

“When summer opens, I see how fast it matures, and fear it will be short; but after the heats of July and August, I am reconciled, like one who has had his swing, to the cool of autumn.” Ralph Waldo Emerson.

Country Journal

Devoted to the Needs of the Hilltowns

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BLANDFORD

NextEra Energy Resources request restriction

By Mary Kronholm
Correspondent

Representatives of NextEra Energy Resources met with the board to request approval of their proposed conservation restriction on their solar field property on Otis Stage Road.

Springfield Water and Sewer Commission will hold and benefit from the CR, conserving approximately 50 acres of Miller Swamp, which abuts other conserved land.

The CR is required by the Mass Department of Environmental Protection storm water mitigation and will permanently protect a wetlands area. According to NextEra the “overall benefits” include storm water and flood plain protection, water quality and supply, wetlands, habitat and biodiversity protection as well as open space protection. The property will not be subdivided as there is no road frontage

or vehicular access. No money is changing hands and SWSC does not own the land just control of the CR, according to NextEra.

Chair Jackie Coury said that town counsel will review the documents and asked NextEra to return for the next meeting, Aug. 17, for a vote, and said, “If there is a problem,” the town will let them know.

Blandford Historical Society Director Jane Rohman brought the board up to date on the Second Annual Ghost Walk which will be in the Hill Cemetery on Saturday, Oct. 3 from 2-4 p.m.

Surplus itmes for sale
Coury spoke on the surplus items on the stage in the gym. These items are for sale and residents will have the first opportunity to purchase. The caveat to those departments with offices in Town Hall is to be sure items are

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SCHOOLS & YOUTH

Students return Aug. 31

By Wendy Long
Correspondent

Schools in the Gateway Regional School District will reopen for students in grades 1 – 12 on Monday, Aug. 31.

There will be no school on Friday, Sept. 4 and Monday, Sept.7, so families can enjoy a long holiday weekend and youngest students can return to the school routine over two short weeks.

Students in pre-kindergarten and kindergarten will have an orientation on Wednesday, Sept. 2 and start school on Tuesday, Sept. 8.

Superintendent Melissa Matarazzo explained that they have added kindergarten students to this later start date for several reasons. It will allow more students to participate in orientation, have time to conduct screenings of students. who may have moved in over the summer.

PreK and kindergarten teachers can connect with the kindergarten students to support their successful transition, she said.

“We are so excited to welcome our students back in just a few weeks,” said



Submitted photo

Schools in the Gateway Regional School District reopen for students first grade through 12th.

Dr. Matarazzo. “This year, our district-wide focus will include building a more connected culture for staff and students, heightening academic excellence for all students, and finalizing and implementing our Portrait of a Gator – the community-defined competencies that we aim to instill in every Gateway Gator.”

All schools will run on the same schedules as last year. Chester Elementary School (Blandford, Chester and Middlefield) and Littleville Elementary School (Huntington, Montgomery and Russell) schedules are 8:35 a.m.-3:35 p.m., with both schools serv-

ing grades K - 5. Gateway Regional School serves grade 6 - 12 students from all six member towns and outside towns via school choice from 7:20 a.m.-2:20 p.m.

New teachers and staff
The district is also welcoming new teachers and staff, including a new English Language Learner coordinator Barbara Page, Early Childhood Coordinator Lynn Thomson and a new Instructional Coach at GRS funded through the Barr Foundation Lexie Jennings.

Family resources
The Gateway website at www.grsd.org contains a

great deal of information for families. Staff contact information may be found on the staff directory page at each school’s website.

The Family Resources page on the Gateway website is a hub for quickly finding information that parents and caregivers need. The lunch menu may be found on its “Food Services” page.

Bus routes are expected to be posted to the Gateway website on Friday, Aug. 21, and will also be found under Family Resources (transportation). It is suggested that students be at their bus stops early on the first few days

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CHESTER



These beef cattle wait to enter the show stand in the shade before the beef show classes start. Submitted photos



These quilts were part of the exhibits on display at the Littleville Fair this past weekend, Aug. 7 to Aug. 9.



Saturday, Aug. 8 there were four classes of oxen draws. This young man feeds his oxen team at the Littleville Fair held last weekend in Chester.



Poultry were exhibited at the Littleville Fair.

Chester celebrates Littleville FAIR

RUSSELL

Family Fun Day and Car Show on Aug. 29

By Mary Kronholm
Correspondent

The Eighth Annual Family Fun Day and Car Show takes place on Saturday, Aug. 29 at Strathmore Park, 950 Westfield Road.

Russell/Montgomery Police Chief Kevin Hennessey said, “Over the past eight years, the Russell-Montgomery Police Department’s Annual Family Fun Day and Car Show has evolved into something far greater than we could have ever anticipated. What began as a local community event serving the towns of Russell and Montgomery has grown to encompass families and residents from throughout the Hilltowns, the greater Westfield area, and beyond.”

Events begin at 10 a.m. and continue through 3 p.m. There will be a Police K-9 demonstration, raffles, for the younger set, a balloon artist, face painting,

free popcorn and for everyone, there will be food vendors including ice cream from Our Mother’s Kitchen.

According to Police Chief Hennessey, Family Fun Day provides an opportunity for police officers, first responders, residents, children and families to interact in a positive and welcoming environment.

“A family simply spending the afternoon with our officers can have a lasting impact,” he said.

The Massachusetts State Police and Life Star helicopters will arrive alternately between noon and 1 p.m.

Everyone will have a chance to sit in a cruiser or firefighting rig.

There will be a pie eating contest, don’t know what kind of pies yet, but they will be delicious.

Children will enjoy the bounce house and the water slide. There will be hot dogs and burgers in abundance. Admission is free for everyone.



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A group of people are kayaking on a river. In the foreground, a purple kayak with a person in a yellow life vest is moving towards the left. To its right, a white kayak with two people, one in an orange life vest, is moving towards the right. Further back, a green kayak with a person in a black life vest is moving towards the left, and a blue kayak with a person in a white life vest is also moving towards the left. The river is surrounded by dense green foliage on the banks.

Whitney Field in Westfield was the take out point.

Keeping up with Hilltown traditions only once in a big while does the Westfield River get deep enough to paddle down river through Russell, Woronoco and Westfield. Lots of rain last week (monumental amounts) raised the Westfield River in Woronoco enough for the rare opportunity to paddle this usually super shallow and rocky section. At 5.5 feet on Sunday the river was ready for the Western Massachusetts Hilltown Hikers. Ten paddlers including some first timers cruised down river, under the turnpike bridge, over rapids avoiding rocks and seeing the beau-

ty of the Hilltowns from the Westfield Wild and Scenic river.

People may check the Hilltown Hikers' YouTube channel for a video they made by putting a GoPro on Greg's hat for this wild ride.

Heather Wyman, Westfield Wild Water Races' key team leader helped guide the group as well as Greg Deily from Southwick, who has competed in the races in the past and a big thank you to Alan McLean from West Springfield for the safety prep and his friend John for being the sweep.

Stephanie Brown from Agawam traded in her River Races parking attendant safety vest for a life vest and gave it

a go too. The Westfield River is very underutilized for outdoor recreation here in the Hilltowns.

Many other paddlers have expressed their wanting to paddle more of this river, but without regular or planned water releases during high water times similar to the Deerfield River this is not possible. People are urged to be an advocate and stand by the paddlers to hopefully get some kind of program together including more fishing access and portage access to the river so that they all can enjoy what is right in their backyard and one of the area's best assets. All can hope for an outfitter, designated parking for paddlers and more.

Sara and Mark from Westfield hit the river for the first time as they learn how to navigate the Westfield River.



They enjoy a quiet part of the Westfield River.

District gives notice of destruction of school records

WORTHINGTON – The Worthington School District gives notice of destruction of Special Education records 2026.

This notification is to inform parents/guardians and former students at the Worthington School District's intent to destroy the Special Education records of students who were no longer receiving Special Education services

as of 2019. These records will be destroyed in accordance with the state law unless the parent/guardian or eligible (adult) student notifies the School District otherwise by Sept. 1, 2026.

Special education records collected by the Worthington School District related to the identification, evaluation, educational placement or the provision of Special

Education in the district, must be maintained under state and federal laws for a period of seven years after special education services have ended.

Special Education services end when the student is no longer eligible for services, graduates, moves from the district or completes their education program at age 22.

After seven years, the

records are no longer useful to the district, but they may be useful to parents/guardians or former students in applying for Social Security benefits, rehabilitation services, college entrance, etc.

The parent/guardian or eligible (adult) student may request records by calling R.H. Conwell Elementary School at 413-238-5856 or emailing Emily Lak at elak@rhconwell.org.

Universities announce graduates

Roger Williams University
Bachelor's Degree
Ava Cieplinski of Westfield
Thomas Vaillancourt of Easthampton

University of Hartford
Doctor of Physical Therapy
Asheyln Baran of Westfield
Master of Science in organizational psychology
Abigail Cervonayco of Westfield

University of Maryland
Bachelor's Degree
Dakota Blaylock of Westfield

There may be changes to some routes over the first few days, so people should check back to make sure the times are still correct. If they are having trouble locating their child's bus, they may call 413-685-1011, email Melissa McKellick at mmckellick@grsd.org or call the principal's office at their child's school for help.

Information about the School-Based Health Center (SBHC) at Gateway, run by Hilltown Community Health Centers, Inc., is also accessed from the Family Resources tab. The SBHC is open from 7:30 a.m.-3 p.m. when school is in session and provides medical and dental care for students at school.

Before and after school care is provided at Littleville Elementary School for

students in grades PreK through 6 by the Greater Westfield YMCA. This fee-based program offers two days, three days, or five days of care; financial assistance is available.

Additional information may be found under the "Family Resources" tab on the Littleville website. This program will also be offered at Chester Elementary School if enough families enroll. Financial assistance

is available and seven hills vouchers are accepted.

Sports tryouts

Athletic Director Matthew Bonenfant announces the tryout days and times for the fall sports season. This is for student athletes in grades 7 - 12. Athletes are expected to attend all sessions.

Girls Cross Country tryouts will run Aug. 24 to Aug. 27 from 3:30-5 p.m.

Boys Cross Country tryouts

will run from Aug. 24 to Aug. 28 from 3:30-5 p.m. Both boys and girls soccer tryouts will be held from 4-6 p.m. from Aug. 24 to Aug. 28. They are not held together.

Additional athletics information, including links to downloading the arbiter app containing the sports schedule, are also located on the athletics page, also found under the family resources tab.

**\$12.50
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or email* them to: jamie@turley.com *Be sure to indicate "Summer Event" in the subject line of your email.

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