

The Journal Register

SERVING PALMER, MONSON, BRIMFIELD, HOLLAND & WALES

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PALMER

Student honored for civics project

By Abigail McCoy
amccoy@turley.com

PALMER – The Palmer School Committee convened for its regular meeting on Wednesday, Feb. 11.

Before moving into reports, OMP Principal Holly Riopel extended an invitation to committee members to visit Old Mill Pond School for a tour of its programs and classrooms, encouraging them to see student learning in action.

Student Representatives Highlight Academics, Fundraisers and School Spirit

Fifth-grade Student Council representatives Miles Gobbout and James Jancses shared a detailed update from Old Mill Pond Elementary School, outlining a busy stretch of winter activities.

The school is celebrating Valentine's Spirit Week and preparing for its "Cold Weather, Warm Hearts" outdoor event on Feb. 13. Students also provided a lighthearted update on the school's adopted cow, Sunflower, who now weighs 250 pounds.

Academically, MCAS testing is approaching, with English Language Arts scheduled from March 23 through April 9, science on April 28 and 29, and math from May 5 through May 20. WIDA testing for multilingual learners has been completed.

Fourth grade is preparing for Career Day, and the PTO continues to organize events and fundraisers. The upcoming "Someone Special Aunt Me Dance" will be held in April. A "Snowball Fight" fundraiser runs through April 10, and Valentine's Day grams have already raised more than \$200. Recent Krispy Kreme and Little Caesars fundraisers have concluded.

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MONSON



Turley photo by Abigail McCoy
Sticky Pickup; a new game where students wrap a classmate in duct tape, sticky side out, and the taped student has to roll on the ground to pick up as many dropped cards as they can during the time limit. The Senior Class only missed two cards out of the dropped 72.

MHS hosts annual WINTER CARNIVAL

By Abigail McCoy
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MONSON – For more than four decades, Winter Carnival has been a hallmark of school spirit at Monson High School, and this year's celebration on Friday, Feb. 13, once again transformed the building into a colorful showcase of student creativ-

ity, friendly competition and long-standing tradition.

Vice Principal Mary Zurawka, a 2006 graduate of Monson High School now serving in her second year as an administrator, said this year's event carried special meaning for her.

"I'm really excited to be participating in Winter Carnival as a staff member

for the first time as a former graduate," Zurawka said, proudly sporting her original Class of 2006 senior T-shirt. "I actually just texted one of my good friends saying that I'm competing in the staff versus student volleyball game this year instead of on the student side."

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PALMER

Cold weather, warm hearts heat up 'Snow Day' at OMP

By Abigail McCoy
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PALMER – Students at Old Mill Pond Elementary traded their desks for snow pants and mittens this past Friday, Feb. 13, as Principal Holly Riopel led the school's "Cold Weather, Warm Hearts" winter celebration; a spirited, school-wide outdoor event designed to embrace the season and create lasting memories for students.

The event was part of the school's broader Spirit Week programming, but instead of staying indoors, administrators and staff decided to take advantage of fresh snowfall and crisp winter temperatures to bring students outside for an afternoon of laughter, teamwork and play.

"This is Cold Weather, Warm Hearts," Riopel said, smiling as students raced

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Turley photo by Abigail McCoy
Principal Holly Riopel stands with students Viola Maresca and Jayden Riopel.

MONSON

Monson School Committee facing major budget shortfall

By Abigail McCoy
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MONSON – The Monson Public Schools School Committee convened for a wide-ranging regular business meeting that touched on athletics, new academic opportunities, looming financial pressures, and the Superintendent's early findings about the district's strengths

and challenges. Over the course of the evening, members reviewed budget projections, discussed operational changes for next year, and voted on several policy updates before entering executive session to discuss litigation strategy.

Financial Outlook and Budget Pressures

A liaison report from the recent Tri-Board meeting

presented a sobering fiscal picture for the town. Monson is facing a preliminary budget shortfall estimated between \$550,000 and \$600,000. In addition, the Group Insurance Commission is anticipating health insurance increases ranging from 3.9% to 7.9%, and GLP-1 medications are expected to be removed from coverage.

Town reserves are cur-

rently below recommended levels, prompting discussion of longer-term solutions beyond annual budget balancing. Officials have begun considering the possibility of an override, which would require three-year financial planning. Although the Governor has proposed increases to local and rural aid, including Chapter 70 funds, those figures remain subject to

legislative approval. Without additional revenue or use of reserves, across-the-board cuts in all town departments may be necessary.

The committee approved minutes from prior Finance Subcommittee and Regular Business meetings, with a minor clarification regarding Ms. Nothe-Valley's direct

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MONSON

Senior Center celebrate Valentine's Day in style

By Abigail McCoy
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MONSON – The Monson Senior Center was filled with music, conversation and the warmth of community on Feb. 12 as seniors gathered for a festive Valentine's Day

party featuring a live jazz performance and luncheon.

The afternoon celebration blended classic love songs with social time, offering attendees a chance to enjoy both entertainment and fellowship in the heart of winter.

Providing the soundtrack for the event was the jazz duo known as Heart and Strings, made up of vocalist and musician Amy Scott and fellow performer Phil Crouch. Performing a mix of jazz standards and traditional Valentine's Day favorites, the pair

kept toes tapping and heads nodding throughout the hour-long set.

"It's mostly jazz songs, along with a few traditional Valentine's Day songs," Kelly Bergeron, director of the Monson Senior Center, explained as the music carried through the dining area.

Crouch, who joked that he has been involved in music "since birth...pre-birth," said he has been performing for roughly 47 years. Scott came to music later but has returned to it in recent years and has been teaching for the past three years at local music studio, Falcetti's. Both performers share a background in music education and performance, bringing experience and easy rapport to the stage.

The duo's appearance at the Senior Center came through a personal connec-



Turley photo by Abigail McCoy
Monson Police Chief, Nicholas Gasperini, poses with two lovely ladies at the luncheon.

MONSON

Select Board contend with mounting budget issues

By Abigail McCoy
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MONSON – The Monson Select Board convened on Tuesday, Feb. 10, tackling a wide range of municipal issues from mounting snow and ice costs and long-term budget challenges to grant opportunities, committee appointments, and a new fundraising effort for Memorial Hall.

Public Comment Highlights Open Meeting Law Violation and Election Reminders

During public comment, Roxanne Gunther raised concerns about an Open Meeting Law violation from November 10, 2025, stating the meeting had not been properly posted. Town counsel acknowledged the violation, explaining it was unintentional and the result of a miscommunication. Gunther stressed that such matters

must be taken seriously to maintain public trust.

Town Clerk Mary Watson used the public comment period to remind residents to return their annual census forms promptly to avoid the cost of a second mailing. She also outlined key election dates, including the town election on June 9, the state primary on September 1, and the November election on November 3. Nomination papers for various town offices will be available beginning March 2.

Town Administrator Outlines Mounting Budget Challenges

In her report, Town Administrator Jennifer Wolowicz detailed ongoing mu-

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STYLE | page 5

Resident raises awareness about risk of nuclear war

By Abigail McCoy
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PALMER – At the Feb. 9 meeting of the Palmer Town Council, longtime resident Mike Moran asked individual councilors to sign an open letter to members of Congress supporting two federal bills aimed at reducing the risk of nuclear war.

Moran described himself as “an almost lifelong resident” of Palmer and framed his request as a matter of public safety and fiscal responsibility. He emphasized that each councilor would be signing as an individual, not taking a formal position as the full council.

“Thank you for giving me a few minutes tonight to tell you why, as a citizen concerned about the growing risk of nuclear war in the world, I’d like you to join other local and state officials across the country in signing an open letter to the U.S. Congress asking them to pass two bills that would greatly reduce that risk,” Moran told the council.

Moran said his concern stems from recent global developments, including the movement of the Doomsday Clock by the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists.

“Two weeks ago, nuclear weapons experts at the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists re-set the hands of their annual Doomsday Clock at 85 seconds to midnight for 2026, the closest it’s ever been to world destruction,” he said.

He also pointed to the recent expiration of New START, the last remaining nuclear arms reduction treaty between the United States and Russia.

“Just four days ago, ‘New START,’ the last nuclear weapons reduction treaty between the United States and Russia, expired. So where does that leave us now? Are we on the verge of a new nuclear arms race?” Moran asked.

Moran noted that dozens of members of Congress, including Massachusetts Senators Ed Markey and Elizabeth Warren and Representatives

“Support from local and state elected officials can always add pressure on the federal government to act,”

– Mike Moran

James P. McGovern and Richard Neal, are lead co-sponsors of companion bills in the U.S. Senate and House.

According to Moran, the proposed legislation would go beyond New START by seeking “a verifiable, time-bound agreement among all nine nuclear-armed nations to eliminate their nuclear arsenals.” He said the bills would also align with the 1970 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and the 2017 Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

The measures include several additional provisions: renouncing the option of first use of nuclear weapons, ending sole presidential launch authority, taking U.S. nuclear weapons off hair-trigger alert, and canceling plans to replace

the current arsenal with enhanced weapons.

Moran said the proposals reflect input from Back from the Brink, a nonpartisan grassroots campaign that drafted the open letter he asked councilors to sign.

While acknowledging that global denuclearization may seem unrealistic, Moran argued that major reductions have occurred before.

“This may sound like an impossible dream, but much of it has actually been done before,” he said, referencing Cold War-era reductions that lowered the worldwide nuclear arsenal from roughly 70,000 weapons to about 12,500.

“These weapons were built by people who also

know how to dismantle and destroy them,” he added.

Moran addressed the question of why he brought the issue before a local governing body rather than federal officials.

“Support from local and state elected officials can always add pressure on the federal government to act,” he said. “A basic duty of elected officials at all levels of government is public safety, and in the event of a nuclear disaster, you would likely be the first people victims would approach for help.”

He also cited financial concerns, quoting from the open letter: “Proposed plans to spend close to \$1 trillion over the next decade to develop and deploy nuclear weapons are tax dollars not being spent to feed, house and provide affordable health care to our constituents, address severe infrastructure needs, support our veterans, confront climate change, or to ensure clean air, water and soil.”

Before concluding, Mo-

ran reminded councilors that signing the letter would be an individual decision. “Each of you would sign this letter to Congress as an individual councilor; you would not be taking a position as a full group,” he said.

Moran was joined by friend and neighbor Tom Arventos, who stepped forward to add his support for the request.

A written statement was also submitted by Jim and Ursula St. Amand, who were unable to attend the meeting in person. In their letter, they wrote that they “share [Moran’s] deep concern that the danger of nuclear war is growing” and agreed that local officials “have a responsibility to protect the safety of our community, including our own children and grandchildren.”

They thanked the council for its attention to the matter and wished members well in their work.

The deadline for councilors to sign the open letter to Congress is March 13.



Palmer Senior Center

Friday, Movie Matinee
12:30 p.m.

with drinks and popcorn
Feb. 20 “Only the Brave” based on a true story of the Granite Mountain Hotshots, an elite fire-fighting crew from Prescott, Arizona, focusing on their training, brotherhood, and sacrifice during the devastating 2013.

Feb. 27 “The Reagans” Two Golden Globe nominees, as one of America’s most beloved Presidents, Reagan led the nation to astounding highs and lows, escaped scandals and assassination. The movie vividly captures the Reagan family.

Upcoming Events
Starting Thursdays in January at 1 p.m. the pool table and cornhole boards

will be available for open play. Please grab a friend and come have fun.

Evening Programs
4:30-7:30 p.m.

Join the center for a 4-part series “Introduction to the Quabbin” on Monday, Feb. 23, April 27, and May 18 (learn about clearing the valley, construction of the dam and history surrounding the cemetery)



M-PACT Annual Meeting Feb. 24

PALMER – The public is invited to attend the annual meeting of Municipal Public Access Cable Television (M-Pact) on Tuesday, Feb. 24, 2026 at 5:30 p.m. at 1659 North Main Street in Palmer.

All residents of Monson and Palmer are eligible to be members of the M-Pact Corporation.

Membership is for one year, renewable annually. Members elect the Board of

M-Pact and only members are eligible for nomination to the Board of Directors. Three Directors, one from Palmer and two from Monson will be elected for three-year terms.

Please join us and add your ideas and energy to make our local Public Access Cable Station even more involved in the communities of Monson and Palmer.

For more information, please call (413) 283-7373.

Brimfield Democrats hold caucus to elect delegates

BRIMFIELD – The 2026 State Democratic Convention is being held to nominate, qualify and endorse candidates for placement on the 2026 statewide Democratic primary ballot.

On Feb. 22, 2026, Brimfield Democrats will convene at 73 Dunhamtown-Palmer

Rd. to elect 2 delegates and 1 alternate to represent Brimfield at the 2026 State Democratic Convention.

The caucus will begin at 3 p.m., but signing in for those who wish to vote or run as delegates begins at 2:30 p.m. You are invited to come at 2 p.m. for mingling and refreshments.

Registered Democrats in Brimfield, who are 16 years old by Saturday, March 29, may vote and be elected as delegates or alternates during the caucus. Youth (age 16 to 35), individuals with disabilities, people of

color, veterans, and members of the LGBTQ+ community not elected as delegates or alternates are encouraged to apply to be add-on delegates at the caucus or by visiting <https://www.massdems.org/caucus-and-convention>.

The 2026 Convention will be in person at the DCU Center in Worcester, MA, on Friday, May 29, and Saturday, May 30.

Those interested in getting involved with the Brimfield Democratic Committee should contact Maria Thomson at mthomson@charter.net, (413) 478-8437.

Brimfield to mark 250th Anniversary of Independence

BRIMFIELD – Save the date! On Saturday, June 13, 2026, a community-wide celebration marking the 250th anniversary of our nation’s freedom will take place in Brimfield. In recognition of this year’s historic milestone, a full day of remembrance and celebration is planned. All are welcome to attend the day’s events, which include the following: Revolutionary War themed cemetery tours, a ceremony at the town common gazebo, a parade, and fun-filled festivities at the Brimfield Winery. The evening will close out with a spectacular

fireworks display.

Additional details and updates will be available through the Friends of Historic Brimfield event website: www.fohbrimfield.org. Tax-deductible donations can also be made in support of this celebration through this website, and in gratitude, donors will be recognized in the event program. Donations can also be mailed to: Friends of Historic Brimfield, P.O. Box 52, Brimfield, MA 01010 with “Spirit of Brimfield” in the memo.

This event is currently being sponsored by the Massa-

achusetts Army National Guard and Classic Hits 97.7 fm. If you or your company are interested in any level of corporate or business sponsorship, please visit the event website at www.fohbrimfield.org. Additional volunteers are needed for both planning and to help with activities during the event, or if you are interested in putting a float in the parade, contact Friends of Historic Brimfield at (413) 239-0288 for more information.

Be sure to save the date for this celebration of the founding of our country! More information will follow.

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Holland Community Center teaches winter planting

By Abigail McCoy
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PALMER — Brenda Palmer, director of the Holland Community Center, led a Winter Plant Sowing workshop on Feb. 11 at 1 p.m., teaching residents a simple method for starting seeds outdoors during the winter months.

Palmer described winter sowing as a way of planting ahead of time using recycled containers as mini greenhouses.

“For me, it’s called lazy gardening,” Palmer told attendees. “You put it outside and you leave it alone and let it do its thing.”

The traditional method uses a translucent milk jug. Palmer explained that gardeners should avoid solid white plastic and instead choose clear containers that allow sunlight in. The jug is cut nearly in half, leaving a small section intact to act as a hinge. Drainage holes are poked in the bottom, and the top is taped closed after planting.

“You want to make sure everything has drainage holes,” she said. “Rain can get in, but it also has to get out.”

She also demonstrated alternative methods using small plastic cups placed inside bins with holes cut into the top and bottom, as well as reused zipper storage bags with notched corners for drainage. In each case, airflow and moisture control are essential.

Before planting, Palmer advised participants to check the packaging date on seed packets.

“One of the first things you’ll want to do is look at the bottom and find the sell-by date or the package date,” she said. While older seeds may still germinate, they are generally less reliable. She noted that germination rates typically decline each year, and some seeds, such as onions, do not store well beyond one season.

Palmer mentioned several seed companies, including Burpee, Johnny’s Selected



Turley photos by Abigail McCoy
Using a box cutter, or any sharp object, Brenda Palmer cuts a clean milk jug nearly in half.

Seeds, Gurney’s and Botanical Interests, but added that seeds purchased at large retail stores can also be successful.

“Gardening isn’t just planting a seed and growing a flower,” she said. “It’s a journey. It’s supposed to be meditative. It’s supposed to be fascinating, and it’s unique to every person.”

For soil, Palmer recommended a standard potting mix rather than specialty blends. The soil should be thoroughly moistened before planting.

“You want to make sure the soil is really wet,” she said. “To the point where you squeeze it and it would drip out a little bit.”

Once planted, the containers are placed outdoors and largely left alone.

Snow and rain provide moisture, and natural temperature fluctuations help trigger germination.

“This is the perfect time to do it,” Palmer said of mid-February planting. “You just leave it alone entirely.”

The workshop provided hands-on instruction and encouraged participants to use recycled household materials to prepare for the upcoming growing season.



One of the best ways to label your plants, Palmer explains, is to write them on popsicle sticks to stick in the dirt next to your plants.



Making sure to leave some plastic attached to create a hinge.



Using a roll of duct tape as a stand in for soil, Palmer shows how the plastic bag technique works for winter sowing.



An example of how to store your various winter planting projects inside a large tub.



Palmer brought a large variety of gardening magazines for people to look through for inspiration.

Corned beef and cabbage dinner March 7

LUDLOW — St. Patrick’s Day is fast approaching. You can begin the month by celebrating with a delicious Corned Beef and Cabbage meal to-go on March 7, 2026. The meal includes

corned beef, cabbage, potatoes, carrots, Irish soda bread, and dessert. All for only \$18.

Call now to make your reservations 413-547-8720.

Drive by First Church in Ludlow, 859 Center Street,

Ludlow between 4:30 and 5:30 p.m. and we will deliver your meal right to your car.

Thank you for being so supportive of this fundraiser that helps us continue to reach out to our community.

Palmer brought a large variety of different seeds meant for winter planting for people to choose from.

St. Joseph Annual Meeting March 1

PALMER — St. Joseph Society Annual Meeting will be held on Sunday, March 1 at 1 p.m. Members may start paying dues at noon.

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.

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Viewpoints

SOCIAL SECURITY

Matters

By Russell Gloor

I'm still working;
Why didn't my benefit
amount increase

Dear Rusty:

I have been working somewhat consistently since commencing my Social Security benefit income. I've been collecting since my full benefit age of 66, approximately. I'm now 81 and customarily, in about October of each calendar year, Social Security notifies me of additional benefits from my additional work. Not this year.

I earned some \$18,000-\$19,000 in 2025. SS advised I did not meet some 35-year formula. I thought that formula just applied to the original benefit calculation. Otherwise, one seems cheated given the SS taxes paid on income received after applying for benefits without any consideration for that income. Please advise me. Signed: Feeling Cheated

Dear Feeling Cheated:

For Your Information, your Social Security benefit is always based on the highest 35 years of your lifetime earnings with your early years' earnings automatically adjusted for inflation. And that formula continues even after you start receiving benefits. Social Security will look at your earnings each year to see if your recent earnings are among your highest. If so, they will automatically recalculate your benefit to give you a higher amount and pay you retroactively to the first of that year.

Apparently, in past years, your more recent earnings were among the highest over your lifetime, which is why you received those notifications in the fall of each previous year saying your benefit was adjusted based upon recent earnings. That you didn't get a similar notification this year, means that your earnings in 2024 were not among the highest over your lifetime, so no adjustment to your monthly benefit was appropriate.

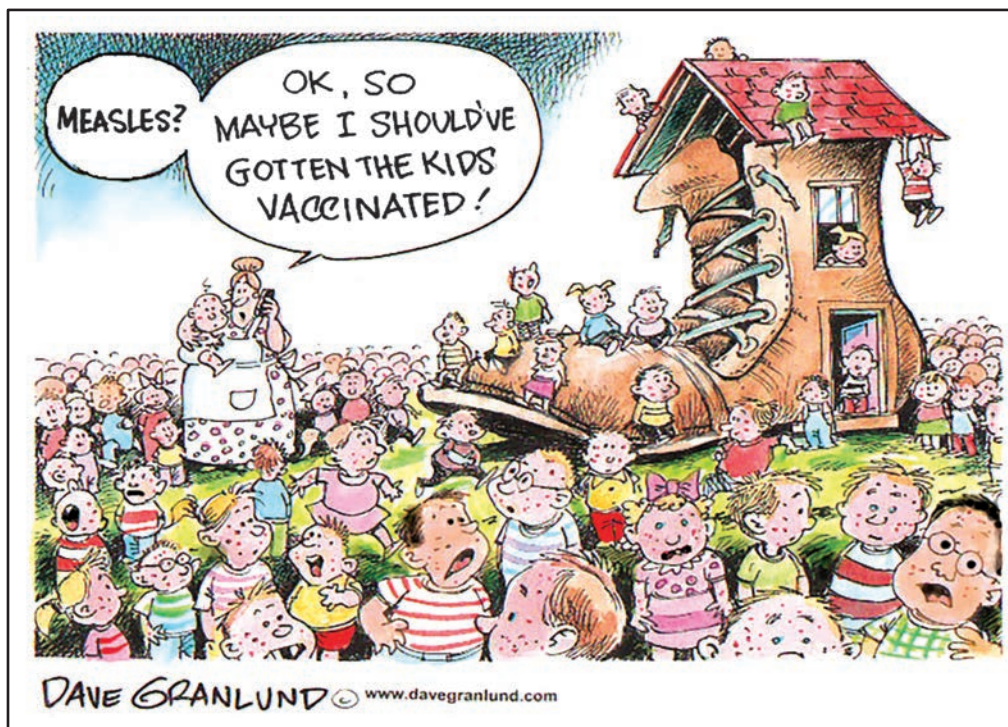
Now, to clarify, those annual notices you received in the past always

referred to the preceding year – that is, if you received a notice in October 2024 of a higher SS benefit, that was a result of your 2023 earnings. If you got no such notice in October of 2025, that means that your 2024 income was not among your highest over your lifetime. And your 2025 earnings of \$18,000 - \$19,000 will likely not be among your lifetime highest either, so you probably won't get a notice next year either.

It's important to understand that your contributions to Social Security, i.e., the SS payroll taxes you pay while working, are not put into a separate account for you - rather, they are used to help pay benefits to all beneficiaries.

In other words, just contributing to SS with payroll tax from your work earnings doesn't necessarily mean you get a higher benefit. Your SS benefit is always based upon the 35 years in which you earned the most, including recent years if you continue to work. So, you weren't "cheated" that is simply how the program works your SS benefit is always based on your highest 35 years of work earnings, including recent years, with earnings from the early years adjusted for inflation.

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.



What are shallots, anyway?

Shortly after the two part column on growing onions, I received a question about shallots.

My friend was looking through a seed catalog and wanted to know the ins and outs of growing them. This topic was a fun one for me because it required some research.

Can you believe that the Garden Lady has never grown shallots before? There is an explanation why, with part of the reason being that I am not what you'd consider a fancy cook, and shallots have their place in fine dining.

The other reason is that admittedly I never understood the point of shallots – aren't they just small onions? Why would you buy something special for a recipe if you had a good old fashioned onion in the pantry?

As all the cooks in the audience gasp, let me qualify that statement with the fact that now I know better.

Shallots are slightly different plants from onions scientifically. Whereas the onion goes by the name *Allium cepa*, shallots are what you would call a cousin, with the Latin name *Allium cepa* gr. *Aggregatum*.

Although the flavor hints of garlic (who is another more distant cousin), shallots are sweeter and more mild than onions, and are a staple in French and Asian cuisine where they can be used raw or cooked. Think delicate sauces or vinaigrettes.

I laugh when I picture all of the onion family members sitting around at a party. You'd have the gregarious onion, the boisterous garlic and then the cultured shallot, wearing a beret and speaking

movement to finish the curing process.

Once necks have shrunk and dried, cut the tops off to about one inch above the bulb and store in mesh bags as close as you can to the freezing mark

with a French accent.

I'm not sure why my mind went there, but it was a fun digression.

In terms of culture, shallots are similar to onions in that they can be grown from both sets or seeds. Seeds would be started indoors anytime now through March. Transplants or sets are best planted in the garden as soon as the ground can be worked, usually early April.

Although shallots mature smaller than onions, spacing should still be four-six inches apart so that they can size up to their full potential. They are shallow rooted, so supplemental watering is a must.

When foliage reaches 12 inches, apply a mulch around the base of each plant to help conserve moisture and cut down on weed competition. Until that point, cultivate carefully by hand or pull individual weeds as they pop up.

Like onions, scallions begin to "bulb up" around the time of the summer equinox. Top dressing with fertilizer at that time is a smart idea.

As summer draws to a close, shallots will exhibit similar die back as onions, whereby the tops begin to fall over, indicating they are ready for harvest. If the weather cooperates, sun cure on the ground or garden path for a few days, then move in doors to a spot with good air

movement to finish the curing process.

Once necks have shrunk and dried, cut the tops off to about one inch above the bulb and store in mesh bags as close as you can to the freezing mark

with ample humidity. One interesting fact I learned from Fedco Seeds (www.fedco-seeds.com) is that if you don't have a room that cold, humidity can be adjusted to make up the difference for proper storage.

For example, best case scenario dictates that shallots need 34 degrees at 66 percent humidity. Say the coldest you can get your storage spot is 55 degrees, well then they would like 45 percent humidity. The closest you can get it to add up to 100 the better.

I wonder if this theory holds true for other crops in storage. My squash and pumpkin aren't the happiest this year, so maybe I will look into how to manipulate the environment to avoid some of the shriveling I am seeing.

Anyhow, I hope you had a few chuckles reading this column and that you might feel inclined to give shallots, that cultured onion cousin, a try this gardening season.

Roberta McQuaid graduated from the Stockbridge School of Agriculture at the University of Massachusetts. For 34 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.

In the Garden

by Roberta McQuaid



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Letters to the editor should be 250 words or less in length, and guest columns between 500-800 words. No unsigned or anonymous opinions will be published. We require that the person submitting the opinion also include his or her town of residence and home telephone number. We must confirm authorship prior to publication. We reserve the right to edit or withhold any submissions deemed to be libelous, unsubstantiated allegations, personal attacks, or defamation of character.

Please send opinions to:
The Journal Register
Letter to the Editor
24 Water St., Palmer MA 01069,
or by e-mail to:
journalregister@turley.com
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.

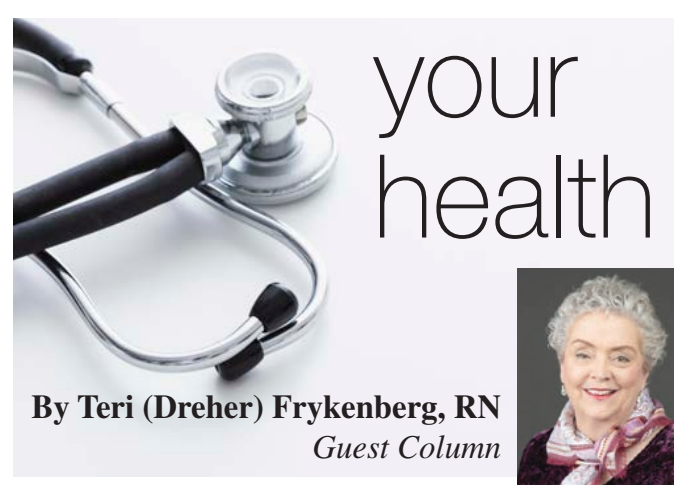
What happens when nurses go on strike

When nurses strike, it's not about walking away from patients — it's about fighting for them.

Across the country, nurses are raising voices over what they view as unsafe staffing conditions, wages that don't reflect the intensity of the job or protect them from inflation, workplace violence, lack of mental health support and the growing strain on the quality of patient care.

Research has shown that adequate nursing ratios — how many patients per nurse — has a direct impact on patient outcomes: lower risk of death, fewer complications, fewer safety incidents and better patient satisfaction. In Massachusetts, hospitals are required to have a staffing ratio of one nurse to one or two patients in intensive care units.

When you're in the hospital, you can gauge for yourself whether there are enough nurses. It may take a long time for someone to answer a call bell. Medications may be delayed or missed. Your vital

By Teri (Dreher) Frykenberg, RN
Guest Column

signs may not be monitored as closely. And you can tell, despite their professionalism, when a nurse seems exhausted or frustrated.

Nobody wins. As I write this, nurses at New York Presbyterian Hospital are continuing their strike after voting down the hospital's latest contract proposal. The major issue is what they consider unsafe staffing. "From the beginning, our biggest concern was staffing," said the president of the New

York State Nurses Association, Nancy Hagans.

Nurses at two other major New York hospitals went back to work after making progress on issues including protections from workplace violence and staffing, as well as pay.

In California, Kaiser Permanente workers — some 31,000 of them — remained on strike for the fourth week. Members of the United Nurs-

POETRY CORNER

Cold Lady In White

Late winter - and what, once more!
As from heaven's broken crown?
An infinity of sparkling sequins pelting,
Like silvery rain the snow coming down.
And it's likely glistening where you are too -
In a not very distant town;
So let us then this hour there meet,
By the invitation being passed around:

To the Annual Ball held in the Great Room,
With its fireplaces red against the storm;
And dancers in gentle stately away, to violins
French horns-and the harp's lone tremolo.

But she beyond the wind who brought us here,
Is now passing-in a new outfit, or worn;
And whatever there might be under it
To maintain — the Lady wore a gown.

— Charles Barnes



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

WALES PUBLIC LIBRARY FEBRUARY EVENTS

Feb. 25 – Story Time 12:15 p.m.
Feb. 28 – Wool Needle Felting 12 p.m.

VENDORS FOR THE BAYSTATE WING HOSPITAL GIFT SHOPPE

February Vendors
Feb. 26 - Weleful Weavers

March Vendors

March 4 - Generations of Cookies
March 10 - Hobbit Hollow Herbs
March 11 - Weleful Weavers
March 12 - Jewelry for Diane
March 18 - How Charming
March 26 - Weleful Weavers
March 30 - Wicked Good Treats
March 31 - Geriations & Sew On

FEBRUARY 26

“Get Enough Protein: A Plant-Based Talk” with Jill Ahlstrand on Thursday, Feb. 26, 6:30-7:30 p.m. (optional lunch served at noon) \$25 per person, Hitchcock Academy, 2 Brookfield Road, Brimfield, Mass. For more information, visit www.hitchcockacademy.org. Hitchcock Academy is a

community center located at 2 Brookfield Road in Brimfield serving the community with educational, recreational, and cultural programming.

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 welcome. (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.

STYLE | from page 1

tion. Scott explained that she is related by family to a member on the staff of the Senior Center, which led to the Valentine’s Day invitation. That connection translated into a comfortable, intimate performance that felt as much like a family gathering as a formal concert.

Guests were treated to lunch during the festivities, creating a relaxed cabaret-style atmosphere. Conversations continued between songs, and laughter echoed through the room as friends greeted one another and celebrated the holiday together.

Beyond the Valentine’s Day event, the Monson Senior Center has a full slate of upcoming activities designed to keep seniors engaged and connected in the weeks ahead.

On Thursday, Feb. 26, the center will host Bingo. On Thursday, March 5, participants can attend a St. Patrick’s Day craft program, where attendees will decorate picture frames for a \$4 materials fee.

Looking further ahead, Thursday, March 12 will fea-



Turley photo by Abigail McCoy

Vocalist Amy Scott and musical partner Phil Crouch sang iconic songs like, “Just The Two Of Us” by Bill Withers and Grover Washington, Jr.

ture a collaborative event with members of the local Police and Fire Departments. The day will include bingo led by Senior Center staff, followed by trivia hosted by representatives from the departments; an intergenerational and community-focused event organizers expect will draw a lively crowd.

With music, themed crafts, games and partnerships with local public safety

officials, the Munson Senior Center continues to provide varied programming aimed at fostering connection and fun throughout the year.

As the final notes of Heart and Strings’ performance drifted away and guests lingered to chat, the afternoon served as a reminder that holidays at the Senior Center are about more than decorations, they are about bringing people together.

HEALTH | from page 4

es Associations of California/Union of Health Care Professionals have never before walked off the job. Again, staffing is the main issue, along with what they see as pay that is inadequate for recruiting and retaining medical professionals.

We may soon see strikes in Michigan, Washington state, Boston and Philadelphia.

These job actions disrupt patient care, as hospitals bus in traveling nurses to take up the slack. That’s unfortunate – especially if you’re the one waiting for surgery or going to the emergency room. In the long run, though, patients will benefit.

I’ve been a registered nurse for more than half my life, inspired by a beloved aunt, so I get where these

nurses are coming from. They’re not asking for luxuries, just the tools and support they need to do their jobs safely and effectively.

The nursing shortage – the U.S. was short 500,000 nurses last year, and the shortage is growing – has created a greater need for patient advocates. It’s a career I’ve been very proud of, and now I’m proud of helping nurses forge their own paths by becoming patient advocates themselves (nurseadvocateentrepreneur.com) to offer the care they were trained for.

Patient advocates can fill some of the gap, but not all of it. Nurses are standing up not only for themselves, but also their patients. When one nurse is stretched too thin, the patients feel it. When burnout becomes the norm, care suffers. When

safety concerns are ignored, everyone is at risk.

I hope all of these medical professionals return to their jobs soon, with greater safeguards and better patient safety.

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

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Sen. Jake Oliveira given Legislator of the Year Award

By Emily-Rose Pappas
epappas@turley.com

REGION — The Massachusetts Municipal Association hosted its annual conference, this year called Connect 351, in Boston, in order to award two State Senators and two State Representatives with the Municipal Advocate Award, recognizing them for their service to the communities they represent and serve.

The Massachusetts Municipal Association, or MMA, works to connect and support municipal leaders by creating a nonpartisan space for shared learning, ideas, and a voice to bring to Beacon Hill in order to make the 351 towns and cities of Massachusetts more connected and unified.

“The more state support that municipalities can get, the better. Making sure that we have reliable state support for our 351 towns and

cities is a lot more equitable. I believe that we are in a Commonwealth, and we should work together to benefit our towns,” said Senator Jake Oliveira.

Oliveira worked hard to file legislation for towns to have the option to make hybrid meetings permanent, offering a way for meetings to become more accessible to the public, amongst many other benefits.

“It’s worked so well, even at the state house, and it makes it easier for people to participate in their government. It definitely improves services, and it was a great help in the long run to allow for more flexibility and an easier time to share information,” said Oliveira.

Oliveira partnered with the MMA to obtain funding for essential services at the local level, including Chapter 70 funds, school transportation, and much more. He also helped work to change



Submitted photos
Recipients of awards at Connect 351: Representative Jim Arciero, Representative Danielle Gregoire, Senator Brendan Crighton, and Senator Jake Oliveira.

the Chapter 90 funding formula in order to help Western MA communities have better roadways that are more cost-effective.

“It was a good conference, and it was very meaningful for me to receive the award,” said Oliveira. “It was great to go to the MMA conference, because you got to see town managers, city councilors, and more, some of whom I worked with while I was part of the school committee.”

To further honor Oliveira’s dedication and service to the communities, the Selectboard of the town of Longmeadow also presented him with an award.

“As someone who came from municipal government, it was very meaningful to receive this award. We really work and fight hard to get these resources for our towns and cities, and working with that is something that I take a lot of pride in.”

‘Magic Time! - Illusions & Humor’ magic show returns

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.

STUDENT from page 1

Students in grades four through six will take part in “Band in the Stands” at a Springfield Thunderbirds game on April 3. Spring concerts are planned for May at Palmer High School with a “movies and TV shows” theme.

The representatives also recognized January Students of the Month from preschool through grade six and United Arts. Ms. Johnson was named Teacher of the Month, and Ms. Liana was recognized as Professional Paraprofessional of the Month.

At Palmer High School, student representative Neila Lachance, NHS Community Service Coordinator, junior class vice president and student council president, reported on a full slate of activities and initiatives.

The junior class recently held a fudge fundraiser and organized flower carnation grams. The Student Council hosted a Super Bowl Can Drive and cookie dough fundraiser, and faculty members participated in a Super Bowl Chili Cook-off.

The high school has introduced a perfect attendance incentive, awarding PHS hats to qualifying students. Lachance noted that high school students are also building connections with younger peers by delivering hats to Old Mill Pond sixth-grade students of the month and discussing the transition to high school.

Biology and physics MCAS testing for ninth graders took place Feb. 4 and 5. The middle school dance was held Jan. 23, followed by a second-semester open house on Jan. 29. Student Council members attended a roundtable in Northampton on Feb. 6, and PHS will host a Highlight Day on Feb. 13 for eighth graders to showcase classes and programs.

Upcoming events include a Renaissance ceremony for grades seven and eight on Feb. 27, NHS Trivia Night on March 12, and a Night of Belonging on March 19. Lachance also announced that she will run for State Board president at the Student Council State Conference in Hyannis from March 4 through 6.

Athletically, the swim team qualified eight athletes for the West Central Massachusetts Championships, with Harper Cassavant advancing to the MIAA State Championship. The girls basketball team earned the eighth seed in the Western Massachusetts playoffs, while the boys team secured the fourth seed.

Valentine’s Spirit Week at the high school included themed dress-up days and a “compliment” advisory activity aimed at fostering positivity.

Eighth Grader Recognized for Civic Engagement
The committee recog-

nized eighth-grade student Robert Lovell for his initiative in a civics project that turned into a memorable exchange with State Representative Todd Smola.

As part of the curriculum, Lovell wrote to Smola expressing his enthusiasm for Craisins. The representative responded with a personalized letter and samples, humorously addressing Lovell as the “Honorable Robert Lovell, Secretary to the Department of Craisins.” Committee members applauded the creative and engaging example of civic participation.

Superintendent Reports Mid-Year Goal Progress

Superintendent Matthew Francis provided a mid-year update on district goals, measured against “Smartie” criteria: Specific, Measurable, Action-Oriented, Rigorous, Time-Tracked, Inclusive and Equitable.

The first goal, focused on student learning and classroom observations, was rated as showing “some progress.” Francis explained that the original target number of classroom observations evolved to better meet evaluators’ individual needs. The focus shifted toward formative assessments and goal-setting conversations rather than simply meeting a numerical benchmark.

The second goal, centered on professional practice through the Superintendent Induction Program (NISIP), was rated as “met.” Now in its third year, the program converted originally remote sessions to in-person meetings, strengthening professional collaboration.

The third goal, a district improvement initiative tied to Curriculum Review 24 and addressing bias in curriculum, was rated as demonstrating “substantial progress.” A committee of Old Mill Pond and Palmer High School educators has been formed, professional development has aligned with the work, and a curriculum review tool has been developed and piloted. Francis noted that dedicated time will be needed for educators to consistently implement the tool.

Budget Review and Financial Updates

As of Jan. 31, 78 percent of the district-wide budget, approximately \$5.1 million, has been expended. This exceeds the 58.4 percent mark of the fiscal year, largely due to full-year encumbrances for tuition at 72.2 percent, facilities at 79.3 percent and transportation at 96.5 percent.

At Old Mill Pond, 43 percent of its \$2.6 million budget has been spent. Teacher and paraprofessional salaries are at 41.2 percent, aligning with the September-to-August fiscal cycle. Palmer High School has expended 45.6 percent of its \$2.8 million budget, with salaries at 41.1 percent.

Combined substitute spending for both schools stands at 56.9 percent of the \$160,000 budgeted amount, slightly ahead of the time elapsed in their respective cycles, a figure attributed to vacancies. Administrators reported that this line item is being closely monitored.

The Kids Corner before- and after-school revolving fund remains stable. Summer program brochures have been released, with early applications encouraged. Full payment is required before the program begins, though payment plans are available. A few slots remain open in the regular-year program.

The district is now fully up to date with Massachusetts Teachers Retirement System submissions through January 2026. Administrators described this as a significant improvement, noting that a new monthly compliance process has been implemented.

School Improvement Plans and Policy Updates Approved

The committee unanimously approved the 2025-2028 Palmer High School Improvement Plan in a 5-0 vote. Developed with stakeholder input and aligned with district values, mission and strategy, the plan emphasizes equitable success, academic engagement, community partnerships, rigorous instruction, student voice, data-driven support and improved communication, including translation and external partnerships.

The 2025-2028 Old Mill Pond School Improvement Plan was also approved unanimously. Its priorities include equipping staff to address behavioral and social-emotional challenges, maintaining consistent school-wide expectations, protecting collaboration time, refining curriculum to strengthen real-world connections and challenging high-performing students. The plan also highlights strong communication and community engagement practices, including diversity initiatives, stakeholder outreach, translation protocols and the potential use of artificial intelligence tools to improve efficiency.

Nine new policies in Section E of the Palmer Policy Manual were adopted in a single unanimous vote, with the committee waiving second and third readings. The policies formalize existing practices in areas such as buildings and grounds management, information security, security cameras, walkers and riders, motor vehicle idling on school grounds, meal modifications, civil rights complaints in child nutrition programs, district technology security, and data and records retention.

The Palmer Public Schools Wellness Policy, first discussed in fall 2022 and previously reviewed twice, was also unanimously approved.



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- CLUES ACROSS**

 1. Cut quickly
 5. A way to state clearly
 11. River in NE Scotland
 14. Expansive
 15. Lacking social polish
 16. Amount of time
 17. Frame
 19. Automobile
 20. Toadstools
 21. High school dances
 22. Utilize
 23. Experimented with
 25. One-sided
 27. Acquisitive
 31. Potted plants
 34. Everyone has one
 35. Kalahari Desert lake
 38. Unidentified flying object

CLUES DOWN

 1. Brushed
 2. Small water spirit (Germ.)
 3. Heroes
 4. Monetary units
 5. Some don't want to share theirs
 6. Free-swimming invertebrate
 7. Litigates
 8. Outer
 9. Parallelograms
 10. Uneasy feelings
 11. Cross
 12. A way to remove
 13. Pages can be dog-__
 18. Ukrainian city
 24. A citizen of Denmark
 26. Month
 28. Hindu queens
 29. Group of chemicals
 30. Rider of Rohan

CLUES DOWN

 31. Wet dirt
 32. Southwestern Russia city
 33. Observed
 36. Angry
 37. Drivers' licenses
 39. Musical composition
 40. Auction
 43. They __
 45. Women
 47. Be filled with love for
 48. Thick-soled sock
 49. Appears
 50. Old World lizard
 52. The leading performer
 53. Protein
 54. "Gunga Din" script writer
 57. Art __, around 1920
 58. __ Blyton, children's author
 59. Abnormal breathing
 63. A place to rest
- CROSSWORD ANSWERS ON PAGE 11**

Business

Smola supports bills regulating AI use in political campaigns

BOSTON — State Representative Todd M. Smola (R-Warren, Ranking Member, Ways & Means Committee), recently supported legislation that would promote greater election transparency by regulating the use of artificial intelligence in political campaign advertising.

House Bill 5094, An Act enhancing disclosure requirements for synthetic media in political advertising, and House Bill 5093, An Act to protect against election misinformation, were both given initial approval by the House of Representatives on February 11. The bills were engrossed on votes of 156-0 and 153-3, respectively.

“Artificial intelligence is a powerful tool, but when

it is used to create deceptive political content, it has the potential to undermine public trust in our elections” said Representative Smola. “These bills strike an important balance by protecting free speech while ensuring voters are not misled by manipulated audio or video. Our goal is to make sure voters can make informed decisions based on accurate information and have confidence in the electoral process.”

Representative Smola noted that House Bill 5094 would require that advertising paid for by a political candidate, political party or action committee, or campaign contributor with the intent to influence voters include clear disclaimers if the advertisement uses any audio or video

that was generated using artificial intelligence. Violations would be subject to a fine of \$1,000.

Representative Smola said the proposed changes will help prevent voters from being misled and will allow them to make informed decisions on whether to support a candidate based on reliable, fact-based information. Similar language was filed as an amendment by the House Republican Leader’s Office during the Fiscal Year 2025 and Fiscal Year 2026 budget cycles, with the House adopting the amendment as part of its Fiscal Year 2025 spending proposal before it was dropped from the final budget.

During floor debate, the House adopted an amendment

to House Bill 5094 offered by House Republican Leadership providing an exemption for radio and television broadcasting stations, including cable and satellite television operators, programmers, producers and mobile applications or streaming services who are paid to broadcast election-related communication.

According to Representative Smola, House Bill 5093 would prohibit any individual or entity from distributing deceptive audio or visual material with actual malice within 90 days of an election. Specifically, the bill would apply to any material that:

- depicts a candidate with the intent to injure their reputation or deceive a voter into voting for or

against the candidate;

- concerns the safety or regular operations of an election with the intent to disrupt the electoral process; or

- intends to mislead voters about the date, time, place, or methods of voting.

Under the provisions of House Bill 5093, a candidate who is the target of a deceptive audio or video may bring action for general or special damages but must bear the burden of proof that a clear violation occurred under this proposed law. It also authorizes the Attorney General to seek injunctive or other equitable relief when a violation occurs to block the distribution of the deceptive material.

Representative Smola noted that House Bill 5093

provides an exemption for radio and television stations and streaming services that broadcast materially deceptive communications, including as part of an interview or news report, provided they disclose that there are questions about the authenticity of the material. Additional exemptions are provided for website and newspaper content that includes a similar disclosure, and for material that is considered to be satire.

House Bill 5093 and House Bill 5094 will now move to the Senate for its consideration.

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

MSB announces \$25,000 in donations

MONSON — In late 2025, Monson Savings Bank asked our local community members to cast votes for their local non-profit of choice. Monson Savings Bank is now announcing the 2026 Monson Savings Bank Community Giving Initiative recipients.

This was the sixteenth year Monson Savings Bank ran its Community Giving Initiative poll. The public’s excitement to cast their vote has grown throughout the years. This year, more than 5,200 votes were received — a record-breaking response from the community.

Monson Savings Bank’s Community Giving Initiative exemplifies the power of collaboration, uniting community members to collectively de-

cide which local organizations receive support. By inviting public votes, the bank ensures that its charitable contributions reflect the community’s values and priorities, fostering a shared commitment to enhancing the well-being of the neighborhoods it serves.

“The community’s enthusiasm for our annual Community Giving Initiative is always so moving!” beamed Michael Rouette, EVP and Chief Operating Officer of Monson Savings Bank. “As a bank operated right here in Western Massachusetts, Monson Savings Bank wants to support the area’s local residents, businesses, and non-profits.”

Now that the votes have been counted, Monson Sav-

ings Bank is planning to donate a generous total of \$25,000 among this year’s top eleven vote recipients. Traditionally, ten recipients are selected, but due to a tie, eleven organizations will be honored this year.

2026 Monson Savings Bank Community Giving Initiative Recipients:

- I Found Light Against All Odds, Springfield
- Magic for Maddie, Southampton
- Friends of Hampden Seniors, Hampden
- South End Community Center, Springfield
- Springfield Ballers, Springfield
- YWCA of Western MA, Springfield
- Monson Free Library,

Monson

- Springfield Jewish Community Center, Springfield
- CLUBOH, Springfield
- Aida’s Food Truck,

Palmer

- Miracle League of Western MA, Holyoke

“These non-profits bring important resources to our communities. It is obvious why they were chosen by our community members to receive our support,” said Dan Moriarty, President and CEO of Monson Savings Bank.

To learn more about Monson Savings Bank’s Annual Community Giving Initiative, please visit: <https://www.monsonsavings.bank/connect/our-community/community-giving-initiative.html>.

Country Bank supports Scantic Valley YMCA with campaign donation

REGION — Country Bank, a full-service financial institution serving Central and Western Massachusetts, announced a \$25,000 donation to the Scantic Valley YMCA in Wilbraham in support of the Y’s ongoing capital campaign aimed at expanding community offerings and completing critical facility improvements.

Country Bank has been a long-time partner of the YMCA, proudly supporting both the Scantic Valley and Springfield branches for many years. This latest contribution reinforces the Bank’s commitment to investing in organizations that strengthen families, promote wellness, and enhance quality of life across the communities it serves.

The Scantic Valley YMCA capital campaign focuses on much-needed facility upgrades and program enhancements, including roof replacement, fitness center expansion and equipment upgrades, outdoor pickleball courts, parking lot improvements, locker room renovations, enhance-

ments to childcare spaces and signage, ensuring the facility continues to meet the evolving needs of members of all ages.

“The YMCA has long been a cornerstone in our communities, providing a welcoming place for individuals and families to grow, stay healthy, and connect,” said Russell Fontaine, Chief Retail Delivery & Customer Experience Officer at Country Bank. “We’re proud to support the Scantic Valley YMCA and its mission to serve thousands of members while ensuring the facility remains strong and accessible for generations to come.”

“Country Bank’s generosity plays a vital role in helping the YMCA continue to serve our community in meaningful ways,” said Dexter Johnson, President and CEO of the YMCA of Greater Springfield. “Partnerships like this allow us to expand our reach, enhance our programs, and create lasting impact for the people who rely on the Y every day.”

Seven Railroads Brewing Co. to pour at Mass Beer Week

PALMER — Seven Railroads Brewing Company, the locally owned brewery that opened two years ago on Park Street, will bring Palmer pride to Boston as part of Brunch with the Brewers on March 15.

Owners Rachel Rosenbloom and Michael Bedrosian, longtime Palmer residents, have quickly made Seven Railroads a neighborhood gathering space.

“Seven Railroads Brewing Co. has brought new energy to Palmer’s downtown hospitality scene,” said Katie Stinchon.

“Their story of dedication and community spirit is exactly what Mass Beer Week celebrates.”

Attendees will enjoy two guided tasting flights featuring beers from Seven Railroads Brewing Co. and fellow participants Antimony Brewing (Lenox), Arlington Brewing Co., (Arlington), Clover Road Brewing Co., (Hudson & Ashland), Drawdown Brewing Co. (Jamaica Plain), Epigram Brewing Co., (Tyngsboro), Forty Second Brew Co., (Kingston), and Murder Hill

Brewing Co., (Whitinsville)

Hosted by the Mass Brewers Guild in partnership with City Tap House, the event brings together eight of Massachusetts’ newest breweries - all three years old or younger - for a celebratory afternoon of curated tastings, storytelling, and community connection. Attendees will hear how each brewery launched their business, what inspires their recipes, and what it takes to open and grow a brewery in Massachusetts.

Guests will also receive

a full-pour collaboration beer brewed exclusively for the event and served in limited-edition Mass Beer Week glassware, plus access to an all-you-can-eat brunch buffet.

Mass Beer Week celebrates the small, independent breweries that lift up their communities - creating local jobs, partnering with nearby businesses, and providing welcoming spaces where neighbors gather and connect.

For more information, visit massbrewersguild.org/brunch-with-the-brewers

BUDGET | from page 1

communication with the Superintendent.

Superintendent Paul Foster reported that the district’s FY26 operating budget remains on target overall, though transportation is projected to run a roughly \$56,000 deficit due to added specialized transportation for a student and a daily midday run.

Looking ahead to FY27, Foster presented an abbreviated overview of the district’s budget request, noting that the full proposal had already been shared with the Town Finance Committee. Enrollment has remained stable for the past four years following a period of decline, and projections from NESDEC suggest potential growth over the next decade.

The level service request totals a \$385,000 increase, or about 3%, primarily covering contractual salary increases, inflationary pressures, curriculum renewals, and modest adjustments for non-union staff to remain competitive.

The operating request is more substantial, an \$851,000 increase (or 6.5%), aimed at addressing critical unmet needs. Proposed additions include a high school business pathway teacher who would also coordinate work-based learning, a third counselor at Granite Valley to support mental health and behavioral needs, a kindergarten aide at the Early Childhood Center, and a fifth pre-kindergarten

classroom to meet growing demand among both special education and general education students.

Other requests include a third night custodian to address cleanliness concerns, a special education coordinator to assist with growing caseloads, an assistant athletic director stipend to cover evening events, and new financial management software to improve budgeting and purchasing processes.

Foster also outlined potential future investments beyond the operating request, including expanded mental health staffing, professional learning and coaching, high-quality curriculum materials across all grades and subjects, and the possibility of free athletics and free preschool — the latter requiring significant upfront funding.

Superintendent’s Entry Plan Findings

Foster presented findings from his comprehensive entry plan, developed during his initial months of listening sessions and data review. The goal, he said, is to build a shared understanding before launching a strategic planning process.

In teaching and learning, he cited strong early literacy efforts, including Applesseeds and Title I reading specialists, which have helped maintain stable outcomes. Daily grade-level team meetings are well established, and art and Advanced Placement programming remain intact.

However, academic

performance outside of early literacy has not returned to pre-pandemic levels and trails state averages. Foster noted that grade-level meetings often leave little room for subject-specific instructional discussions. Students and families have expressed a desire for more rigorous, engaging and relevant instruction. He also pointed to the elimination of the curriculum director position as a barrier to ensuring high-quality instructional materials across all grades and subjects.

Special education and tiered supports emerged as a significant area of concern. Staff voiced worries about caseloads and the level of support available for teachers serving students with disabilities. Foster said the district lacks a systematic, tiered academic support structure beyond early literacy, leaving insufficient steps between general education and special education referrals and potentially delaying appropriate interventions.

On equity, Foster reported that the percentage of students from low-income households has doubled over the past decade and now mirrors the state average. That demographic shift correlates with lower academic outcomes and reduced access to advanced coursework for affected students.

Culturally, he described a strong sense of community and widespread praise for staff dedication. At the same time, students reported

feeling they lack meaningful voice or agency, which can lead to disengagement. Families have expressed a desire for greater involvement but are sometimes unsure how to participate. Fiscal challenges have also strained relationships between the schools and the broader town community.

Attendance trends are improving, with chronic absenteeism down and daily attendance up. But behavior remains a significant concern. Feedback from staff, parents and students consistently highlighted challenging behaviors. Less than half of fifth graders believe their classmates behave as teachers expect, a figure significantly below the state average. Staff report feeling overwhelmed by behavior management, which reduces instructional time.

At the high school level, expanded pathways such as early college and work-based learning have been well received and may help retain students. However, transitions from sixth to seventh grade have been described as particularly difficult, with students and families noting stark cultural and expectation shifts between Granite Valley and the high school.

Operationally, the district has maintained small class sizes but faces trade-offs between class size and sufficient support staffing. Cleanliness concerns stem from earlier reductions in facilities staffing. Community members have called for greater financial

transparency and long-range planning. Foster also warned that many district processes are known but not formally documented, creating what he described as a “lottery risk” if key personnel leave. The high school’s 84-minute block schedule has received mixed reviews, with questions about maximizing instructional time.

Foster said the next step is to share the findings broadly and begin strategic planning to develop a clear instructional vision and align professional development for the coming school year.

School Choice Seats and First Grade Relocation Proposal

The committee discussed a recommendation to open 32 school choice seats for FY26-27 across grades 1, 2, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10 and 11 in order to fill available seats and generate revenue. No seats would be opened in kindergarten due to projected enrollment, nor in grades 3 and 4 due to budget uncertainty and cohort size. Seventh grade was excluded to ease transition challenges, and 12th grade was excluded out of concern for meeting the needs of incoming seniors.

Committee members raised legal questions about reserving upper-grade seats for students who move out of district, and Foster said he would consult legal counsel. He also offered to bring forward a policy allowing students who move mid-year to complete the school year in Monson without applying for

school choice, provided transportation is arranged by families. Once accepted through school choice, students have the legal right to remain through graduation.

Foster also proposed moving first grade from Granite Valley to Quarry Hill beginning next school year. The goal is to establish Quarry Hill as a dedicated Early Childhood Center serving Pre-K through grade 1 and to reduce Granite Valley’s population by roughly 70 students, alleviating overcrowding and behavioral pressures.

Under the plan, current kindergartners at Quarry Hill would advance to first grade in the same building, while current first graders at Granite Valley would move to second grade there. No new staff would be added, and teachers would move with their grade levels. Classrooms are available at Quarry Hill, and minor moving costs would be absorbed within the budget.

Foster emphasized that the proposal is not a step toward building consolidation, noting that projected enrollment increases make maintaining current facilities fiscally sound over the long term. Initial feedback from first-grade teachers raised logistical concerns, particularly around maintaining specialized supports, but Foster said he plans collaborative planning and site visits to address those issues. Committee members voiced general support for the student-centered rationale.



Vice Principal Mary Zurawka speaks to the assembled classes at the start of the Winter Carnival.



Turley photos by Abigail McCoy
Vice Principal Mary Zurawka and Principal Chris Fontaine during the opening speech.



Human-sized Hungry Hungry Hippo was a hit with the students, with cheers and screams echoing through the gymnasium.



Students eye the cards preparing to play Sticky Pickup.



The freshman class member gets some airtime during his flops.



The senior class goes for as much coverage as possible with their duct taped teammate.



Juniors start off tug-of-war strong, planting their feet and leaning back.



Members of each class rush the gymnasium floor to shout encouragement at their teammates.



The freshman class aren't deterred and follow the same strategy of planting their feet.



The seniors versus sophomores tug-of-war is over quick with the seniors winning.



Student spirit is high in the Senior section after their win of Sticky Pickup.



Submitted photo by Wendy Pisciotta
A member of the senior class jumps to block a spike during the February 10 Volleyball tournament.

CARNIVAL | from page 1

Zurawka reflected on the shift from competing alongside classmates to now standing shoulder to shoulder with colleagues. "I loved having my former classmates by my side," she said. "But now I have my colleague family."

According to Principal Chris Fontaine, Winter Carnival has been a Monson tradition for more than 40 years. While staff members help coordinate logistics, the heart of the event belongs to the students.

"We want this to be a student-centered event," Fontaine said. "These are their decorations, their ideas. Students plan this from start to finish."

Each year, students vote on a theme. This year's overarching concept was board games, with each grade level assigned a different game to inspire hallway decorations, T-shirt designs and team spirit.

The freshmen were themed around The Game of Life, incorporating signs about marriage, college and retirement; an ironic twist for ninth graders just beginning their high school journey.

Sophomores took on Jumanji, transforming their hallway into a jungle-inspired

scene filled with creative details.

Juniors embraced Monopoly, complete with oversized dice and references to the iconic property-trading game.

Seniors selected Candy Land, or, as they dubbed it, "Senior Land." Zurawka described the senior hallway as "incredible," praising the elaborate design work students completed. She noted that students stayed at school until 8 p.m. on Wednesday evening to finish decorating. "They were incredible," she said. "The most artistic, creative, elaborate game-based hallway decorations I've ever seen."

In addition to the high school grades, seventh and eighth graders also participated. Eighth graders worked with a Guess Who theme, while seventh graders focused on Scrabble. Their activities took place earlier in the day, part of an ongoing effort to build a unified school culture from grades 7 through 12.

"We're trying to build that culture 7 through 12 here," Fontaine said. "Again, kids design everything."

Winter Carnival unfolds over the course of a week, featuring themed dress-up days, hallway decorating and athletic competitions.

Earlier in the week, the school held its annual volleyball tournament, drawing participation from approximately 75 to 80 percent of students in grades 9 through 12. Each class designs its own T-shirt based on its board game theme, and students customize them further.

The gym was opened for a tournament-style competition, with staff ensuring every student who wanted to participate had the opportunity to do so.

The culminating day of Winter Carnival featured a series of energetic, game-based competitions in the gymnasium from noon to 2 p.m. Events included a human-sized version of Hungry Hungry Hippos, as well as relay-style races such as a flipper race, a three-legged race, and Sticky Pickup.

The celebration traditionally concludes with one of the most anticipated matchups of the year: the seniors versus the staff in volleyball.

While staff members enter the game with enthusiasm, they also acknowledge the odds.

"We know we're going to lose," Zurawka said with a laugh. "We just hope to walk out in one piece."

The senior boys' Win-

ter Carnival volleyball team has built an unprecedented legacy. This year's group is aiming to complete a perfect four-year sweep, having won the Winter Carnival volleyball title as freshmen, sophomores, juniors and now hoping to finish undefeated as seniors; the first team in school history to accomplish the feat.

"It is a tradition that the seniors usually beat the staff," Zurawka said, noting that some staff members' primary goal is simply to avoid taking a volleyball to the face.

As both an alumna and administrator, Zurawka emphasized how unique the Winter Carnival is to Monson.

"This is a really special thing to Monson High School," she said. "I don't think a lot of other schools or communities do quite as elaborate of a winter celebration as we do here."

From intricately decorated hallways to high-energy gym competitions, Winter Carnival continues to reflect the pride, creativity and unity of the Monson school community; a tradition that bridges generations of students, including those who once competed in the games and now help guide them from the sidelines.

SPORTS

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Palmer defeats Lee in WMass quarterfinals

By Tim Peterson
Sports Correspondent

PALMER – The third time was the charm for the Palmer boys' varsity basketball team.

After losing in the Western Mass. Class C quarterfinals during the past two seasons, the fourth-seeded Panthers celebrated a 67-57 home victory over the fifth-seeded Lee Wildcats in this year's Class C quarterfinal game, last Thursday night.

"This is the first time that we've been able to win a game in the Western Mass. tournament since I've been a member of the varsity team," said Palmer senior Stephen Fredette, who scored 13 of his 15 points in the first half. "It just means so much to me and my teammates, especially doing it in front of the home crowd."

A year ago, the Panthers lost at Mahar Regional in the Class C quarterfinals.

They also suffered another road loss to Granby two years ago.

"Winning a Western Mass tournament game at home is very special," added senior Gavin Smola (9 points). "We competed very hard in tonight's game."

Fredette and Smola scored most of their points in the paint area.

"When we watched Lee on film, we noticed that their 2-3 zone defense wasn't very strong," Fredette added. "We just took full advantage of it. We scored a lot of inside hoops."

The other Palmer seniors, who won a Western Mass.

PALMER | page 10



Turley photos by Gregory A. Scibelli
Taydem Haley nails a layup. Taydem Haley nails a layup. The junior scored his 1,000th point last Thursday night in the Western Mass. Class C quarterfinals.

Panthers tip Cougars in non-league game

By Tim Peterson
Sports Correspondent

PALMER – The most recent encounter between the Quaboag and Palmer girls' varsity basketball teams before last Monday night took place at the 2010 Spalding Hoopball Classic. The Lady Cougars edged the Lady Panthers 41-40 in that contest, which was held at Blake Arena situated on the Springfield College campus.

Led by eighth grader Harper Brouillette, who netted 13 of her game-high 19 points during the second half, the Lady Panthers managed to pull out a 41-36 non-league home victory over the Lady Cougars in their only meeting of this season.

"Every win for us this season is big because we're such a young team," said Palmer girls' varsity coach Amanda Theriault. "We've been playing very well during the past couple of weeks."

The Lady Panthers finished the regular season with a 9-9 overall record.

Brouillette was Palmer's only double digit scorer against Quaboag (3-14).

"Harper has been playing really well in our past couple of games," Theriault said. "She's been one of our leaders this season."

Three other Palmer eighth graders combined to score 16 points. They are Aria Nompleggi (8 points), Isabelle Braden (6 points), and Lainey Haley (2 points).

Freshman Anabelle Ladue (4 points), and junior Addyson Petraszewicz (2 points) rounded out the scoring column for the home team.



Turley photos by David Henry www.sweetdogphotos.com
Lainey Haley tries to grab a rebound.

Senior Madeline Potvin (15 points) and eighth grader Caitlyn Toomey (14 points) combined to score 29 of their Lady Cougars 36 points.

"We really didn't shoot very well in tonight's game," said Quaboag head coach Bill Beauregard. "It's another

disappointing loss for us."

The only other senior listed on the Quaboag varsity basketball roster is Madeline Dufresne, who saw limited playing time in the road game.

PANTHERS | page 10

Pioneers fall against Franklin Tech

PALMER – Last Thursday night, Pathfinder Tech boys basketball was defeated by Franklin Tech 53-49 in a game that Pathfinder nearly came all the way back to tie. In the loss, Cassian Kowalik

had a massive game with 28 points. He made seven free throws for the Pioneers. The Pioneers are still looking to qualify for the state tournament and need more wins this week to squeeze in.



Maddox Baer avoids the defense and goes for the hoop.



Brody Wetnicka holds the ball outside the arc.



Cassian Kowalik gets the tip-off.



Grayson Griswold eyes an open teammate.



Ian Squi Nieves heads down the court.



Dustyn Cook takes a free throw.

Turley photos by David Henry www.sweetdogphotos.com

Candlepin League News

By Ryan Drago
Staff Writer
rdrago@turley.com

Bondsville League

WARE – During week 22 of the Wednesday Night Bondsville League, Team UMass bowled against Ironmen.

In game one, Team UMass defeated Ironmen by a score of 489-451. Ryan Drago of Ironmen made a strong effort to keep the lead down by beginning with 130.

In game two, Team UMass stayed on course and won again, 473-454. Keith Ferez of Team UMass bowled well over his league average (91) with a 107 in game two. Drago remained over average with a 120 in game two.

In game three, going into the final few frames, Team UMass held on to a slim lead and won 476-468. Drago finished with another 120 and a three-game series of 370. Ferez finished with a 91, which included an important spare to stay in the lead.

The final score was 1438-1373 in favor of Team UMass, who now have a record of 77.5-76.5.

cord of 77.5-76.5.

Sandri bowled against P&J Meats this past league night. In game one, P&J Meats ruled the lanes and won 487-466. Paige Stabach of P&J Meats was the hero of the team and began with 122. Brandon Lane of Sandri had the highest game on his team with 112.

In game two, P&J Meats won again by a score of 513-496. Stabach stayed in the 120s with a 120 game, and her teammate, Kristy Temple, bowled well with 115. Randy Harper of Sandri had the highest game on his team with 117.

In game three, Sandri won by a score of 497-464. Sue Horton of Sandri finished the match strong with 134, which consisted of five spares in a row. Horton's three-game series for the evening was 356 (109, 113, and 134). Lane finished with 118 and a series of 326. Stabach finished with 93 and a series of 335.

The final score was 1464-1459 in favor of P&J Meats.

Zeke's Freaks bowled against Fire Mountain. In game one, Zeke's Freaks

pulled off the upset and won 469-468. In game two, Fire Mountain returned the favor and pulled off a close win, 437-435.

In game three, Scott Brewster of Fire Mountain bowled 112 during his team's victory, 483-455. The final score was 1388-1359 in favor of Fire Mountain, who are in first place overall in the Bondsville League.

Slow Burners bowled against the Snappers this past week. In game one, Slow Burners won by a score of 483-469. Scott Radisic of Slow Burners fired up the burner with a 132 game to start the match.

In game two, Slow Burners won again by a score of 481-476. Andy Tombor of Snappers bowled well with 110 and his teammate Kevin "Kras" Krasnecky bowled 115.

In game three, Snappers snapped out of the slump and won 490-417. Eddie Stachowicz of Snappers finished with 119 to go with his 115 and 97 for 331. Krasnecky finished with 118. The Snappers win total pinfall with a final score of 1435-1381.

PALMER | from page 9

tournament game for the first time are Dylan Doherty (9 points), Matt Santos (6 points), Chris Stapleton, and Adonis Dupre.

It was an extra special game for junior Taydem Haley, who became the ninth member of the boys' basketball team and the 19th player overall in school history to score 1,000th career points.

The last member of the Panthers boys' team to score 1,000 career points was Jack Letendre (1,118 points) in 2022.

David Niemczura, who graduated in 1979, is currently the all-time leading boys' scorer with 1,415 career points. Brittany Boser, who graduated in 2005, is the school's all-time leading scorer with 1,548 career points.

"My next goal is to become the school's All-Time

leading scorer next year," Haley said. "I think I'll be able to do it next year."

Haley, who entered the quarterfinal contest 22 points away from reaching the milestone, magic moment took place with 1:36 left in the third quarter after he hit a jumper from the right side.

"This is more like a team accomplishment, not a personal one," said Haley after taking pictures with his teammates, family, and friends after the game. "I just tried to focus on the game, but it was a great feeling to get the pressure off my back after I made the jumper."

Haley, who finished the quarterfinal with a game-high 24 points, has been a member of the varsity team since the eighth grade.

"Not only did Taydem score his 1000th career point here at home, but we were also able to win a Western Mass. tournament game after losing in this game the past two years," said Palmer head coach Missy Rocker. "We pretty much dominated the game for the first three quarters of the game."

Haley has progressed offensively each year that he's been a member of the basketball team.

He has scored more than 300 points this season.

Haley, who picked up

his second personal foul in the middle of the first quarter, sat on the bench until late in the first half. He scored eight points in the first half. He then scored 15 points in the third quarter on mainly lay-ups.

Besides being teammates during the past couple of years, Fredette and Haley are also neighbors.

"Taydem is one of my best friends and neighbors," Fredette said. "We're always playing basketball together and it was great watching him score his 1,000 career point tonight. I'm very proud of him."

Palmer (11-9) was leading, 19-8 after the opening eight minutes of the game. They were leading 34-16 at halftime and by 30 points at the end of the third quarter before being outscored 27-9 during the final eight minutes of the contest. The Panthers reserve players saw a lot of playing time during the final quarter.

Palmer suffered a 76-43 loss at top-seeded Drury High School in the Class C semifinals, last Saturday.

The Panthers will have a week off before beginning their journey in the Division 5 state tournament. The Palmer players, especially the six seniors, were hoping to play at least one more home game this season.

After a Braden inside hoop increased Palmer's lead to 34-28, Potvin knocked down a 3-pointer from the right side.

With 20 seconds left in the fourth quarter, Toomey hit a runner in the lane slicing the Lady Cougars deficit to 38-36.

The Lady Panthers would seal their victory with two free throws from Brouillette and

responded with a 7-0 run. Brouillette scored five of those points and Nompleggi also chipped in with a put-back hoop.

The Lady Panthers, who outscored the Lady Cougars, 18-11, in the third quarter, entered the final eight minutes of regulation holding a 32-26 lead.

another one by Ladue

Two nights later, the Lady Panthers lost at top-seeded Drury, 66-19, in a Western Mass. Class C quarterfinal game. They'll also be competing in the Division 5 state tournament, which begins next week.

Quaboag didn't qualify for the Division 4 state tournament.

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Athlete of the Week

Taydem Haley

Palmer High School

Last week, Haley achieved the 1,000-point milestone during Palmer's playoff game at home against Lee.

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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Dylan Doherty tries to navigate through traffic.



Turley photos by Gregory A. Scibelli
Gavin Smola tries to keep the play moving.



Matt Santos gets the open layup.



Stephen Fredette passes on the run.

PANTHERS | from page 9

Quaboag held a 6-5 lead in the middle of the first quarter following a jumper in the lane by sophomore Riley Corder (3 points).

The Lady Panthers' other scorer was sophomore Caitlyn Stevens, who finished the road game with four points.

Palmer, who scored the

final four points of the first quarter, took an 11-6 advantage on an inside hoop from Braden less than a minute into the second quarter.

A Toomey lay-up with 3:55 remaining in the first half closed the gap to 11-10.

Another lay-up from Stevens tied the score at 14-14 before the visitors from War-

ren retook the lead with 46.3 seconds left in the second quarter when Potvin made one of two shots from the free throw line.

Potvin also buried a 3-pointer from the right corner giving the Lady Cougars a 20-18 lead with 6:50 remaining in the third quarter.

The Lady Panthers then



Aria Nompleggi makes her way down the court.



Turley photos by David Henry
Anabelle Ladue looks to make a pass.



Harper Brouillette heads into the offensive end.



Isabelle Braden gets ready to shoot.

Warriors suffer home loss to Knights

FISKDALE – After some struggles throughout the season, Holyoke High School boys basketball grabbed some momentum last week, winning three straight games, including against Tantasqua Regional 60-48 last Thursday night. The Knights would get to enter the Western Mass. Tournament, facing Pope Francis in the quarterfinals.



Ryan Cleary catches a pass on the run.



Turley photos by Gregory A. Scibelli
Dariel Correa is pressured after making a rebound.



Jack Nichols heads down the court after a steal.



Sean Allen takes advantage of a pick-play.



Drew Wright sends a pass across the court.



Thomas Eldred holds possession just outside the arc.

How to contact the Sports Editor

Have the scoop on a local sports story? Want to submit a team photo, pass along a potential story idea, or just find out how to get a copy of that great photo of your young athlete? Please send all sports-related press releases and information to Sports Editor Greg Scibelli at: sports@turley.com or call, 1-413-283-8393.

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Hardwick Crossing Country Club

GILBERTVILLE – The former Duxbury Country Club, a 9-hole golf course, reopened at 262 Lower Road, known as "Hardwick Crossing" and has a five-star quality restaurant without the price tag.

Hardwick Crossing golf course opened in July 2022 with a renovated course while offering a variety of memberships packages to suit a range of guests and family needs. This endeavor fulfilled owner Kenneth Utracki's dream of reopening the former golf course.

The newly renovated restaurant, known by regulars as "The Clubhouse," opened in September 2022 and provides a full-service bar and gourmet food. Choices include sauté dishes, clam chowder, prime rib, fish and chips Buffalo chicken dip, Buffalo tenders, Gnocchi, Bourbon steak tips and salmon.

The executive chef is Thomas Simons. He was at Erickson Brick Oven Pizzeria for eight years as well as Lower Hill Botanical Gardens for many years. Their Sous Chef Neils Anderson took over that position when Simons got promoted to executive chef. Anderson comes from Starbridge Hotel and Eureka's and been at Hardwick Crossing from the beginning.

A 3,000 square foot banquet venue, which seats 170 people is open for special events and weddings. It has a panoramic view of the golf course. Chef Jeff Nicholas assists in the regular kitchen and runs the events and wedding kitchen. They also have outdoor seating for 125 overlooking the golf course.

The motto they follow at Hardwick Crossing is ingredients are "from the sea, from the table" and "from the family," so fresh and local products are a top priority. General Manager Courtney Letourneau said the restaurant has food delivered six days a week. Alex Symons is Assistant Manager and Cassandra Hobbs, Bar Manager. They offer products and produce from Gibson Farms, Midtown Meats, West Boylston Seafood, local farm stands, Frost Yard Farms.

The restaurant is open Sunday through Thursday from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. and Friday and Saturday 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. People may follow them on Facebook and Instagram at [hardwickcrossing.com](https://www.facebook.com/hardwickcrossing).

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In the classroom

COLLEGE NOTES

Gabriel Messier named to Univ. of Scranton Dean's List

SCRANTON, PA – Gabriel M. Messier of Palmer was among more than 1,750 students who were named to The University of Scranton's Dean's List for the 2025 fall semester. The Dean's List recognizes students for academic excellence. A student must have a grade point average of 3.5 or better with a minimum number of credit hours during the semester to make the Dean's List. The list includes students from the Jesuit university's College of Arts and Sciences, Kania School of Management and the Leahy College of Health Sciences. Messier is a senior mechanical engineering major in the University's College of Arts and Sciences.

University of Rhode Island students named to Dean's List

KINGSTON, RI – The University of Rhode Island is pleased to announce that several area students have been named to its Fall 2025 Dean's List. Among them are:

- Lizzy Maxfield and Vanessa Ricci of Brimfield
- Alissa Mckinney, Miranda Sandoval and Victoria Stephens of Palmer
- Caitlin Lebel of Three Rivers
- Makena Pentoney of Holland

To be included on the Dean's List, full-time students must have completed 12 or more credits for letter grades which are GPA applicable during a semester and achieved at least a 3.30 quality point average. Part-time students qualify with the accumulation of 12 or more credits for letter grades which are GPA applicable earning at least a 3.30 quality point average.

Krista Misischia graduates from Elms College

CHICOPEE – Krista Misischia of Bondsville received a Bachelor of Arts from Elms College following the conclusion of the Fall 2025 semester.

Misischia was among 60 students who received their degrees in December.

Elms College is a co-educational Catholic college offering a liberal arts curriculum that prepares students holistically for a purposeful life in a diverse and interconnected world. Founded in 1928 by the Sisters of St. Joseph, Elms College has a tradition of educating reflective, principled and creative learners, who are rooted in faith, educated in mind, compassionate in heart, responsive to civic and social obligations, and capable of adjusting to change without compromising principle.

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Job Connection

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The Town of Warren has immediate openings for the following Full & Part-Time positions...

Assistant Assessor: The Warren Board of Assessors is seeking to fill this full-time, Town benefited position of Assistant Assessor. The successful candidate will perform administrative work, provide excellent customer service, maintain detailed records of property assessments, maps, new growth, and assist with setting the annual tax rate under the general direction of the Board of Assessors. One of the Town's goals is to transition this position to a Principal Assessor in the future.

Hourly wage range: \$30.44 - \$37.08

Monday to Thursday, 32 hours per week

\$1,000.00 annual stipend offered with MAA certification

Executive Assistant: This position is responsible for providing administrative and clerical support to the Town Administrator's Office and Board of Selectmen. This is a full-time, Town benefited position. Candidate should be able to demonstrate excellent customer service skills, being proficient with Microsoft Suite and have superior writing skills. Attendance at evening meetings is required.

Hourly wage range: \$24.78 - \$26.69

Monday to Friday, 40 hours per week

Sewer Plant Operator / Mechanic: This position is responsible for operating, maintaining, and cleaning machinery, equipment, and generators. Performs building and grounds maintenance. This is a full-time, Town benefited position, with required on-call and overtime hours. Candidate must possess a Grade 4 or higher Wastewater Treatment Plant License within the first six months of employment.

Hourly wage range: \$24.78 - \$26.69

Monday to Friday, 40 hours per week

Full-Time Police Officer: Applicants are preferred to be academy trained and must be willing to work weekends, nights, and holidays. It is also preferred that applicants currently possess valid certification as a Police Officer. The Patrolmen's contract provides for an education incentive. Please send resumes and cover letters to the attention of Lt. Kyle Whitcomb, WPD PO Box 606, Warren, MA 01083 or whitcomb@warren-ma.gov.

Hourly wage range: \$28.64 - \$34.24 Overtime Available

**Starting hourly will be based on years of municipal police service.*

Part-Time COA Custodian: This position is responsible for all aspects of cleaning, light maintenance of the building and Senior Center grounds. Must have scheduling flexibility to meet the daily operational needs of the Senior Center. Prior custodial experience preferred.

Hourly wage range: \$17.70 - \$18.05

Monday to Friday, 15 hours per week

Please email or mail your resume and cover letter to the
Town Administrator, Jim Ferrera, townadministrator@warren-ma.gov
or by mail to 48 High Street, P.O. Box 609, Warren, MA 01083.

For a complete job description of any of these positions please visit the Town's website
www.warren-ma.gov.

All positions will be open until filled.

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Chris Herren to speak at MHS Feb. 26

MONSON – We are pleased to share that Chris Herren, former professional basketball player, author, and nationally recognized wellness speaker, will be visiting Monson High School on Thursday, Feb. 26 to speak with our students about the importance of making healthy choices and understanding the early warning signs that can lead to substance use.

Chris Herren, a high school All-American from Fall River, Massachusetts, went on to play in the NBA with the Denver Nuggets and Boston Celtics. While he appeared to be living the dream, Chris struggled with the pressures of fame and turned to alcohol to cope—an early decision that eventually



led to addiction and the loss of his basketball career.

His inspiring story of recovery has been featured in the ESPN Films 30 for 30 documentary *Unguarded* and later in *The First Day*, a film that focuses on the challenges young people face before substance use begins. Through these experiences, Chris emphasizes that understanding “the first day” of substance use—what leads someone to begin—is more powerful than focusing on the last. His message encourages students to build resilience, show compassion to peers, and seek help when needed.

Following the presentation, we encourage parents and guardians to have an open con-

versation with their students about what they heard and how it relates to making positive choices. To support families, organizations such as the Partnership to End Addiction and the Herren Project offer free resources on how to talk with children about substance use, recognize warning signs, and find help if needed.

If you have any questions or concerns about this event, please contact Mr. Fontaine at Monson High School. Additional student support resources will be available throughout the school day.

This presentation is an important opportunity to continue meaningful conversations at home and strengthen our shared commitment to student health, safety, and wellness.

Monson High School is proud to host Chris Herren and his powerful presentation, *The First Day*, on Thursday,

February 26 at 6:30 p.m. in the Granite Valley Auditorium.

Chris Herren shares his personal story of addiction, recovery, and resilience in a message that is honest, powerful, and meaningful for students, families, and our community.

There will be two student presentations during the school day and a separate evening presentation for parents and community members beginning at 6:30 p.m. in the Granite Valley Auditorium.

Members of the community are welcome and encouraged to attend the evening presentation.

This important program is being sponsored by the Town of Monson through a portion of the Town's opioid settlement funds, in support of prevention, education, and increased community awareness.

HCC scholarship season open for 2026-2027

HOLYOKE – The Holyoke Community College Foundation is now accepting scholarship applications for the 2026-2027 academic year.

The application deadline is Friday, March 13, 2026.

Last year, the HCC Foundation awarded 410 scholarships worth about \$364,000 to 379 incoming, current, and transferring HCC students. Some students received multiple scholarship awards. The average scholarship award is typically around \$900.

Students must be cur-

rently enrolled at HCC or have been accepted for the upcoming academic year to be eligible for scholarships.

Applicants only need to fill out a single online form to be automatically matched with the scholarships they are most qualified to receive. There are scholarships for new students, current students and students transferring to other institutions, scholarships based on financial need, scholarships for students in specific majors, scholarships for residents of certain communities, and

scholarships that recognize academic achievement.

To view scholarship opportunities and begin the application process, please go to: www.hcc.edu/scholarships.

The HCC Scholarship Resource Center, on the first floor of the Donahue Building (Room 158), is open Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., to help current and incoming students navigate the process of applying for scholarships.

The HCC Foundation is a 501(c)(3) that works to ad-

vance the college's mission, vision, and values. Founded in 1968 as the Friends of Holyoke Community College, in response to a devastating fire that forced the college to rebuild on a new campus, the Foundation now manages assets of more than \$20 million, the largest community college foundation endowment in Massachusetts.

Questions should be directed to the HCC Foundation office at 413-552-2182, or by email to scholarships@hcc.edu.

STCC offers free dental care on Community Dental Day

SPRINGFIELD – The Springfield Technical Community College Dental Sciences Department, in partnership with the Valley District

Dental Society, will host the eighth annual Community Dental Day on Saturday, March 28, 8 a.m.-4 p.m., in Building 20 at STCC.

This free event provides an opportunity for area residents who may not be receiving regular dental care to obtain necessary treatment at no cost.

Licensed dentists from the Valley District Dental Society, along with STCC dental hygiene and assisting students, will provide a range of services, including patient education, health screenings, diagnosis, X-rays and limited treatments such as fillings, extractions, sealants and assessments of urgent issues. While cleanings will not be provided during the event, patients needing one may schedule a low-cost follow-up visit at STCC's dental clinic.

“Community Dental Day plays an important role

in helping meet the needs of our community while giving our students meaningful, real-world clinical experience,” said Christopher Scott, Dean of the School of Health and Patient Simulation at STCC. “We invite community members who need dental care to make use of this no-cost service. Through our collaboration with local dental professionals, we're able to provide high-quality care while also equipping our students with the skills they need to succeed in their future careers.”

STCC offers pathways to dental careers through two programs. Students can seek a two-year associate degree in Dental Hygiene or a one-year certificate in Dental Assisting.

Dr. Michael Nardi, an event organizer with the Valley District Dental Society volunteer dentists, highlighted the impact of Community Dental Day.

“Too often, people delay getting dental treatment because it can be expensive or difficult to access,” Nardi said. “This event allows us to offer timely care to individuals who need it most, while also helping them understand how to maintain their oral health in the long run. I'm proud to take part in an initiative that has such a positive impact on our community.”

Valley District Dental Society is a supporter of STCC through generous financial support for scholarships and dental kits.

The event is open to the public, and no insurance is required. Patients can also return to STCC's dental clinic for affordable follow-up care if needed.

Community Dental Day is open to the public on a first-come-first-served basis. Please call (413) 755-4900 if you have questions.

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Obituaries

Elizabeth F. Gibb, 86

MONSON — Elizabeth F. Gibb, born on April 18, 1939, in Salem, New Jersey, passed away on Feb. 12, 2026, in Palmer, Massachusetts, surrounded by the love of her family. Mrs. Gibb spent her life nurturing young minds as an elementary school teacher at Faith Baptist Christian Academy in Palmer for many years. Her strong dedication to education extended beyond the classroom, as she also taught many piano students in her home, sharing her passion for music with them.



lifelong learning. She cherished her time spent gardening, filling her yard with beautiful flower gardens. She kept a daily journal which she faithfully shared with her family. She was known for her organizational skills. In her free time, she enjoyed engaging in crossword and Wordle puzzles, hiking, and listening to music. She found comfort and strength in her faith and was a member of the Community Bible Church in Northfield.

A graduate of Salem High School and later Bob Jones University, Liz was a very curious individual who embraced

and his wife Michelle of Niskisno, Alaska; her daughters, Wendy Emberley and her husband Bob of Northfield, MA, Becki Keith and her husband Brian of Palmer, MA, and Debbie Beaudoin and her husband Danny of Monson, MA.

Liz is also survived by her sisters, Doris Lum and her husband Milt of Port Ludlow, Washington, Hannah Jones and her husband Gary of Rocky Point, NC, and Susan Dolbow and her husband Ron of Salem, NJ.

She leaves behind a loving legacy of 19 grandchildren, Matthew, Tiffany, Jennifer, Emily, Ethan, Rose, Bobby, Rachel, Ben, David, Joel, Brandon, Jordan, Nathan, Katherine, Megan, Joshua, Abby and Emma; 19 great grandchildren, George, Apphia, Henry,

Adeline, Kayce, Codie, Caleb, Noah, Erin, Alethia, Leah, Nolle, Caroline, Nathan, Lily, Micah, Oliver, Bella, and Genevieve, who will forever hold her memory in their hearts.

Elizabeth's memory will be celebrated during a Memorial Service held on Saturday, Feb. 21, 2026 at 1 p.m. at Faith Baptist Church located at 251 Shearer Street, Palmer, MA 01069.

In lieu of flowers please consider a memorial donation in memory of Elizabeth to the Community Bible Church 105 Main Street, Apt C Northfield, MA 01360.

Lombard Funeral Home of Monson has been entrusted with the arrangements. For online condolences please visit www.lombardfuneralhome.com.

Keith E. Tinney

Keith E. Tinney, 71, of Montgomery, passed away peacefully on February 13, 2026. Born in Westfield on March 19, 1954, he was the son of the late Wendell and Dorothy (Hall) Tinney. Keith attended local schools. Keith dedicated 19 years



of his career to Monson Developmental Center before retiring. He was known for his gentle nature and kind heart. An avid animal lover, Keith found great joy in nature and music, simple pleasures that brought him lasting happiness throughout his life. To cherish his memory, Keith leaves his beloved wife, Barbara (Blando) Quenneville of Montgomery, and his sister, Debbie LaPorte of North Carolina. Services for Keith will be private and held at the convenience of the family. Donations in Keith's name may be made to the Alzheimer's Association. www.firtionadams.com.

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DEATH NOTICES

Elizabeth F. Gibb
Died Feb. 12, 2026
Services Feb. 21, 2026
Lombard Funeral Home

Keith E. Tinney
Died Feb. 13, 2026
Services will be private
Firtion-Adams Funeral Service

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Monson Fire Logs

Here is the fire log for the Monson Fire Department for the week of Feb. 9 through Feb. 15, 2026. The department responded to 17 EMS calls and 7 Fire calls.

On Monday, Feb. 9 at 4:21 p.m., the department responded to 32 Hospital Road for the smell of gas. The department returned to service at 7:10 p.m.

On Tuesday, Feb. 10 at 11:13 p.m., the department responded to 216 Main Street for the fire alarm activation.

The department returned to service at 11:45 p.m.

On Wednesday, Feb. 11 at 9:20 a.m., the department responded to 1 Green Street for the gas leak/odor. The department returned to service at 9:30 a.m.

On Wednesday, Feb. 11 at 12:20 p.m., the department responded to 31 Lower Hampden Road for the public assist. The department returned to service at 12:42 p.m.

On Wednesday, Feb. 11 at 11:41 p.m., the department

responded to 216 Main Street for the fire alarm activation. The department returned to service at 11:58 p.m.

On Thursday, Feb. 12 at 1:15 a.m. the department responded to 216 Main Street for the panel fault. The department returned to service at 1:15 a.m.

On Saturday, Feb. 14 at 11:39 a.m., the department responded to 216 Main Street for the fire alarm sounding. The department returned to service at 11:53 a.m.

The Journal Register OBITUARY POLICY

Turley Publications offers two types of obituaries. One is a free, brief **Death Notice** listing the name of the 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.

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ISSUES | from page 1

municipal activities, including participation in police collective bargaining, regular coordination meetings with department heads, and addressing employee matters. She also reported attending the Western Massachusetts Municipal Budget Roundtable, where communities across the region discussed shared fiscal pressures.

Locally, Wolowicz has been working to strengthen community engagement through daytime "Let's Talk Monson" sessions and an evening meet-and-greet event with Hope Bodwell, designed to encourage greater resident participation in town affairs.

As Monson enters the FY27 budget season, Wolowicz emphasized the importance of what she described as a "mini Tri-Board" approach: bringing together the Town Administrator, Finance Committee Chair, School Superintendent, School Committee Chair, and Business Manager; to improve communication and promote long-term financial planning.

Wolowicz underscored that the town's financial challenges are structural rather than the result of waste. Rising costs for wages, health insurance, utilities, and basic operations are largely unavoidable and often mandated. Meanwhile, state aid has not kept pace with these increases. Because Monson lacks a large commercial or industrial tax base and cannot create new revenue streams, the burden falls primarily on residential property taxes.

She characterized the situation as "a mathematical issue," pushing back on the perception that higher taxes stem from mismanagement. The town's options, she said, include pursuing a budget override, reducing services or staffing, or drawing from reserves. Each option carries consequences that must be clearly communicated to residents.

A particularly pressing concern is the snow and ice budget. The town initially appropriated \$200,000 for the

year, but by February 10 had already spent \$350,000 after three \$50,000 transfers. Officials discussed the possibility of creating a snow and ice stabilization fund to reduce the town's reliance on free cash in heavy winter years.

Department Updates Reflect Active Winter Season

Department heads reported steady activity across town government. The Assessors submitted updated property valuations, processed three abatements, and handled 99 personal exemptions. The motor vehicle excise commitment for 2025-26 is expected in mid-February.

The Conservation Commission has issued wetlands permits and continues work on land grants and Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness initiatives. Efforts include pursuing a federal 319 grant to improve water quality in Chi-

copee Brook and participation in the Monson High School Career Fair.

The Council on Aging continues to offer Wii bowling, crafts, bingo, and new programming such as Tai Chi and a dance event. The department is navigating staffing transitions following Lori Stacy's retirement and the loss of longtime volunteer Rose Murphy, while also facing rising food costs for senior meal programs.

The Library has launched a "How Can We Help" series, with its first session focusing on scam awareness in partnership with the Monson Police Department and the Hampden County District Attorney's Office. A resume workshop was recently held, and the library has added digital access to The Wall Street Journal. The Memory Cafe program, developed in collaboration with police and the Council on Aging,

continues to support residents with Alzheimer's and dementia and their caregivers.

The Police Department reported reviewing and decommissioning older equipment. Four officers recently completed tactical negotiations training focused on de-escalation techniques at no cost to the town.

The Water and Sewer Department repaired a water main break on Harrison Avenue under extremely cold conditions, marking the third break on that street in three years. An upcoming capital project with Palmer will address centrifuge dewatering operations.

In economic development news, National Grid has purchased the former Eagle Logistics building and plans to establish a training center there, securing its continued presence in Monson after earlier uncertainty.

Town Administrator

Wolowicz also noted that her annual evaluation is underway, with completed forms due to the Town Council by Feb. 27.

CDBG Application Targets Harrison Avenue Improvements

Evan Mastroianni of the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC) presented the town's proposed FY26 Community Development Block Grant application.

CDBG funding supports a broad range of projects, including social services, housing rehabilitation, infrastructure, food pantries, and ADA improvements. Monson is proposing a first-phase project on Harrison Avenue that would address water, sewer, drainage, and roadway improvements. The area has previously completed an income survey supporting eligibility.

Because of rising material costs and stricter state preferences, Mastroian-

ni explained that the state now favors "design-only" or "construction-ready" grants. Monson is likely to pursue a design-only application for less than the \$950,000 maximum in hopes of presenting a focused and competitive proposal. CDBG projects require no upfront town funding.

The Planning Commission will distribute digital and paper surveys to gather public input on funding priorities. A formal request with specific dollar amounts is expected to come before the Select Board in early to mid-March.

Officials acknowledged increased statewide competition and noted that Monson's low-to-moderate income score has dropped to five out of ten, potentially affecting the town's competitiveness. A targeted, feasible application is seen as the best path forward.

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HELP WANTED

The Town of Huntington is seeking a **PART-TIME COUNCIL ON AGING CLERICAL AIDE**
\$20-\$22 per hour based on experience. 6 hours per week. Application and complete job description are available online at www.huntingtonma.us or by emailing admin@huntingtonma.us. Position is open until filled.
Town of Huntington is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

The Town of North Brookfield is looking for a **PART-TIME PROGRAM ASSISTANT** for the Senior Center. Please submit a resume with a letter of interest to the **Selectmen's Office, 215 North Main St., North Brookfield, MA 01535;** or by email to: selectmen@northbrookfield.net.

REAL ESTATE FOR RENT

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All real estate advertising in this newspaper is subject to the Federal Fair Housing Act of 1968, which makes it illegal to advertise any preference, limitation or discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, handicap, familial status (number of children and or pregnancy), national origin, ancestry, age, marital status, or any intention to make any such preference, limitation or discrimination.
This newspaper will not knowingly accept any advertising for real estate that is in violation of the law. Our readers are hereby informed that all dwellings advertising in this newspaper are available on an equal opportunity basis. To complain about discrimination call The Department of Housing and Urban Development "HUD" toll-free at 1-800-669-9777. For the N.E. area, call HUD at 617-565-5308. The toll free number for the hearing impaired is 1-800-927-9275.

Classified Advertising DEADLINE
FRIDAY AT NOON

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From 1040

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Public notices

TOWN OF PALMER PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS

In accordance with the provisions of Chapter 40 A, Sections 6 & 11 M.G.L. the Palmer Zoning Board of Appeals will hold a Public Hearing on **Monday, March 2nd, 2026 at 6:30PM** at the Palmer Town Administration Building, 4417 Main Street, Palmer, MA.

The applicant, Richard Rock, is requesting a Finding under §171.83J of the Palmer Zoning Ordinance to allow for the construction of an addition eight feet into the setback. The property is located at 121 Ford Street, Palmer. This parcel is also known as Assessor's Map 67, Lot 57.

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://mass-publicnotices.org>).

Palmer Zoning Board of Appeals
02/12, 02/19/2026

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, March 9th, 2026 at 7:20 PM** in the Police Department Meeting Room, 4419 Main Street, Palmer, MA.

The applicant, Wellman Realty, LLC., is seeking Site Plan Approval & Finding as allowed under section 171.29, 171.83K(1) to construct a two-story 11,550± square-foot addition on the east side of the existing building with additional parking on the property located at 250 Shearer St, Palmer. This parcel is also known as Assessor's Map 12, Lot 32.

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://mass-publicnotices.org>).

Norman Czech, Chairman
02/19, 02/26/2026

PALMER CONSERVATION COMMISSION PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

In accordance with the Wetland Protection Act, MGL c.131 s.40, and the Town of Palmer Wetlands Bylaws, the Conservation Commission will hold a public hearing at **6:40 PM, Tuesday, March 3, 2026** at the Town Administration Building, 4417 Main Street, Palmer, MA to consider a Notice of Intent application related to the proposed construction of a building addition at the existing Palmer Healthcare Center located at 250 Shearer

Street in Palmer, MA (Assessor's Map 12, Lot 32). The project proposes redeveloping and expanding the existing facility with a two-story addition, additional parking, landscaping, lighting, utilities, and stormwater systems. Work is proposed to occur within the 100-foot Buffer Zone and 50-foot No Disturb Zone to Bordering Vegetated Wetlands. The applicant making the request is Land Design Collaborative, on behalf of Wellman Realty, LLC and Palmer Healthcare Center.

Any interested person wishing to be heard on the application should appear at the time and place designated.

Donald Blais, Jr., Chair,
Palmer Conservation
Commission
02/19/2026

PALMER PLANNING BOARD PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

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

The applicant, Jerzey Sajdera, is seeking a Site Plan Approval as allowed under section 171.29 for a wood chip processing facility, which will include construction of a 6,200 square foot fabric equipment shelter. Located on the property at 289 Wilbraham Street, Palmer. This parcel is also known as Assessor's Map 5, Lot 13.

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://mass-publicnotices.org>).

Norman Czech, Chairman
02/19, 02/26/2026

Commonwealth of Massachusetts The Trial Court Probate and Family Court Hampden Division Docket No. HD25P2030EA

Estate of:
Paul R. Girard

Date of Death: **August 26, 2025**
**INFORMAL PROBATE
PUBLICATION NOTICE**

To all persons interested in the above captioned estate, by Petition of Petitioner **James W. Gelinas of Chicopee, MA.**

James W. Gelinas of Chicopee, 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.
02/19/2026

Town of Holland RFQ May Brook Road Improvement Project Engineering Design

The Town of Holland has been awarded funds from the FY22/23 Massachusetts Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities, Community Development Block Grant Program. The Town of Holland is seeking responses for design engineering services for infrastructure improvements to May Brook Road. The project area includes May Brook Road beginning at the intersection of Union Rd and continues for approximately 1600 feet towards the intersection of Stagecoach Drive. Services requested include engineering design to construct a new storm water drainage basin, improved stormwater management, and full depth roadway grading and pavement reclamation. This is a two-phase project. The Phase 1 engineering services sought through this Request for Qualifications (RFQ) will include right of way and utility research, site survey and base plan development, identification of all required easements, preparation of preliminary design plans, final design plans and specifications, preparation of bid documents, and preparation of an opinion of construction costs. Phase 2 is contingent upon funding and will include bidding services, construction administration services, resident engineering services, and construction close-out services.

The fee for services sought for phase 1 will be negotiated and shall not exceed \$90,000. In the event project construction funding is procured in the future, the engineer shall provide Phase 2 services to be negotiated according to Chapter 7C of the Massachusetts General Laws. A more detailed RFQ is available at the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, 60 Congress Street, Springfield, MA 01104, (413) 781-6045, between 9:00 AM and 5:00 PM. To request an electronic copy of the RFQ, please contact Sue Ortiz at sortiz@pvpc.org. The RFQ will be available from February 11, 2026, until the due date specified below. The Town of Holland reserves the right to reject any and all responses if it is deemed in the best interests of the Town to do so. The Holland Selectboard will be the awarding and contracting authority.

Completed proposals are to be submitted no later than 2:00 PM, Friday, February 27, 2026, at the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, 60 Congress Street, 1st Floor, Springfield, MA 01104.
02/12, 02/19/2026

Town of Palmer Notice of Public Hearing

Massachusetts Electric Company d/b/a National Grid, you are hereby notified that a public hearing will be held at the Palmer Town Administration Building 4417 Main St. Palmer, MA on the **2nd day of March, 2026 at 5:00 P.M.** on the petition of National Grid to erect poles and wires to be placed thereon, together with

such sustaining and protecting fixtures as said Company may deem necessary, in the public way Foster St-Palmer-MA. 1 SO Pole on Foster St beginning at a point approximately 1,120 ft west of the centerline of the intersection of Emery St. Install Stub Pole diagonally across from Pole #6 approximately 70' southeast of existing pole to support new customer service to #3052.
Brad Brothers, Town Manager
02/19/2026

Town of Palmer Notice of Public Hearing

Massachusetts Electric Company d/b/a National Grid, you are hereby notified that a public hearing will be held at the Palmer Town Administration Building 4417 Main St. Palmer, MA on the **2nd day of March, 2026 at 5:15 P.M.** on the petition of National Grid to erect poles and wires to be placed thereon, together with such sustaining and protecting fixtures as said Company may deem necessary, in the public way State St-Massachusetts Electric Company d/b/a National Grid to install 1 SO Pole on State St. beginning at a point approximately 65 ft west of the centerline of the intersection of Jim Ash St. Installing new mid span Pole #32-50, approximately 25' from Pole 32 to support new service for Bondsville Fire & Water department.
Brad Brothers, Town Manager
02/19/2026

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 Denise M. Trombly to Ameriquet Mortgage Company, dated October 4, 2004 and recorded in the Hampden County Registry of Deeds in Book 14556, Page 354, of which mortgage the undersigned is the present holder, by assignment from: Ameriquet Mortgage Company to Mortgage Electronic Registration Systems, Inc. as nominee for JPMorgan Chase Bank, National Association, recorded on January 26, 2009, in Book No. 17617, at Page 533 Mortgage Electronic Registra-

tion Systems, Inc. as nominee for JPMorgan Chase Bank, National Association to Towd Point Mortgage Trust 2015-6, U.S. Bank National Association as Indenture Trustee, recorded on June 13, 2025, in Book No. 25900, at Page 500 for breach of the conditions of said mortgage and for the purpose of foreclosing, the same will be sold at Public Auction at **9:00 AM on March 16, 2026**, on the mortgaged premises located at 205 Breckenridge Street, Palmer, Hampden County, Massachusetts, all and singular the premises described in said mortgage, TO WIT:

Beginning at an iron pin on the Easterly side of Breckenridge Street, at the Northwesterly corner of land of Charles E. Norris et ux, said iron pin is N. 15° 34' E. three hundred two and 00/100 (302.00) feet from an iron pin on the Easterly side of Breckenridge Street and the Northerly side of Reservoir Street,

thence N.15° 34' E. one hundred and 00/100 (100.00) feet along the easterly side of Breckenridge Street to an iron pin at remaining land of H. and L. Builders and Developers, Inc.,

thence turning and running S. 77° 16' E. two hundred and 24/100 (200.24) feet along said last named land to an iron pin at land of Palmer Fire District No. 1;

thence turning and running S. 15° 34' W. one hundred and 00/100 (100.00) feet along said last named land to an iron pin at land of the aforesaid Norris;

thence turning and running N. 77° 16' W. two hundred and 24/100 (200.24) feet along said last named land to the point of beginning. Containing about 20,000 square feet.

For mortgagor's(s)' title see deed recorded with Hampden County Registry of Deeds in Book 12802, Page 26.

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 Five Thousand (\$5,000.00) 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.

TOWD POINT MORTGAGE TRUST 2015-6, U.S. BANK NATIONAL ASSOCIATION AS INDENTURE TRUSTEE Present holder of said mortgage
By its Attorneys,
HARMON LAW OFFICES,
P.C.

150 California St.
Newton, MA 02458
(617)558-0500 27433
02/12, 02/19, 02/26/2026

Please check the accuracy of your legal notice prior to submission (i.e., date, time, spelling). Also, be sure the requested publication date coincides with the purpose of the notice, or as the law demands. Thank you.

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The football field behind Old Mill Pond is filled with snow deep enough to come up to some kids' knees.

Turley photos by Abigail McCoy



Alyssa Richardson shows off her Snow Angel making skills.



Principal Holly Riopel (white coat) joins in the tug-of-war action.



Tug-of-war is difficult, but at least these students have a nice snowy ground to fall onto.



One student goes head first down a small hill on a sled.



Tug-of-War was the most popular event with kids lining up to take their turns against each other.



Students ran to the field, one jumping on a sled right away. JiJi, the beloved penguin mascot from the ST Math software games, joins in on the snow day fun.



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OMP | from page 1

between stations. "It comes upon our spirit week, where we decided to get the kids out to do some sledding, tug of war, painting... just enjoying themselves out in the snow."

From pre-kindergarten through sixth grade, every student participated in the rotating outdoor stations. Classes cycled outside in roughly 30-minute blocks, ensuring that each grade level had the opportunity to experience every part of the event. The structure allowed for organized movement while maintaining the high-energy feel of a snow day, without the cancellation.

Across the school grounds, students bundled in winter gear could be seen competing in tug-of-war matches, carefully tossing snowballs at designated targets, racing in

relays and flying down sledding hills. Another station offered water-based dyes to "paint" the snow, adding a creative element to the day's physical play.

The air was filled with shrieks of laughter, cheers from classmates and the unmistakable thud of playful "face plants" into soft snow. Teachers and staff supervised each station, encouraging participation and helping younger students navigate the slopes.

One moment in particular captured the spirit of the day. Riopel shared that a first-grade student told staff it was her very first time ever sliding down a hill.

"That's what this is about," Riopel said. "Giving these kids new memories."

In addition to the activities, the school secured fund-

ing to provide every student with an Old Mill Pond winter hat; a practical keepsake that also fostered a sense of unity. Throughout the afternoon, matching hats dotted the playground, reinforcing the communal spirit behind the event.

By organizing the celebration for all grade levels, the administration ensured that even the youngest learners could take part in a safe and structured winter experience. The result was a full-school event that blended recreation, community-building and seasonal joy.

While it may not have been an official snow day, for many students it felt like something even better; a chance to embrace winter together, build friendships, and create first-time experiences that will likely be remembered long after the snow melts.