

The Journal Register

SERVING PALMER, MONSON, BRIMFIELD, HOLLAND & WALES

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PALMER

Town pursues block grant funding

By Abigail McCoy
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PALMER – From road repairs to social service funding, the Town of Palmer’s Community Development Office continues to play a critical role in shaping both the physical landscape and quality of life for residents.

John Latour, Palmer’s director of community development, said his department is responsible for securing and administering state and federal grants that support a wide range of local initiatives.

“We apply for grants and administer grants from various sources, federal and state,” Latour said. “Currently, it’s Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding, and we focus primarily on infrastructure and public social services.”

Among the programs supported through these efforts are initiatives that may not always be visible to residents but have a significant impact. These include domestic violence services and transportation assistance programs such as the

Quaboag Valley Community Development Corporation’s “Palmer Rides to Work” program, which helps residents access employment and job training opportunities.

“We help fund the van [the connector] that you may have seen around town,” Latour explained. “Part of what we contribute goes toward helping residents get to work or access job training.”

Latour noted that many residents are unaware of the Community Development Office’s role in supporting these types of services, despite their broad reach.

On the infrastructure side, the town continues a multi-year effort to upgrade streets and utilities, particularly in areas surrounding Hryniewicz Park. Recent and ongoing projects include improvements to Maple Street and Maple Terrace, with work currently underway on Front Street and Park Street through fiscal year 2025 funding.

Looking ahead, the town plans to apply for fiscal year 2026 funding to

FUNDING | page 6

MONSON

Tri-Board prepares for vote

By Abigail McCoy
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MONSON – As Monson officials prepare to bring a proposed \$3 million override before voters, a central focus has emerged: ensuring residents fully understand the consequences of both passing and failing the measure.

During the March 16 tri-board meeting, leaders from the Finance Committee, Select Board, and School Committee agreed that transparency and public engagement will be critical in the weeks leading up to Town Meeting and the June ballot.

Two budgets, one decision

In a significant strategic shift, the Finance Committee voted to require the creation of two distinct Fiscal Year 2027 budgets:

- A “reduced services budget”, reflecting expected revenue without an override and detailing necessary cuts
- An “override budget”, showing how a \$3 million increase would maintain current service levels

Officials stressed that the terminology is intentional.

VOTE | page 6

PALMER



Quaboag Hills EmpowHer launch draws sell-out crowd

By Abigail McCoy
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PALMER – A new initiative aimed at supporting and connecting women across the local business landscape made a powerful debut earlier this month, as the Quaboag Hills Chamber of Commerce hosted the inaugural meeting of its “EmpowHER” Women in Business network.

Held March 12 at the Chamber and Pathfinder’s joint-office at 191 Sykes Street, the event drew a capacity crowd, signaling strong demand for a dedicat-

ed space where women entrepreneurs, professionals, and leaders can collaborate, share experiences, and build lasting connections.

The program began with a morning reception, followed by a panel discussion featuring local business leaders and a wide-ranging introduction session that allowed attendees to share their personal and professional journeys.

“This is just the beginning,” said Chamber President Renee Niedziela, who spearheaded the effort to

Turley photos by Abigail McCoy
The Sykes Office had every available seat filled with active and excited participants.

establish the group. “Being a woman in business carries its own unique set of challenges, but the value, insight, experience, and expertise we bring to the table far outweigh those challenges.” Niedziela reflected on her early career, recalling walking into a room of dozens of professionals and finding only a handful of women present. Decades later, she said, the need for support, mentorship, and connection among women

EMPOWHER | page 14

PALMER

Pathfinder Tech unveils FY27 budget proposal

By Abigail McCoy
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PALMER – Officials from across the region gathered at Pathfinder Regional Vocational Technical High School this week as the district presented its proposed Fiscal Year 2027 budget, outlining continued growth, strategic investments, and increasing demand for career

and technical education. The event, held in the school’s library, drew a strong turnout of Select Board members, Finance Committee representatives, town administrators, managers, and council members from all nine member communities; an indication, school officials said, of the district’s deepening partnerships across the region.

“It was great to see such strong representation from our member communities,” officials noted during the presentation. “The turnout and engagement demonstrated the continued partnership between Pathfinder Tech and the towns we serve.”

Budget overview and fiscal strategy

Superintendent Eric Duda led the presentation,

opening with a series of recent highlights, including coverage from the Journal Register, to illustrate what he described as a year of “growth and progress” for the district.

The proposed FY27 budget reflects an overall increase of 4.98% compared to FY26. Of that, the assessment to the district’s nine member towns would rise by

2.27% collectively.

One contributing factor to the increase is a \$519,000 rise in the minimum local contribution requirement across member communities.

Despite these increases, district leaders emphasized their continued focus on balancing fiscal responsibility

BUDGET | page 6

MONSON

Boards back \$3M override proposal

By Abigail McCoy
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MONSON – Monson town officials took a decisive step toward addressing a growing financial crisis during a March 16 tri-board meeting, where members of the Finance Committee, Select Board, and School Committee unanimously supported advancing a \$3 million Proposition 2½ override to voters.

The proposed override comes in response to a projected Fiscal Year 2027 (FY27) budget shortfall of approximately \$1.6 million to \$1.7 million, driven largely by rising fixed costs such as health insurance, utilities, and contractual obligations; expenses officials say are largely outside local control.

“This is the reality of where we are,” Finance Director Sherri Roberson explained during the meeting, noting that prior attempts to balance the budget through across-the-board cuts proved unworkable. “Most departments can’t cut without severely impacting services.”

A temporary fix for a structural problem

Town leaders emphasized that the override is not a permanent solution, but rather a

PROPOSAL | page 6

Gusting winds bring down trees and wires



Photos courtesy Monson Police Department

Monday nights wind and rainstorm brought down numerous trees and wires around the area. Power outages were reported in Palmer, Monson, Brimfield, Holland and Wales. Most outages were restored by Tuesday evening, as of Wednesday morning there were still some outages reported in neighboring communities.



Spring Clothing Drive in full bloom

Clothing Drive in collaboration with Cradles to Crayons

PALMER – Spring is in the air and Project 351's Spring Service Clothing Drive is in full bloom. This transitional season from frigid winters to warmer and longer days ahead marks a period of growth and new beginnings, not just for the environment but the renewed energy of children across the Commonwealth through increased outdoor activities. That's why Palmer High School, St. Paul's Church, and the Palmer Public Library, encourage you to

mobilize friends and family in acts of generosity and joy by providing new/gently used children's clothes, shoes, and winter essentials along with monetary donations to support children in their developmental years as they journey through life.

20 million children across the U.S. lack access to affordable, seasonally appropriate clothing. Cradles to Crayons offers kids the essentials they need for a safe and healthy childhood because nobody should have to settle for the bare minimum due to their financial situation. Unfortunately, 9.7% of Massachusetts families struggle to pay for

rent and groceries and often can't afford to spend extra on resources that seem like a luxury. Considering this, basic items for their children - clothes that fit, shoes not worn out, a warm coat - are simply not possible. Every child is entitled to basic resources that make them feel safe, warm, and ready to learn. Many people unconsciously donate what is not of use to them anymore without considering the lives impacted, which is why it's important to take into account that "Quality Equals Dignity". Always reflect on whether you would have worn the same clothes as a child before giving them a new life. Cradles

to Crayons takes a step further, by ensuring that children in need are comfortable through all stages of early life.

These past winter storms have been a harsh reminder of the hardships children who lack the necessary essentials they need to thrive struggle through. As Cradles to Crayons experiences increased demand for clothing, these needs are an even greater struggle to be met but our mission to end clothing insecurity remains strong through the efforts of Project 351 Ambassador Olivia Drewnowski, Project 351 Alumni Jannat Khan, Rev. Steven Sousa of St. Paul's Church, Palmer High School

Student Council, and Library Director Stephanie Maher of Palmer Public Library! To ensure our vision becomes a reality, our efforts combined with those of the community will impact thousands of families served by Cradles to Crayons

Questions? Contact jannat.khan@alumni.project351.org, 30odrewnowski@palmer-schools.org

Project 351 is a statewide, nonprofit organization which unites ambassadors from all 351 cities and towns across Massachusetts for years of unison, action, and leadership through services elevating our communities.

DRIVE DETAILS

When:
March 29 - April 10

Where:
• Palmer High School, During School Hours
• St. Paul's Church (1060 Central St.), 24/7
• Palmer Public Library, Library Hours

Collecting:
New/Gently used clothing, shoes, and winter essentials + Cash donations

Sizes:
Infant - Adult Medium

New:
Socks, underwear, pajamas

Keep Homestead to open

MONSON – The Keep Homestead Museum on 35 Ely Road in Monson, will open for the season on April 12 with the program Indian Baskets of the Northeastern Woodlands with Lorraine German.

Lorraine, owner of Mad River Antiques in

North Granby, Conn. will discuss the development of basket making among Native Americans in New England and New York including their stylistic differences.

This program starts at 1:30 p.m. in the barn and is open to the public free of

charge through donations are welcome. The museum will be open for viewing of new displays and for light refreshments from 1 to 3:30 p.m.

The Friends of Keep Homestead Museum meeting will take place after the Open House at 3:30 p.m.

Mass Button Show April 11

THREE RIVERS – Massachusetts State Button Society's spring meeting will be hosted by the Metropolitan and Monson Button Clubs on Saturday, April 11 at the Amvets Post 74 on Main St. in Three Rivers from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

The public is invited to attend the day's activities and to purchase buttons and button related items from 9 am to noon and from 1:30 p.m. to 3 p.m. There will be no button sales during the break from noon to 1:30 p.m. as lunch, a business meet-

ing, and auction will take place.

Morning visitors will be treated to coffee and refreshments provided by the hosting club; bring your own brown bag lunch, and dessert will be provided. There is no admission fee, and all are welcome.

Sensory Street coming to Holyoke St. Patrick's Day Parade

By Brendan Rooney
Correspondent

HOLYOKE – A new addition is coming to the 73rd Annual Holyoke St. Patrick's Day Parade, as the St. Patrick's Committee of Holyoke is partnering with the Miracle League of Western Mass (MLWM) and Magic for Maddie to introduce 'Sensory Street' along this year's parade route, which offers and provides a lower-stimulus viewing option for visitors with sensory sensitivities.

Providing insight into how this came together was Holyoke City Council President Tessa Murphy-Romboletti, who explained that the inspiration came from a trip to Ireland last year.

"Last year, a group of city officials and Parade Committee members took a trip to visit our sister city of Tralee, Ireland. We marched in their parade and saw that their parade offered a 'sensory-friendly' area for spectators, and we thought it was such a great idea," Murphy-Romboletti said.

She explained that she pitched the idea to the Parade Committee, and they followed through.

"Our 2026 Parade President (Jim Wildman) and volunteers took the initiative and made it come to fruition, with the support of some amazing sponsors," Murphy-Rombo-



Logo and graphic from the social media post.

letti said.

It was also revealed that Wildman then reached out to Kerry Parsons, a board member for the MLWM, who loved the idea.

"We're so excited, because this is such an incredible inclusion to the parade," Parsons said, something that Murphy-Romboletti also bestowed praise towards.

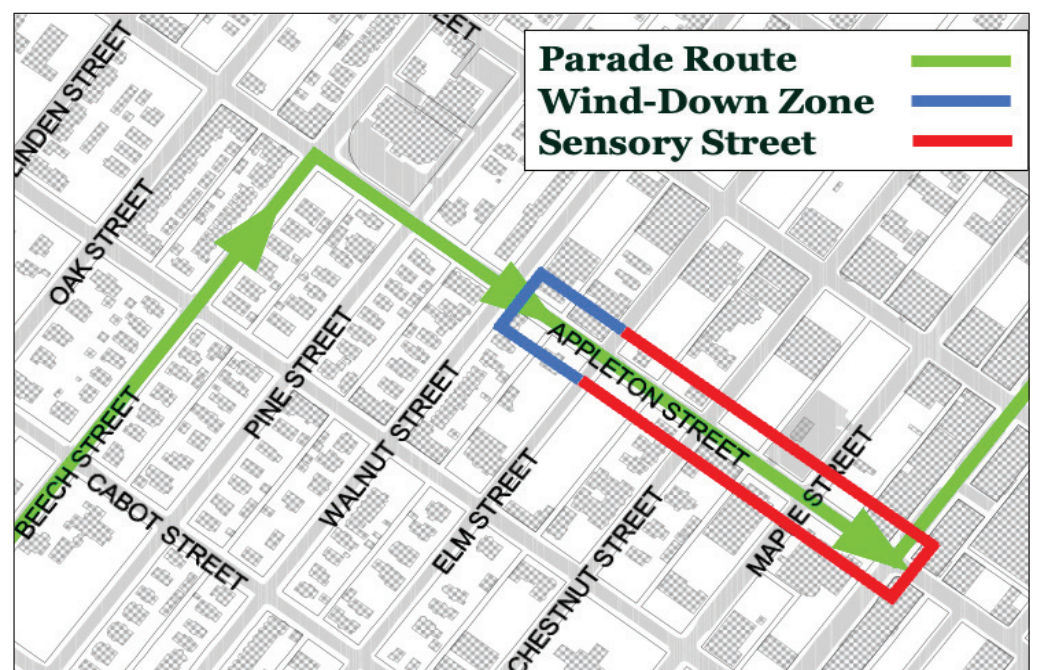
"This addition is a great way to make sure everyone gets to enjoy the parade, including families with children and individuals who may not love the big noises that can happen during the parade," Murphy-Romboletti said. "Simply, it's just another way for our city to say, 'you are welcome here.'"

Echoing similar thoughts was Wildman.

"This is a huge step for us, because I don't believe there is another St. Patrick's Day Parade that does this type of activity, and to have this area be inclusive for all these kids and adults who have issues with all the lights, sirens, and the noise, and for them to come in and join us is heartwarming," Wildman said.

Wildman added that the social media response and reaction to the announcement has been beneficial and surprising.

"For example, this past week, we had our social media go out, and we had almost 500 likes and close to 1K comments within 24



Photos courtesy of the Holyoke St. Patrick's Day Parade Committee

Map of the Sensory Street Designated Zone.

hours," Wildman said. "We gained interest and traction from groups we've never heard of, who have shared the announcement, that are all talking about coming, and so we're hoping for a very, very good first year, and for people to show up and enjoy this with their families."

According to details, the full Sensory Street zone runs from Appleton Street, Elm, Maple Street, and the wind-down begins to take shape at Walnut Street before the traditional parade experience returns on High Street. Both

zones will be marked with signs along the route and highlighted on the official parade map.

No reservations are required to access Sensory Street, and the zone will be open to all spectators. Offering an in-depth analysis of what families can expect was Murphy-Romboletti.

"During the couple of blocks of 'Sensory Street,' folks can anticipate no emergency or flashing lights, no sirens or amplified alarms, bands will feature strings only (no percussion or brass),

as well as reduced loud or sudden vehicle noises," Murphy-Romboletti said. "I think it's great that we can join others in these efforts because true inclusivity isn't about taking away an experience from anyone else; it's about creating new opportunities that encourage bringing more people into the fold."

The new initiative is believed to be the first of its kind for any major event held in Western Massachusetts.

The Holyoke St. Patrick's Day Parade kicks off later this month on March 22.

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Nomination Papers available for Board of Water Commissioners and Fire Prudential Committee. Nomination paper can be picked up at the Fire Department Headquarters at 12 Walnut Street or the Water Department at 10 Walnut Street.
Deadline to obtain papers is April 15.
April 22 is the deadline to submit nomination papers.
Annual District Meeting is May 12, 2026.

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Palmer Senior Center

Friday, Movie Matinee
12:30 p.m.
with drinks and popcorn

March 20 "People we met on Vacation" is a 2026 American romantic comedy film directed by Haley Polar opposites, Poppy wants to explore the world while Alex would prefer to stay home with a good book, but sur-

prisingly they become best friends after sharing a car to their small Ohio hometown from Boston. They live far apart, but for a decade they have shared one week of summer vacation together, which finally leads to a deeper connection.

March 27 "Ford VS Ferrari" Academy Award-winners Matt Damon and Christian Bale star in FORD v FERRARI, based on the-

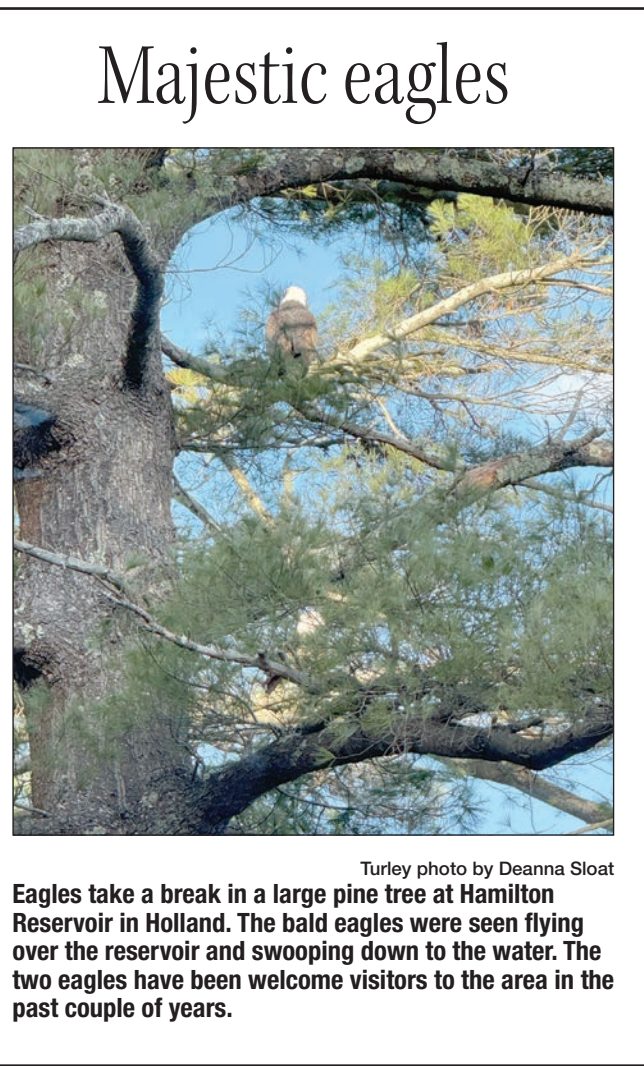
markable true story of the visionary American car designer Carroll Shelby (Damon) and the fearless British-born driver Ken Miles (Bale), who together battled corporate interference, the laws of physics, and their own personal demons to build a revolutionary race car for Ford Motor Company and take on the dominating race cars of Enzo Ferrari at the 24 Hours of Le Mans in France in 1966.

Monday Evening Programs
4:30 p.m.

March 18, at 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. St Pat's Party with Memory Lane

March 23, Spaghetti and Meatballs Dinner/Pictionary to Follow

Join the center for a 4-part series "Introduction to the Quabbin on Monday, March 30, April 27, May 25 and June 29.



Majestic eagles

Turley photo by Deanna Sloat
Eagles take a break in a large pine tree at Hamilton Reservoir in Holland. The bald eagles were seen flying over the reservoir and swooping down to the water. The two eagles have been welcome visitors to the area in the past couple of years.

Monson Garden Club offers Xeriscaping on April 6

MONSON – Monson Garden Club is sponsoring its GUEST NIGHT program XERISCAPING with Master Gardener Kathi Garipey on Monday, April 6 at 7 p.m. in First Church of Monson on High St. in Monson.

Xeriscaping is the art of landscaping with plants that require little water for upkeep. This process helps with water conservation

while beautifying an area.

Kathi contributes to community enrichment and education as a lead teacher for Massachusetts Horticultural Society and education coordinator for Mass Audubon. She is actively involved in the Attleboro Garden Club and Massachusetts Master Gardener Association. As a master gardener she shares research-based

horticultural knowledge and experience with the public.

This program is open to the public with light refreshments to be served. A suggested donation of \$5 will include a chance to win plants for sustainable gardening. It is funded in part by a grant from the Monson Cultural Council, a local agency of the Mass. Cultural Council.

Fashion Show April 23

WILBRAHAM – The Wilbraham Women's Club is sponsoring a Fashion Show Luncheon on Thursday, April 23, at the St. Cecilia Parish Center, 42 Main St., Wilbraham.

Clothing from Chico's in the Longmeadow Shops will be featured. The catered luncheon choices are Salmon with dill sauce or Chicken Francaise.

There will also be a raffle for many prizes and gift certificates. Join us at 11:30 for a social time with hors d'oeuvres followed by lunch at Noon. The donation is \$42 and is a fundraiser for the club's scholarships and charitable donations to needy organizations in the area.

For reservations, please make checks payable to Wilbraham Women's Club and mail to Sue Agnew, 7 Aspen Dr., Wilbraham 01095. For questions, call Sue at 596-9480.

Be sure to include meal choice in memo of check. Also, include with whom you wish to sit. Thank you for your support.

Annual Pioneer Valley wine festival June 6, 7

BRIMFIELD – Brimfield Auction Acres, Birthplace of the world-famous Brimfield Antique Shows will host the 6th annual Pioneer Valley wine festival on Saturday, June 6 and Sunday, June 7 from 12 p.m. to 5 p.m.

2026 Marks the 7th year of the Pioneer Valley Wine and Food festival. This exciting event brings together New England Wineries, Cideries, Distilleries, and Meaderies from across the Pioneer Valley and Farmers of many sorts selling their wares.

The event started in 2018 by the collaboration with farm wineries throughout New England and local

farmers to create a festival to highlight the magnificent products Massachusetts provides all in unison and support of Massachusetts Agricultural Department.

The festival will feature local vintners and craft brewers ready to spill their secrets. Live Art demonstrations, sizzling chef panel starring culinary celebs - to be announced soon. Last year celebrity guests include Brynn Gibson, the youngest Black Jacket finalist from Fox's Hell's Kitchen with Gordon Ramsay. We also have Jared Forman, the culinary mastermind behind Deadhorse Hill, who brought the heat on Food Network's Beat Bobby Flay.

Public invited to Opacum Land Trust's Annual Meeting

PALMER – Do you enjoy hiking, mountain biking, hunting, fishing, or other outdoor recreation? Are you interested in protecting local land, water, and wildlife? Are you curious about Opacum Land Trust, land conservation, or how you could get involved? Join Opacum Land Trust for their Annual Meeting Breakfast. All are welcome to this free event! This free

breakfast will be held on Saturday, March 21 at Pathfinder High School, Panek St, Palmer, MA from 10 a.m. to noon.

In addition to local conservation updates, attendees will hear from guest speaker and Director of Rural Affairs of Massachusetts, Anne Gobi. Director Gobi will speak about her involvement with the MILUS (Massachusetts Integrated

Land Use Strategy) Project and PILOT (Payments in Lieu of Taxes) commission and how they relate to conservation in the state.

REMEMBER TO RSVP – Please RSVP by March 6. You can RSVP on our website at <https://www.opacumlt.org/events>, through the Facebook event, or call the Opacum Land Trust office at (508) 347-9144.

American Heritage Museum bus trip hosted by AmVets Post 74

PALMER – Homefront Strong is partnering with The Friends of Veterans & the Palmer Veterans' Services Director to offer another bus trip to the American Heritage Museum in Hudson, MA on Thursday, April 16. The bus will leave AmVets Post 74 in Three Rivers at 8:30 a.m. and return at 6:15 p.m.

At the American Heritage Museum guests explore America's conflicts beginning with the Revolutionary War and continuing through to today. Guests discover and interact with American heritage through documented history, including a focus on the national effort to develop new technologies of warfare and the human impact of

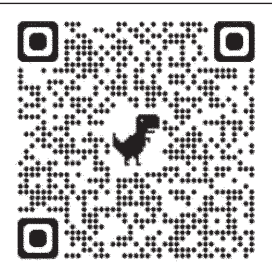
America's fight to preserve the freedom we all hold dear.

After the tour, attendees will go for a short drive, stepping back in time to experience more than 300 years of history and hospitality at The Wayside Inn® in Sudbury, Massachusetts.

Veterans FREE w/ID, Guests \$25.00 each cost includes bus, admission to museum & lunch

Scan the QR code to register. You may call 413 262-3338 to make reservations, leave message with veteran count and guest.

To learn more about HomeFront Strong, visit www.homefrontstrongus.org.



Bake sale at Monson Free Library

MONSON – Tuesday, March 31, the Friends of the Monson Free Library will hold a Swing into Spring Bake Sale in the DeSantis Community Room from 10 a.m. until 5 p.m. or until sold out.

Members of the Friends

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

Many baked goods will have an Easter theme. Proceeds from the sale will

be used to support library programs, including story hours, teen activities, museum passes, and various special events.

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

NOTICE

ERRORS: Each advertiser is requested to check their advertisement the first time it appears. This paper will not be responsible for more than one corrected insertion, nor will be liable for any error in an advertisement to a greater extent than the cost of the space occupied by the item in the advertisement.

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Viewpoints

SOCIAL SECURITY Matters

By Russell Gloor

When will I get full credit for delaying my SS retirement?

Dear Rusty:

The time is nearing that I want to move from my current Social Security survivor benefit to my own SS retirement benefit at 70 years of age.

I have been looking more deeply into the application of Delayed Retirement Credits and I have read that DRCs accumulated in the year that I turn 70, September 2026, will not be effective when I actually turn 70. Rather, those DRCs won't be paid until the following year. Can you verify that this is correct? I presume that if the DRC's are not applied at age 70, that they will be applied sometime after the first of the year and any increase will be paid retroactively.

Signed: Retiring Soon

Dear Retiring Soon:

The Delayed Retirement Credits you speak of have accumulated at the rate of 8% per year (.667% per month) since you reached your SS Full Retirement Age, which means that at age 70 your monthly SS benefit will be about 129% of the amount you were entitled to at your FRA of 66 years plus 4 months.

However, your understanding of how DRCs will work for you at age 70 is not correct. If you claim for your Social Security retirement benefits to begin in September 2026 (the month you turn 70) you will receive all DRCs, you have accumulated up to that point in time. In other words, you will get your full age 70 benefit amount immediately, including all DRCs earned until then, effective with your first SS retirement payment, which you will get in October 2026. What you have likely read about

is that DRCs work a bit differently for those who claim SS after their full retirement age, but before their 70th birthday month.

For those who claim mid-year but before age 70, only DRCs earned through the end of the preceding year are initially applied and DRCs earned during the current year are not paid until the following January. This results in a loss of some SS benefit between the time benefits start and the following January, because only the amount earned as of the end of the previous year are first paid, and the full number of DRCs earned during the current year are applied in January.

But, as is the case for you, when benefits are claimed to start in the month you reach 70 years of age, all DRCs earned up to the month of your 70th birthday are immediately applied. Congratulations on selecting a strategy which will maximize your monthly Social Security benefit.

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.



On the look out for a nice lawn

I'll be the first to admit that I don't have an especially nice lawn. Looking out the window further proves it.

It is early in the year and all, so the shades of brown I see are pretty common, but there are some lawns that are greening up nicely while mine is definitely not.

My mind always goes to thoughts of green as we approach St. Patrick's Day. I wonder if that's why my Irish dad enjoyed caring for his lawn so much?

One of his spring rituals was to rake it. I remember him out there working his way across the yard a little at a time, making pile after pile of dead grass, leaves and small sticks.

This was the just the first job in a season's worth of work aimed at growing good turf. Chances are that once the ground dries a bit you'll be out there too, clearing the lawn of winter debris and enjoying some long awaited sun on your back.

Find out what else you can do (and I should too) to achieve an attractive greenscape with a minimal commitment.

Don't mow so low, or as often. Mowing at a height of about three inches will encourage a healthy lawn. Why? Taller grass shades out developing weed seedlings.

It also makes large, established weeds more susceptible to mower damage (the more surface area of the weed that is removed, the more weakened it becomes.)

High mowing also fosters deep root growth. Deep

thing to my lawn each season it should be lime. Grass can't grow well, or fight off diseases or bugs for that matter, if it isn't getting the nutrients it needs.

Many nutrients are bound up until the pH is corrected. Get a soil test and specify on the order form that you wish to grow grass, as results for flower or vegetable gardening may differ.

Based on the results of your test, recommendations will be made as to the type of lime to use and at what application rate. For more information contact the UMAss Extension or www.umass.edu/plsoils/soiltest. Here are some interesting grass facts: Did you know that according to a poll (sponsored by Briggs and Stratton) 64% of homeowners wish they had a better lawn? Or that 63 million households own at least one lawn mower?

The Professional Lawn Care Association estimates that a well-maintained lawn can increase the value of a home by up to 20%.

This was probably of little concern to Presidents Washington and Jefferson... they were the first to have lawns as we know them today but they were maintained by sheep!

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.

Grass is also less prone to fungal diseases because it has a chance to dry before nightfall.

Know your soil. A friend of mine who knew a lot about turf once told me that if I were to apply one



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.

your health

By Teri (Dreher) Frykenberg, RN
Guest Column

Smoking cessation is beneficial at any age

If there's one habit every doctor wishes you would break, it's smoking. Quitting significantly improves health and reduces the risk of diseases.

And this is true no matter what age you are, from your 20s right into your 70s. While some older adults may believe it's "too late" to change, evidence shows that about one-third of older adults who attend specialized clinics successfully quit and stay off cigarettes for at least a year.

Research has also found that even 75-year-olds who are able to stop cigarettes gain an average of one year of life expectancy. That's one more year to do some of the

things you enjoy, like visiting with grandchildren (and not being relegated to the patio to light up).

Besides life expectancy, other benefits for older quitters are

- A lower risk of disease: Older adults who quit have lower rates of death from heart attacks, strokes and cancer compared to those who continue to smoke.
- Reduced frailty: Stopping smoking is associated with a lower degree of "frailty" (a measure of increased vulnerability and weakness) over time, promoting healthier aging and better physical function.

• Cognitive and sexu-

al health: Quitting smoking can lead to improved brain function and has been shown to improve long-term sexual function recovery following procedures like prostate surgery.

• Surgical success: For older adults facing surgery, quitting at least eight weeks prior can significantly decrease the risk of lung-related complications. If you can go eight weeks, you can keep going.

Quitting cigarettes is really, really hard because of the addictive properties of nicotine, which has been shown to boost dopamine in the reward circuits of the brain, but causes cravings and withdrawal symptoms when it's stopped. This is true whether your source of nicotine is a cigarette or a vape.

Most adults who smoke say they want to quit. A 2022 survey found that more than half of adult smokers tried to quit in the previous year. If you fall into that group, don't go it alone, especially if smoking is a decades-long ingrained habit. Chances of

POETRY CORNER

A Song of Ireland

I don't care where yer from,
Now yer here - just be a mun
Or a woman, whether good or ill-begotten;
So, let us ring the bell
Or we'll all go down to hell,
If the past, aye the past, were forgotten.

The wise we have around us,
Cause, universalling fuss,
With their rockets and their robots
much and then; -
O' we need something new
Or we wouldn't know what to do,
But wouldn't know a thing,
were the past forgotten.

After sorrows, after strife,
After things would dim yer life,
O' sing out, O' say out, here and then, -
O' the times they go way too fast,
We could kick em in the ass
But the past we will hold not forgotten.

Let the lambs grow their fleece,
Let us have a moments peace,
Here on earth or wherever
That you can;
O' the present - sing its praise,
Down the pastures
Of yer days, -
But the past let it stand
Unforgotten.

- 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

VENDORS FOR THE BAYSTATE WING HOSPITAL GIFT SHOPPE

March Vendors

March 26 - Weleful Weavers
 March 30 - Wicked Good Treats
 March 31 - Geriations & Sew On

April Vendors

April 1 - Cork Elegance
 April 2 - Generations of Cookies
 April 8 - How Charming
 April 16 - Weleful Weavers
 April 21 - Wicked Good Treats
 April 23 - Hobbit Hollow Herbs
 April 30 - Jewelry for Diane

March 28

Join Here Today Adopted Tomorrow for our "Spay"ghetti Supper Fundraiser on Saturday, March 28, 2026, from 5 to 6:30 p.m. at St. Thomas Parish Center, 1076 Thorndike St, Palmer, MA. Enjoy a delicious dinner prepared by a professional chef, mingle with fellow cat lovers, and support our shelter cats and community programs. Advance Tickets: \$15 adults, \$10 seniors & kids. Enter our raffle for fun prizes and take part in a night of good food, great company, and feline-friendly fun. Can't attend but want to help? Consider becoming a sponsor! Learn more at <https://www.heretoday-sanctuary.org/supper>.

March 30
 Public Supper to benefit the Ware Community Garden. Hosted by Ware Grange and Ware Senior Center. Enjoy a dinner of Chicken Marsala, roasted potatoes, carrots, salad, roll, drinks, and cream puffs for dessert. \$15 per person. Join us on Monday, March 30, from 6 to 7 p.m., at the Ware Senior Center, 1 Robbins Rd, Ware, MA. Please RSVP in advance to waregrange164@gmail.com or call 413-284-1135. Join us for a good meal in support of the creation of Ware's new community garden.

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.

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success improve with support from doctors and family.

Support for smoking cessation is everywhere you look. The National Cancer Institute hosts a website, smokefree.gov, which is chock full of tips and techniques to help you on your journey to becoming a former smoker.

For example, there's guidance on nicotine replacement therapy (NRT), which has been shown to increase the success rate, especially when several forms are used, such as a nicotine patch supplemented by lozenges or gum. Some studies suggest that older adults may actually have higher success rates using NRT compared to younger smokers.

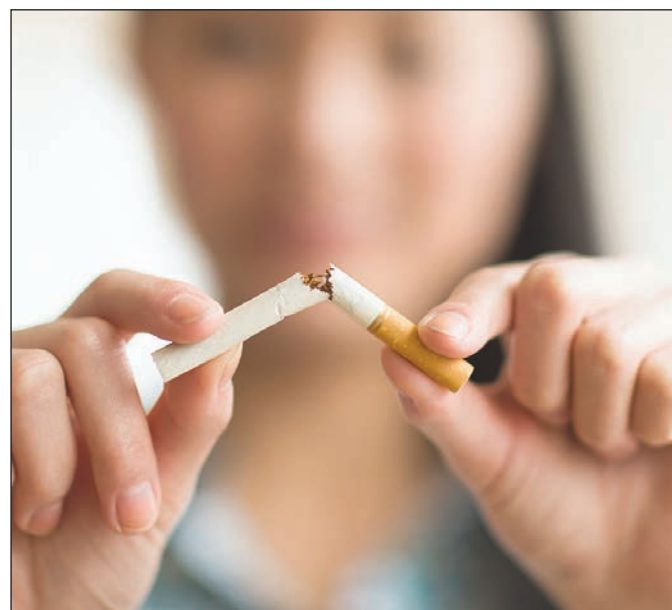
You can also find apps,

texting and social media sites that offer support, along with how to build a quit plan.

Medicare wants you to quit smoking, too. After all, it will save them money. Medicare covers counseling sessions to help you stop smoking under Part B, allowing up to eight sessions every 12 months at no cost if your provider accepts Medicare. Additionally, Medicare Part D covers certain prescription medications to assist with smoking cessation.

Medicare Advantage Plans are required to cover counseling and some medications as well, though benefits vary by plan.

Here in Massachusetts, 1-800-QUIT-NOW is Massachusetts' tobacco and nicotine Quitline, where you can connect to a free trained quit coach by phone or line. They



share strategies to curb cravings, handle life's big and small stresses and tackle. You can track your progress and

learn how to access free NRT supplies.

Talking to your healthcare provider is also important, both as a source of

support and advice on using certain prescription medications to curb smoking such as varenicline (Chantix). This medication can be used by older adults, but caution is advised because of a higher likelihood of age-related kidney issues. Your doctor may also recommend cognitive behavior therapy (CBT).

What does a quit plan look like? Pick a date you're going to quit and rid the house of cigarettes, ashtrays and other smoking paraphernalia. You might need to take some things to the dry cleaner to get the cigarette smell out. Tell everyone that you've made a quit plan and you need their help.

Be proud of what you're accomplishing! Let people know when you've been smoke-free for a week, a month, a year. If you do hap-

pen to light up, don't give up. Tomorrow is another day.

And you may have more tomorrows when you've become an ex-smoker. Good luck.

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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BUDGET | from page 1

with program quality. "Our goal continues to be balancing fiscal responsibility with maintaining high quality programs and opportunities for our students," Duda said. Expansion Efforts and Facility Investments

A significant portion of the presentation focused on ongoing and recent expansion projects, including the district's partnership with the Cold Spring School in Belchertown. The initiative will add 150 seats, expanding access to vocational education in the region.

"The excitement around the 150-seat expansion initiative with the Cold Spring school in Belchertown could be felt in the room," officials said.

District leaders also highlighted the successful redevelopment of the former Country Bank property at Four Corners. Renovated by Pathfinder students, the building is now fully operational and serves multiple community functions.

The space currently houses the Quaboag Hills Chamber of Commerce and is used in the evenings for adult continuing education programs; an initiative that has grown significantly in recent years.

Costs associated with the Cold Spring expansion, including transportation and staffing, are being offset through revolving funds, meaning they will not impact member town assessments for FY27.

Rising costs and insurance adjustments

While the district remains in a stable financial position, several cost drivers

are putting pressure on the budget. Among the most significant increases are:

- 10% rise in transportation costs
- 12.7% increase in retiree health insurance premiums
- 9.83% increase in active employee health insurance
- 12% increase in non-employee insurance

District officials pointed to reforms made in FY23 to health insurance offerings as a mitigating factor. The transition to tiered plans and expanded options has improved coverage while positioning the district for long-term savings.

Officials project that continued staff attrition and retirements over the next five to seven years will further reduce insurance-related costs.

Strong financial position

Despite rising expenses, Pathfinder Tech reported no outstanding debt and no major capital requests for the upcoming fiscal year.

This stability is largely attributed to the district's success in securing more than \$1.4 million in competitive grants across FY25 and FY26.

"Through careful planning and strategic grant funding, the district has been able to invest in programs and facilities while avoiding new debt," Duda said.

Enrollment trends defy regional decline

A key theme of the presentation was the contrast between regional enrollment trends and Pathfinder's continued growth.

Across the nine member towns, K-12 enrollment has declined by more than 20 percent over the past 12 years. In contrast, Pathfinder Tech has seen steady increases in enrollment, with particularly

strong demand among incoming ninth-grade applicants.

"Even as overall K-12 enrollment declines in many communities, demand for career and technical education continues to grow," officials said. "We are seeing that reflected in our application numbers each year."

Enrollment is expected to increase further in FY27, driven by both in-district students and non-resident tuition applicants.

Programs driving engagement

District leaders also highlighted several initiatives contributing to student success and engagement.

Among them is the "PATH to Professionalism" framework, which emphasizes core values and workforce readiness skills. Officials credited the program, along with hands-on learning opportunities, for helping drive student interest and retention. Pathfinder is also now in its third year as a cell-phone-free school; a policy administrators say has significantly improved focus, engagement, and productivity in classrooms.

Daily attendance rates exceed 95 percent, a figure officials cited as evidence of strong student investment in their education.

Expanding adult education

The district's adult continuing education program was another area of growth highlighted during the presentation. Now fully self-sustaining, the program operates without financial impact on member towns while generating revenue and expanding course offerings.

In the past year alone, the program secured more than \$500,000 in grant funding.

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"I don't want to call it a balanced budget when everybody's losing services," Superintendent Paul Foster said, advocating for language that clearly communicates the real-world impacts of budget reductions.

The dual-budget approach is designed to give voters a clear, side-by-side comparison of their options.

What cuts could look like

Department heads provided early insight into what a reduced services budget might entail, warning that cuts would go far beyond minor adjustments.

Among the potential impacts discussed:

- Police Department: Loss of up to three positions
- Fire Department: Reduction of two positions, potentially increasing response times and overtime costs
- Highway Department: Elimination of one position, reduced paving schedules, and slower service delivery

Officials emphasized that many departments are already operating at "bone bare" levels, leaving little room for reductions without significant consequences.

Challenges in budget development

The push for dual budgets comes after earlier efforts to impose uniform cuts across all departments proved ineffective.

Finance Director Sherri Roberson explained that the initial directive for equal percentage reductions delayed the budget process, as departments struggled to identify cuts that would not undermine core operations.

"We spent time on an exercise that we already

knew wouldn't work," she said.

The experience underscored the need for a more realistic, department-specific approach to budgeting.

Public information campaign takes shape

Recognizing the complexity of the issue, officials are planning an extensive public outreach effort to educate residents before the vote.

Plans include:

- Informational flyers breaking down budget impacts
- Public forums and town hall meetings
- Detailed explanations of service reductions and override benefits
- Narrative summaries for each major budget category, including public safety, education, and public works

"You can't make an informed decision until we give you the information," one Finance Committee member said. "This is going to be a huge informational campaign."

Clarifying the town meeting process

Officials also addressed the procedural steps required before the override reaches voters.

At Town Meeting, residents will be asked to vote on two separate articles:

1. Adoption of a reduced services budget
2. Approval of an override question tied to a higher spending plan

If Town Meeting supports the override article, the question will then proceed to a town-wide ballot vote in June.

Leaders emphasized the importance of clearly explaining this process to avoid confusion, particular-

ly given the complexity of presenting two competing budget scenarios.

Long-term planning and revenue ideas

While the override is intended as a short-term solution, discussions also touched on longer-term strategies to strengthen the town's financial position.

Ideas included:

- Temporarily pausing the Community Preservation Act (CPA), subject to Town Meeting approval
- Relaxing zoning restrictions along Route 20 to encourage commercial development
- Anticipating future revenue from projects such as the MDC development and National Grid expansion
- Exploring regionalization of services to reduce costs

Additionally, officials are working to establish a Special Education Reserve Fund, funded through Medicaid reimbursements, to help offset unpredictable education expenses.

A community-wide decision

Ultimately, officials framed the upcoming vote as a defining moment for the community.

The override would provide financial breathing room, but it also requires taxpayer support. Without it, residents will face tangible reductions in services across multiple departments.

By presenting two fully developed budgets and prioritizing transparency, town leaders hope to give voters the tools they need to make an informed choice.

"This is about laying everything out clearly," one official said. "People need to see exactly what's at stake."

PROPOSAL | from page 1

short-term strategy designed to stabilize finances over the next 2.5 to 3 years. The \$3 million would not be spent all at once; instead, funds would be drawn incrementally as needed to close annual gaps and absorb rising costs.

This phased approach is intended to soften the tax impact on residents while buying time for long-term planning.

"This is a bridge," officials reiterated throughout the discussion; one that would allow the town to explore sustainable solutions such as economic development, regionalization of services, and

new revenue streams.

Committee support and next steps

All three boards expressed strong support for moving the override forward:

- The Finance Committee voted unanimously to recommend placing the question on the June ballot.
- The Select Board signaled its intent to formally vote on placing the measure on the Town Meeting warrant.
- The School Committee reached consensus, with no opposition to advancing the proposal.

The process now moves to Town Meeting, where residents will first vote on

whether to include the override question on the ballot. If approved, the final decision will rest with voters in a town-wide election in June.

Financial pressures across departments

The meeting highlighted widespread strain across municipal departments, many of which are already operating at minimal staffing levels.

The Highway Department, for example, currently maintains over 100 miles of road with just six employees; down significantly from historical staffing levels of 10 or more. Officials warned that further cuts would reduce road maintenance and delay

essential services.

Public safety departments also outlined potential impacts of budget reductions, including fewer police officers, firefighter staffing cuts, and slower emergency response times.

School budget context

School officials pushed back on the notion that education spending is driving the deficit, offering data to show a different trend.

Superintendent Paul Foster noted that school staffing has decreased alongside enrollment, which has dropped by roughly 20% over the past decade. Staffing levels have fallen even more sharply, by

about 25%, during that same period.

Foster also emphasized that the school department's requested FY27 budget increase of 5.9% (or 11.5% including transportation) is not the largest among town departments.

"The schools have been level funded for years," Foster said, arguing that past restraint in school spending helped the town avoid overrides in the past. "We're in this situation now because we can't do that anymore."

Limited financial flexibility

Officials also pointed to limited reserve funds as a contributing factor to the

town's financial challenges. After accounting for deficits such as snow and ice removal and maintaining required reserves, Monson's available free cash stands at approximately \$450,000.

That relatively low cushion raises concerns about financial stability and could impact the town's bond rating if not carefully managed.

Additional financial obligations are also on the horizon. While a previous debt exclusion has rolled off, a new fire station project will begin requiring principal and interest payments in FY28, adding further pressure to future budgets.

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FUNDING | from page 1

address Kelly Street as part of its continued neighborhood improvements.

"These projects include water, drainage, paving, sidewalks... everything," Latour said. "It's continuous maintenance of the town, modernizing and updating amenities around the area."

In addition to infrastructure upgrades, the department has also redirected previously awarded funds to meet emerging commu-

nity needs. Latour said the town reprogrammed savings from earlier grant cycles to provide fuel assistance to residents during the heating season.

"We're just finishing up that heating season now," he said, adding that the town hopes to continue similar efforts in the future.

Latour, who has served in his role in Palmer for approximately four and a half years, brings more than three decades of experience in community development work. He said the ability to

make meaningful, lasting improvements is what continues to motivate him.

"It's helping people," Latour said. "Everyone in this office is here because it's a feel-good scenario where you're able to make positive changes... real, lasting contributions."

As Palmer continues to pursue funding opportunities and invest in both infrastructure and community services, Latour emphasized that the goal remains the same: improving daily life for residents across the town.

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Second Chance Animal Services seeks foster homes for cats

EAST BROOKFIELD – Second Chance Animal Services is urgently seeking foster families to care for cats and kittens in need. The nonprofit is especially looking for homes willing to take pregnant cats, kittens, cats recovering from surgery, or timid cats who need time and patience to build confidence before finding permanent homes.

“Our greatest foster need right now is cat and kitten fosters,” said Lindsay Doray, Chief Development Officer for Second Chance Animal Services. “In recent years, our kitten season seems to extend all year long. With more cats requiring

temporary care throughout the year, every new foster home allows us to help more vulnerable animals and give them the individualized attention they need.”

Foster homes provide a calm, safe environment where cats can heal, give birth, or adjust to people at their own pace. Second Chance supplies everything fosters need, including food, medical care, supplies, and guidance from the organization’s veterinary and shelter teams-fosters provide love and a temporary home.

“Fostering is one of the most impactful ways someone can help,” Doray added. “It gives cats and kittens the

chance to recover, grow, and prepare for adoption, while freeing up space in our shelters so we can continue helping all pets in need.”

Foster commitments vary depending on the animal’s needs. Pregnant cats stay with the foster family through the birth until the kittens are eight weeks old, while cats recovering from surgery or needing socialization may only require a few weeks. No prior experience is required.

Those interested in fostering a cat or kittens can learn more and complete a foster application at www.secondchanceanimals.org/foster-care/.

Brimfield to mark 250th Independence Anniversary

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 Massachusetts 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.

Springfield Garden Club hosts Gardening Series

SPRINGFIELD — The Springfield Garden Club will host a series of programs for anyone interested in gardens and gardening or just escaping the winter for an hour.

The programs will be held at The Monkey House in Forest Park at 10 AM. Admission is free to all with paid park admission. More information can be

found on the club’s website www.springfieldgardenclubma.org or on Facebook.

Saturday, March 28, 2026 - 10 a.m. “Vegetable Gardening 101” presented by Gretel Anspach

Saturday, April 11, 2026 - 10 a.m. “Planning and Growing a Bountiful Flower Garden” presented by Becky Sadlowski.

Valley Press Club offers journalism scholarships

REGION – The Valley Press Club, based in Springfield, Mass., will award \$1,000 scholarships to high school seniors in Western Massachusetts and Northern Connecticut who are interested in pursuing a career in journalism.

The Valley Press Club Scholarships, funded by contributions and dues to the Press Club, are for students planning careers in print, online or broadcast journalism.

The Republican Scholarship, funded by The Republican, is for students living within the newspaper’s circulation area who are planning careers in print journalism.

The 22News Scholarship, funded by WWLP-22News is for students planning careers in broadcast journalism.

The MassLive Scholarship is for a Massachusetts high school senior planning to pursue a career in print, online or broadcast journalism/communication. This scholarship is available to a student who is underrepresented in the field of journalism and is planning to attend an institution of higher education in the field.

The Edward J. Malley Jr. Memorial Scholarship, es-

ablished in memory of a chief photographer for the Springfield Newspapers, is for students planning careers in photojournalism.

The Rhonda Swan Memorial Scholarship, established in memory of the award-winning journalist, editor and author, honors her legacy by supporting students from the Greater Springfield area who aspire to careers in journalism and bring voices and perspectives that have been historically underrepresented in the field.

Primary emphasis is placed on career goals, writing ability, scholastic aptitude and overall achievement as measured by an applicant’s high school transcript, class rank,

academic awards, SAT scores and extracurricular activities. The deadline for submissions is April 10, 2026.

Scholarship applications are available at www.ValleyPressClub.com or high school guidance offices. Applications may be sent by mail to Noreen Tassinari, Scholarship Chair, Valley Press Club, P.O. Box 5475, Springfield, Mass. 01102 or electronically to NTassinari77@gmail.com

Over the course of six decades, The Valley Press Club has presented over \$140,000 in scholarships to eligible students. The Valley Press Club consists of active and retired journalists and public relations professionals from corporate and nonprofit organizations.

Railers split weekend in Reading Royals

READING, PA — The Worcester Railers HC (26-24-5-2, 59 pts) split the weekend against the Reading Royals (30-20-6-1, 67 pts) by a 4-2 final on Sunday, March 15th, in front of a crowd of 3,066 at Santander Arena. The Railers are back in action this Friday at the DCU Center in Worcester, MA against the Maine Mariners for a 7:05 p.m. puck drop.

Reading came out firing in the first with three unanswered goals. Connor Kurth (1-0-1) kicked things off for the Royals at 2:09 with a slapshot into the top corner of the net (0-1). Connor McMenam (1-0-1) scored a rebound chip over Thomas Gale as the puck came loose in the crease at 8:29 (0-2). A third goal from Reading at 14:39 closed the period with the Royals up three-nil. Brandon Saigeon (1-1-2) finished off an initial drive from Vincent Sevigny at the outer edge of the zone. Ross Mitton (1-0-1) broke the scoreless drought for the Railers with an early third-period goal off a faceoff (1-3). Michael Suda (1-0-1) narrowed the Royals’ lead down to a single goal with 61 seconds left on the clock with a shot that sent the puck past Keith Petruzzelli (2-3). A final empty net goal from Ben Meehan (1-0-1) at 19:35 in the third extended the Royals’ lead back to two

goals and cemented the 2-4 final.

The Royals opened a three-goal lead in the first frame. Connor Kurth (11th) drove the puck home with a slapshot to the top corner of the net at 2:09 on Reading’s first shot of the afternoon. Connor McMenam (10th) made the game 2-0 for the Royals as he finished off a rebound along the far side of the crease and chipped the puck high as Gale dove to cover. Brandon Saigeon (12th) closed out the period with a third goal on the power play, another rebound play set up by Vincent Sevigny on the outer edge of the zone. Worcester trailed in shots on goal with six to Reading’s 10. Each team picked up one penalty in the first twenty minutes.

It was a scoreless second period for both sides as neither team was able to break past their respective goaltenders. Despite not finding the back of the net, both teams kept the energy going with continuous conversations and physical blows. Cam McDonald collected a roughing call just as the period turned to its second half. MacAuley Carson dropped the gloves against former-Railer Artyom Kulakov. Both men earned themselves a double minor in the final five minutes of the frame. Reading outshot Worcester by one, nine to eight. Worcester

led in penalties with three to Reading’s two.

The Railers managed to narrow the gap created by Reading in the first, as Ross Mitton (5th) scored the first goal of the game for Worcester at 4:22 in the final frame. Mitton’s shot came from a faceoff win by Ryan Miotto, who maneuvered the puck behind him at the near faceoff dot in the Royals’ zone. Mitton quickly steadied the puck and skimmed the crossbar as he fired high on Keith Petruzzelli (3-1). Worcester continued to chip away in the offensive zone as Gale was called to the bench for the extra attacker. Michael Suda (3rd) nabbed a second goal for the Railers from the left point, his shot sent past Petruzzelli for a narrow 2-3 game. An unexpected turnover in Reading’s zone, as Declan McDonnell’s stick snapped while he tried to maintain puck possession, led Ben Meehan (9th) to a fourth and final goal for the Royals. Meehan sent the puck sailing from along the near boards into the unattended Railers’ net as the final seconds of regulation ticked away. Final shots were 29-27 in favor of Reading. Worcester led in shots for the period with 13 to 10. MacAuley Carson and Jacob Frasca earned the sole penalties awarded to each team in the period.

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Business

Wing achieves Healthgrades Patient Safety Excellence Award

PALMER – Baystate Health is pleased to announce that Baystate Wing Hospital has achieved the 2026 Patient Safety Excellence Award™ from Healthgrades, the #1 site Americans use to find a doctor or hospital.

Baystate Wing has earned this award for the second consecutive years, ranking in the top 10% in the nation for patient safety throughout that time and rising to the top 5% for 2026.

This recognition reflects Baystate Health's mission to deliver compassionate, quality, and accessible care – advancing our communities' health for all.

"This recognition reflects the dedication of the Baystate Wing Hospital team and their unwavering commitment to delivering safe, high-quality, and reliable care to every patient," said Karli Barrett, president and chief operat-

ing officer of Baystate Wing Hospital. "Our caregivers are deeply guided by the values of courage, accountability, and respect, and they work collaboratively to provide care with empathy and compassion. Safety is our highest priority in every moment, and through our commitment to continuous improvement, we strive to deliver the very best care to our neighbors, families, and communities each day."

The recognition of Baystate Wing is based on what matters most: patient outcomes. To determine the national leaders in patient safety, Healthgrades evaluated risk-adjusted complication and mortality rates from approximately 4,500 hospitals nationwide across 13 patient safety indicators (PSIs), with each PSI representing a serious, preventable complication.

Patients treated at Baystate Wing and other

award-winning facilities had significantly lower risk of experiencing these leading complications:

- In-hospital fall resulting in fracture (52.4% less likely)
- Collapsed lung due to a procedure in or around the chest (57.5% less likely)
- Catheter-related bloodstream infections acquired in the hospital (67.8% less likely)
- Pressure sores or bed sores acquired in the hospital (71.9% less likely)

"The data behind this year's Patient Safety Excellence Award highlights how measurable improvements in safety can prevent thousands of complications," said Dr. Alana Biggers, MPH, medical advisor at Healthgrades. "By prioritizing evidence-based safety practices, Baystate Health's community hospitals are achieving better clinical outcomes and cultivating a culture where patients come first."

Baystate Franklin Medical Center and Baystate Noble Hospital also earned the award, with Baystate Franklin in the top 5% and Baystate Noble in the top 10%, reflecting the continued excellence and dedication of care teams across Baystate Health.

Patient Safety Excellence Award™ and view data insights not available anywhere else, visit [healthgrades.com](https://www.healthgrades.com).

*Statistics are calculated from Healthgrades' Patient Safety Excellence Award Methodology, which is based primarily on AHRQ technical specifications (Version 2025.0.1) to MedPAR data from approximately 4,500 hospitals for years 2022 through 2024 and represent three-year estimates for Medicare patients only.

About Baystate Health
Baystate Health is a not-for-profit, integrated healthcare system with hospitals,

physician practices, a health plan and more serving over 800,000 people throughout western New England. Baystate Health is the safety net provider in Western Massachusetts. With roots dating to the founding of Springfield Hospital in 1883, Baystate Health has been providing high-quality, compassionate and accessible care in the Pioneer Valley for more than 140 years and continues to be a pillar of its community – rooted here, serving here, and helping generations thrive here. With a focus on advancing health for all, Baystate is not only a keystone of the region, it is a national leader in healthcare. Learn more at [BaystateHealth.org](https://www.BaystateHealth.org).

Healthgrades is dedicated to empowering meaningful connections between patients, doctors, and hospitals. As the #1 platform for finding a doctor and a leader in healthcare

transparency, we help millions of consumers each month find and schedule appointments with their healthcare professional of choice and prepare for their appointments with best-in-class, treatment-focused content.

For over 20 years, our health system, group practice, and life sciences marketing solutions have helped our partners reach and engage consumers on their way to the doctor.

Healthgrades is part of RVO Health, the largest consumer health and wellness platform. RVOH's audience across its brand portfolio, including Healthgrades, Healthline, Medical News Today, Greatist, Psych Central, and Bezy, touches every part of the health and wellness journey. RVO Health helps more than 70 million unique visitors live their strongest and healthiest lives each month.

Palmer Democratic Caucus to be held on March 21

PALMER – The Palmer Democratic Town Committee announces that Palmer Democrats will convene for the Annual Caucus on Saturday, March 21, 2026 at 10:30 a.m. at the Palmer Public Library to elect 5 delegates and 4 alternates to represent Palmer at the 2026 State Democratic Convention.

Registered and pre-reg-

istered Democrats in Palmer at least 16 years old may vote and be elected as delegates or alternates during the caucus.

Youth (16-35), people with disabilities, people of color, veterans, members of the LGBTQ+ community not elected as delegates are encouraged to apply to be additional delegates at the caucus or by visiting massdems.org/

massdems-convention.

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

Those interested in getting involved with the Palmer Democratic Town Committee should contact Chairperson Kathy Burns at Palmerdems@icloud.com or 413-313-9579.

Town of Palmer announces nomination papers available

PALMER – The Town Clerk of Palmer will have nomination papers available the week of March 9.

The available seats on the June 9, 2026 town election are as follows:

- Councilor at Large 1 seat**
3-year term
- Councilor at Large 1 seat**
1-year term
- District Councilor PCT#1**

- 1 seat**
3-year term
- Planning Board**
2 seats
3-year term
- School Committee**
2 seats
3-year term

Last day to obtain Nomination papers is April 16, 2026. Nomination papers must be filed with the Registrar, no later than April 21,

2026. Fifty valid signatures are required. The fifty signatures must be registered voters in the Town of Palmer; the District Councilor Precinct # 1 seat requires fifty signatures of registered voters from Precinct #1.

If you have any questions regarding filing requirements on above seats, please reach out to the Palmer Town Clerk's office.

"Spay"ghetti Supper fundraiser

PALMER – Here Today Adopted Tomorrow (HTAT) invites all animal lovers to our annual "Spay"ghetti Supper fundraiser at the St. Thomas Parish Center in Palmer on Saturday, March 28, 2026.

Enjoy a delicious chef-prepared meal while helping the very cats in our community! Whether you're a true party animal or simply want to make a difference, it's a great way to support a good cause with friends and family. Plus, enjoy raffles, prizes, and

plenty of fun throughout the evening.

Each year, HTAT sees more cats pawing at its doors for help. As prices rise, everyone feels the strain—but many people don't realize that rising costs affect pets, too. It's not just veterinary care that has exploded; as food and housing prices rise, many loving pet owners find themselves struggling to keep up. When life becomes overwhelming, cats can be the ones caught in the middle.

The "Spay"ghetti Supper takes place at the St. Thomas Parish Center in Palmer on Saturday, March 28, from 5 to 6:30 p.m. Advance tickets are \$15 for adults and \$10 for seniors and kids under 12, while limited door tickets will be available at \$20 for adults and \$15 for seniors and kids. To purchase tickets, visit www.heretodaysanctuary.org or call 413-324-8224. Visit www.heretodaysanctuary.org to learn more about our community assistance programs.

Monson nomination papers available for town election

MONSON – The Monson Town Clerk's Office announces that nomination papers are now available for the Annual Town Election to be held on June 9, 2026.

The following slate of offices are available:

- Select Board, 1 Seat,**
term 3 years
- Town Clerk, 1 Seat,**
term 3 years

- Board of Assessors, 1 Seat,**
term 3 years
- School Committee, 2 Seats,**
one term 2 years
one term 3 years
- Water/Sewer Commission,**
1 Seat,
term 3 years
- Cemetery Commission,**
1 Seat,
term 3 years

- Parks and Recreation Commission, 1 Seat,**
term 3 years
- Housing Authority, 1 Seat,**
term 5 years

The deadline to obtain nomination papers is Thursday, April 16.

For inquiries contact the Monson Town Clerk's office at 413-267-4115 or email: townclerk@monson-ma.gov.

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DEADLINE

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

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



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BASKETBALL

Palmer falls to Frontier in youth playoffs

PALMER – On Saturday, Mar. 7, Palmer’s 7-8 Blue-Green Division youth boys basketball was defeated by Frontier in a playoff game. Palmer defeated Easthampton to reach the next round for the division. Frontier then scored a 53-45 win in the final matchup, held at Palmer High School.



Seth Peets goes for the three-pointer.



Max Wilkerson focuses as he shoots the ball.



Mason Cowher tries to bring in a rebound.



Noel McKee fakes a pass.



Josiel Ortiz takes a free throw

Turley photos by David Henry www.sweetdogphotos.com

SWIMMING

Casavant shines for swim team

By Tim Peterson
Sports Correspondent

PALMER—The seventh and eighth grade students at Palmer High School can take swimming as part of their gym class.

When Harper Casavant was in the eighth grade, Kel-

lie Murphy, who’s a physical education teacher at Palmer High, thought he had the potential to be a very good swimmer. One day, Murphy encouraged him to join the Panthers swim and dive team, which is coached by Brittany North-Marek.

“I played several sports

growing up, but I never swam competitively,” said Casavant, who’s currently a sophomore at Pathfinder Tech. “When I was in the eighth grade, Mrs. Murphy told me that I was a very good swimmer, and I should think about joining the swim team. She’s the main why reason I decided to join the team.”

At the end of his first season on the swim, Casavant qualified for the Western/Central Mass. championships as a member of three relay teams.

“I didn’t perform very well at the beginning of that season, but I was able to pull it together during the second half of the season,” Casavant said. “I improved my skills with the help of coach North-Marek. She’s a very good swim coach and is always very positive.”

North-Marek, who’s an eighth grade math teach-

er, gave her thoughts about Casavant’s abilities in the pool.

“Harper works extremely hard in practice and is a dedicated student-athlete,” North-Marek said. “He’s also a leader on our team and consistently demonstrates excellent sportsmanship. His growth as a swimmer has been truly impressive.”

Prior to the start of his freshman year, Casavant transferred to Pathfinder Tech. He was still able to compete for the Palmer boys’ swimming team because the neighboring high schools have a co-op.

“I thought that I would have more opportunities academically here at Pathfinder Tech,” Casavant said. “I was also interested in learning a vocation. I’m currently taking HVAC. It has been an awesome experience and I’m very grateful to still be a member of the Palmer swim team.”

During his first semester at Pathfinder Tech, Casavant took eight one-week exploratory classes. He had to rank his top five favorite classes and HVAC was his top choice.

“As well as Harper does for his swim team, he’s equally as strong academically,” said Pathfinder Tech Athletic Director Kevin Aldrich. “He’s an honor roll student and is also a member



Turley photos by David Henry www.sweetdogphotos.com

Harper Casavant competes in the 200 freestyle during an event this year.



Harper Casavant goes for a win the medley relay.

WRESTLING

Wrestling season nets many championships

By Gregory A. Scibelli
gscibelli@turley.com

The high school wrestling season has come to an end, with many individuals and teams in Western and Central Massachusetts bringing home titles.

At the All-State Tournament held on Mar. 1 and 2 right in Springfield at the MassMutual Center, Agawam High School girls wrestling captured the All-State title with 86 points. Ludlow was 11th overall at 46 points. Stella Christopher captured the All-State title at 165 pounds, defeating Jordyn Reynolds of Greater Lawrence. Gabriella Ramos was a runner-up at 145 pounds. For Ludlow, Ella Libiszewski was the runner-up at 114 pounds.

In the mixed-gender all-state event, Agawam would place 16th with 33.5 points. Minnechaug scored 26 points and both teams crowned an all-state champion. Jordin Agosto was Agawam’s all-state champion with a top finish at 144 pounds. Minnechaug’s Kai Ly also took an all-state title at 138 pounds.

Ludlow High School captured the Division 3 state girls wrestling championship with 97.5 points, crowning four state champions. Quabbin Regional High School was ninth overall with 36 points. South Hadley finished with 18 points and Holyoke with 16 points in the meet.

Ludlow’s champions were Libiszewski at 114 pounds, Samantha Bertini at 120 pounds, Ellianna Williams at 145 pounds, and Riley Morais at 152 pounds. Quabbin had one champion with Kailynn Schuster scoring the win at 138 pounds.

Agawam took second place in the Division 2 state girls tournament, scoring 94.5 points. Christopher had the big performance by placing first in the 165-pound bracket. Ramos placed second at 145 pounds and Madison Minalga also had a runner-up finish at 185 pounds.

In the Division 2 state championship, Agawam was the second-best finisher from Western Mass., finishing fourth overall with 96 points, and crowning one runner-up in the field. Minnechaug was a distant 14th with 52 points. The Falcons’ Ly won the state championship at 138 pounds, while Agawam’s Ryan Sexton placed second.

In the Division 3 state championship, Holyoke placed ninth overall with 69 points, Ludlow was 25th with 28 points, Quabbin 26th with 27 points, and South Hadley and Belchertown also registered points in the competition. Holyoke would place two wrestlers as runners up. Steven Santiago was the second-place finisher at 120 pounds and Parker Brunelle was the runner-up at 285 pounds.

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Turleysports

Athlete of the Week



Mason Cowher
Palmer High School

Cowher was a member of the 7-8 boys basketball team to reach a big playoff matchup with Frontier on Mar. 7.

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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Candlepin League News

By **Ryan Drago**
Staff Writer
rdrago@turley.com

Bondsville League

WARE – The regular season of league candlepin bowling is nearing the end for the Wednesday night Bondsville League.

After 26 weeks, Sandri is hanging on to first place with a record of 114-68. Fire Mountain is in second place with a record of 109.5-72.5 and would have to win out the final week of the season to reclaim first place. It is possible only if Sandri doesn't win any points during the final regular week.

During week 26, Cannonballs bowled against Spare Parts Bud at Roll-A-Way Lanes. In game one, Cannonballs defeated Spare Parts Bud by a score of 473-460. Micah Hinckley of Cannonballs had a strong start with 133.

In game two, Cannonballs held on to the lead and won 466-461. Hinckley broke the century mark with 105. Madison Jebb of Spare Parts Bud bowled over her league average with 100.

In game three, Spare Parts Bud won the last game 507-471. Cindy Laramme of Spare Parts Bud had a good game of 105. The final score was 1428-1410 in favor of Spare Parts Bud.

Sandri bowled against the Snappers during week 26. In game one, Snappers got the win by a score of 456-450.

Snapper bowlers, Andy Tombor and Kevin Krasnecky, bowled 107 and 106.

In game two, Sandri won by a score of 505-445. Randy Harper of Sandri bowled 118 and his teammate Sue Horton finished with 123.

In game three, Sandri defeated Snappers by a score of 505-434. Brandon Lane of Sandri had the highest game of 126, while Horton finished with 113 (347 for the series), and Ron Gouin finished with 120 (341 series).

The final score was 1460-1335 in favor of Sandri.

P&J Meats bowled against Slow Burners in week 26. In game one, Slow Burners took the first game 479-446. Paige Stabach of P&J Meats had a strong beginning with 118.

In game two, Slow Burners won again by a score of 445-420. Scott Radisic of Slow Burners had the highest score of 104 in game two.

In game three, Slow Burners won the last game by a score of 482-469. The final score was 1406-1335 in favor of Slow Burners.

Team UMass bowled against Night Hawks in week 26. In game one, Team UMass defeated Night Hawks by a score of 490-457. Lee Robinson of Night Hawks had the highest score of 124 to start the match.

In game two, Team UMass won again by a score of 481-466. Kevin Trott of Team UMass broke the century mark with 105.

In game three, Night

Hawks pulled off a one-pin victory over Team UMass, 475-474. Robinson finished with 117 for a three-game series of 345. His teammate, Gavin Sinclair, finished with 114. The final score was 1445-1398 in favor of Team UMass.

Fire Mountain bowled against Zeke's Freaks in week 26. In game one, Zeke's Freaks defeated Fire Mountain by a score of 476-425.

In game two, Fire Mountain won by a score of 468-443. Rick Trott of Fire Mountain had the highest score of 121 during his team's win over Zeke's Freaks.

In game three, Fire Mountain won again by a score of 474-441. Trott bowled better his last game with 129 to end the match. The final score was 1367-1360 in favor of Fire Mountain.

Ironmen bowled against Filling Bowling Balls (FBB) in week 26. In game one, FBB defeated Ironmen by a score of 493-459. Filling in on FBB is Jared Demitri, who started with 123.

In game two, FBB won again by a score of 500-460. Demitri continued bowling well with 116. Don Paulus of FBB bowled well with 111.

In game three, Ironmen won the last game by a score of 464-440. Ryan Drago of Ironmen finished strong with 144 to go with his 127 and 115 for a 386 series. Demitri finished with 107 and a 346 series.

The final score was 1433-1383 in favor of FBB.

Women's basketball season comes to a close

HOLYOKE – Earlier this month, Holyoke Community College Women's basketball saw their stellar season come to a close on Sunday afternoon, Mar. 1, falling to top seed CC of Rhode Island in the New England (Region XXI) championship game. The #2 seed Lady Cougars played well in their attempt to win a regional title but were

on the wrong end of the 86-51 final score.

Holyoke had a tremendous season overall, finishing in second place in the regular season New England standings before their runner-up finish in the regional championship tournament. Their postseason and title game appearances were

the program's firsts since the 2010-11 campaign. Women's basketball finishes the year with an 11-4 regional record and a 15-8 overall record. They were 13-4 against fellow NJCAA teams. Eight players from this year's squad can return to play next season.



Annastacia Dixon sends a pass away.



Tatiyana Zuniga heads across the court.



The Cougars face off with Bristol Community College early in the playoffs.



Mileidy Rosado heads into the paint.



Johnnays Andrades gets the open layup.

Turley photos by Gregory A. Scibelli

CASAVANT | from page 9
of our student ambassador program. Harper has done a very good job of representing Pathfinder Tech."

Casavant, who lives in Palmer, qualified for two events at the Western/Central MA Championships as a freshman.

His sophomore season in the pool, which wrapped up in the middle of February, was very memorable. He qualified for the Western/Central Mass. championships in seven of the eight individual events, along with the three relay races. The only event that he didn't qualify for at sectionals was the 100-meter breaststroke.

"I was close to qualifying

in the breaststroke, but I still need to do a little more work," Casavant said. "I'm hoping to qualify for that event next year."

A swimmer is only allowed to compete in two individual races and two relays at the sectionals.

Despite being one of the youngest swimmers at the Western/Central MA Championships, Casavant finished in sixth place in the 200 Freestyle and earned a medal with a time of 1:56.60. He also competed in the 50 freestyle race.

A week later, he competed at the Division 2 state meet, which took place at M.I.T. in Boston. He finished in 16th place in the 200 Free-

style, which is eight laps, with a time of 1:54.83.

"It was such a cool experience competing at states for the first time, he said. "I made a couple of changes with my stroke and was able to take two seconds off my time, which is a lot in swimming. I'm looking forward to qualifying for the states again during the next two years."

During the regular season, the Panthers boys' swim and dive squad squeaked out an 83-80 victory over Ludlow High School, which was held at the Ludlow Boys & Girls Club.

"Our meet at Ludlow was really close, and it came down to the final relay race," Casavant said. "We were able to

win it, which connected us as a team a little bit more."

If there are six swimmers in a race, the first place finisher gets six points. Second place earns five points, and third place gets four points. Each swim meet consist of eight individual races and three relay races.

Both the boys and girls swim teams normally compete at the same time. It usually takes between two and three hours to complete a swim meet.

Besides his coaches and teammates, Casavant has also received plenty of support from his parents (Kirsten & Jeremiah).

"Before the start of every race, I look for my parents,"

Casavant said. "They're also the first people that I look for after my races. They've always been my biggest supporters."

Harper's younger brother, Reese, is a member of the rec swim team. He also has a younger sister, Autumn.

The other members of the Palmer boys' Swim and Dive team were senior Shane Normoyle, senior Jack Shilovsky, junior Simon Tetts, junior Derek Aldrich, junior Robbie Williams, junior Quinn Richardson, junior Jonas Toutant, sophomore Troy Lockwood, sophomore Noah Steinberg, sophomore Eddy Duggan, freshman Joshua Lisek, freshman Cristiano Garcia, eighth grader Emerie Marsh, seventh

grader Owen Mauer, and seventh grader Alex Guryanov.

The members of the Palmer girls' Swim and Dive team were senior Hannah Roy, senior Scarlett LaRose, junior Neila Lachance, junior Jacklyn McNally, junior Maddy Roy, freshman Akasha Santos-Thomas, freshman Eva Becker, freshman Abigail White, eighth grader Samantha Opielowski, eighth grader Talya Verda, seventh grader Mido Penny, seventh grader Adrianna Centeno, and seventh grader Amelia Wentworth.

Verda was the only member of the Lady Panthers swim team to qualify for Western/Central Mass. Championships.

Public safety

Monson Fire Logs

MONSON – Fire log for the Monson Fire Department for the week of March 9 through March 15, 2026. The department responded to 21 EMS calls and 4 Fire calls.

On **Wednesday, March 11** at 6:45 p.m. the department responded to 56 Margaret Street for the carbon monoxide alarm sounding. The department returned to service at 7:08 p.m.

On **Thursday, March 12** at 5:05 p.m. the department responded to 12 Al-

drich Road for the water in the basement. The department returned to service at 6:27 p.m.

On **Friday, March 13** at 5:59 p.m. the department responded to 184 Main Street for the public service. The department returned to service at 6:05 p.m.

On **Saturday, March 14** at 6:24 p.m. the department responded to 43 Margaret Street for the odor of gas. The department returned to service at 6:47 p.m.

Palmer Police Logs

Sunday, March 8

7:30 p.m. – Electrical fire, Palmer St.

8:30 p.m. – Burglar alarm, Wright St.

9:27 p.m. – Summons – Joshua Joseph Gingras, 34, charged with Strangulation or suffocation, assault and battery, two counts of breaking and entering, two counts of trespassing, and animal cruelty.

Monday, March 9

8:46 a.m. – Summons – Allison Marie Smith, 39, charged with unlicensed operation of a motor vehicle.

12:19 p.m. – Motor vehicle accident, N. Main St.

3:46 p.m. – Animal complaint, Main St.

8:53 p.m. – Animal complaint, Longview St.

Tuesday, March 10

12:27 a.m. – Animal complaint, Ware St.

6:07 a.m. – Burglar alarm, Wilbraham St.

10:16 p.m. – Arrest – Gina Anne Outhuse, 39, charged with possession of a Class B drug, and speeding

Wednesday, March 11

1:51 p.m. – Fire alarm, Pathfinder Tech, Sykes St.

4:29 p.m. – Animal complaint, Hovey Rd.

8:46 p.m. – Burglar alarm, Thorndike St.

Thursday, March 12

5:07 a.m. – Burglar alarm, Depot St.

10:41 a.m. – Water leak, Ruggles St.

12:30 p.m. – Animal complaint, Foster St.

1:09 p.m. – Assault, Main St.

2:50 p.m. – Arrest – Shannon McElhiney, 46, charged with possession of a Class B drug, uninsured motor vehicle, unregistered vehicle, and operation of motor vehicle with a suspended registration

4:12 p.m. – Vandalism, Main St.

10:35 p.m. – Summons: Mia Elise Rankins, 21, charged with operating a motor vehicle with a suspended license.

Friday, March 13

6:55 a.m. – Burglar alarm, Caroline Cir.

10:31 a.m. – Summons: Russell B. Thompson, 47, charged with unlicensed operation of a motor vehicle, and unregistered motor vehicle.

11:52 a.m. – Burglar alarm, Palmer Rd.

3:56 p.m. – Trespass complaint, Main St.

4:29 p.m. – Summons – Joseph Ramdial, 51, charged with disorderly conduct and threat to commit a crime

Saturday, March 14

8:39 a.m. – Summons – Ja-Chuan Aaron Johnson, 31, charged with uninsured motor vehicle.

11:50 a.m. – Animal complaint, Breckenridge St.

3:26 p.m. – Noise complaint, High St.

4:47 p.m. – Animal complaint, Main St.

6:04 p.m. – Summons – Lance James Hopkins, 34, charged with vandalizing property and stalking.

9:36 p.m. – Trespass complaint, N. Main St.

Obituaries

Sheila Marie (Boilard) Duquette

1947 – 2026

It is with heavy hearts that we share the passing of Sheila Marie (Boilard) Duquette, beloved wife, mom, and Nana. Sheila grew up in Indian Orchard, MA where she worked from an early age at the family business, Boilard Lumber. Sheila and Patrick lived in the Orchard until they moved to Monson in 1976.

She leaves her husband of 59 years, Patrick Duquette, her daughters Joan Long and husband Lawrence Long Jr., Erin Thomas and husband Sebastian Thomas, and grandchildren Haley, Finn, and Nadine; and her sisters Patricia McCullough and husband William McCullough; Elizabeth Hurley and husband William Hurley; and brothers Carl Boilard and wife Susan Speyer-Boilard, and Edward Barboza; her brothers- and sisters-in-law Jef-

frey Duquette and wife Heidi Duquette, Christine Newton and husband Ralph Newton, and Charlie Duquette and wife Jackie Duquette, and many nieces and nephews.

After graduating from the High School of Commerce in 1965, Sheila attended Northampton Commercial College. She was a lightning-fast typist and worked with Turley Publications for many years where she made lasting friendships and had the chance to work with a great team. She loved to play the piano and was known for silly dances in the kitchen – back then as kids, we probably rolled our eyes at something called “the mashed potato”, a great memory of her bringing joy to dinnertime. She and Patrick loved live music at local venues, notably Bob Dylan at Symphony Hall in Springfield in the ‘60s, and again just a couple of years

ago – same seats!

If they weren’t listening to music or watching a blues concert video, you would find them watching a Bruins game, attending a Springfield Falcons game, or packing a picnic lunch to spend the day at Quabbin or explore the back roads of western MA by motorcycle until they found a treasure like a used book store, coffee shop, ice cream stand, or random llamas and donkeys. She had a strong connection with animals, adopting cats that chose our house, visiting the “granddogs” and making a beeline to see the horses at Silver Bell Farm after a pumpkin-picking ride. She treasured spending time with all the grandkids whether it was crafting, coloring, visiting the brook, baking



cookies and muffins, attending recitals, or just hanging out and grabbing lunch.

Sheila was the most patient person you would ever meet. Even in crazy traffic, she gave strangers the benefit of the doubt, “maybe he’s having a bad day,” she would say. Not even a complaint during the fight with breast cancer, non-Hodgkins lymphoma, or dementia. We would like to thank Quaboag Rehabilitation for showing such kindness and wonderful care during her stay. The quietest, toughest warrior there could ever be. A celebration of life will be held in May. In lieu of sending flowers, please support your local animal shelter – Sheila would love that as much as she enjoyed flowers.

Joseph A. Furey III, 77



WEBSTER – Joseph A. “Joe” Furey III, 77, of Webster, passed away March 10, 2026, peacefully in the warmth and comfort of his home, with his daughters by his side after a short illness.

He leaves his daughters, Autumn B. Furey-LeBeau and her husband Justin LeBeau of Webster, and Willow Z. Furey and her husband Todd Calder of Belmont NH; he leaves his brother, Gregory A. Furey and his wife Marguerite “Peggy” of Dudley; his sisters, Lynn M. Helderich of Stratham, NH and Karen J. Furey of Dracut; his nieces and nephews Tina, Sarah, Crystal, Jackie, Kevin and Patrick, and his longtime friend Jack Daniels. He was predeceased by his brother David B. Furey, his sisters Cheryl A. Furey and Michelle M. (Furey) Bilis and by his nephew Joseph M. Janiak.

He was born in Boston on April 6, 1948, a son of Joseph A. Furey Jr. and Lois E. (Bruce) Furey. Residing in Palmer throughout his youth, Joe graduated from Palm-

er High School in 1966 and went on to graduate from Dean Jr. College in 1968 with an associate’s degree in science.

He joined the United States Marine Corps in 1969 and, upon completing boot camp at Parris Island, was deployed directly to Vietnam. While his official duty during the Vietnam War was that of a Machine Gunner, his exceptional tracking and navigation skills quickly proved invaluable. He served as a Combat Tracker and Point Man, leading his platoon through the dense jungles of Vietnam using only topographical maps. Joe was honorably discharged in 1975 with the rank of Corporal.

Throughout his life, Joe poured his creativity and his work ethic into everything he touched. He began his career as an artist with Atlas Screen Process Company in Webster, later dedicating many years to the corrugated industry with Johnson’s Corrugated in Thompson, CT, and Creative Packaging in Worcester. No matter the job, Joe approached his work with pride, precision,

and an artist’s eye.

A true outdoorsman at heart, Joe found his greatest peace in the wilderness—especially among New Hampshire’s White Mountains. He cherished the countless backpacking adventures he shared with his daughters. A skilled survivalist, Joe, carried a deep respect for nature and felt most at home under open skies.

Creatively, he was a remarkable artist whose talents stretched across many mediums. While gifted in all forms, he was especially known for his mastery of oil painting and airbrushing, through which he brought vivid landscapes, striking portraits, and imaginative scenes to life.

In addition to his artistic pursuits, Joe was a dedicated bodybuilder and an accomplished martial artist, proudly earning his black belt in Karate. Though he could be difficult to coax onto a dance floor, once the right song came on—especially Bruce Springsteen or Michael Jackson, he lit up with joy as he showed off his dance moves. His family cherished those rare, bright moments when his love of music broke through his quiet nature.

Joe was also a man who loved stories—whether found in books, in nature, or in music. He passed that appreciation on to his daughters, instilling in them a deep love for James Taylor’s storytelling and the emotional truth woven through his songs.

A lifelong learner and an avid reader, Joe carried a quiet curiosity that shaped the way he saw the world. But, above all else, Joe loved nature—its beauty, its challenges, and the quiet wisdom it offered. The wilderness was not just a place he visited, but truly part of who he was.

And so, on his next journey, he left this life with his favorite farewell: “Are you ready to rock and roll, kids?” In return, we send him off with, “Goodnight all you moonlight ladies, rock a bye Sweet Baby James.”

Services will be held privately and at the convenience of the family. In lieu of flowers, the family requests that donations be made to the World Wildlife Fund, 1250 24th Street NW, Washington, DC 20037. Funeral arrangements are under the direction of Scanlon Funeral Service, 38 East Main Street. www.websterfunerals.com.

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CLUES ACROSS

- Inclined to do
- Sketches
- Book of Chronicles (abbr.)
- Atomic #58
- Dorm official
- Small Eurasian deer
- Southern constellation
- Workers’ groups
- Former
- Excellent
- Romance language related to Spanish
- Reference
- Equally
- Dirty towels
- A cargo (abbr.)
- Ammunition
- You get one in summer

CLUES DOWN

- Moth species
- Quantum of energy
- Break the law
- Location of White House
- Official cancellation of a decision
- Where rockers work
- Cut of beef: ___ mignon
- Nocturnal burrowing reptile
- Atomic #62
- Genus of evergreen shrubs
- Flowering plant of the legume family
- Inches per minute (abbr.)

CLUES DOWN

- Slang for trucks with trailers
- Swiss river
- Exchange rate
- British School
- College teacher
- Foreign Service
- Horse gear
- Cost to fly
- A salt or ester of boric acid
- Mocking
- One who bird-watches
- Concluding passage
- A major division of geological time
- Sodium
- A way to produce
- Soak
- Laughed loudly and harshly
- Affirmative

CLUES DOWN

- Tropical fruit
- Hot fluid beneath the earth’s crust
- James ___, painter
- Popular dessert
- Payment (abbr.)
- Cuisine style
- Genus of true flies
- City in western France
- Arrogance
- One holding a position of command
- Weekday
- An evening party
- Print errors
- Not good
- Egyptian Sun god
- East German town
- Olfactory property
- Atomic #37
- “Pollock” actor Harris

The Journal Register OBITUARY POLICY

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

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

DEATH NOTICES

Sheila Marie (Boilard) Duquette
Celebration of Life in May

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Died March 10, 2026
Services are private
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Public notices

MONSON CONSERVATION COMMISSION LEGAL NOTICE

Under the requirements of M.G.L. Chapter 131, §40, the Monson Conservation Commission will hold a public hearing on **Wednesday, April 1, 2026 at 7:30 PM** in the Large Meeting Room, Town Office Building, 110 Main St. Under consideration is a Request for Determination of Applicability to determine if the work associated with the construction of an addition to a single-family home for the property located at 110 Bumstead Road, identified as Assessor's Map 079, Parcel 018, is subject to the Wetlands Protection Act. The Applicant is Andrew Beau- lieu.

Submitted by: Monson Conservation Commission 03/19/2026

Town of Monson Zoning Board of Appeals LEGAL NOTICE

In accordance with Chapter 40A M.G. L. §.11, the Monson Zoning Board of Appeals will hold a Public Hearing **Thursday, March 26th, 2026 at 7:00 P.M.** in the Select Board meeting room at the Town Administration Building, 110 Main Street on the application of Ronald Florek 149 Stafford Road, Monson, MA for a special permit as provided by §6.6 Earth Removal of the Monson Zoning Bylaws to conduct an Earth Removal operation. The property is zoned Rural Residential and located at 149 Stafford Road, Map 80, Parcel 21 and Map 101 Parcel 2. A copy of the application is on file in the Office of the Town Clerk, Zoning Board of Appeals and is available for viewing during regular office hours.

David Beaudoin, Chairman 03/12, 03/19/2026

MONSON CONSERVATION COMMISSION LEGAL NOTICE

Under the requirements of M.G.L. Chapter 131 §40, the Monson Conservation Commission will hold a public hearing on **Wednesday, April 1, 2026 at 7:20 PM** in the Large Meeting Room, Town Office Building, 110 Main St. Under consideration is a Notice of Intent for the abatement and demolition of several buildings and associated infrastructure within Riverfront Area for the property located at 175 State Ave., identified as Assessor's Map 088, Parcel 001. The Applicant is Westmass Area Development Corporation.

Submitted by: Monson Conservation Commission 03/19/2026

Legal Advertisement TOWN OF MONSON Monson Bellman Museum HVAC Replacement

The Town of Monson invites sealed Bids for the Monson Bellman Museum HVAC replacement project. The project includes the furnishing of all labor, equipment and materials required to complete the replacement of two HVAC units and ductwork of the Monson Bellman Museum. This project is being funded through the Town's Community Preservation Act (CPA) funding.

Contract documents, including specifications, may be obtained electronically beginning March 11, 2026 at 9:00 AM by contacting Penny Gustafson Pgustafson@monson-ma.gov at the Town of Monson.

All bids for this project are subject to the provisions and minimum wage rates required by M.G.L. c.149, §§26 to 27H, inclusive. All applicable Federal minimum wage rates and applicable Federal labor standards

shall also apply pursuant to the Davis-Bacon Act. When both State and Federal wage rates are applicable, the higher rate must be paid.

The Awarding Authority encourages, to the extent feasible, the use of minority-, women- and disadvantaged-owned businesses for work under this contract. Bidders on the work shall make a good faith effort to achieve the goals of the Federal Minority and Women's Business Enterprise (MBE/WBE) policy regarding utilization of MBEs and WBEs in order to be deemed a responsible bidder.

Bid security in the form of a bid bond, certified or cashier's check, payable to the Town of Monson, is required in a dollar amount of not less than five percent (5%) of the total bid amount. A payment bond for 50% of the total contract price, issued by a satisfactory surety company shall be required by the successful bidder.

The Town of Monson reserves the right to reject any and all bids, to accept proposals deemed to be in the best interest of the Town, and to waive any informalities or irregularities in the bids received. Bids may not be withdrawn within 30 days of the bid opening.

The Town of Monson, through its Selectboard, reserves the right to waive any informality in the bidding or to reject any and all bids in total or in part as may be deemed to serve the best interest of the Town. The lowest qualified, responsible bidder shall be awarded the contract.

The Town of Monson will not be responsible for any costs incurred by a bidder in preparing and submitting a bid in response to this IFB.

The Town of Monson Select Board is the Awarding and Contracting Authority.

Bids may be changed or withdrawn prior to the bid opening, but not within the sixty (6) days subsequent to the bid opening, by submission of such a change in writing in a sealed envelope, identifying the submitting party and indicating that it contains a correction of the bid for the Monson Bellman Museum HVAC replacement project.

A pre-bid site walkthrough will be held at Monson Bellman Museum, 200 Main Street, Monson, Massachusetts on March 19, 2026 10:00 a.m. The building will be available for inspection at that time.

Questions regarding this procurement directed to Jennifer Wolowicz at jwolowicz@monson-ma.gov.

Hard copy bids for the Monson Bellman Museum HVAC replacement project for the Town of Monson, Massachusetts, must be received by the Town of Monson, 110 Main Street, Monson, MA 01057, Office of Building Department 4:00 PM, on Wednesday, April 1, 2026. 03/12, 03/19/2026

Legal Notice Public Hearing Town of Wales

The Board of Selectmen will hold a public hearing at the Wales Senior Center, 85 Main Street, Wales, MA on **March 23, 2026 at 6:30 p.m.**, to consider a request by Massachusetts Electric Company d/b/a National Grid and Verizon New England, Inc to allow National Grid to install 7 JO Poles on Sizer Dr and relocate 6 JO Poles on Sizer Dr beginning at a point approximately 350 feet southeast of the centerline of the intersection of MA-19 and Sizer Dr and continuing approximately 3,200 feet in a southeastward direction. Install new Poles 2-50, 3-50, 4-50, 5-50, 8-50, 11-50, 13-

50. Relocate the following Poles: P-2, 40' NW - P-6, 50' SE - P-8, 10' N - P-9, 80' S - P-11, 30' N - P-13, 45' NE. The documents and maps related to this matter are available for review from the Executive Secretary during regular business hours.

Wales Board of Selectmen 03/12, 03/19/2026

TOWN OF PALMER PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE FY2026 Community Development Block Grant

The Palmer Community Development Department will conduct a Public Hearing on **Monday, April 6, 2026, at 5:30 PM** in the meeting room of the Palmer Town Building, 4417 Main Street, Palmer, MA. If the building is closed due to inclement weather or for any other reason on that date, the Public Hearing will be held on the next night Tuesday, April 7, 2026, at the same time and location.

The purpose of this Public Hearing is to solicit input relative to the development and submission of a grant application under the FY 26 MA CDBG Program. The CDBG Program is funded by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC) through the use of federal funds under the Housing & Community Development Act of 1974 as amended.

Projects currently under consideration for inclusion in Palmer's FY 26 application include public works improvements to Kelley Street located in the Three Rivers section of Palmer. Work is to include a replacement water main, sewer improvements as needed, improved stormwater drainage systems, new curbing, and rehabilitated road and sidewalk surfaces. Public social services will also be considered as part of the grant application and may include domestic violence prevention services and transportation assistance.

All people and organizations with questions or comments will have an opportunity to be heard. Those who are unable to attend the hearing may mail written comments to the Town of Palmer, Community Development Director, 4417 Main Street, Palmer, MA 01069, or may be emailed to communitydevelopment@town-ofpalmer.com. Written comments must be received no later than April 13, 2026. For further information, contact John Latour Palmer Community Development Director (413) 283-2614 or email, jlatour@townofpalmer.com. People who require accommodation to participate in the public meeting should contact the Town of Palmer Community Development Office at least two business days before the hearing. 03/19/2026

PALMER PLANNING BOARD PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

In accordance with the provisions of Chapter 40A, Section 11, M.G.L. the Palmer Planning Board will hold a public hearing on **Monday, March 30th, 2026 at 7:00 PM** in the Town Administration Building, 4417 Main Street, Palmer, MA.

The applicant, RDL Associates, LLC, is seeking a Special Permit and Site Plan Approval as required by section 171.73 of the Palmer Zoning Ordinance to remove earth materials from the property located off Palmer Street, Bondsville, also known as Assessor's Map 24 Lot 66.

A copy of the application may be inspected at the Planning Department office in the Town Administration Building Monday through Thursday 8:30am-4:30pm.

Anyone interested in more in-

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

This notice shall also be posted on the Massachusetts Newspaper Publishers Association's (MNPA) website: (http://masspublicnotices.org). Norman Czech, Chairman 03/12, 03/19/2026

Commonwealth of Massachusetts The Trial Court Probate and Family Court Hampden Probate and Family Court 50 State Street Springfield, MA 01103 (413)748-7758 Docket No. HD26P0303EA Estate of: Dennis Frank Santelli Date of Death: 11/16/2025

CITATION ON PETITION FOR FORMAL ADJUDICATION

To all interested persons: A Petition for Formal Adjudication of Intestacy and Appointment of Personal Representative has been filed by **Tina M Santelli of Holland, MA** requesting that the Court enter a formal Decree and Order and for such other relief as requested in the Petition.

The Petitioner requests that **Tina M Santelli of Holland, MA** be appointed as Personal Representative(s) of said estate to serve **Without Surety** on the bond in **unsupervised administration**.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

You have the right to obtain a copy of the Petition from the Petitioner or at the Court. You have a right to object to this proceeding. To do so, you or your attorney must file a written appearance and objection at this Court before: 10:00 a.m. on the return day of 04/14/2026. This is NOT a hearing date, but a deadline by which you must file a written appearance and objection if you object to this proceeding. If you fail to file a timely written appearance and objection followed by an affidavit of objections within thirty (30) days of the return day, action may be taken without further notice to you.

UNSUPERVISED ADMINISTRATION UNDER THE MASSACHUSETTS UNIFORM PROBATE

A Personal Representative appointed under the MUPC in an unsupervised administration is not required to file an inventory or annual accounts with the Court. Persons interested in the estate are entitled to notice regarding the ad-

ministration directly from the Personal Representative and may petition the Court in any matter relating to the estate, including the distribution of assets and expenses of administration.

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

Date: March 10, 2026 **Rosemary A Saccomani**, Register of Probate 03/19/2026

MONSON CONSERVATION COMMISSION LEGAL NOTICE

Under the requirements of M.G.L. Chapter 131 §40, the Monson Conservation Commission will hold a public hearing on **Wednesday, April 1, 2026 at 7:10 PM** in the Large Meeting Room, Town Office Building, 110 Main St. Under consideration is a Notice of Intent for the construction of a new single-family home, driveway, well, and septic within the buffer zone to a Bordering Vegetative Wetland for the property located at Wood Hill Road, identified as Assessor's Map 030, Parcel 003. The Applicant is Peter & Christina Henriques.

Submitted by: Monson Conservation Commission 03/19/2026

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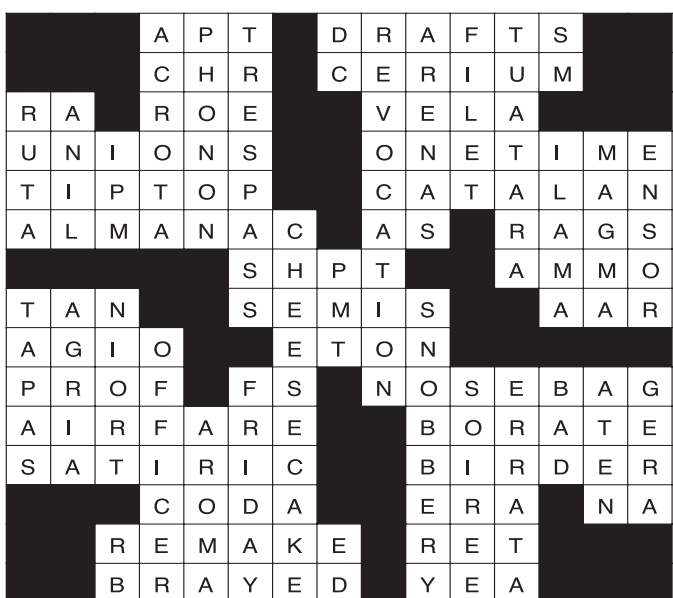
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EMPOWERHER | from page 1

in business remains significant.

"It has long been a goal of mine to have an uplifting women in business group within the Chamber," she said. "What I hope this group brings is the chance to get to know each other, to offer support, positivity, and to have confident, optimistic conversations where we can learn from and empower one another."

The event brought together women from a broad range of industries, highlighting the diversity and depth of the region's professional community. Attendees represented fields including healthcare, education, finance, manufacturing, nonprofit work, small business ownership, and municipal government.

Panelists included Jennifer Baublitz, executive director of HomeFront Strong; Kara Noonan Pear of Noonan Energy; Rebecca Maurer of Quabbin Valley Eye Care; and Tanya Bullock, owner of Life's Memories & More. Moderators Kaitlin Young of Hardwick Vineyard & Winery and Niedziela guided the discussion.

Throughout the morning, a common theme emerged: the reality of "wearing many hats." Many participants described balancing multiple roles within their organizations, while also navigating responsibilities at home; often managing operations, marketing, human resources, and customer relations simultaneously.

"Exhausting," said Maurer, when asked to describe her entrepreneurial journey. Despite the demands, she pointed to significant accomplishments, including expanding her Palmer-based eye care practice by absorbing another local office that might otherwise have closed.

Others echoed similar sentiments, pairing candid reflections on challenges with pride in their achievements.

Bullock, a papercraft business owner celebrating 20 years, described her journey as "courageous," citing the need to continually adapt in the face of online competition and shifting market conditions.

Kara Noonan Pear highlighted operational improvements at Noonan Energy, including efforts to streamline hiring processes, while Baublitz spoke about building sustainable partnerships to support nonprofit programming for veterans and their families.

Across industries, participants shared stories of growth, resilience, and innovation; whether launching new businesses, expanding services, earning certifications, or achieving long-term goals ahead of schedule.

Beyond business success, many attendees emphasized the importance of community impact and personal fulfillment in their work.

Banking professionals described helping first-time homebuyers achieve homeownership, while educators and administrators spoke about expanding opportunities for students and adult learners. Nonprofit leaders highlighted their commitment to serving vulnerable populations, including veterans and seniors.

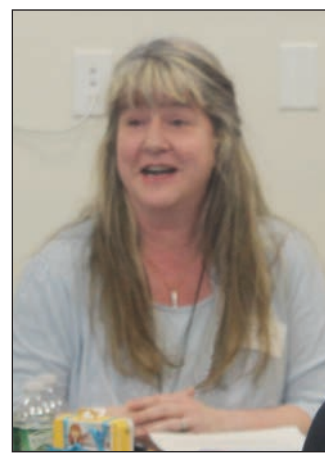
For some, entrepreneurship offered flexibility and independence. A local baker shared how starting a home-based business allowed her to remain present for her children, while others spoke about career shifts that aligned more closely with their passions or family needs.

"My purpose in life is to use the light that lies within me to support and champion others," said one participant, reflecting a broader sentiment that resonated throughout the event.

According to Niedziela, the idea for the EmpowHER group had been in development for about a year before gaining traction through a



Turley photos by Abigail McCoy
Graphic of the EmpowHER logo.



Tanya Bullock, Owner of Life's Memories & More, talks about how creativity gives light to her life.



Chamber President and President of J. Stolar Insurance Renee Niedziela gives her introduction to the start of the panel.

Chamber survey conducted at its annual dinner. The response was overwhelmingly positive, prompting organizers to move forward with the initiative.

The result was a sold-out inaugural event that filled every available seat.

"That tells us this is something the community needs," Niedziela said, noting that similar programs are not currently offered by neighboring chambers.

Plans are already underway for a second meeting, which organizers anticipate will require a larger venue to accommodate growing interest. Future sessions are expected to continue featuring speakers, networking opportunities, and discussions focused on professional development and collaboration.

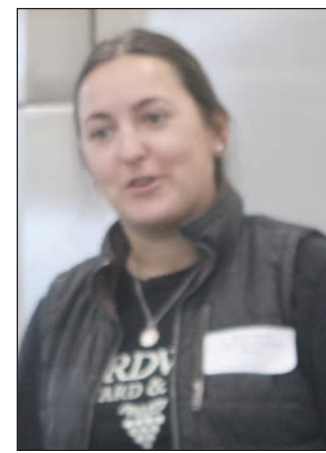
Niedziela credited the event's success to a collaborative effort between Chamber leadership, including CEO James, and the volunteer panelists who helped shape the program.

"There is so much energy in this room," she said. "So much passion and positivity about what's happening in our community."

With its strong debut, the EmpowHER network appears poised to become a cornerstone initiative for the Chamber, providing a platform for women across the Quaboag Hills region to connect, grow, and lead together.



Rebecca Maurer (left), Principal Owner of Quabbin Valley Eye Care and Kara Noonan Pear (right), Director of H.R. at Noonan Energy; two of the panelists.



One of the moderators, Kaitlin Young, Manager at Hardwick Vineyard & Winery.



Jennifer Baublitz, Executive Director of HomeFront Strong.



Director of Hitchcock Free Academy in Brimfield, Cindy Skowrya, stands to introduce herself to the group.



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