

Country Journal

Devoted to the Needs of the Hilltowns

Ashfield, Becket, Blandford, Chester, Chesterfield, Cummington, Dalton, Easthampton, Florence, Goshen, Granville, Hawley, Haydenville, Hinsdale, Huntington, Middlefield, Montgomery, Otis, Peru, Plainfield, Russell, Southampton, Washington, Westfield, Westhampton, Windsor, Williamsburg, Worthington

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CHESTER



Turley Publications photos by Wendy Long
Contestants of the longest beard contest at Littleville Fair (left to right) were Nellie Rivera, whose bearded dragon took third place; Joseph Miserendino (first place), Jerry Hodges (did not place) and Evan Duso (second place).

Fairgoers withstand passing storm

By Wendy Long
Correspondent

A quick-moving but massive storm on Saturday evening caused a power outage at the Littleville Fair on Aug. 8, but did not deter the fans and contestants in the annual Demolition Derby.

Twenty-three cars competed and kept on going through the storm with Tyler Main winning the final event. “Hilltowners in the bleachers were covered in mud and said it was awesome,” reported Stephanie Hunter, the entertainment fair volunteer.

Treasurer Jim Burke reported that Saturday Night’s storm was a bit of a scare. “With some back-up power we finished the Demolition Derby after the storm and the October Mountain band played music to get us to the end of the night,” Burke said. “By

Sunday morning we were back up and running.” Burke added that the chicken dinner on Saturday and turkey dinner on Sunday were both a great success and many of the fair goers left with full stomachs and

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HUNTINGTON

Select Board offers Garriepy Police Chief post

By Wendy Long
Correspondent

Town Administrator Jennifer Peloquin and Select Board Chairman Roger Booth, members, Rob Drabiuk, and John McVeigh, interviewed two candidates for the town’s part-time Police Chief position, to replace outgoing Chief Brian Kowal.

Fire Chief Joshua Ellinger also took part in the interviews.

Former Police Chief Robert Garriepy was interviewed first. Garriepy graduated from American International College and began serving on the Huntington Police Force in 1991. In 1994 he became the youngest police chief in Massachusetts, a record that has since been broken.

He retired in June 2025 and took a part-time position as Deputy Police

Chief to support Kowal through the transition.

Garriepy said he has been in public safety since age 13 and has a passion for the town, where he still lives. He said the town’s pressing needs are supporting the growing senior population in their homes, making the town livable for people on fixed incomes and supporting safety in the schools.

He said he could work a flexible schedule to meet a variety of duties, including such things as magistrate hearings, arraignments (Mondays), gun permits (Wednesdays), court motions (Thursdays) and payroll (Fridays).

Throughout his interview he emphasized the needs of town residents and importance of working with service providers such as Highland Valley

SELECT BOARD, page 2

RUSSELL

Remembering the good old days

Russell Pond

By Mary Kronholm
Correspondent

It was a slow day at the Russell Pond beach area last Wednesday, Aug. 12, according to attendant Mark Taylor.

Both he and Sawyer Wilkinson were on duty. While Taylor was a certified life guard and worked at the

pond every summer, that is no longer the case.

Certified life guards are in high demand these days and there are too few to work every location that needs them. Therefore, Russell Pond has attendants.

Taylor comes up to Russell from Southampton daily to safeguard those who visit for sun, sand and swimming. He’s been coming to

the pond since he was two-years-old. Wilkinson is from Russell and a long time visitor to the pond as well.

See how times have changed.

Blandford’s Recreation Committee shared the financial responsibility for the cost of lifeguard salaries and upkeep for well over 30 years with Russell.

The tickets, once sold at the beach, were nominal and could also be used at the Russell Town Pool.

In bygone times, most of the Russell residents used the Russell Pool, which closed in 2001, sending more moms, dads and children to the pond.

At one time beach tickets were much less than the \$40 for one tag (if you live in Russell) charge now. And you could buy a day pass to the beach for \$1. The fee schedule for Russell residents is two tags, \$60, three, \$80; four, \$100; five, \$120; six, \$140 and seven, \$160.

Other Hilltown community residents, Blandford, Chester, Huntington, Middlefield and Montgomery passes have a higher rate, which is one tag for \$80; two for \$120, three for \$160, four for \$200; five for \$240; six for \$280 and seven for \$320.

According to the Russell website, these tags or beach passes, “are non-refundable and should be treated like

RUSSELL POND, page 6

CHESTER



Submitted photo

Hilltown Hikers, from left, Liz Massa, Karen McTaggart, Russ Lapierre, Tom Hoffman and Greg Deily at the Chester granite saw that the group has been restoring. The Hikers just purchased an additional three-acre plot of land that housed the company’s office.

Hilltown Hikers purchase historic land parcel

By Wendy Long
Correspondent

Liz Massa of the Western Mass Hilltown Hikers announces the organization purchased a parcel of land located on Emery Street in Chester for \$10,000 on Tuesday, Aug. 11, 2026.

The plot is located next to the former Chester Granite and Polishing Works dating back to the 1800s that contained the granite saw that cut material that was quarried in Becket.

According to Massa,

the three acre parcel was originally part of the factory they’ve been uncovering on Prospect Street, across from the Chester Railway Museum.

A house that once existed on the new site served as the office for the granite saw. The previous owner of the parcel had reached out to the Hilltown Hikers to offer it for sale.

“We jumped on that opportunity,” said Massa, who donated her own money to purchase the property.

Not only does the land

have historic value for the work they are undertaking at the saw, it also contains access to water, power and wifi, all of which she said are very important for the group’s fundraising events. Thanks to these utilities, “the pace of the renovations can go faster,” Massa said.

The property also contains two run-down sheds. She believes they will save and use one for storage. The second building is a two-story structure that has heat. They are looking at histori-

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HILLTOWN HIKING ADVENTURES



The potholes are under the old Strathmore Bridge, a favorite paddling location on the Westfield River.



The Hilltown Hikers explore the potholes, carved by the river over centuries.



This paddler takes a closeup look at one of the potholes.

Woronoco potholes are a Westfield River geological wonder

The Woronoco potholes are one of the favorite Western Massachusetts Hilltown Hikers paddling spots so they sat down to research how these were actually formed.

They are a striking geological feature along the Westfield River in Russell. They are deep, circular depressions carved by the river over centuries, with both vertical and horizontal potholes formed by the erosive action of water.

The potholes are under the old Strathmore Bridge. This area is a favorite for paddlers. The parking is available at the canoe portage on the road and its just a

short walk to the water with the boat.

The river pools here and creates a nice area of very slow moving water so its great for people, who want to experience paddling on the river.

To get up close to the potholes paddlers need to drag their boat over a very rocky and shallow short section to the next pool, which is under the old bridge.

Here the water moves a bit faster so paddling up to the potholes is a bit more challenging. It's the best way to get an up close and personal pothole experience.

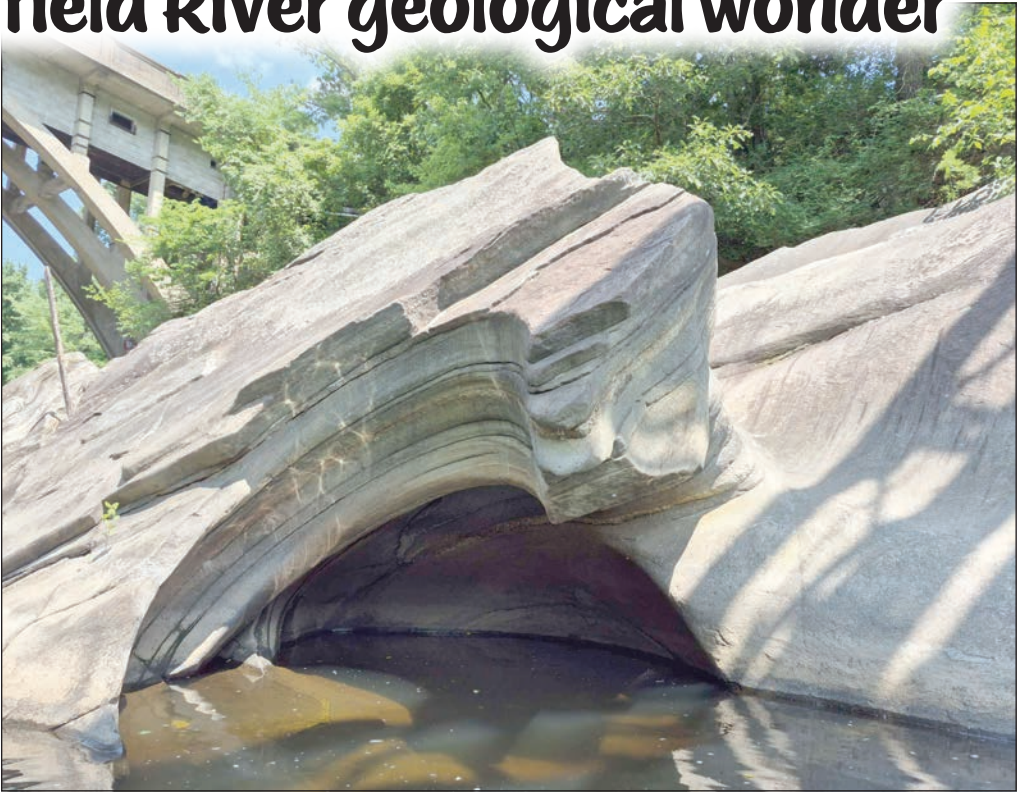
These potholes are created by a process called fluvial erosion the river's

flow has worn away bedrock, creating smooth, bowl-shaped cavities. The vertical potholes are deep, narrow channels, while the horizontal ones are wider and more shallow, both shaped by the river's constant movement.

Their formation is tied to the region's glacial history and the Westfield River's long-term erosive power.

To top things off this site has Native American heritage too as Salmon Falls was a place that the original inhabitants of Woronoco used quite a bit for fishing.

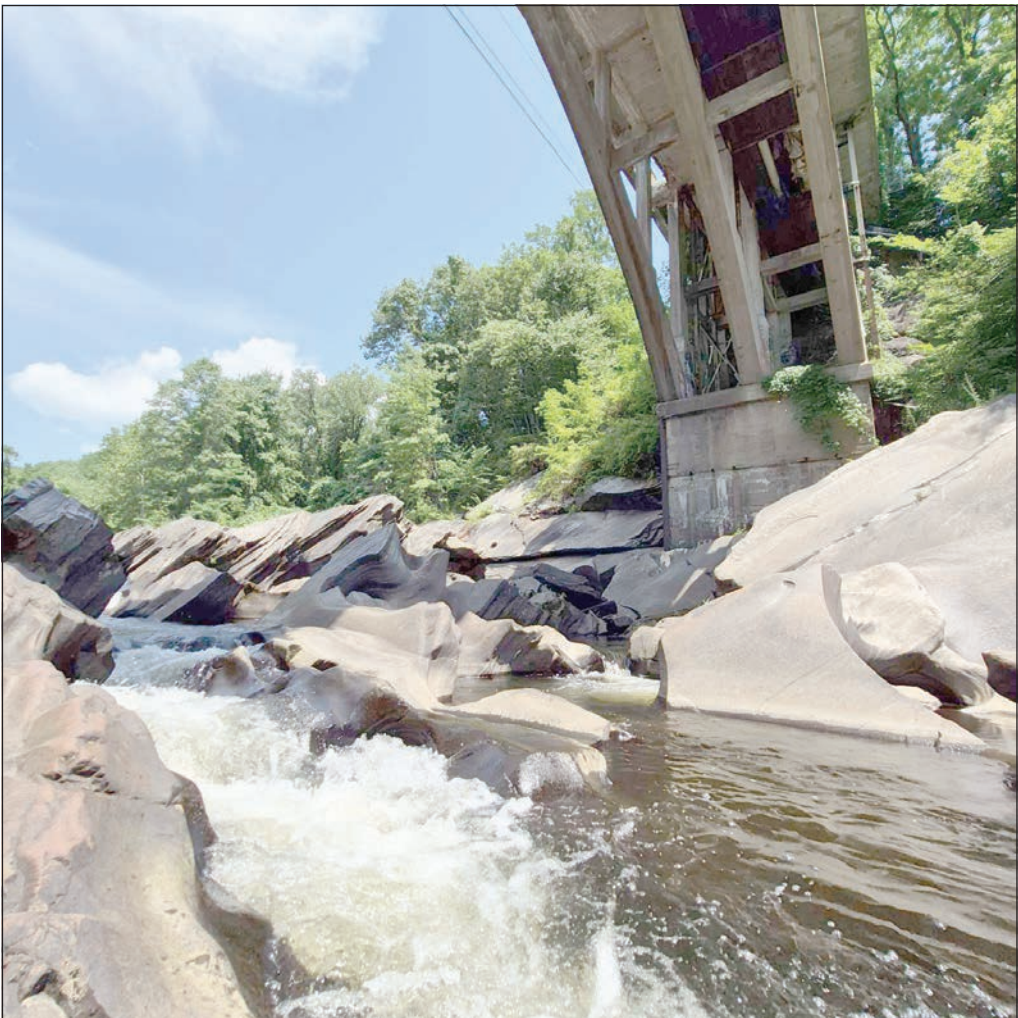
People should get out on the Westfield River while the weather is still warm to enjoy what is right in our backyard.



This is a closeup view of one of the potholes along the Westfield River.



A member of the Western Massachusetts Hilltown Hikers approaches the potholes under the old Strathmore Bridge in the Woronoco section of Russell.



Water rushes under the old Strathmore Bridge.

Submitted photos

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