

The Journal Register

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MONSON

District to discuss budget

By Abigail McCoy
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MONSON – The Monson Public Schools School Committee met in regular session on Jan. 21, to address a wide range of district business, including budget planning for fiscal year 2027, curriculum and policy updates, enrollment trends, and the district’s response to a town-wide fraud risk assessment.

The meeting opened with Superintendent of Schools Paul Foster highlighting recent student achievements and providing updates on enrollment and community outreach.

“Our student athletes continue to impress,” Foster said, recognizing Monson High School senior Austin Beacham for reaching the milestone of scoring his 1,000th career point.

Budget transparency and enrollment trends

Foster announced that the district will begin posting short informational videos, dubbed “Budget Talks,” on the district’s Facebook page to help residents better understand how the school budget is developed.

“It really is an educational series,” he said. “We want to start talking about what’s in the budget and how we develop the budget.”

Foster also confirmed that the district’s formal fiscal year 2027 budget presentation will be made to the Town Finance Committee on Feb. 9.

In a notable update, Foster reported that district enrollment has increased mid-year, countering the

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PALMER



Library hosts origami event

By Abigail McCoy
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PALMER – The Palmer Public Library hosted an adults-only Crafternoons for Adults program on Wednesday, Jan. 21, in the library’s Community Room.

The in-person craft session focused on creating origami hearts and was open to participants ages 18 and older. Due to limited space, advance registration was required.

The program was led by Janet Yelle, an experienced origami artist with nearly four decades of practice. Yelle, who lives in East Longmeadow, said she had been doing origami for approximately 37 years and

had begun assisting with origami programs at the Palmer Public Library about a year earlier.

“I think it’s really been wonderful for me to be part of the origami community,” Yelle said. “It’s really grown online, so it’s a lot more accessible than when I first started. There are a lot more videos now. When I began, it was mostly books.”

Yelle described origami as both a creative outlet and a shared experience, noting that teaching the art form allowed her to bring joy and relaxation to others. She said programs like the Palmer event were geared toward older children, teens, and adults, and were especially popular with adult learners looking for a calm, social activity.

In addition to her work at the Palmer Public Library, Yelle regularly



Turley photos by Abigail McCoy
Above, Yelle often stopped to explain why a certain fold was made. Left, Marie Kile and Linda Bisnette show off the origami hearts they made. Inset, The three types of origami hearts people were taught during the craft session.



Janet Yelle showed how to do certain folds to start the project.

taught origami at the East Longmeadow Library, often hosting classes nearly every month. She was also involved with the Springfield Museums, where she taught adult art and origami classes, with additional sessions planned later in the month.

Information about Yelle’s other programs was available through the East

Longmeadow Library and the Springfield Museums, where listings for adult classes were posted.

The Crafternoons series was part of the Palmer Public Library’s ongoing effort to provide engaging, adults-only programming that encouraged creativity, community connection, and lifelong learning.

PALMER

Students raise concerns

By Abigail McCoy
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PALMER – The Palmer School Committee met Wednesday, Jan. 21, to address student concerns, hear detailed updates from student representatives and district leadership, review finances and enrollment trends, and vote on a series of policy, program, and funding items. The meeting also featured an in-depth presentation on the district’s English Learner/Multilingual Learner (EL/ML) programs and concluded with an executive session.

Public comment brings student voices forward

During public comment, School Committee Chair Bonnie Rathbone shared two letters written by Palmer eighth-grade students that raised issues affecting their school experience.

Emma Columbus, an eighth grader at Palmer High School, expressed concern over music websites being blocked on school Chromebooks, citing research on the benefits of music for focus and stress reduction. “I believe that music makes people able to focus better,” Columbus wrote, adding that access to music could help students perform better academically.

Administrators clarified that while music sites are blocked on the public network, students may still listen through approved methods. Rathbone praised the letter, calling it “very well written,” and thanked Columbus for bringing the issue forward.

Another eighth grader,

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PALMER

Library Wellness Group marks two years of community support

By Abigail McCoy
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PALMER – What began as a conversation about how to better serve residents in need has grown into a well-established, community-wide support network. The Palmer Public Library’s Community Wellness Group recently marked its second anniversary, celebrating two years of connecting residents with critical resources in a welcoming, confidential setting.

The program, a partnership between the Palmer Public Library and the Palmer Police Department, launched in January 2024 following discussions in the fall of 2023 about gaps in local, in-person support services. Stephanie Maher, director of the Palmer Public Library, said the goal was simple but essential: meet people where they are and help them navigate life’s challenges.

“We needed to do a bet-

ter job of providing in-person, one-on-one services for folks in town who need help,” Maher said. “That can be anything from housing and food insecurity to domestic violence issues, mental health concerns, problematic substance use, or just the day-to-day challenges people are dealing with. However we can help.”

Maher said she and Sgt. Dave Burns of the Palmer Police Department quickly realized how much their roles overlapped when it came to supporting vulnerable residents.

“Both of us were surprised by how much of our jobs intersect in that way,” she said.

Burns serves as Palmer’s DART officer (DART: Drug Addiction Recovery Team), a program that partners with Northampton’s Department of Health and Human Services. Palmer has been involved with DART since 2020, just before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.



Turley photo by Abigail McCoy

Sergeant Dave Burns from the Palmer Police Department and Stephanie Maher, director of the Palmer Public Library.

LIBRARY | page ?

MONSON



Monson High School at 55 Margaret Street in Monson.

Turley photos by Abigail McCoy

MHS looks towards the future

By Abigail McCoy
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MONSON – Monson High School Principal Chris Fontaine reflected on a year of significant growth and momentum at the school, highlighting new academic programs, increased enrollment, and strong community support as the district looks ahead to 2026.

Fontaine, who is in his second year as principal, described the 2025 school year as an “incredible” period of

progress, particularly for a small high school. A major highlight has been the successful launch of two new career pathway programs: medical assisting and advanced manufacturing/engineering. According to Fontaine, the medical assistant program has already enrolled approximately 23 students, while the advanced manufacturing and engineering pathway has drawn about 30 students.

“For a small high school, we’re excited to see those numbers,” Fontaine said. “We

have kids every day that want to join those programs.”

Looking ahead to 2026, Fontaine said the school plans to continue expanding these offerings and hopes to add two additional pathway programs within the next year, computer science and business and finance. If successful, Mon-

MHS | page ?



Birdfeeder Alternatives workshop held by Opacum Land Trust

By Abigail McCoy
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BRIMFIELD – Feeding birds is a cherished pastime for many nature lovers, but despite good intentions, it can sometimes create unintended harm. That message was at the heart of a hands-on workshop hosted by Opacum Land Trust at Hitchcock Academy, offering residents a fresh perspective on how to support bird populations in healthier, more sustainable ways.

On Saturday morning, Jan. 24, participants gathered at Hitchcock Academy in Brimfield for “Alternatives to Bird Feeders,” a workshop led by Opacum Land Trust Executive Director Laney Wilder. The program explored the potential downsides of traditional bird feeding while introducing practical, bird-friendly alternatives that still allow people to enjoy close connections with wildlife.

“Bird feeders are a very popular way for people to engage with birds and nature observation,” Wilder said. “But sometimes they’re not the best option. They can attract other wildlife you may not want in your yard, spread diseases between birds, and raise some environmental concerns.”

Rather than discouraging bird lovers altogether, Wilder emphasized balance and education. She noted that bird feeding was what sparked her own interest in nature as a child, and she understands why people are drawn to it. The workshop instead focused on ways homeowners can use their landscapes to naturally support birds year-round.

During the session, participants learned about planting native species that provide food, shelter, and nesting materials for birds. Wilder explained that native plants produce seeds birds rely on and also attract insects that are essential food sources, especially during breeding season.

As part of the hands-on experience, attendees constructed hanging bird nesting material balls using woven willow formed into star or ball shapes, then stuffed with wool. These structures can be hung outdoors, allowing birds to collect safe, natural materials to line their nests.

In addition, participants sowed trays of native wildflower seeds to take home, along with instructions for winter seed sowing; a simple method that mimics natural seasonal processes. Seeds included purple coneflower, bee balm, mountain mint, and hyssop, all herbaceous plants known for their vibrant blooms and wildlife value.

“These plants are beautiful, but they’re also incredibly functional,” Wilder said. “For example, scarlet bee balm is great for attracting hummingbirds, while others feed birds through the seeds they produce.”

Wilder stressed that alternatives to bird feeders do not mean giving up birdwatching. Homeowners can still enjoy observing birds, and even set up cameras, near native plantings or hanging nesting materials.

“You don’t have to completely get rid of the birding activity,” she said. “This is just another way to bring birds to your yard.”

The workshop marked a first for Opacum Land Trust in providing both seeds and nesting materials for participants to take home, though the organization has previously partnered with Hitchcock Academy to host native plant workshops and plant giveaways for members.

Looking ahead, Wilder encouraged community members to stay involved with Opacum Land Trust’s upcoming events. The organization plans to hold its annual meeting breakfast in March, which is free and open to the public, and will feature information about the land trust’s work, a raffle, and a guest speaker.



Turley photos by Abigail McCoy

Above, the willowy branches and vines are brought to weave into a carrier for wool. Right, the alternate examples that people could choose between making. Far right, OLT Executive Director Laney Wilder with the star of wool made as an alternative to bird feeders.



Additional spring programming is also in the works, including guided walks, educational talks, and a family-friendly letterboxing event (similar to geocaching) that was popular during school vacation week last year. Opacum Land Trust also partners with local organizations such as Rappellion and Hitchcock Academy to offer educational programs throughout the year.

For more information about upcoming events and conservation programs, residents are encouraged to visit Opacum Land Trust’s website.

Library hosting Valentine’s Bake Sale to be held Feb. 10

MONSON – Friends of the Monson Free Library will hold a Valentine’s Day bake sale on Tuesday, Feb. 10 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. or until sold out in the DeSantis Community Room.

Members of the Friends

will bake special treats for the sale, including specially decorated cookies and bars, homemade pies and breads, cakes, chocolates, and granola.

Proceeds from the sale will be used to support li-

brary programs, including story hours, teen activities, museum passes, and various special events.

Membership cards will be available for those who wish to become members of the Friends.

Magic Time Magic Show to be held Feb.21

A Little Winter Magic Returns with Jeff Kempton at St. Paul’s Church

PALMER – In the quiet heart of winter, when days are short and people naturally draw closer to warmth and light, St. Paul’s Church of Palmer is opening its doors to imagination, laughter, and shared

delight. On Saturday, Feb. 21, 2026, at 2 p.m., the church will once again host Magic Time! — Illusions & Humor, a family-friendly magic show featuring the playful artistry of magician Jeff Kempton.

Magic Time! will take place on Saturday, Feb. 21, 2026, at 2 p.m., in St. Paul’s Fellowship Hall, located at 1060 Central Street, at the corner of Park and Central Streets, in Palmer. Admission for children is free,

with a suggested \$5 donation for adults. Popcorn, drinks, and snacks will be available.

The event is being offered as a community outreach, with a special focus on welcoming families during the winter season. Rev. Steve Sousa, minister of St. Paul’s Church, sees Magic Time! as part of the church’s broader commitment to hospitality and connection. “Magic Man Jeff has delighted children

and adults alike in recent years with his wonderful blend of illusion, sleight of hand, humor, and balloon creations,” Sousa says. “We eagerly anticipate this year’s show. It’s a simple gift to our community — an afternoon where laughter, imagination, and warmth take center stage.”

More information about St. Paul’s Church of Palmer and its community offerings can be found at www.StPaulsPalmer.org.



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Puppies & Pilates bring wellness, and wagging tails

By Abigail McCoy
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PALMER – Seven Railroads Brewing Company in Palmer welcomed the new year with an event that combined fitness, fun, and furry companionship, hosting Puppies & Pilates and Puppy Yoga on Saturday, Jan. 24. The unique wellness experience drew participants of all ages eager to jumpstart their 2026 health goals while surrounded by playful puppies.

The event featured two back-to-back classes held inside the brewery. Puppies & Pilates took place from 11 a.m. to noon, followed by Puppy Yoga from 12:30 to 1:30 p.m. Both sessions were open to all fitness levels and designed to be family-friendly, with accommodations made for all abilities. Participants were treated not only to guided movement and stretching, but also to puppies freely roaming the room, adding an extra layer of joy and unpredictability to the workout.

Seven Railroads Brewing Company co-owner Rachel Rosenbloom said the event was about more than just exercise. “It was just great to see everybody come out and want to enjoy the puppies and work on improving their bodies for the new year,” she said. “We look forward to more fun events like this.”

Each class cost \$32 per person and included a drink token for the brewery, while those who signed up for both

classes received a discounted rate. The welcoming atmosphere and lighthearted nature of the sessions made them especially appealing to families and first-time participants.

The Pilates and yoga instruction was led by Ashley Bousquet, owner of Beyond Yoga and Wellness. Bousquet said the idea came together through collaboration and a shared love of creative wellness experiences. “We have a litter of puppies that my friend had, and we just collaborated together,” she explained. “They all have homes already, but they’re super adorable.” The puppies, mini dachshund and chihuahua mixes, were a highlight of the day, with participants quickly learning their names: Hank, Chubs, and Cooper.

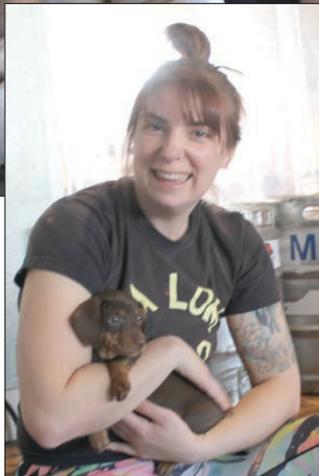
Bousquet said the combination of movement and animal interaction creates a relaxed and joyful environment. “It’s been a blast and everyone loves it,” she said.

Looking ahead, both Rosenbloom and Bousquet emphasized that this event is just the beginning of a growing series of wellness programs at Seven Railroads Brewing. Bousquet announced that “Piggies & Pilates” and “Piggy Yoga,” featuring pigs and bunnies, are scheduled for March 7 at 11 a.m. at the brewery. Additional events are also in the works, with details available on Beyond Yoga and Wellness’s website.

By blending community, wellness, and a bit of ani-



Sarah Van Ells cuddles with Hank while everyone else does a plank.



Turley photos by Abigail McCoy
Mother-daughter pair, Autumn and Alivian Fugere, cuddle with one of the puppies at Puppies and Pilates.

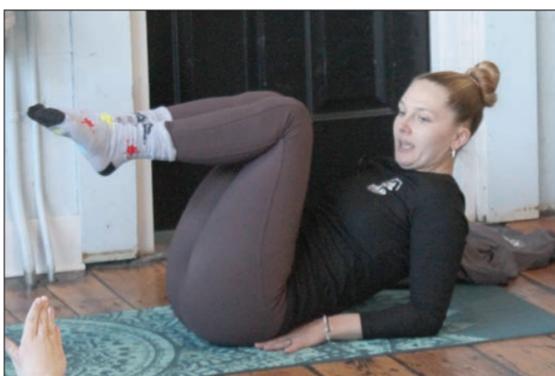
mal magic, Seven Railroads Brewing Company continues to expand its role as a gathering place for creative and inclusive events, proving that sometimes the best way to stretch, breathe, and reset is with an adorable puppy by your side.



Two young boys try to tempt one of the puppies over to their mat with a toy.



Victoria Manning hangs out with one of the pups preventing her from working out.



Ashley Bousquet, owner of Beyond Yoga and Wellness, goes through her pilates instruction.



The pups roam everywhere interrupting people for cuddles during their workout.

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Viewpoints

SOCIAL SECURITY Matters

By Russell Gloor

Claiming Social Security early and investing it

Dear Rusty:

I am a 63-year-old single lady and I have questions regarding Social Security "early retirement," though I will still be working full time.

I know there is a maximum allowable income limit and, if I exceed that, I will need to return probably 2/3 of my received Social Security benefit. I'm thinking about taking those early SS benefits about \$1,400 per month and putting them in my high yield savings or CD where I can gain the interest on it and have it stay "liquid" so I can return what I need to.

My current interest rate is 3.65% on the savings and over 4.25% on CD, with options for 3, 6, 9 mos. or longer- but I want to be able to access the money to pay Social Security back at the end of the year. Can you advise me on this?

Signed: Still Working but Wondering

Dear Still Working:

I commend you, for investigating your options before claiming early Social Security benefits while still working. FYI, the 2026 annual earnings limit for those collecting early SS benefits is \$24,480 (changes annually). If your 2026 work earnings exceed the annual limit, Social Security will take away \$1 in benefits for every \$2 you are over the limit. The annual earnings limit lasts until you reach your Full Retirement Age and the limit is about 2.5 times higher during the year you attain FRA.

FYI, when you apply for benefits, Social Security will ask if you are working and, if so, how much you make. Using that information, they will evaluate whether you can take benefits now and, if so, how many months they can actually pay your benefits.

For example, if your projected 2026 earnings are, say, \$100,000, you would be about \$75,000

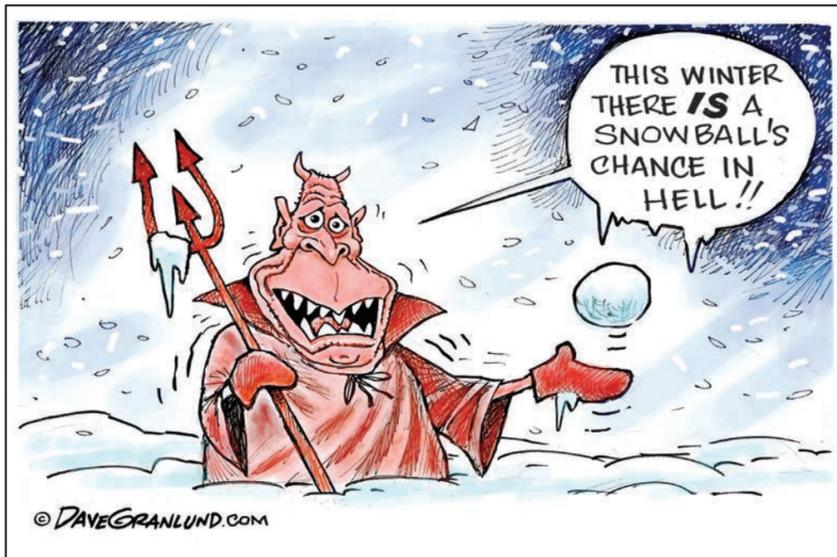
over the annual limit which means that half of that \$37,500 would need to be paid back to SS. Since your monthly SS benefit at your current age would be about \$1,400 per month, Social Security will say that you are temporarily ineligible to collect early benefits because you cannot pay back within one year what you would owe for exceeding the limit. In other words, they won't pay your SS benefits just yet because your earnings are too high and they do not want to overpay benefits, which you will only need to return.

For additional perspective, if your expected 2026 earnings are less say about \$50,000 that means you would be about \$25,000 over the limit about half of that (about \$12,500) would need to be paid back to SS. In that event, SSA would tell you they will withhold nine months of your SS payments in advance and pay your benefits for only 3 months. This because the overpayment, with your current benefit of about \$1,400, could be recovered by withholding your SS payments for nine months. They do not want to intentionally overpay your SS benefits.

So, despite your best repayment intentions, Social Security will not favor intentionally overpaying your benefits. Historically, overpayment of benefits due to exceeding the annual earnings limit has been a notoriously difficult issue for the Social Security Administration. So, to get your early SS benefits while you are working full time, you would likely need to lie about your anticipated 2026 earnings on your application for SS benefits, which we strongly discourage.

Keep in mind that this all changes when you reach your FRA (67), because the earning limit goes away entirely when

SECURITY | page 5



Sow onion seeds to get the season started

If you are sick and tired of winter, Land want to get the gardening season going already, why not sow some onion seeds?

Onions are the first seeds I sow each year and I always welcome this task as a true harbinger of spring! Many gardeners only know of growing onions from sets, but you can indeed start them from seed, both indoors in the garden.

Read on for more information on growing onions from start to finish, right out of the archives.

First it's important that we "understand the onion," in other words, come to know its life cycle. Onions are biennial.

We are all familiar with biennial flowers like foxglove, hollyhock and Canterbury bells, who develop foliage the first year of their lives and bloom and set seed in the second, but few gardeners today ever experience a biennial vegetable. That wasn't always the case. Just visit the Freeman Farm at Old Sturbridge Village where in the summer you will see beets, parsnips, onions and more in year two of their life cycle, complete with seed heads.

As the seeds ripen, 19th century gardeners would have stored them away for use the following spring.

So then, if the onion is a biennial and its goal is to make seeds the second season of its life, what is it trying to accomplish in its first? Ex-

actly what you and I want: a big bulb!

The bulb is the food storage unit for the plant during its dormancy period- the winter between years one and two. A big bulb gives the second year plant a good head start and almost always directly relates to increased seed production as compared to smaller bulbs.

For me, understanding this concept was one of those "ah ha" gardening moments. It all really came together when I recognized that big bulbs are a direct result of lush topgrowth.

Just imagine the green part of the plant photosynthesizing, drawing in all of that wonderful energy from the sun and turning it into a big, fat onion! Luckily, we gardeners can provide just the right conditions for lush top growth.

Get an early start

All onions have a built-in mechanism that triggers "bulbing up" in response to warmer temperatures and increased daylight hours. Likewise, as daylight begins to decrease, the onion is cued into dormancy.

If lush tops are our first goal, we have to get our onions in early, so that they achieve lots of top growth

before being prompted to bulb up. Those of us who garden in the north choose "long day" onions, while southern gardeners opt to grow "short day" types.

Long day onions bulb up when day length reaches 14-16 hours per day; short day begin at 12-13 hours. If we plant short day in our locale we'd end up with fat scallions, but not much more, so choose accordingly.

Reputable seed companies will list the type of onion it is next to the variety name, or feature them under appropriate headings.

Choose your method

There are three ways onions can be grown: by seeds sown directly in the garden, from transplants started indoors, or from sets, which are tiny onions. One huge advantage of utilizing seeds is the variety at your disposal as compared to sets.

They are also less expensive. Some folks even argue that onions sown from seed store longer. The rest of this article will be devoted to starting onion seeds indoors, which is best accomplished in late January through Valentine's Day- good news for those of you itching to get your hands "dirty!"

Onion seeds are sown indoors in small flats filled with moist soilless growing medium. Spacing can be a little closer than prescribed for outdoor germination, with sowing at 1/4" apart. The use of heat mats set at 72 degrees

was seen among thousands of common Eiders in North Chatham. A Pacific loon and over 400 razorbills were at Race Point in Provincetown.

Brimfield resident

A Brimfield resident sent an email on Jan. 6 that he received a preliminary total for the Springfield Christmas Bird Count, which was 66 species, a few below the average. He also said, "We occasionally see them in the yard and sometimes hear the barred owls calling."

People may report a bird sighting or bird related experience by calling me at 413-967-3505, leaving a message at extension 100, emailing mybackyard88@aol.com or edowner@turley.com or mailing to Barre Gazette, P.O. Box 448, Barre, MA 01005.

Recent Mass Audubon sightings include western grebes, eared grebes, tufted ducks and sandhill cranes as well as an unusual visitors, a scissor-tailed flycatcher, a rare state record and a rosy-billed pochard. Other sightings include goldeneye, mergansers, horned larks, and wintering raptors like Northern harriers in Massachusetts in early January.

On Jan. 6 and again on Jan. 13 a male King Eider

In the Garden

by Roberta McQuaid



The Journal Register

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The submission deadline for consideration is Monday at noon.

Election letters to the editor welcome

The Journal Register welcomes readers to participate in this year's election campaigns by writing letters to the editor for publication on these pages. Letters of up to 250 words from local residents endorsing candidates on the ballot or discussing campaign issues should be sent to The Journal Register, care of Turley Publications, 24 Water St., Palmer, MA 01069, faxed to 413-289-1977 or emailed to journalregister@turley.com. Please include a daytime telephone number for verification purposes (it will not be printed). Letters must be received by noon Monday to be considered for that Thursday's newspaper. No attack letters will be printed. No letters written by candidates supporting their own candidacy will be printed. If the volume of letters received is larger than the space available in the newspaper, or if the letters become repetitive, the newspaper reserves the right to print a representative sample. No endorsement letters will be printed in the last edition before the election.

For more information, call the editor at 413-283-8393.

Campaign news

As part of its election coverage, the newspaper plans to print stories about contested races for Congress, state Senate, state House, district attorney and Governor's Council during the weeks leading up to the election, as well as a question-and-answer voters guide. In order to ensure fairness to all candidates, no political press releases will be printed, nor will reporters cover political rallies or fundraisers.

Candidates who wish to further publicize their candidacy, beliefs and events may contact advertising, 413-283-8393 about paid advertising in The Journal Register.

In late December of last year and early January of this year, a snowy owl has been seen at Northampton Airport and in a cornfield.

The snowy owl is an irruptive species from the tundra. Usually, it is the young snowy owls that head this way. There have been reports of snowy owls at Plum Island this month. Logan Airport is another common location for them.

The snowy owl is large and white. The mature males have a lot of white. Females and juveniles have dark brown and black barring.



Snowy owl

in my BACKYARD

By Ellenor Downer

Living in the Arctic, it is well adapted to cold with dense feathers including feathers on their feet. They hunt rodents like lemmings in open tundra. They have exceptional sight and hearing.

Their flight is silent allowing them to catch unsuspecting prey. They hunt during the day, a rarity for most owls. They expand south during winter food scarcity in the tundra. It is one of North America's heaviest owls with a wing span of 4.5 to 5.5 feet.

They are generally solitary, but form pairs. They build nests in the ground in shallow scrapes. The female lays three to 11 eggs, the number of eggs depending on food availability. Males bring food and the females incubate and feed the chicks.

Helping owls

Here are some tips if you see a snowy owl. Keep a safe distance to observe quietly. Do not play bird calls from your phone or other device. Don't feed the owls. Avoid flashes when taking photos. Keep noises to a minimum. If you find an injured owl: contact your state wildlife agen-

cy or local rehabilitator. If you find a dead owl: contact your state wildlife agency.

Also people should avoid using rodenticides; they are poisonous to birds and other animals even a pet.. If an owl or other birds of prey eat a rodent that ingested, it will kill them.

Evening grosbeaks

A Worthington resident reported a friend saw two evening grosbeaks on Tuesday, Jan. 6. He said in his email he remembered when they used to be in giant flocks. He asked if they were rare out my way. I have not seen evening grosbeaks in sometime. Other people in Central Massachusetts have seen them recently. The Massachusetts Audubon Society reported six evening grosbeaks in North Brookfield.

Mass. Audubon sightings

Recent Mass Audubon sightings include western grebes, eared grebes, tufted ducks and sandhill cranes as well as an unusual visitors, a scissor-tailed flycatcher, a rare state record and a rosy-billed pochard. Other sightings include goldeneye, mergansers, horned larks, and wintering raptors like Northern harriers in Massachusetts in early January.

On Jan. 6 and again on Jan. 13 a male King Eider

was seen among thousands of common Eiders in North Chatham. A Pacific loon and over 400 razorbills were at Race Point in Provincetown.

Brimfield resident

A Brimfield resident sent an email on Jan. 6 that he received a preliminary total for the Springfield Christmas Bird Count, which was 66 species, a few below the average. He also said, "We occasionally see them in the yard and sometimes hear the barred owls calling."

People may report a bird sighting or bird related experience by calling me at 413-967-3505, leaving a message at extension 100, emailing mybackyard88@aol.com or edowner@turley.com or mailing to Barre Gazette, P.O. Box 448, Barre, MA 01005.



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

E-mail items to journalregister@turley.com or mail to Calendar Editor, Journal Register, 24 Water St., Palmer, MA 01069, for receipt by Monday of week for publication.

The Journal Register encourages readers to contact event coordinators and organizers for updated event times. Have an event to promote? Email the information (in sentence form and as a Word doc or plain email text – no PDFs or flyers, please – to journalregister@turley.com).

UPCOMING

January Vendors

- Jan. 21 - How Charming
- Jan. 29 - Hollow Hobbit Herbs

February Vendors

- Feb. 4 - How Charming
- Feb. 5 - Jewelry For Diane
- Feb. 9 - Generations of Cookies
- Feb. 10 - Hollow Hobbit Herbs
- Feb. 11 - Wicked Good Treats
- Feb. 12 - Weleful Weavers
- Feb. 13 - Cork Elegance
- Feb. 26 - Weleful Weavers

ONGOING

2025-2026 Drama & Dance Program Beginning September 11th and running through May on Thursdays at PHCC. Does your child love dancing and acting? Have they always been interested but never tried? All levels and ages 5 plus wel-

come. (Drama students must be able to read.) Also offering Adult Hip Hop & Lyrical Dance Classes. Students must be available for show date in May. Date TBD. Adult class students can dance in show or choose not to as long as requested ahead of time. Contact: trulytorie2000@gmail.com for more info and to register.

THURSDAYS - WESTERN LINE DANCE CLASSES 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. and 7:30 to 8:30 p.m. \$10 for one lesson or both. Brimfield Winery at 35 Main Street in Brimfield. Check brimfieldwinery.com for any variations.

CRAFTERNOONS: Drop in 2 to 4 p.m. daily at the Holland Public Library, 23 Sturbridge Road to learn or practice different crafts. There are new crafts every Wednesday. For more information, call 413-245-3607.

KEEP HOMESTEAD MUSEUM: Located at 35 Ely Rd., Monson, nature trails are open daily until dusk for hiking, snowshoeing and cross-country skiing. Trail maps can be found in the parking lot. For more information call 413-267-4137, email khm@keephomesteadmuseum.org or visit keephomesteadmuseum.org.

QUABOAG VALLEY QUILTERS GUILD: Members meet at 1 p.m. on the first and third Thursdays of the month in the Amvets post at 2150 Main St., Three Rivers. The Guild is a no-pressure group with varying degrees of accomplishments, from novice to Big E "Best In Show" winners. Dues

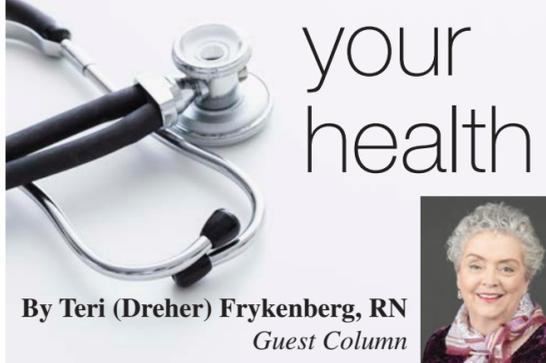
are \$55 a year. For more information, contact Barbara Beaulieu at 267-4044 or Merry Mombourquette at 283-7577. Follow them on Facebook for more.

LINE DANCING CLASS: 3-5 p.m. and/or 6:30-8:30 p.m., every Thursday at the Monson Polish Club, 7 Bliss St, Monson. Rose's line dancing classes include absolute beginners and beginners, and participants get to dance to all types of music. \$10 per class. Please wear comfortable footwear, no sandals.

GAME NIGHT: 6-7:45 p.m. the second Tuesday at the Palmer Library at 1455 N. Main St. Free and open to the public. Play available board and card games or bring your own. Must be 16 or older unless accompanied by an adult. No Registration Required – just show up! Questions? Call 283-3691, or email palewis19@yahoo.com.

NOTCH VISITOR CENTER OPEN FOR WINTER SEASON: 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., Thursday-Monday. The center is located on Rt 116, at the center of the Holyoke Range State Park. DCR Interpretive staff will be available for visitors. Coming in January, programs will also be offered to highlight the Range's special nature in winter, see the park web site for details.

QI GONG: Qi Gong at Monson Free Library with Randy Emerson. Every Tuesday from 5:45 to 6:45 p.m.



your health

By Teri (Dreher) Frykenberg, RN
Guest Column

Being an advocate in the emergency room

In the emergency room, the health-care system's shortcomings are laid bare. Not enough nursing staff, too little communication, confusing interactions.

I have seen that effective advocacy, whether from a family member, friend, or professional patient advocate, can have a positive impact on emergency room outcomes. Caregivers, who are usually familiar with their loved one's care and medical conditions, have the ability to act as advocates and perhaps make up for some of the shortcomings we find in ERs.

The tips I will outline aren't easy, and they sometimes run counter to the natural fear or even panic that accompanies a trip to the ER. But you will be doing your loved one and yourself a favor if you

can remember them.

Evaluate whether going to the ER is necessary

Patients present themselves at the emergency room with issues that could and should be handled by a primary care doctor or urgent care center. The result, of course, is an even more overburdened emergency room.

Go to the ER when there's:

- Chest pain or pressure (possible heart attack)
- Difficulty breathing (asthma attack, pulmonary embolism)
- Sudden numbness or weakness (stroke symptoms)
- Severe bleeding (uncontrolled, deep wounds)
- Head injuries with confusion/vomiting (possible concussion)
- Severe burn or frac-

ture (bone protruding, major burns)

- Poisoning or overdose
- Seizure lasting more than 5 minutes

Bring a list of the patient's current medications and allergies

Electronic health records (EHR) have done a lot to improve coordination of care, but the various systems sometimes don't "talk" to each other. Not only that, the medications and dosages listed in an EHR aren't always up to date.

Keep a list of current medications, including how many milligrams are prescribed and the frequency, printed out and kept in a "go bag" that you can grab on the way out the door. This can save precious moments in the ER.

Understand the triage process

People who need immediate life-saving care, or who appear to be having heart attack or stroke, are considered Level 1 and Level 2 patients and will be seen almost immediately.

Your loved one will be evaluated and, if it's determined they're not in imminent danger, you likely will have to wait. If the wait feels too long, calm and cour-

teously ask at the desk how much longer it may be.

Summarize the patient's conditions and what brought them to the ER

The patient may be able to do this themselves, but I find they usually downplay certain things or even omit them. If your loved one has heart disease, diabetes, chronic kidney disease, allergies and previous surgeries, the clinicians need to know as soon as possible.

Have the patient's ID and insurance card with you

One of the first people through the door (faster probably than any doctor) will be from admissions, and they will need information to register your loved one as a patient: photo ID and types of insurance.

Also, if you're not the spouse or the patient is your child over the age of 18, you will need their permission to receive medical information from the clinicians. The patient can give permission verbally, but having a signed HIPAA form or durable medical power of attorney is better.

Be familiar with the patient's preferences

Some people don't want blood transfusions. Some don't want to be resuscitated if their heart stops beating or intubated if they stop breathing. The best way to provide this information is with a living will or advanced care directive. Bring copies with you.

Make sure your loved one is comfortable

If they need more pillows or a heated blanket, ask for them. If it's OK for them to drink water (they may not if the docs feel there may be a surgery), get them some. Talk to your patient about what's going on, what's being said to you and what they can expect.

When you hear, "We're admitting you," understand what that means.

Is your patient being admitted for observation, which may have an impact on insurance coverage? Is an in-patient room available, or will they have to remain in the ER? What unit will they be admitted to, for example intensive care?

Listen carefully to the discharge instructions, ask questions and take them seriously

The most common reason people return to the ER is not following discharge instructions. This may include what activities to avoid or new medications to take. The most important instruction is often "follow up with your primary care doctor within 72 hours." Don't brush them off.

It's easy to feel lost in the ER. The staff is there to help you, so speak up as an advocate and remember to say "thank you."

Teri (Dreher) Frykenberg, R.N., a registered nurse and board-certified patient advocate, is the founder of www.NurseAdvocateEntrepreneur.com, which trains medical professionals to become successful private patient advocates. A Monson, MA resident, she is the author of "How to Be a Healthcare Advocate for Yourself & Your Loved Ones" and her new book, "Advocating Well: Strategies for Finding Strength and Understanding in Health Care," available at Amazon.com. Contact her at Teri@NurseAdvocateEntrepreneur.com to set up a free phone consultation.

SECURITY | from page 4

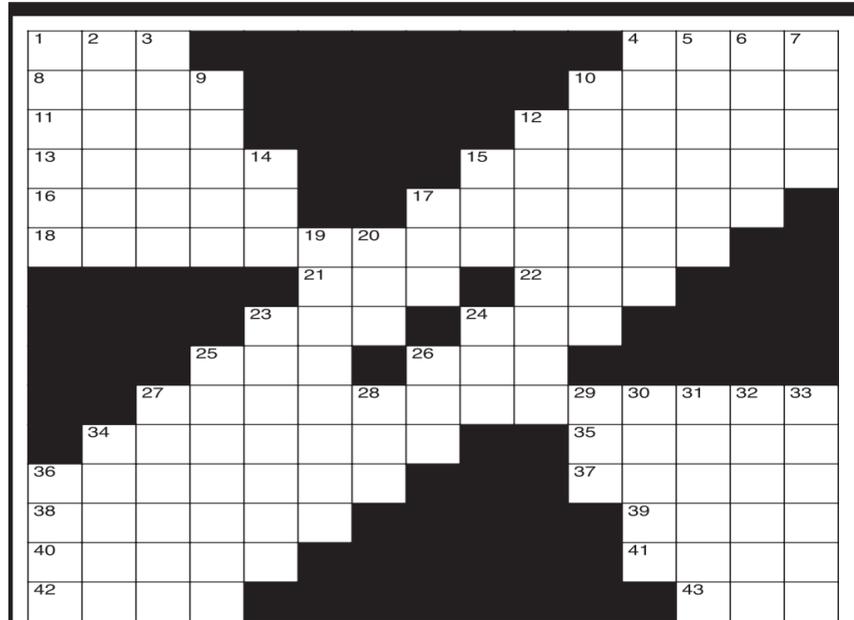
you reach FRA and the limit goes up by about 2.5 times in the year you attain full retirement age. So, depending on your earnings level, you may wish to either wait until your full retirement age, or until you stop working full time, to claim SS.

Now, as for the general idea of taking early benefits and investing them, many have said they wish to do that and we understand that logic. Our caution is that it requires religious discipline to put the

SS money into a higher yield investment vehicle to accomplish the goal of beating the SS increase realized when you wait to claim. Many who try it succumb to the temptation to use the invested funds for emergency needs and sometimes non-emergency needs. I offer this only as something to be aware of, as some have shared that they failed in their investment objectives with their Social Security money.

The Association Mature Citizens Foundation and its staff are not affiliated with or endorsed by the Social

Security Administration or any other governmental entity. This article is intended for information purposes and does not represent legal or financial guidance. It presents the opinions and interpretations of the Association Mature Citizens Foundation's staff, trained and accredited by the National Social Security Association. To submit a question, visit amacfoundation.org/programs/social-security-advisory or email us at ssadvisor@amacfoundation.org. Russell Gloor is a Social Security advisor for AMAC.



CLUES ACROSS

1. Racket sport pros
4. Make tea
8. City South of Moscow
10. Spanish bullfighting term
11. Egg-shaped
12. Could not remember
13. French modernist painter
15. Persons
16. Painful intestinal obstruction
17. Professions
18. Is up to the task
21. Wood or metal bolt
22. Tax collector
23. A way to save for the future
24. Georgia rockers
25. Midway between

- north and northeast
26. High schoolers' test
27. Does not accept responsibility
34. One who prepares
35. Gout-indicative deposits
36. Place to play games
37. Book of Genesis character
38. Cleans oneself
39. Unloaded for money
40. Genus of flowering plants
41. Take a puff
42. Congressmen
43. God of battle in Scandinavian mythology

CLUES DOWN

1. Type of bomb
2. South Pacific islands
3. Celestial body
4. Negotiates
5. Consider in a specified way
6. Type of group in organic chemistry
7. Buddhist monasteries
9. Inhabitant of Bering Sea island
10. Body part
12. Milestone birthday
14. Thyroid-stimulating hormone
15. More (Spanish)
17. Chicago ballplayer
19. Leaves a place

20. Cannot be found
23. One's internal body parts
24. Tell on
25. North American peoples of southwest
26. Soviet Socialist Republic
27. Extract used for jams and jellies
28. Greek goddess of the dawn
29. Old English letter
30. A way to exaggerate
31. Get up and leave
32. "Boardwalk Empire" character
33. More generous
34. Hanging cloth used as a blind
36. Ancient Greek sophist

DEADLINE

The Journal Register deadline for public submissions to Mondays. To get your submission in for that week's edition space permitting, email Editor at journalregister@turley.com or call the office at 413-283-8393 by noon on Mondays. We appreciate the cooperation of our readers.

CORRECTIONS

The Journal Register will gladly correct factual errors that appear in this paper. Corrections or clarifications will always appear on Page 2 or 3. To request a correction, send an email to: journalregister@turley.com, or call (413) 283-8393. Corrections may also be requested in writing at: Journal Register, Attn: Editor, 24 Water St., Palmer, MA, 01069

Are you having difficulty communicating with your partner, struggling with boundaries, and healthy relationships?

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This group will be held in zoom, is educational, confidential, and free.

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Wales Community Pantry hosts Open House

By Abigail McCoy
amccoy@turley.com

WALES – The Wales Community Food Pantry opened its doors to the public on Saturday, Jan. 24, welcoming residents to an open house that highlighted both the pantry's growth and its increasing need for community support.

The open house was hosted by pantry leadership, including Co-Chair Laura Blockel, Board Chair Annette Farrington, and former Board Chair Sue Gregory, who spoke about the pantry's mission, recent expansion, and the challenges it now faces amid rising demand.

According to Blockell, the event was designed not only to showcase the pantry's operations but also to recruit new board members. Several longtime board members stepped down over the summer, creating an urgent need for new volunteers with energy, enthusiasm, and fundraising experience.

"Since we moved, we've seen a 56 percent increase in the number of people coming," Blockell said. "From July to December alone, we served over 300 people."

The pantry relocated to a larger, more visible, and more accessible space in August, a move that has significantly

expanded its reach. The new location has also allowed the pantry to become a larger partner pantry with the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts, enabling it to receive and distribute greater quantities of food.

That growth, however, has come with added responsibility. Between July and December, the pantry distributed more than 90,000 pounds of food; a figure that reflects both the community's need and the scale of the operation.

"That requires more hands all around," Blockell said.

The Wales Community Food Pantry is currently open twice a week; a distinction that sets it apart from other pantries in the area. Distribution hours are Tuesdays from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. and Thursdays from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m., with the evening hours specifically designed to accommodate residents who work during the day.

"We're the only pantry in this area that offers a twice-weekly distribution," Blockell said, noting that the Thursday evening hours make the pantry more accessible to working families.

Farrington explained that the pantry operates on a "client-choice" model, allowing visitors to shop for the items

they want rather than receiving pre-packed boxes.

"They get to shop like in a grocery store," Farrington said. "It gives a lot more dignity and humanity to it."

The pantry's operations are powered largely by volunteers, many of whom are seniors, along with a growing number of younger volunteers who help manage the physical demands of moving and organizing large volumes of food.

While the pantry continues to operate, leaders acknowledged financial challenges ahead. The organization was not renewed for its basic operating grant through the Pioneer Valley Commission, which had been part of a larger block grant shared among Wales, Holland, and Brimfield. The full grant was not funded due to competition and widespread need across



Turley photos by Abigail McCoy
Former Board Chair Sue Gregory, Co-Chair Laura Blockel, Board Chair Annette Farrington, and Board Member Meghan Matczak join the open house at the Wales Community Pantry.

the region. "We can still continue operations," Blockell said, "but it's going to take a lot more fundraising from the local community, businesses,

and private grants to replace that very substantial operating grant."

As a result, the pantry is aggressively seeking board members and volunteers with

fundraising skills, as well as community members willing to support the pantry through donations of food, funds, or in-kind gifts.

Residents interested in getting involved or seeking assistance can contact the Wales Community Food Pantry by email at walescommunityfoodpantry@gmail.com or visit www.walescommunitypantry.com. The pantry can also be reached by phone at 413-245-0055 and maintains an active presence on Facebook and Instagram.

"We invite people to come," Farrington said. "This is an open pantry."

The Jan. 24 open house offered a clear picture of an organization that has grown rapidly to meet rising needs; and one that now looks to the community to help ensure its ability to serve well into the future.



The back storage room for the Wales Community Pantry where they store nonperishables.



The Pantry is set up with shelves like an actual grocery store so patrons can "shop" for food.



Cookies and snacks were provided for guests joining in.

Join the trend with these New Year resolutions

With the new year around the corner, many people are setting goals for 2026. After months of rising prices on everything from milk to mortgages, money-related resolutions are prominent.

One out of four Americans (27%) plan to make 2026 the year of their financial comeback, according to 2025 research from Edward Jones and Morning Consult. Others will continue with previous goals (21%), start from scratch (20%) or catch up on missed goals (14%).

Here are their top three financial goals and what to consider if you make one or more of these yours.

Boost your income: Get creative with your time and interests. Consider side hustles such as delivery driving, pet sitting or tutoring. Perhaps you can sell things online that you no longer need. And if you traditionally get a refund on your tax return, consider adjusting your withholdings so less is taken from your paychecks.

To indirectly increase your income, cut your expenses. Every dollar saved effectively increases the "income" side of your budget. The biggest categories Americans plan to cut are restaurants and subscriptions.

Build up savings: Whether you're planning for a vacation or creating an emergency fund, having accessible cash means you're less likely to rely on credit cards. And credit cards can incur interest charges if you don't pay the full amount due every month.

To save for something specific, calculate how much you'll need and by when. Then break it down into monthly targets to help make your goal tangible and achievable.

For an emergency fund, build toward three to six months of living expenses. And remember: an emergency fund is for true emergencies – think medical bills, major auto or furnace repairs, not a TV on sale.

Pay off debt: Every payment brings you closer to a life of financial freedom. Start by listing all your debts and their interest rates. Then choose one of these payoff strategies.

The Avalanche Method: You'll pay off the debt with the highest interest rate first. With that paid, you'll move on to the next highest. This reduces the amount of interest you pay over time, which generally means a lower total cost and often a shorter payoff period.

The Snowball Method: You'll pay off the card with the lowest balance first, then move to the next smallest balance. This may offer quicker gratification as the number of creditors can dwindle faster.

The Consolidation Method: You may be able to bundle and refinance high interest credit card debts to a 0% bank card for 12 months or longer.

With any of these methods, don't ignore your other debts. You'll still need to pay the minimum balances due on mortgages, auto loans and other credit cards to keep interest rates and late payment fees from accruing and your credit score from dropping.

Ready to join the trend? Across the country, millions of people are committing to improving their financial situation, and ultimately their financial future. By joining this trend, you're not just setting goals—you're shaping a life of freedom and possibility.

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LIBRARY | from page 1

“What we do is active outreach,” Burns explained. “It started as a post-overdose outreach program and evolved into identifying at-risk individuals and helping them with life... whether it’s substance use or really any issue that corresponds with that or stems from that.”

Burns said the DART program has become a gateway to a wide range of resources, many of which residents may not realize are available.

“I tend to overuse DART and try to access their resources for literally anything,” he said. “If I have somebody dealing with homelessness, we’ll tap into their resources. We do a lot of boots-on-the-ground work trying to connect people to outreach services. It’s a free program that doesn’t cost anybody anything.”

The Community Wellness Group meets every other Thursday at the Palmer Public Library, inviting residents to stop in for lunch and one-on-one assistance. Over the past two years, the group has built a core network of professionals from organizations including Behavioral Health Network (BHN), Community Healthlink (CHD), Alcoholics Anonymous, the VA, the Clerk’s Office, and the probation division.

“These folks help individuals who walk in get the answers they need,” Maher said. “Over time, we’ve built this whole network of professionals. Pretty quickly, we realized we’re not only helping people who need acute help, but we’re also helping professionals network with each other and create a larger support system.”

That collaboration be-

comes especially important during emergencies or severe weather. Maher said the group frequently discusses how to keep an eye on residents who may be at risk, particularly given the lack of nearby shelters.

“There aren’t shelters around here...the closest are in Springfield or Amherst,” she said. “So we quickly, as a group, devise a plan to make sure that if folks need something over the weekend, especially when it’s really cold and snowy, we can get people out there to help them.”

The library itself also serves as an informal warming center when open.

“Anyone is welcome to come in,” Maher said. “We have food, we have water, and it’s warm. You’re always welcome.”

Looking ahead, both Maher and Burns said their focus is on continuing the work and expanding awareness of the program.

“My ticket really boils down to continuing what we stand behind and promoting the wellness program more,” Burns said. “A lot of it right now is word of mouth... through organizations or through police interactions when we’re on calls for service. The next step is following through on our goals and motivating people to come in.”

Maier said the library plays a similar role in spreading the word.

“If people come in and need help with specific things, we tell them, ‘Hey, we’ve got this group,’” she said. “We’ve also tried to reach out to other towns, libraries, and police stations to say this isn’t that hard to do. If you have dedicated people and some time, you can make it work.”

Monson Fire Logs

MONSON – Here is the fire log for the Monson Fire Department for the week of Jan. 19 thru Jan. 25, 2026. The department responded to 25 EMS calls and 6 Fire calls.

On Monday, Jan. 19 at 9:38 a.m. the department responded to the area of 89 Thayer Road for the MVC.

The department returned to service at 11:39 a.m.

On Tuesday, Jan. 20 at 11:44 a.m., the department responded to 18 Silva Street for the odor of gas. The department returned to service at 12:16 p.m.

On Wednesday, Jan. 21 at 11:19 a.m., the department responded to 9 Colburn

Road for the structure fire. The department returned to service at 4:05 p.m.

On Saturday, Jan. 24 at 12:11 p.m., the department responded to the area of Old Stagecoach Road for the odor of gas. The department returned to service at 12:28 p.m.

On Sunday, Jan. 25 at

2:42 p.m., the department responded to 115 Main Street for the sprinkler activation. The department returned to service at 3:05 p.m.

On Sunday, Jan. 25 at 4:25 p.m., the department responded to 115 Main Street for the fire alarm activation. The department returned to service at 4:31 p.m.

Burns emphasized that the library provides a neutral and discreet location for residents to seek help.

“Community wellness at the library is a neutral spot where anybody can come in and access any resource they think they need,” he said. “We try to keep things as confidential as we can.”

From the police department’s perspective, Burns stressed that the program is not about enforcement.

“Absent mandatory reporting situations, like threats of harm, child abuse, or domestic violence, things are confidential,” he said. “We don’t use the information to further criminal investigations. We want to see people get help.”

As the program enters its third year, Maher said the continued demand speaks volumes.

“We are busier than we’ve ever been,” she said.

For Palmer residents facing uncertainty, hardship, or simply needing guidance, the Community Wellness Group remains a steady, compassionate presence; one built on trust, collaboration, and the belief that help should be accessible to everyone.

MHS | from page 1

son High School would have four pathway programs in place within just two years, a milestone Fontaine said would significantly enhance opportunities for students.

Beyond academics, Fontaine emphasized the importance of community engagement and extracurricular support. One of the school’s largest events in 2025 was a community soccer night held back in October, moved earlier in the season to take advantage of better weather. The event drew an estimated 1,000 attendees in support of the boys’ and girls’ soccer teams.

The evening also served as a fundraiser, with individual classes raising money through concession stands and activities such as face painting. Proceeds from the event helped support class activities and contributed to improvements in the school’s athletic programs overall.

Another notable partnership during the year involved the Hampden County District Attorney’s Office, which has been working with Monson’s eighth-grade students as part of their civic education curriculum. Rep-

resentatives from the DA’s office have visited the school twice in recent months to discuss their roles in the justice system and how it connects to what students are learning in social studies.

“They’re planning to come back to do an interactive trial with students and take them on a tour of the district courthouse,” Fontaine said, calling the experience an engaging, real-world extension of classroom learning.

On the operational side, Fontaine acknowledged the ongoing challenges associated with school budgeting but praised the School Committee for its support of the school’s long-term vision. While funding constraints remain a reality, he said the committee has been willing to invest in staffing and program development to help bring new initiatives to life.

“Last year, they supported getting us the positions we needed to build these programs,” Fontaine said. “We’re hoping to get another position to help build both programs further. They’re supportive of the vision, and we’re hoping the budget reflects that vision, not just the immediate wants.”

Academically, Monson

High School is also seeing encouraging trends. Enrollment has increased by nearly 10 percent compared to last year, a significant jump for a small-town school, and Fontaine anticipates an additional 7 to 8 percent increase next year.

To support this growth, the school is expanding its course offerings, including the introduction of AP Cybersecurity, computer-integrated manufacturing, and advanced manufacturing courses. These additions align with a broader instructional focus on applied learning, which has been a central theme of professional development for staff this year.

“We’re trying to help students understand that we’re not just learning math for the sake of math,” Fontaine explained. “We want them to see how those skills apply from seventh grade through high school, into jobs, careers, and even the day-to-day operations of life.”

As Monson High School continues in 2026, Fontaine said the combination of growing enrollment, expanded academic pathways, and community involvement positions the school well for continued success.

BUDGET | from page 1

long-term decline Monson has experienced over the past decade.

“Since Oct. 1 through Jan. 15, we have a net increase of 18 students,” he said, with seven additional students at Monson High School, seven at Granite Valley School, and four at the Early Childhood Center.

“That’s interesting, knowing our enrollment history,” Foster added. “There’s some data to back up the anecdotal feeling that kids are showing up in numbers.”

He also encouraged families to attend the Monson High School Showcase scheduled for Jan. 29 at 5:30 p.m., which will highlight new pathways and early college programming.

“This is really a chance to see the good stuff that’s happening at the high school,” Foster said.

Subcommittee updates

The committee received reports from its subcommittees, including curriculum, policy, and finance.

Curriculum Subcommittee chair Jamie Murphy reported progress on implementing updated physical education and health standards for grades 6-8, as well as the start of a districtwide English Language Arts curriculum selection process.

“They’re reviewing about 10 product samples right now,” Murphy said, with the goal of narrowing options to two or three for pilot testing and teacher and student feedback by the end of May.

The subcommittee also decided not to pursue an “Investigating History” grant for grades 3-7 in order to focus staff time and resources on the ELA curriculum review.

In addition, the district is exploring replacing the IXL assessment platform with MAP testing, a nationally used assessment tool.

“It’s the same price as IXL,” Murphy said, calling the potential switch “a financial wash.”

The Finance Subcommittee reported on the district’s fiscal year 2026 budget, transportation costs,

plumbing issues, and early projections for fiscal year 2027, while noting that many of those topics would be discussed later in the meeting.

Town budget outlook raises concerns

School Committee Chair Alison Morgan provided an update from the Mini Tri-Board meeting held earlier in the month, where town-wide financial pressures were outlined.

At the time of that meeting, the town was projecting a budget shortfall of approximately \$569,000 before all department budgets were finalized. Major cost drivers include a 10 percent increase in Hampden County pension assessments, totaling roughly \$250,000, an estimated 8 percent increase in Pathfinder costs of about \$119,000, and a potential 10 to 15 percent increase in Group Insurance Commission costs.

Superintendent Foster said the district is also facing revenue uncertainty.

“We’re projecting a negative \$117,000 in grant revenue,” he said, citing un-

certainty around a \$75,000 legislative earmark received last year and declining rural aid.

Foster said he plans to continue advocating with legislators for state funding support.

Financial update and FY27 budget outlook

Business Manager Leah Zippin reported that the district is currently projecting a \$141,240 surplus in its operating budget for fiscal year 2026, though that figure could be reduced by unbudgeted expenses, including plumbing issues and potential out-of-district student placements.

The transportation budget, however, is projected to end the year with a shortfall of approximately \$31,000.

Foster then presented a high-level overview of the initial fiscal year 2027 budget, outlining two scenarios: a “level service” budget and an “operating request” budget.

The level service budget, which maintains current staffing and programming, reflects a 2.4 percent increase

in expenditures. The operating request budget, which includes expanded high school pathways and additional mental health supports, reflects a 5.4 percent increase.

“If our revenue situation doesn’t change, that 2.4 percent increase in expenditures could show up as a 3.9 percent increase in what we’re asking from the town,” Foster said. “That’s a big concern.”

He added, “We’ve had to cut so much over the years. I’m very concerned with where we even look at cutting at this point.”

Policies and contracts approved

The committee approved an amended legal services contract with Dupray Law Offices, adding a clearly defined hourly litigation rate of \$250 while maintaining the \$1,800 monthly retainer.

“Our retainer has never covered litigation matters,” Foster explained. “We just needed to specify the rate if litigation happens.”

Several policies were approved or advanced, including updates to student fund-

raising and student activity account policies aligned with Massachusetts Association of School Committees model language. The committee also approved new and revised policies related to smoking, substance use, and student harassment, including provisions addressing online and technological harassment.

Fraud risk assessment response

Foster presented the district’s response to the town’s fraud risk assessment, emphasizing that no fraud was found.

“These are areas where there is a risk of fraud, not where any was actually found,” he said.

The district’s action plan outlines existing controls, planned improvements, some of which are budget or staffing dependent, and areas requiring collaboration with the town, such as payroll processing and cash handling.

“Getting out of the cash business would benefit us for a multitude of reasons,” Foster said, citing both security and convenience.



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'Faces of Grief' exhibit at STCC gives voice to love, loss and healing

SPRINGFIELD – Photography students at Springfield Technical Community College are telling the story of grief through images on display at an exhibition at the Carberry Fine Arts Gallery.

Running Jan. 20 through Feb. 6, the exhibition offers the community a space to witness, honor and reflect on the deeply personal yet universally shared experience of grieving. "Faces of Grief" is a collaborative photography exhibition presented by STCC, Cooley Dickinson VNA & Hospice, and The Garden: A Center for Grieving Children and Teens.

STCC invites the public to attend a reception on Saturday, Jan. 31, 2026, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., at the gallery, located on the STCC campus.

"Faces of Grief" invites viewers into the intimate world of loss and remembrance. Under the guidance of Professor Sondra Peron, STCC darkroom photography students captured portraits of grieving individuals holding, wearing or displaying objects that connect them to loved ones who have passed away. The students used analog, or film, photography as well as digital to capture 26 portraits of The Garden members and

STCC community members. Each portrait was developed as a gelatin silver print and gifted to the participant following the exhibition.

"Grief is often a silent experience," said Shelly Bathe Lenn, Bereavement Coordinator at Cooley Dickinson VNA & Hospice. "This project offers a powerful way to honor those who have died and to open up conversations that help us feel less alone."

Lenn, who has led grief support groups across Western Massachusetts since 2002, uses creative rituals and dialogue to help individuals navigate the complexities of

mourning. Her work with The Garden and Cooley Dickinson VNA & Hospice continues to foster healing spaces for children, teens, and adults.

For Peron, the exhibition represents both an artistic and human opportunity. "This exhibit invites the public to reflect on a subject that is difficult but universal," Peron said. "I hope visitors leave feeling a deeper sense of compassion, for others and for themselves."

Mary Lou Vredenburg, Dean of Liberal and Professional Studies at STCC, said the project also plays an important role in student learning.

"Our photography students are not just developing technical skills," Vredenburg said. "They are learning how to approach people with empathy, how to listen and how to translate emotion into visual storytelling. Experiences like this prepare them to become thoughtful artists and compassionate professionals."

Julia Salazar, a fine arts major at STCC, recalled the day she took photos. "It was a very emotional day," Salazar said. "One man had lost his young son. And then there was a boy who lost his biological dad. I felt very emotional taking their photos."

Photography student Tina Scott said the child who lost his father wore his dad's boxing robe. "That really touched me," Scott said. "We had people from all walks of life and with all different types of losses. It was an honor to be able to do this for them."

STCC Business Professor Diane Sabato participated in the photo shoot as a subject.

"I chose to participate because I thought it would be cathartic as well as a good way to honor and recognize my husband," Sabato said. "It

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Panthers win big over HRHS

By Tim Peterson
Sports Correspondent

PALMER – Jeff Brodeur played for the Palmer boys' varsity basketball team twenty years ago. He has also coached the Panthers summer league team in the past and attended last Saturday's matinee against Hampshire Regional.

With Brodeur providing encouragement from the second row of the bleachers, the current Panthers players dismantled the Raiders, 72-30, in a non-league game.

"We just took care of business," said Palmer senior Dylan Doherty, who scored 10 of his 15 points during the first half. "We expect to beat every opponent that we face. Our defense set the tone in today's game."

The 42-point home victory evened the Panthers overall season record at 6-6. They're also trying to qualify for the Division 5 state tournament for the third consecutive year.

"We played very well, especially in the second and third quarters. I'm hoping that it's something that we can build on," said Palmer head coach Missy Rocker. "So far this season, we normally play three good quarters before hitting a roadblock in the last quarter. I'm very pleased with how well we played from start to finish in today's game."

It was only the Panthers fourth home game of the reg-



Turley photos by David Henry www.sweetdogphotos.com

Dylan Doherty flies for the layup.

ular season. They have a 3-1 record playing in front of their faithful supporters.

"I believe that we'll be playing twelve road games and only six at home during the regular season," Rocker added. "We just need to con-

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Turley photos by David Henry www.sweetdogphotos.com

Monson boys basketball recognizes its latest 1,000-point scorer, Austin Meacham.

Austin Meacham becomes latest Mustang to score 1,000 points

By Tim Peterson
Sports Correspondent

MONSON – A total of sixteen Monson High School basketball players have scored 1,000 career points.

Eleven of those players have been members of the boys' varsity team, while five played for the girls' varsity squad.

Senior forward Austin Meacham, who's an outstanding three-sport athlete, is the newest member of the elite club.

His magic moment took place on a coast-to-coast fastbreak lay-up during the second half of the Mustangs, 57-45, home victory against the Hampden Charter School on January 14. He entered the non-league 24 points away.

"I'm very glad that I was able to accomplish the milestone at home in front of my family and friends," Meacham said. "I'm the 16th Monson basketball player to do it, which is pretty cool."

Tony Costa, who graduated in 1957, was the first

Monson basketball player to score 1,000 career points.

Mike Sweeney, who graduated in 1981, was the school's all-time leading scorer with 1,456 career points until Olivia Chrzan broke that mark a couple of years ago.

Chrzan, who finished her brilliant high school basketball career with 2,224 career points, is currently a freshman on the Western New England women's basketball team.

Angie Arbour, who

graduated in 1993, previously held the girls team scoring record with 1,352 points.

The last member of the boys' basketball team to reach the milestone was Trey Dillahunt. He compiled 1,255 points during the past three seasons transferring to Wilbraham & Monson Academy prior to the start of the 2025-26 school year.

"It was awesome being teammates with Trey for the past three seasons," Meacham said.

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Defensive battle results in loss

WARE – Last Thursday evening, Monson High School boys basketball team battled rival Ware in Bi-County action. Both teams played a lot of defense resulting in a very low-scoring affair. Ware would take the win by just a 39-24 final score. Jack Gaudreau had another good game for the Indians, leading all scorers in the game with

15 points.

For Monson, Shane Szado led the Mustangs with six points. Ware improved to 6-7 for the season while Monson is 6-8. Ware is currently holding a spot in the Top 32 in the state in Division 5 despite a sub-.500 record. Monson is ranked No. 56, currently, and would need a .500 record to make the tournament.



Brady Ronaldson holds the ball high before passing away.



Kyle Beaudry collects a pass on the outside.



Brennan Peterson heads down the court after making an offensive rebound.



Austin Meacham reaches out to take in the offensive rebound.



Shane Szado looks to avoid the opposition.

Pioneers turn on offense in win over Turners Falls

PALMER – Last Tuesday evening, Pathfinder girls basketball defeated Turners Falls 52-28. The Pioneers did an excellent job on defense, limiting Turners to single digits in every frame of the game. Addison Doktor had a great game with 22 points while Megan Clark contributed 21 points for the Pioneers. Pathfinder is an even 5-5 this season.



Turley photos by David Henry www.sweetdogphotos.com

Jinx Ripley goes for the three-pointer.



Ciara Green makes a pass in transition.



Addison Doktor shoots near the free-throw line.



Megan Clark shoots with pressure on.



Cassandra Nykiel goes for a jump-shot.

Candlepin League News

By Ryan Drago
Staff Writer
rdrago@turley.com

Bondsville League

WARE – It is week 19 of the Wednesday Night Bondsville League at Roll-A-Way Lanes in Ware.

After 19 weeks, Fire Mountain maintains the #1 seed overall and in their division. Fire Mountain has a record of 84.5 wins and 48.5 losses. Night Hawks are in second place with a record of 78-55. Ironmen are in third place with a record of 76-57 and Sandri has the same record as Ironmen and are leading in the west division.

During week 19, Night Hawks bowled against The Snappers at Roll-A-Way Lanes. In game one, Snappers began the match with a win over Night Hawks, 493-451. Eddie Stachowicz of the Snappers was on fire with an opening game of 139.

In game two, Night Hawks snapped out of their first game slump and beat the Snappers, 501-474. Every Night Hawk bowler exceeded the century mark with scores of 129, 118, 108, and

103.

In game three, Night Hawks won the last game by a score of 448-431. Gavin Sinclair of Night Hawks finished strong with a final game of 122. The high three-game series on the Night Hawks was bowled by Darryl Sinclair (340), and the highest series for Snappers was Stachowicz (311).

The final score was 1400-1398 in favor of Night Hawks.

Ironmen bowled against Spare Parts Bud during week 19. In game one, Spare Parts Bud defeated the Ironmen by a score of 491-469. Pete Swistak of Ironmen began the match with 119 in a losing effort. John Jebb of Spare Parts Bud maintained the lead and began with 99.

In game two, Ironmen defeated Spare Parts Bud by a score of 464-459. Ryan Drago of Ironmen finished with 119 to hang on to a slim lead. Jebb had to throw back-to-back spares in the final two frames to catch up to Drago and only got one spare.

In game three, Ironmen won by a score of 525-498. Steve Swistak of Ironmen

bowled well over his average with 124. Drago finished with the highest game of the match, 143. Jebb finished strong bowling well over his league average by scoring 114.

The final score was 1458-1448 in favor of Ironmen.

Cannonballs bowled against P&J Meats in week 19. In game one, P&J Meats defeated Cannonballs by a score of 436-430. In game two, Cannonballs defeated P&J Meats by a score of 464-448. Micah Hinkley of Cannonballs responded with 112 in game two.

In game three, P&J Meats won by a score of 448-445, the closest game in the match. The final score was 1339-1332 in favor of Cannonballs.

Fire Mountain bowled against Flaming Bowling Balls on lanes 9 and 10 at Roll-A-Way Lanes. In game one, Fire Mountain won the first game by a score of 482-443. Rick Trott of Fire Mountain began the match with 128.

The final score was 1437-1379 in favor of Fire Mountain.



Turley photos by David Henry
Taydem Haley heads up for the easy shot.



Abees Castillo avoids a defender as he shoots.



Adonis Dupre heads down the court.

Junior Hunter Baird led the reserve unit with five points. Freshman Abees Castillo scored six points, while eighth grader TJ Smola chipped in with five points and senior Adonis Dupre added two points.

The Panthers are scheduled to play four road games, which includes matchups with archrivals Ware High School on Friday night and Pathfinder Tech on Monday night before closing out the regular season with a pair of home games.

for the first time. Holding a comfortable 37-17 halftime lead, the Panthers continued playing well at both ends of the court in the third quarter.

A 3-pointer from junior Griffin Nawrocki (3 points), who's the only non-senior starter, made the score 46-17 with 5:48 left in the third quarter before Haley made a lay-up completing the 11-0



Stephen Fredette gets the one-hand layup.

run with a 3-pointer and a fastbreak lay-up, which increased the Panthers lead to 29-13 with 3:25 remaining in the first half.

During the final two minutes of the half, Doherty made a pair of free throws and a lay-up pushing Palmer's lead over twenty points

contest, which was still a very close affair at that time.

The trio of Doherty, Santos, and Fredette, who are all starters, combined to score 40 of the Panthers 72 points.

The game was tied five times during the opening quarter, but Hampshire, who's a Division 4 team, never held the lead.

With 45 seconds remaining in the first quarter, Palmer junior Taydem Haley, who came off the bench and scored six points, broke an 11-11 tie with a lay-up. In the closing seconds of the quarter, Fredette drained a 3-pointer from the right side giving the Panthers a 16-11 advantage.

Haley, who scored all his points before halftime, began the second quarter by hitting a jumper from the top of the key before sophomore Liam Mckee capped off the 9-0 run with a jumper in the lane after receiving a pass from Haley. It was Mckee's only points of the contest.

After the visitors made a jump shot, the Panthers reeled off nine more unanswered points.

Santos finished off that

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tinue playing every game like we did today."

Doherty played in his first home game of the regular season. He suffered a right hand injury during the football season, which sidelined him for the first eleven games of the basketball season. He saw his first action of the season in Palmer's 78-50 loss at Frontier Regional two days earlier.

"Dylan was very excited about finally playing a home game," Rucker said. "He needed a game to get the rust off, but I thought he got into a groove in today's game. I can't wait to see what the rest of the season will look like for him."

Senior Matt Santos, who has been the starting quarterback for the Panthers football team during the past several years, also scored 15 points against the Raiders, who made the trip back to Westhampton with a 6-7 record.

Senior Stephen Fredette scored all ten of his points in the first eight minutes of the

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cham said. "Scoring 1,000 points in only three years is a very difficult thing. You just need to have very good players around you."

Chris Sisco and Logan Gerry, who were both inducted into the Monson Athletic Hall of Fame last fall, are also listed on the 1,000 points banner that's hanging on the wall inside Michael J. Kane Gymnasium.

Meacham entered his senior season with 771 points.

"The first time that I thought about reaching the milestone was at the beginning of this season," Meacham said. "I was about 225 points away from 1,000. It took a lot of hard work to accomplish it."

Meacham scored ten or more points in the Mustangs first ten games of the regular season. He netted a season-high 33 points in a 72-50 non-league road win against North Brookfield High School on January 6. He also scored 31 points in a 46-32 home victory versus Bi-County East rival Granby in the second game of the regular season.



The Meacham family celebrates his milestone.

Meacham, who joined the varsity basketball team in the eighth grade, has played for three different head coaches during the past five years.

"Dennis Vacon was the varsity basketball coach when

I joined the team as an eighth grader," Meacham said. "We weren't a very good team that season. I recall scoring my first varsity points on a 3-pointer against Quaboag."

The Mustangs finished

with an 8-12 record the following season. They just missed qualifying for the Division 5 state tournament.

One of the seniors on that team was Collin Beaupre, who's younger brother, Jake,

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Athlete of the Week

Austin Meacham

Monson High School

Meacham, who has been a top player all season long, recently scored his 1,000th career point.

To nominate someone for Athlete of the Week, contact Managing Sports Editor Gregory A. Scibelli at 413-283-8393 or send an e-mail to gscibelli@turley.com.

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Sports

Steve Ott named new head coach of Thunderbirds

SPRINGFIELD — St. Louis Blues President of Hockey Operations and General Manager Doug Armstrong announced today that Steve Ott will assume the role of head coach for the team's AHL affiliate, the Springfield Thunderbirds, for the remainder of the season. Ott replaces Steve Konowalchuk, who has been relieved of his duties. Current Thunderbirds assistant coach Chad Wiseman will serve as the interim head coach for today's Thunderbirds game against the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton Penguins until Ott can join the team later this week.

"The Blues want to thank Steve Konowalchuk for his contributions to our organization over the last two years and wish him all the

best moving forward," said Armstrong. "We're looking forward to Steve Ott taking over in Springfield to push our young players to get better every day and further their development path to become St. Louis Blues. The current staff will take over his duties with the Blues for the rest of this season."

Ott, 42, has nine seasons behind the Blues' bench after first joining the staff as an assistant in the summer of 2017. During his tenure, the Summerside, PEI, native has helped the Blues compile a 350-244-74 (.588 points percentage) regular-season record and four postseason appearances. In 2018-19, just his second season as a coach, Ott played an instrumental role in helping the Blues

make a historic rise in the standings during the regular season, ultimately capturing the 2019 Stanley Cup championship. Ott becomes the fifth head coach in Thunderbirds history.

As a player, Ott enjoyed a 14-year NHL career, including 122 games with the Blues from 2014-2016. Overall, he accumulated 288 points in 848 career regular-season games, including stints with Dallas, Buffalo, St. Louis, Detroit, and Montreal.

Konowalchuk, 52, was in his second season as head coach of the Thunderbirds and has recorded an overall record of 47-50-4-8 (.486 points-percentage) during his time in the organization, including a record of 13-18-4-2 (.432) this season.

Registration set to open Feb. 1 for Quabbin Valley League

SOUTH HADLEY — On Sunday, Jan. 11, the Quabbin Valley Baseball League, an over-28 recreational league, held its first meeting of 2026 to prepare for the upcoming season.

At the meeting it was determined registration for players will open up on Sunday, Feb. 1.

For the 2026 season, the cost will be \$215 and will include a 16th game added to the regular season schedule.

During the 2025 season, the league experimented with playing on Mother's Day Saturday as well as a weeknight game to allow players an opportunity to play under the lights. While the night games were very successful, the Mother's Day Saturday games were rained out.

Those elements will return along with a 16th game with an opponent to be determined as the league's board explores possibilities for interleague matchups with another league in the region.

For returning players to the league, the deadline is Mar. 22 at 12 noon to be registered for the 2026 season in order to be guaranteed a roster spot. There will be open practices for all players but specifically targeted at new players scheduled for March 29 and April 4 at times and locations to be announced. The draft is currently scheduled to take place on April 4 following that practice.

The season is currently slated to start on Sunday, April 19 and following the success of the six-team fall

league last year, the league will also have a fall league in September and October this season.

The registration link will be live on Feb. 1 at www.quabbinvalleybaseball.org. Players must register and then pay the league dues via Venmo or contact the league leadership if an alternate form of payment is needed.

Aside from the weeknight and Mother's Day games, other games take place Sundays at 10 a.m. outside of Mother's Day, Memorial Day and July 4 weekends. Playoffs will be in August.

This is the 30th season for the league and league officials are looking to celebrate the anniversary with a couple of events.

Baldwin to chase unprecedented third straight SMART Modified Tour Championship

Sadler-Stanley Racing announced Wednesday that Luke Baldwin will return to the Pace-O-Matic No. 7VA for another season of SMART Modified Tour racing in 2026.

Baldwin will be searching for an unprecedented third straight championship on the SMART Modified Tour powered by Pace-O-Matic, after capturing the title in his rookie season in 2024, and following it up with another crown in 2025.

Baldwin won three of

13 series events in 2025 to go along with top-10 finishes in all but two races. Baldwin also won twice during the 2024 season, including capturing the \$20,000 to win 'King of the Modifieds' at South Boston Speedway in its inaugural season as his first career win.

The team will continue with a PSR Chassis, partnered with Pace-O-Matic.

"What Luke has accomplished both on and off the track the last two years has

been impressive and fun to watch," Sadler-Stanley Racing co-owner Hermie Sadler said. "Luke has a great future ahead of him and it will be exciting to watch him race in the NASCAR Craftsman Truck Series, along with on the SMART Modified Tour. We are truly excited to have him back in the Pace-O-Matic Modified in 2026 trying to chase some history."

"Going back to Sadler-Stanley Racing for a chance to win a third con-

secutive SMART Modified Tour championship - it's incredible," Luke Baldwin said. "Hermie and Bill took a chance on me, and it has paid off in many ways. I expect no different in 2026."

"We are just thrilled that Luke will lead Sadler-Stanley Racing for the 2026 SMART Modified Tour season, and run for this third consecutive championship," co-owner Bill Stanley said. "He brings excitement and a winning attitude to the track every week,

and we can't wait to get the season started with him behind the wheel of the Pace-O-Matic 7VA."

"Pace-O-Matic is proud to once again be the premier sponsor of the SMART Modified Tour and Sadler-Stanley Racing for 2026," Paul Goldean, President and CEO of Pace-O-Matic, said. "The SMART Modified Tour is an exhibition of cutting-edge innovation and excitement, just like the skill games we develop. We are excited to watch

Sadler-Stanley Racing pursue a historic third consecutive championship, and we wish all the drivers luck this season."

Information on the driver lineup for the No. 16 Pace-O-Matic entry for the 2026 season will be released in the coming weeks.

The SMART Modified Tour 2026 schedule includes 14 events at 13 different tracks. All SMART Modified Tour races are streamed live on FloRacing.

GARDEN | from page 4

is helpful, but not entirely necessary; regular room temperatures will also encourage sprouting.

Supplemental lighting is vital, however, so that the onions grow straight and strong. Once onions are up, thin seedlings 1/2" to 1" apart from one another — onions hate competition, so this step is important!

I generally cut out the

extras using scissors, right at the soil line so as not to dislodge the roots of those we are growing on. As the seedlings continue to grow, keep them trimmed at 3" tall; this will encourage strong roots and a straight, bulky plant.

About a month prior to the last frost, the transplants should be hardened off for a week by gradually acclimating them to outdoor conditions. When they are ready,

seedlings are sunk into 1" furrows 3-4" apart and watered carefully; they can be protected from sun and wind off and on for the first week should it seem necessary; here a floating row cover supported by wire hoops would come in handy, but old pots or trays would work fine too. Additional rows should be one foot apart.

Stayed tuned for part two of this column next week,

and extra-large onions will be yours come fall!

Roberta McQuaid graduated from the Stockbridge School of Agriculture at the University of Massachusetts. For 33 years she has held the position of staff horticulturist at Old Sturbridge Village. She enjoys growing food as well as flowers. Have a question for her? Email it to pouimette@turley.com with "Gardening Question" in the subject line.

Public notices

**Commonwealth of Massachusetts
The Trial Court
Probate and Family Court
Hampden Probate and Family Court
50 State Street
Springfield, MA 01103
Docket No.
HD26P0105PM
In the matter of:
Isabella Leigh Laviolette
Of: Three Rivers, MA
RESPONDENT
(Person to be Protected/
Minor)
CITATION GIVING
NOTICE OF PETITION
FOR APPOINTMENT
OF CONSERVATOR OR
OTHER PROTECTIVE
ORDER PURSUANT TO
G.L. c. 190B,
§5-304 & §5-405**

To the named Respondent and all other interested persons, a petition has been filed by Deborah A Laviolette of Three Rivers, MA in the above captioned matter alleging that Isabella Leigh Laviolette is in need of a Conservator or other protective order and requesting that Deborah A Laviolette of Three Rivers, MA (or some other suitable person) be appointed as Conservator to serve Without Surety on the bond.

The petition asks the court to determine that the Respondent is disabled, that a protective order or appointment of a Conservator is necessary, and that the proposed conserva-

tor is appropriate. The petition is on file with this court.

You have the right to object to this proceeding. If you wish to do so, you or your attorney must file a written appearance at this court on or before 10:00 a.m. on the return date of 02/13/2026. This day is NOT a hearing date, but a deadline date by which you have to file the written appearance if you object to the petition. If you fail to file the written appearance by the return date, action may be taken in this matter without further notice to you. In addition to filing the written appearance, you or your attorney must file a written affidavit stating the specific facts and grounds of your objection within 30 days after the return date.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

The outcome of this proceeding may limit or completely take away the above-named person's right to make decisions about personal affairs or financial affairs or both. The above-named person has the right to ask for a lawyer. Anyone may make this request on behalf of the above-named person. If the above-named person cannot afford a lawyer, one may be appointed at State expense.

Witness, Hon. Claudine T. Stoudemire, First Justice of this Court.

Date: January 20, 2026

Rosemary A. Saccomani
Register of Probate

01/29/2026

TOWN OF MONSON Public Hearing (RESCHEDULED) – February 10, 2026, at 7:00 PM FY 2026 Application Forum

Due to inclement weather, the Town of Monson, in association with the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, is rescheduling its hearing that was to serve as the first public forum to solicit community input on potential activities to be included in a potential FY26 Community Development Block Grant application. The new hearing date will be **Tuesday, February 10, 2026, at 7:00 pm**, in person at the Town Office Building, 110 Main Street, Monson, MA 01057. All community members and stakeholders are invited to share thoughts on potential CDBG-eligible activities to be included.

All persons with questions or comments regarding the performance hearing will have an opportunity to submit comments up until and through the public hearing. Please submit comments to Evan Mastroianni at the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission @ emastroianni@pvpc.org or 413-781-6045. Persons who require special accommodations should contact the Town prior to the hearing date at 413-267-4100.

Glenda's

Saturday, January 31st ~ 7pm-11pm

Country Rock

Fridays

Karaoke

948 Main Street, Warren, MA • 413-436-8491

Upcoming Events

Saturday, February 14th
7pm-11pm

Pure Country

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DARTS

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5:30pm • All Welcome

PUBLIC NOTICES ARE NOW ONLINE

- 1 Email all notices to notices@turley.com
- 2 Access archives and digital tear sheets by newspaper title.
- 3 Find a quick link to the state of Massachusetts' public notice web site to search all notices in Massachusetts newspapers.

Public notice deadlines are Friday at 3 p.m.

visit www.publicnotices.turley.com

Public notices

PALMER PLANNING BOARD PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

In accordance with the provisions of Chapter 40A, sections 9 & 11 M.G.L., the Planning Board will hold a public hearing on **Monday, February 9th, 2026, at 7:10 PM** in the Police Department Meeting Room, 4419 Main Street, Palmer, MA.

The applicant, Shauna Ziemba, is seeking a Special Permit as required by §171.94(B)13 to display one additional main frontage sign in the Village Center 1 Zoning District, located on the property at 1018 Central Street, Palmer. This parcel is also known as Assessors Map 58, Lot 91.

A copy of the application may be inspected at the Planning Department office in the Town Administration Building from 8:30 AM to 4:30 PM Monday through Thursday.

Anyone interested in more information or wishing to be heard on the application can contact the Planning Department at 413-283-2605 or appear at the time and place designated above.

This notice shall also be posted on the Massachusetts Newspaper Publishers Association's (MNPA) website (<http://masspublicnotices.org>).

Norman Czech, Chairman
01/22, 01/29/2026

PALMER PLANNING BOARD PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

In accordance with the provisions of Chapter 40A, sections 9 & 11 M.G.L., the Planning Board will hold a public hearing on **Monday, February 9th, 2026, at 7:00 PM** in the Police Department Meeting Room, 4419 Main Street, Palmer, MA.

The applicant, Frank Dagostino, is seeking a Special Permit as required by §171.94(B)13 to display one additional frontage wall sign in the Village Center 1 Zoning District, located on the property at 1364 Main Street, Palmer. This parcel is also known as Assessors Map 58, Lot 5.

A copy of the application may be inspected at the Planning Department office in the Town Administration Building from 8:30 AM to 4:30 PM Monday through Thursday.

Anyone interested in more information or wishing to be heard on the application can contact the Planning Department at 413-283-2605 or appear at the time and place designated above.

This notice shall also be posted on the Massachusetts Newspaper Publishers Association's (MNPA) website (<http://masspublicnotices.org>).

Norman Czech, Chairman
01/22, 01/29/2026

Commonwealth of Massachusetts The Trial Court Probate and Family Court Hampden Probate and Family Court 50 State Street Springfield, MA 01103 (413)748-7758 Docket No. HD25P2578EA

Estate of: Richard W Guzik Date of Death: 11/01/2025 CITATION ON PETITION FOR FORMAL ADJUDICATION

To all interested persons: A Petition for S/A - Formal Probate of Will with Appointment of Personal Representative has been filed by **Frederick J Guzik of Bondsville, MA** requesting that the Court enter a formal Decree and Order and for such other relief as requested in the Petition.

The Petitioner requests that **Frederick J Guzik of Bondsville, MA** be appointed as Personal Representative(s) of said estate to serve on the bond in **unsupervised administration**.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

You have the right to obtain a copy of the Petition from the Petitioner or at the Court. You have a right to object to this proceeding. To do so, you or your attorney must file a written appearance and objection at this Court before: 10:00 a.m. on the return day of 02/20/2026. This is NOT a hearing date, but a deadline by which you must file a written appearance and objection if you object to this proceeding. If you fail to file a timely written appearance and objection followed by an affidavit of objections within thirty (30) days of the return day, ac-

tion may be taken without further notice to you.

UNSUPERVISED ADMINISTRATION UNDER THE MASSACHUSETTS UNIFORM PROBATE

A Personal Representative appointed under the MUPC in an unsupervised administration is not required to file an inventory or annual accounts with the Court. Persons interested in the estate are entitled to notice regarding the administration directly from the Personal Representative and may petition the Court in any matter relating to the estate, including the distribution of assets and expenses of administration.

WITNESS, Hon. **Claudine T. Stoudemire**, First Justice of this Court.

Date: January 22, 2026
Rosemary A Saccomani,
Register of Probate
01/29/2026

Town of Holland Public Forum Tuesday, February 3, 2026 6:00 PM in the Holland Town Hall 27 Sturbridge Road Holland, MA 01521 FY26 Community Development Block Grant Application Proposed FY26 CDBG Application

The Holland Select Board will conduct a public forum on **Tuesday, February 3, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. at the Holland Town Hall located at 27 Sturbridge Road, Holland, MA** regarding its proposed FY26 application by the Town of Holland to the Massachusetts Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities Community Development Block Grant Program.

This hearing will serve as the first public forum to solicit community input on activities to be included in a potential Holland FY26 Community Development Block Grant application. All community members and stakeholders are invited to share thoughts on potential Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) eligible activities to be included. Eligible projects typically include Infrastructure, Housing Rehabilitation, ADA Planning and Improvements, and Social Services.

All persons with questions or comments regarding the grant application will have an opportunity to be heard. Persons who require accommodation for the hearing should contact the town several days prior to the hearing date at (413)-245-7108 ext. 101. Those unable to attend can send written comments to the Holland Town Administrator, 27 Sturbridge Road, Holland, Ma 01521, Attn: Stacy Stout. For further information contact Sarah Maroney at PVPC at (413) 781-6045 or smaroney@pvpc.org. 01/22, 01/29/2026

NOTICE OF MORTGAGEE'S SALE OF REAL ESTATE

By virtue and in execution of the Power of Sale contained in a certain mortgage given by Teresa Wieslawa Hrynkiw to H&R Block Mortgage Corporation, dated September 21, 2005 and recorded in the Hampden County Registry of Deeds in Book 15355, Page 570, of which mortgage the undersigned is the present holder, by assignment from: H&R Block Mortgage Corporation to Option One Mortgage Corporation, recorded on December 21, 2005, in Book No. 15587, at Page 81 Sand Canyon Corporation f/k/a Option One Mortgage Corporation to Deutsche Bank National Trust Company, as Trustee for Soundview Home Loan Trust 2005-OPT4, Asset-Backed Certificates, Series 2005-OPT4, recorded on January 30, 2013, in Book No. 19661, at Page 194 for breach of the conditions of said mortgage and for the purpose of foreclosing, the same will be sold at Public Auction at **10:00 AM on February 9, 2026**, on the mortgaged premises located at 114 Peck Brothers Road, Monson, Hampden County, Massachusetts, all and singular the premises described in said mortgage.

TO WIT: Lot 4A certain parcel of land on the southeasterly side of Peck Bros. Road, Monson, Hampden County, Massachusetts, known and designated as Lot 4 on a plan entitled "Plan of

Lots in Monson, Mass., Surveyed for Lawrence D. Tassinari, Scale 1" = 100', Jan. 11, 1982, Kenneth C. Sherman, Engineer-Surveyor, Palmer, Mass.", which plan is recorded in Hampden County Registry of Deeds, Book of Plans 203, Page 121, more particularly described as follows:

Beginning at an iron pin in the southeasterly line of Peck Bros. Road at the westerly corner of land now or formerly of Cynthia A. Lloyd (see Book of Plans 177, Page 116);

thence S. 51° 41' 30" E. along a stone wall, twenty-eight and 69/100 (28.69) feet to a point; thence S. 62° 27' 30" E. continuing along said stone wall, ninety-nine and 28/100 (99.28) feet to a point;

thence S. 75° 21' 30" E. continuing along said stone wall, one hundred two and 84/100 (102.84) feet to a point;

thence S. 66° 39' 15" E. two hundred seventy-one and 56/100 (271.56) feet to a point in a stone wall, the last four courses being along land now or formerly of said Lloyd;

thence S. 29° 54' 15" W. along land now or formerly of Lawrence D. Tassinari, one hundred thirteen and 00/100 (113.00) feet to an iron pin at the easterly corner of Lot 3;

thence N. 75° 56' W. along Lot 3, five hundred seventy-six and 09/100 (576.09) feet to an iron pin in the southeasterly line of said road; thence N. 45° 6' E. along said road, two hundred nineteen and 94/100 (219.94) feet to the point beginning, all as shown on said plan. Containing 1.847 acres.

Lot 4A A certain parcel of land on the Southeasterly side of Peck Bros. Road, Monson, Mass., known and designated as Lot 4A on a plan entitled, "Plan of Lots in Monson, Mass., surveyed for Lawrence D. Tassinari dated January 11, 1982, Revised June 10, 1983, Kenneth C. Sherman, Engineer-Surveyor", which plan is recorded in Hampden County Registry of Deeds in Book of Plans 210, Page 58, more particularly described as follows:

Beginning at an iron pin in the southeasterly line of said road at the southwesterly corner of land now or formerly of Thomas J. Barry, Jr., and Annette B. Barry, being Lot 4 on a plan in Book of Plans 203, Page 121;

thence S. 75° 56' E. one hundred ninety and 00/100 (190.00) feet along last named land to a point;

thence S. 70° 24' 45" W. one hundred four and 16/100 (104.16) feet along remaining land of Gene W. Burbee et ux to iron pin;

thence N. 28° 41' 45" W. seventy-two and 26/100 (72.26) feet along last named land to a point;

thence N. 71° 1' W. fifty-four and 43/100 (54.43) feet along last named land to the iron pin at the point of beginning, as shown on said plan. Containing 4,150 square feet of land.

Together with the right to maintain the existing leach field on remaining land of Gene W. Burbee and Louann M. Burbee.

For mortgagor's(s') title see deed recorded with Hampden County Registry of Deeds in Book 9247, Page 25. These premises will be sold and conveyed subject to and with the benefit of all rights, rights of way, restrictions, easements, covenants, liens or claims in the nature of liens, improvements, public assessments, any and all unpaid taxes, tax titles, tax liens, water and sewer liens and any other municipal assessments or liens or existing encumbrances of record which are in force and are applicable, having priority over said mortgage, whether or not reference to such restrictions, easements, improvements, liens or encumbrances is made in the deed.

TERMS OF SALE: A deposit of Ten Thousand (\$10,000.00) Dollars by certified or bank check will be required to be paid by the purchaser at the time and place of sale. The balance is to be paid by certified or bank check at Harmon Law Offices, P.C., 150 California St., Newton, Massachusetts 02458, or by mail to P.O. Box 610389, Newton Highlands, Massachusetts 02461-0389, within thirty (30) days from the date of sale. Deed will be provided to purchaser for recording upon receipt in full of the purchase price. The description of the premises contained in said mortgage shall control in the

event of an error in this publication.

Other terms, if any, to be announced at the sale.

DEUTSCHE BANK NATIONAL TRUST COMPANY, AS TRUSTEE FOR SOUNDVIEW HOME LOAN TRUST 2005-OPT4, ASSET-BACKED CERTIFICATES, SERIES 2005-OPT4 Present holder of said mortgage By its Attorneys, HARMON LAW OFFICES, P.C. 150 California St. Newton, MA 02458 (617)558-0500 28623 01/15, 01/22, 01/29/2026

ADVERTISEMENT

The **Monson** Housing Authority, the Awarding Authority, invites sealed bids from Contractors for the Family 705-1, Development for the **Monson** Housing Authority in **Monson** Massachusetts, in accordance with the documents prepared by **GCE Architecture**.

The Project consists of: **Replace windows and exterior doors and remediate lead materials.**

The work is estimated to cost **\$ 81,800.00 and Alternate #1 is estimated to cost \$-11,000.00** Bids are subject to M.G.L. c.149 §44A-J & to minimum wage rates as required by M.G.L. c.149 §26 to 27H inclusive.

General Bids will be received until **1:00 p.m., Friday, February 27, 2026** and publicly opened, forthwith.

All Bids should be delivered to: www.Projectdog.com online. Hard copy bids will not be accepted by the Awarding Authority. E-Bid tutorials and instructions are available within the specifications and online at www.Projectdog.com. For assistance, call Projectdog, Inc at (978)499-9014, M-F 8:30AM- 5PM and received no later than the date & time specified above.

General bids shall be accompanied by a bid deposit that is not less than five (5%) of the greatest possible bid amount (considering all alternates) and made payable to the **Monson** Housing Authority.

Bid Forms and Contract Documents will be available for pick-up at: www.Projectdog.com or for pick-up at: Projectdog, Inc., 18 Graf Road, Suite 8, Newburyport, MA 978-499-9014 (M-F 8:30AM-5PM). **Enter Project Code 872459 beginning February 4, 2026** in the project locator box. Select "Acquire Documents" to download documents, review a hard copy at Projectdog's physical location, or request a free project CD.

Contractors requesting Contract Documents to be mailed to them shall include a separate check for \$25 per set, payable to the Awarding Authority, to cover mail handling costs.

The job site and/or existing building will be available for inspection between 10 A.M. and 10:30 A.M. on **Thursday, February 12, 2026 at 290 Main Street, Monson**. Parking is limited.

For an appointment call: **no appointments.** 01/29, 02/05, 02/12/2026

NOTICE OF MORTGAGEE'S SALE OF REAL ESTATE

Premises: 11 Christine Street, Palmer, MA 01069

By virtue and in execution of the Power of Sale contained in a certain mortgage given by Randall E Paxton to Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems, Inc., as Mortgagee, as nominee for First Federal Savings Bank of Boston, and now held by U.S. Bank National Association, said mortgage dated September 12, 2014 and recorded in the Hampden County Registry of Deeds in Book 20424, Page 171, as affected by a Loan Modification dated June 7, 2016 and recorded in the Hampden County Registry of Deeds in Book 21287, Page 50; as affected by an Affidavit dated March 2, 2023 and recorded in the Hampden County Registry of Deeds in Book 24927, Page 586; said mortgage was assigned from Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems, Inc., as Nominee for First Federal Savings Bank of Boston to U.S. Bank National Association by assignment dated September 18, 2015 and recorded with said Registry of Deeds

in Book 20876, Page 399; for breach of the conditions in said mortgage and for the purpose of foreclosing the same will be sold at **Public Auction** on February 19, 2026 at 01:00 PM Local Time upon the premises, all and singular the premises described in said mortgage, to wit:

The following real property situate on the Southerly side of proposed street, known as "Christine Street" Town of Palmer, Hampden County, Massachusetts, bounded and described as follows:

Beginning at an iron pipe which is located S. 78 degrees 06 minutes E. a distance of four hundred thirty-six (436) feet from an iron pin in the Easterly line of Flynt Road and at the Northwesterly corner of land formerly of Albert L'Heureux, now believed to be of Stephen Stoneberger, all as shown on "Plan of Land in Palmer, Mass. owned by Charles T. Carter, dated August, 1957, Theodore P. Drazek, R.L.S." recorded with the Hampden County Registry of Deeds, Book of Plans 70, Page 28; thence running

S. 78 degrees 06 minutes E. a distance of one hundred fifty (150) feet to an iron pin; thence turning and running

N. 18 degrees 54 minutes E one hundred fifty and no/100 (150) feet to an iron pin in the Southerly terminus of a proposed street known as "Christine Street" thence turning and running

N. 78 degrees 06 minutes W along the line of said proposed street one hundred fifty and no/100 (150.00) feet to an iron pin; thence turning and running

S. 18 degrees 54 minutes W. along land of Charles Carter et al one hundred fifty and no/100 (150) feet, more or less to the place of beginning.

Together with the right in common with the Grantors and other, to use the proposed street, as shown on said plan for all purposes of travel.

Being the same premises conveyed to the mortgagor by deed recorded in the Hampden County Registry of Deeds simultaneously herewith.

The description of the property contained in the mortgage shall control in the event of a typographical error in this publication.

For Mortgagor's Title see deed dated September 12, 2014 and recorded in the Hampden County Registry of Deeds in Book 20424, Page 168.

TERMS OF SALE: Said premises will be sold and conveyed subject to all liens, encumbrances, unpaid taxes, tax titles, municipal liens and assessments, if any, which take precedence over the said mortgage above described.

FIVE THOUSAND (\$5,000.00) Dollars of the purchase price must be paid in cash, certified check, bank treasurer's or cashier's check at the time and place of the sale by the purchaser. The balance of the purchase price shall be paid in cash, certified check, bank treasurer's or cashier's check within thirty (30) days after the date of sale.

Other terms to be announced at the sale.

Brock & Scott, PLLC
23 Messenger Street
2nd Floor
Plainville, MA 02762
Attorney for U.S. Bank National Association
Present Holder of the Mortgage
(401) 217-8701
01/22, 01/29, 02/05/2026

Commonwealth of Massachusetts The Trial Court Probate and Family Court Hampshire Probate and Family Court 15 Atwood Drive Northampton MA, 01060 Docket No. HS21P0704PM In the matter of: Maryellen Seward Of: South Hadley, MA Protected Person/ Disabled Person/Respondent CITATION GIVING NOTICE OF CONSERVATOR'S ACCOUNT

To the named Respondent and all other interested persons, you are hereby notified pursuant to Rule 72 of the Supplemental Rules of the Probate & Family Court, that the **Temporary Conservator's First and Final Account and Permanent Conservator's First and Second and Final**

account(s) of **Alison Bartlett-O'Donald, Esq. of Holyoke, MA** as Conservator of the property of said Respondent has or have been presented to the Court for allowance.

You have the right to object to the account(s). If you wish to do so, you or your attorney must file a written appearance and objection at this court on or before 10:00 A.M. on the return date of **02/18/2026**. This day is NOT a hearing date, but a deadline date by which you have to object to the account(s). If you fail to file the written appearance and objection by the return date, action may be taken in this matter without further notice to you, including the allowance of the account(s).

Additionally, within thirty days after said return day (or within such other time as the Court upon motion may order), you must file a written affidavit of objections stating the specific facts and grounds upon which each objection is based and a copy shall be served upon the Conservator pursuant to Rule 3 of the Supplemental Rules of the Probate & Family Court.

You have the right to send to the Conservator, by registered or certified mail, a written request to receive a copy of the Petition and account(s) at no cost to you.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

The outcome of this proceeding may limit or completely take away the above-named person's right to make decisions about personal affairs or financial affairs or both. The above-named person has the right to ask for a lawyer. Anyone may make this request on behalf of the above-named person. If the above-named person cannot afford a lawyer, one may be appointed at State expense.

Witness, Hon. **Diana S. Velez Harris**, First Justice of this Court.

Date: January 14, 2026
Mark S. Ames
Register of Probate
01/29/2026

Commonwealth of Massachusetts The Trial Court Probate and Family Court Hampden Division Docket No. HD24P1921EA

Estate of: Christine Marie Skowrya Date of Death: July 29, 2024 INFORMAL PROBATE PUBLICATION NOTICE
To all persons interested in the above captioned estate, by Petition of Petitioner **Leslie M. Skowrya of Brimfield, MA**.

Leslie M. Skowrya of Brimfield, MA has been informally appointed as the Personal Representative of the estate to serve **without surety** on the bond.

The estate is being administered under informal procedure by the Personal Representative under the Massachusetts Uniform Probate Code without supervision by the Court. Inventory and accounts are not required to be filed with the Court, but interested parties are entitled to notice regarding the administration from the Personal Representative and can petition the Court in any matter relating to the estate, including distribution of assets and expenses of administration. Interested parties are entitled to petition the Court to institute formal proceedings and to obtain orders terminating or restricting the powers of Personal Representatives appointed under informal procedure. A copy of the Petition and Will, if any, can be obtained from the Petitioner.
01/29/2026

TOWN OF PALMER LICENSING COMMISSION NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

The Palmer Licensing Commission will hold a public hearing on **Thursday, February 12, 2026 at 4:00 PM** at the Palmer Town Building, 4417 Main Street, Palmer on the application from Panther Development located at 1519 N. Main Street Palmer MA for a new all-alcohol on-premises license through Special Legislation under Chapter 76, Acts of 2025.

Any persons interested in being heard should appear at the time and place above stated.

Town of Palmer Licensing Commission
01/29/2026

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Obituaries

Patricia A. Smith

THREE RIVERS – Patricia A. Smith, 82, passed away Jan. 21, 2026. She was born on Sept. 15, 1943 in Newport, Rhode Island to the late Antone Silva Moitoza and Irene (Santos) Lewis. Patricia has been a longtime resident of Palmer since 1953, spending a couple of years residing in Maine with family where she graduated from Herman High School in 1963.



and cousins. She will be dearly missed by her husband of 60 years, Byron Smith; daughter, Melissa Police and husband, Richard; son, Samuel Smith and wife, Melissa; grandchildren, Derek Nadeau, Kyra Mercier, Nadalie Mercier and Hailie Smith; and her sister, Daureen Blythe.

Visitation will be held on Friday, Feb. 6, 2026, from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. at the Beers & Story Palmer Funeral Home with a Funeral Mass to be held at 12:30pm at St. Thomas the Apostle Church in Palmer. Burial will be held later in the Spring. In lieu of flowers, donations in Patricia's memory can be made to the Alzheimer's Association by visiting www.alz.org.

Upon graduating, Patricia worked as a machinist at Tambrands for many years before their closing. She enjoyed making ceramics, horseback riding, bowling, and above all else, spending time with her family.

Besides her parents, Patricia was preceded in death by her stepfather, Samuel Lewis, as well as many aunts, uncles,

GRIEF | from page 8

was really emotional, but the students were very thoughtful as they took the photos. They made it a moving and memorable experience for me."

The Faces of Grief exhibit aims to destigmatize grief and transform discomfort into connection. All are welcome to attend the reception and view the portraits that reflect love, memory and resilience.

The Amy H. Carberry

Fine Arts Gallery at Springfield Technical Community College features works by artists of local and national repute as well as STCC student work. The gallery is on the first floor in B28, on the Pearl Street side of the STCC campus. The gallery is supported in part by funding from the School of Liberal and Professional Studies. Find the Amy H. Carberry Fine Arts Gallery on Facebook or follow on Twitter @STCCArtGallery.

STUDENTS | from page 1

Ethan Newport, wrote to advocate for increased student choice in Unified Arts courses. Newport argued that allowing students to select their electives would increase motivation, engagement, and academic success. "Students give their best effort in subjects they are passionate about," Newport wrote, adding that choice helps students identify future goals and build skills.

Rathbone acknowledged the challenges of scheduling but thanked Newport for sharing his perspective, noting that both letters reflected thoughtful civic engagement.

Student representatives highlight school activities and achievements

Fifth-grade student council representatives Viola Morezko and Rena Violet delivered the Old Mill Pond School report, detailing a wide range of initiatives and events. They reported that the school's PBIS store has been highly successful and announced an Amazon wish list to support its continued growth.

Upcoming events include a PTO movie night featuring Charlotte's Web, a spring "Summer Special in Me" dance, and the annual Snowball Fight fundraiser using paper snowballs placed on classroom doors. The representatives also announced new soccer goals, school squares fundraising, Valentine's Day gram sales, and an ecology field trip planned for mid-April.

Morezko and Violet also highlighted multiple fundraisers, including Krispy Kreme and Little Caesars Pizza, and shared that grades 4-6 band students will perform at a Springfield Thunderbirds game with a movie and television theme. They noted that WIDA testing for English learners is about halfway complete and announced December's Students, Teacher, and Paraprofessional of the Month.

"You both did a beautiful job," Rathbone told the students, thanking them for their clear presentation and enthusiasm.

At Palmer High School, National Honor Society President Scarlett LaRose presented an update that included academic programming, student

leadership initiatives, and athletics. LaRose described a recent "Highlight Day," during which upperclassmen presented to eighth graders about high school academics, extracurriculars, and opportunities such as EMT coursework, dual enrollment, and international travel.

LaRose also announced that Palmer Schools were recognized by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education as a 2025 Massachusetts School of Recognition for MCAS accountability and improvement. Superintendent Brian Francis and Principal Susan North received the honor at the State House.

"This recognition reflects the work of our teachers, staff, and students," LaRose said, noting that the district received a banner marking the achievement.

She also shared details about engineering students collaborating with Modvic, a steampunk art and design company, as well as upcoming events including the middle school dance, open house, MCAS testing, Spirit Week, international travel to the Dominican Republic, and the junior-senior prom. LaRose concluded with winter sports updates, highlighting strong performances across basketball and swimming programs.

EL/ML dept. presentation explains services and student support

Superintendent Francis introduced a comprehensive presentation from the district's English Learner/Multilingual Learner department, led by ESL teachers Kelly Simkis of Palmer High School and Lisa Newton and Karen Perry of Old Mill Pond School.

Simkis explained that EL/ML services are often misunderstood and outlined the many acronyms used in the field, including ESL, EL, ML, SEI, SLIFE, and WIDA. "ESL has the most acronyms in all of education," Simkis said, emphasizing the need for clarity.

The presenters explained that Palmer uses the Sheltered English Immersion model, in which English learners are educated alongside their peers in mainstream classrooms while receiving targeted ESL support. "Kids are learning alongside their peers

It is with profound sadness that we announce the passing of John E. Machnik, who entered eternal rest on Jan. 21, 2026, at the age of 102. He was born on Dec. 8, 1923, in Ware, Massachusetts, the beloved son of Stanislaw and Stefania (Mazurek) Machnik.



John was predeceased by his first wife, Julia (Lemanski) Machnik, in 1979, and his second wife, Stella (Pisarski) Machnik, in 2004. He was also predeceased by two brothers, Dominick and Edward Machnik; four sisters, Josephine Machnik, Veronica Goodreau, Fredericka Roszko, and Irene Audette; and his daughter-in-law, Simone (Cote) Machnik.

He is survived by his loving children, Mark Machnik of Palmer, Massachusetts, and Arlene (Machnik) Baker of Sacramento, California; and by his brother, James Machnik of Vernon, Connecticut. John was a devoted Dziadzu to his six grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren: Natasha Baker and her husband Andrew Shaw; Ethan Baker and his wife Susan (Oliver), and Ethan's daughter Brielle. Joshua and his wife Esther (Bjorbekk) Machnik, and their children Jubilee, Agape, Toren, and Hosea; Matthew and his wife

John E. Machnik



Jenna (Brouillard) Machnik, and their children Amelia, Penelope, and Eli; David and Justin Machnik. He was also Dziadzu to Stella's two great-grandchildren, Rachael and Hannah Zajchowski. He is further survived by many cherished nieces, nephews, cousins, and dear friends.

John was a proud veteran and deeply patriotic American who served his country with distinction for more than three decades. He honorably enlisted in the U.S. Army Air Corps during World War II, answering the call to defend freedom during one of history's most pivotal times. Following the war, he continued his lifelong commitment to service in the National Guard and Reserves, dedicating a total of 35 years to the United States military and retiring with the rank of Senior Master Sergeant. His military expertise and discipline naturally carried into his civilian career at Barnes Air National Guard Base, 104th Fighter Wing, Westfield, where he began as a jet engine mechanic and later served in quality control, ensuring operational safety and compliance for more than 20 years.

John resided in Three Rivers since 1959 and was

a devoted parishioner of Divine Mercy Parish, where he was active in the men's guild. He was proudly affiliated with AMVETS Post 74, the American Legion, St. Stan's Club, Weir River Social Club, Three Rivers Chamber of Commerce, Air Force Sergeants Association, USO, the American Air Museum in Britain, Wounded Warrior Project, Wings Society, and the American Bowling Congress.

Above all, John was a loving and joyful Dziadzu. He had a lifelong love of aviation, enjoyed trips to the casino, playing cards, bowling with his Monday Night Owls league, telling jokes to keep everyone laughing, listening to polka music, dancing polka with his dear friend Angie Cormier, and collecting beer steins from his travels.

A calling hour will be held on Tuesday, Feb. 3, from 8:30 a.m. to 9:30 a.m. at the Beers and Story Palmer Funeral Home, followed by a Funeral Mass at 10 a.m. at Divine Mercy Parish. John will be laid to rest in the spring with full military honors, as his family entrusts him to God's care and gives thanks for a life of faithful service to country, family, and community.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in John's memory to Divine Mercy Parish, 2267 Main Street, Three Rivers, MA 01080.

DEATH NOTICES

John E. Machnik
Died Jan. 21, 2026
Services Feb. 3, 2026
Beers & Story Funeral Home

Patricia A. Smith
Died Jan. 21, 2026
Services Feb. 6, 2026
Beers & Story Funeral Home

The Journal Register OBITUARY POLICY

Turley Publications offers two types of obituaries. One is a free, brief **Death Notice** listing the name of deceased, date of death and funeral date and place. The other is a **Paid Obituary**, costing \$275, which allows families to publish extended death notice information of their own choice (with a word limit of up to 500 words) and may include a photograph.

Death Notices & Paid Obituaries should be submitted through a funeral home to: obits@turley.com.

Exceptions will be made only when the family provides a death certificate and must be pre-paid.

and also receiving direct ESL services," Simkis said, noting that all teachers in the district are SEI-trained.

Perry traced the legal foundation of ESL education back to the Equal Education Opportunities Act of 1974 and highlighted Massachusetts' leadership in ensuring access for multilingual students. She described how instruction focuses daily on listening, speaking, reading, and writing, with strategies adjusted based on students' proficiency levels.

WIDA testing determines student proficiency on a scale from one to six. Students exit the EL program with an overall score of 4.2 and a literacy score of 3.9, after which they are monitored for four years as Former English Language Learners. "We make sure they're not falling through the cracks," Perry said.

Committee members praised the presentation, with Rathbone calling it "excellent education for all of us" and thanking the department for its work supporting students and families.

Enrollment trends and financial updates reviewed

Superintendent Francis also presented a school-attending children report showing a decline in the total number of Palmer resident students from 2022 to 2025. He noted that the report is not yet state-certified and involves extensive data collection from multiple agencies and districts.

"There has been a decline of school-attending children in the town of Palmer," Francis said, adding that while current enrollment has increased slightly since October, it remains lower than the previous year. He also reported an increase in newly home-schooled students, many of whom are new to the district, and noted that Palmer currently has 23 incoming school choice students.

Director of Finance and Operations Sara Menard provided a detailed financial report, stating that as of Dec. 31, 2025, the district had spent approximately 76 percent of its \$6.6 million budget. Transportation costs were nearly fully encumbered, while utilities continue to be closely monitored.

Substitute spending was higher than desired due

to staffing vacancies, but Menard said overall budgets at Old Mill Pond and Palmer High School remain on track. She also reported that the Kids Corner before- and after-school program is financially healthy with strong enrollment.

Committee approves field trips, policy changes, and grants

The committee unanimously approved several action items, including an out-of-state overnight field trip to Washington, D.C. for eighth-

grade students in June 2027.

Members also approved a formal job description for the "Student Worker, Cafeteria Sanitation Assistant" position, part of the Palmer High School Pathways program for students aged 18-22. The program allows students to gain paid work experience while building employability skills.

Policy revisions were approved to remove several outdated or procedural policies from Section E of the Palmer Policy Manual, marking the first phase of a three-month

review process.

The committee also approved Palmer Public Schools as a School Choice District for fiscal year 2027, offering 35 seats across grades 4 through 12, and unanimously accepted six Palmer Cultural Council grants totaling \$8,021 for field trips and music programming.

Additionally, the committee approved the second reading of a revised 16-page Wellness Policy, with a third and final reading expected in February.

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Smola co-sponsors comprehensive GOP energy reform bill

Will generate savings of about \$147M in first year and \$2.38B over 10 years

BOSTON – Representative Todd M. Smola (R-Warren, Ranking Member, Ways & Means Committee) is co-sponsoring comprehensive energy reform legislation put forth by House and Senate Republicans to provide financial relief to Massachusetts ratepayers who are struggling to pay high energy bills.

House Docket 5554, An Act addressing energy costs, transparency, and sustainability, was filed by Representative Smola and 23 of his Republican colleagues. It contains a series of reforms to address rising energy costs, including proposals to restructure the Mass Save program, allow older homeowners and renters to factor in a portion of their utility bills to determine their eligibility for the Senior Circuit Breaker tax credit, and provide more cost transparency for consumers.

“Energy costs are crushing family budgets, forcing seniors to make impossible choices, and putting small businesses at a disadvantage”, said Representative Smola. “This legislation delivers immediate, measurable relief by returning money directly to ratepayers, reining in run-

away program costs, and bringing much needed transparency and accountability to our energy system. We must pursue our energy goals without losing sight of affordability”.

To provide immediate short-term relief for Massachusetts ratepayers, House Docket 5554 requires 50% of Alternative Compliance Payments (ACPs) made pursuant to the Renewable Portfolio Standard to be returned to utility customers in each of the next three years. These ACPs are currently deposited in a custodial fund overseen by the Massachusetts Clean Energy Center for use in clean energy projects. This change alone will return approximately \$66-\$69 million per year to ratepayers, and between \$198 million and \$207 million over three years.

Additional first-year savings of \$78 million will be realized through basic service and energy contract changes contained in the bill, including language giving electric distribution companies the flexibility to procure default service supply through procurements of varying lengths and in combination with other companies, as well as provisions extending the contract period from 1 year to 1 1/2 years and allowing electric



Todd M. Smola

distribution companies to collectively procure their energy supply (gas, electric, transmission, transportation or any combination thereof) together. Along with the ACP changes, this is expected to produce about \$147 million in combined savings for ratepayers in each of the first three years of implementation.

House Docket 5554 also includes several proposed changes to the Mass Save program, which is an energy efficiency initiative funded by Massachusetts ratepayers through a monthly surcharge on their gas and electric bills. The program’s three-year budget for 2025-2027 is currently set at \$4.5 billion.

In addition to capping Mass Save administrative spending at 10% of the total funds allocated for the program, House Docket 5554 also limits spending on the program’s next three-year plan (running from 2028-2030) by prohibiting the budget from exceeding the cost of the 2022-2024 plan, plus 6.25%. Because the 2022-2024 plan was funded at \$4 billion, the 2028-2030 plan cannot increase by more than \$250 million. This means that by 2030, the combined annual savings from the ACP returns, basic service changes, and the

Mass Save spending reduction will produce an estimated \$396 million in ratepayer savings per year, or approximately \$2.38 billion in savings over 10 years.

Under the bill, an oversight commission will be established to examine Mass Save’s structure and the possibility of transferring the administration of the program to an independent agency. It also removes a requirement that the “social value” of greenhouse gas emissions be calculated by DPU to determine the cost-effectiveness of the Mass Save program.

In addition, House Docket 5554 temporarily updates the Senior Circuit Breaker tax credit for homeowners and renters who are 65 or older by allowing 50% of their utility costs to be calculated into their income used to determine their eligibility for the credit. Taking effect for the current tax year, this change would sunset after three years, on January 1, 2029.

House Docket 5554 requires the Department of Public Utilities (DPU) to develop a public-facing dashboard that will provide information on the cost and supply of energy for residential and commercial consumers. It also creates a special commission to study and recommend reforms to utility delivery fee structures, identify the industry’s best practices, and develop cost-reduction measures for consumers in the Commonwealth.

House Docket 5554 also:

- Delays the enforcement of motor vehicle emissions standards in Massachusetts for 5 years, which targets Massachusetts’ adoption of California’s Advanced Clean Cars II standards requiring automakers to sell a growing share of Zero Emission Vehicles beginning with model year 2026;
- Creates a special commission to analyze natural gas costs in the Commonwealth and recommend measures to contain and reduce those costs for residential and commercial consumers;
- Directs the Secretary of Energy and Environmental Affairs, in consultation with the Massachusetts Clean Energy Center, to develop and implement the framework of a regional compact among the states of Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Maine, Vermont, and Connecticut for the purposes of research and development regarding nuclear fusion energy and establishes a Fusion Research Council to provide additional guidance;
- Raises the solar net metering cap from 25MW to 35MW and the municipal net metering hosting capacity limit from 10MW to 20MW;
- Allows municipal light boards to provide services – including the construction, installation, operation, or maintenance of utility poles and conduit, wires, cables, and equipment, and streetlights and traffic signals – to assist

utilities, including their own municipal light plant;

- Repeals a provision contained in the 2021 climate policy roadmap law that added biomass to the Municipal Light Plant Greenhouse Gas Emissions Standard (GGES) as of January 1, 2026;
- Prohibits third-party competitive electric suppliers from using predatory practices to enroll customers at an artificially low rate that will increase dramatically in a short period of time and limits automatic contract renewals to those instances where the customer provided expressed written consent at the time of their initial enrollment;
- Allows pre-2019 clean energy generation (primarily hydro-generated electric power) to participate in the Clean Peak Energy Standard and receive full clean peak credits; and
- Repeals a 1982 law that requires the construction of any new nuclear power plant, low-level radioactive waste disposal or storage facility to first be approved by a majority of voters in a statewide general election;

Representative Smola will be working with his colleagues to push for the scheduling of a public hearing on the legislation as soon as possible.

For additional information please contact Representative Smola at Todd.Smola@mahouse.gov or (617) 722-2100.

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Death by Cupcake murder mystery dinner Feb. 7

BELCHERTOWN – The Belchertown Historical Association is holding its annual murder mystery dinner on Saturday, Feb. 7 at Tony and Penny’s Restaurant in Ludlow. The show will begin at 6:30 p.m. followed by the dinner buffet at 7 p.m. Guests can arrive as early as 6 p.m.

This year’s show, written by Paula Hilton, is entitled: Death by Cupcake. We look forward, as always, to the hilarious antics of the BUCC Players from the Belchertown

United Church of Christ. Plan a night out of dinner and entertainment while supporting our historical association, the United Church of Christ, Belchertown and a favorite local restaurant business.

The tickets are \$47 each and include the show, dinner and dessert. There will be a cash bar.

Tickets are available at Cold Spring Discount Liquors (on the Belchertown Common) or by contacting Sally Shattuck 413-230-2022 or sallyshattuck54@gmail.com.

HMC offers diabetes education and support

HOLYOKE – Holyoke Medical Center will host an ongoing bilingual Diabetes Education and Support Group for community members with diabetes. Diabetes education will be provided at each meeting with a Certified Diabetes Care and Education Specialist or member of the HMC Endocrinology & Diabetes Center team. The group will meet every Wednesday from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. in the Holyoke Medical Center Medical Office Building Conference Room located at 11 Hospital Drive, 3rd Floor, in Holyoke.

“Being educated and having a better understand-

ing of diabetes enables people to be more successful in controlling or even reversing the progression of their disease. Support group members will be able to discuss struggles and solutions they have found while managing their diabetes with others going through similar experiences,” said Corina Valvo, RN, BSN, CDCES, Diabetes Program Coordinator for HMC Endocrinology & Diabetes Center.

For more information or questions regarding the Diabetes Education and Support Group, please contact the HMC Endocrinology & Diabetes Center at 413.534.2820.

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