management and more.

The Hazard Mitigation Plan in its entirety is on the town's website at townof-blandford.gov.

End of year transfers

Town Administrator Cristina Ferrera reminded the board that departments were responsible for turning in wage and salary updates for the coming fiscal year for payroll. There will have to be two meetings with the Finance Committee for end-of-year transfers of funds, and an invoice from the Chester/Blandford Police for the end of the year. Heating fuel account is being used up and reimbursement for Americans with Disabilities Act compliant improvements at Town Hall for \$5,286.62 which included communication device upgrades in the gym and select board room, walkers and wheel chairs for use in town hall and improved signage.

Vegetation management

PLAN, page 7



Turley Publication photo by Mary Kronholm
Senior Land Use and Environment Planner from Pioneer Valley Planning Commission Derek Strahan met with the Select Board Monday, July 6.

HUNTINGTON



Turley Publications photos by Wendy Long

Above, Alicia Boyer, information officer and Paul Graham, president of Gateway Little League met with the Huntington Select Board. Right, Harry Rock, Race Director of the Westfield River Wildwater Races, presented the Select Board and Fire Departments with appreciation paddles for their work and support of the 2026 races.

Gateway Little League to pay for water at Petis Field

By Wendy Long
Correspondent

Paul Graham and Alicia Boyer of Gateway Little League met with the Select Board at their Wednesday, July 8 meeting, to discuss water issues at Pettis Field, where the organization maintains a baseball field.

At issue was the use of town water at the field, which the board said needed to be paid for by GLL.

Attending his first official meeting as a selectman was Rob Drabiuk. Also attending were selectmen Roger Booth, re-elected

chairman at that meeting; John McVeigh and Town Administrator Jennifer Peloquin.

Graham said that the baseball field has been on Pettis field with no water meter for the past 50 years. They had just reseeded the field, but the water had not been turned on for them to irrigate the seed. They reached out to the town's Water and Sewer Department and were told that the town wanted to put a meter on it for GLL to pay for their usage.

Graham said that when the meter was installed, they

made the water line unusable for GLL. Graham is a plumber, who redid the work to make it usable. He said he would be happy to shut the water line off at the end of season and drain the meter annually.

"Anybody can go in and use the water right now," Graham said, adding that GLL would be happy to pay

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A woman with blonde hair tied back, wearing sunglasses, a blue tank top, and black shorts, stands on a large, flat rock. She is pointing her right hand towards a waterfall cascading over rocks in the background. In the foreground, a small, scruffy dog with tan and black fur stands on the same rock, wearing a bright yellow life vest with blue straps. The scene is outdoors, with a concrete structure visible in the upper left background.

Stephanie and Cybil, stand at Crescent Mills in Russell.



Valerie, Liz and Frenchie share a paddle board.



Hilltown Hikers take a swim in Upper Goose Pond in Becket.

The heatwave last week really did the hikers in. The Western Massachusetts Hilltown Hikers usually hike every weekend, but when the message asked “hey, where are we going this weekend? All I got was crickets.”

This time of year people may see many kayaks on top of cars and in back of pickup trucks because here in Western Massachusetts and especially in the Hilltowns as they have so many places to paddle.

Paddling is a great upper body workout because they use their core as well as arms. So the Western Massachusetts Hilltown Hikers still got out and got active and beat the heat at the same time.

There are several “put ins” along the Wild and Scenic Westfield River along Route 20 including just above the historic village

of Crescent Mills. The jaw dropping rock formations in the river stand out here behind the old Texon Mill with a few miles of paddling in the impound area.

One of their favorite spots to paddle is below the Russell Mills in Woronoco. This hidden spot off Valley View Drive has an official portage used by the River Racers in April.

The water is just deep enough this time of year to paddle up close to the amazing Russell Potholes just below Salmon Falls. The vertical and horizontal potholes here are something rarely seen on any river including the magical small waterfalls cascading down the rocks.

Don't forget about Becket with its large amount of lakes and ponds including Greenwater Pond straddled between the Turnpike and Route 20.

Did you know the Huckleberry Trolley Line ran along the pond? Yes, you can paddle alongside Hilltown History here and there is designated parking alongside Route 20 and a great boat launch.

Be sure to see the play-boy bunny rock and paddle out to the island in the middle marked with an American flag.

Lastly on the hottest day all headed to Lee to launch at Lower Goose Pond for a seven mile paddle. Most of time was spent swimming at the secluded at Goose Pond cabin area. It was just plain too hot to hike!

They paddled through three towns, Lee, Becket and Tyringham on these giant, clear water and historic ponds from early morning to late afternoon. The Hilltown Hikers hopes to be on the trails next week when the humidity drops.



Valerie from Lenox spends the day on a paddle board., a great alternative to a heavy kayak.



Greg and Stephanie embark on a paddle around Greenwater Pond in Becket.



The Hilltown Hikers paddle around the Upper Goose Pond island.



The old bridge to Strathmore Mill crosses the Westfield River.

Submitted photos



Send Us Your Community Autumn Events

Turley Publications will print your Summer event
FREE OF CHARGE in our **Autumn Fest Supplement**
which will be published September 9, 2026.
Total circulation of 85,000 which reaches
over 200,000 readers in the Pioneer Valley.
Event Should Be Non-Profit & Open to the Public



**Deadline
for Calendar
submissions is
August 19.**

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

**MAIL YOUR LISTING INFORMATION TO: Turley P
or email* them to: jamie@turley.com *Be su**

Event Name	_____
Date/Time	_____
Location	_____
Description	_____ _____ _____ _____
Cost	_____
Contact name & phone number for more information	_____

Please specify if you would like your name and number printed in the paper.

MAIL YOUR LISTING INFORMATION TO: Turley Publications, Attn: Jamie Joslyn, 24 Water Street, Palmer, MA 01069
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