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January 25

## Wilbraham police officer recovering after shooting

By Dalton Zbierski  
Editor  
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WILBRAHAM – A 29-year-old Wilbraham police officer is recovering after being shot outside a residence on Old Carriage Drive at approximately 8:20 p.m. on Saturday, Jan. 20.

Wilbraham Police Chief Edward Lennon updated the public at the start of the Select Board meeting on Monday evening. He noted that officers initially responded to a call regarding a male resident threatening others in a home.

“Upon arrival, Wilbraham police officers outside of the residence exchanged gunfire with a 53-year-old male later identified as Michael

Ortega, who was inside the home. A male Wilbraham police officer sustained a gunshot wound and was transported to a hospital with serious injuries. The officer is currently in stable condition at the hospital,” Lennon said, on Jan. 22.

Other occupants in the home were able to escape through a second-floor window. They exited onto a lower roof and were subsequently assisted off the roof by police officers using a ladder.

Ortega was wounded in the gunfire exchange, and a four-hour standoff ensued. MassLive reported first that state troopers from the Massachusetts State Police Crisis Negotiation Unit attempted to negotiate with Ortega.

Ortega did not surrender. The State Police report that after several hours its Special Tactical Operations unit used an armored vehicle with a battering ram to break a window. A State Police drone was flown in, revealing that Ortega was wounded.

Local, state and federal law en-

Please see **SHOOTING**, page 3



A 29-year-old Wilbraham police officer was shot in the line of duty last Saturday. File photo

## What a Year It Has Been

Happy 2025 Wilbraham and Hampden! As you take a moment to look back on some of the biggest stories of the past year, I hope you see what the people of these two communities are really about: kindness, making your voices heard and rallying around each other.

2024 has also been a time of transition, with farewells to many after serving their communities, including Veterans Services Director Jered Sasen, Children’s Librarian Heidi Kane, Deputy Fire Chief Peter Nothe, local kindergarten teacher Patti Colkos, Hampden Town Administrator Bob Markel, Select Board Chairman Theresa Goodrich, School Committee Member William Bontempi, Hampden Senior Center Activities Coordinator Diane Marino and Assistant Superintendent for Finance, Operations and Human Resources Aaron Osborne.

As many of you know, it’s also been a time of transition at this paper. After Dalton Zbierski departed his post, I have come in as his successor as editor of the Times. During this time, you all have embraced me along with our rising stars in Noelle Hisgen, Hannah Yeasley and Amanda Munson. We also saw the exciting return of Patti Sullivan, who previously wrote for the Times during our friend Charlie Bennett’s time as editor.

As I look over this Year In Review, I realize how much the communities of Wilbraham and Hampden have to be proud of. Rallying around each other during times of tragedy, a willingness to ask tough questions and share tough answers, expressing heart and passion for a cause, and, most importantly, emphasizing a deep belief in the goodness in each other. Something we definitely need now more than ever.

I look forward to another year together as we continue telling the stories that mean the most to you. Enjoy looking back on this past year.

September 19



A runner about to cross the finish line during the Trot for Tom 5K Run/Walk at Minnechaug Regional High School on Sept. 14 in honor of Dr. Thomas “Tom” Julian. File photo

## STM Shocker: Postponed due to overcapacity

By Kristin Rivers  
Editor  
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HAMPDEN - In an unexpected twist stunning residents on Oct. 29, the Special Town Meeting was postponed to two weeks later--Nov. 12--due to overcapacity at Thornton W. Burgess Middle School.

Town Moderator Richard Green made the shocking announcement roughly 15 minutes after the Special Town Meeting was supposed to have been called to order at 6:30 p.m.

“Ladies and gentlemen, as the moderator, I am calling an end to tonight’s proceedings. This room’s ca-

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Town Moderator Richard Green announces the Special Town Meeting is postponed on Oct. 29 at Thornton W. Burgess Middle School. File photo

November 4

## Hundreds turn out for Trot for Tom at MRHS

Event raises over \$40K for neurological research

By Kristin Rivers  
Editor  
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WILBRAHAM - Hundreds came out to Minnechaug Regional High School on Sept. 14 to honor Dr. Thomas “Tom” Julian at the Trot for Tom 5K Run/Walk.

The one-time event’s proceeds will be donated to neurological research and to a member of Julian’s dissertation committee—who was also his advisor and professor—at the University of Connecticut, Dr. Ruth Lucas, to

Please see **TROT**, page 2

# Hello Wilbraham and Hampden!

It is a true honor and privilege to serve as editor for the Times and I pray I live up to your expectations. I'd like to thank Dalton Zbierski for all that he has taught me and his mentorship as I take on this new responsibility and continue delivering the local news and stories that mean the most to you. Everything done this past year has been a true team effort and it's one that I don't take for granted.



**Kristin Rivers, the Times' newest editor, shares her welcome message**

In this last year, I have felt my faith in humanity restored a little at a time: whether covering an event at the libraries or senior centers, sharing the journey behind a cause people care about and utilize to help serve others or attending local government meetings to get a better understanding of what is going on in your towns; the issues and concerns that mean the most to each and every one of you.

It's easy to let the challenges of today's world get us down or wonder if there's still good. I've been there and have had my moments of cynicism. But as I said earlier, this work has lightened my heart in ways I haven't felt in a long time; the writing aspect being part of it of course! But also because of the stories I've had the privilege to tell or share working for this paper in this last year.

You all make this paper what it is today. All I simply do is help tell the stories, share the facts, gather the information and research and bring to life the visions you each have.

I hope as your new editor I can continue this work, while also making a bigger impact.

I look forward to getting to know you all even more. We have many more stories to tell.

**Kristin Rivers**

# School Committee addresses Jan. 12 Hampden school bus fire

Parents express concerns, disappointment over district's response

By Kristin Rivers  
Staff Writer  
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WILBRAHAM - The School Committee addressed on Jan. 18 the school bus fire that took place in Hampden on Jan. 12

Around 3 p.m. that Friday, the Hampden Police Department received several 911 calls for a school bus fire on Bayberry Road, with the Hampden Fire Department responding within minutes. The bus driver and all students were safely evacuated, with no injuries reported.

Superintendent Dr. John Provost explained he's been in touch with Hampden's fire and police chiefs and district collaborative administrative staff, holding a multi-agency action review the day before.

"I think what came out of that meeting was that the most positive part of the whole response was the emergency response and the bus evacuation training we do with students, that was followed. Students got off the bus safely and the firefighters' response, they got there, I believe, in four minutes and suppressed the fire," Provost said.

Provost said what didn't go well was communication and information sharing within and between agencies, apologizing to the community.



Photo courtesy of Hampden Fire Department

The School Committee addressed a Jan. 12 school bus fire in Hampden during their Jan. 18 meeting.

"There was gaps of information that I think would have allowed the district to communicate in a better way, so we talked about how if this should ever happen again, we want to be more tightly synced up with each other so we're getting more complete information out and more timely information out," Provost said.

Brett Castellano said, "This is one of the first times that I've ever been truly disappointed in the school district."

"I just think it would have gone a long way for the district, it would have gone a long way in my eyes and I think in many other parents' eyes if there was that follow-up communication to tell us how serious it was, but also to tell us that we were okay," Castellano said.

Kyle Jourdain criticized the lack of response from the district.

"The fact that I'm sitting here tonight nearly a week after the event for the first time hearing from you about this without a reach out, personal reach out to my family, my daughter, there was no response," Jourdain said.

School Committee member William Bontempi suggested to Chair Michal Boudreau the incident be on the next meeting's agenda.

"The way that things played out from what these parents have said would be very upsetting to me as well, so I don't think it should end here. I think we need a considerable amount of time for this," Bontempi said.

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**Applications will be available starting January 1, 2025. Priority screening and placement will be given to applications received prior to January 31, 2025, but we offer a rolling admission.**

**STM** from page 1

capacity is determined by the State Fire Marshal and the fire department. It's 300. We are easily going to exceed that number tonight," Green said. "The only other alternative we will exercise on Nov. 12 at 6:30 p.m. in the same building--with the expectation that all of you will come back--is we will utilize the gymnasium. It will be wider and screened, so that way everyone either in this room or that room will be able to do voting and hear the presentation and all of the information in the same way in real-time."

Green summed it up this way. "As moderator, what I'm telling you is that this is not an environment conducive to a fair presentation of the arguments. It is not an environment that will not allow all voters to participate fairly and with transparency," Green said.

Green ended the announcement by saying this. "So, the 12th here at 6:30 p.m., utilizing this room and the gymnasium. We appreciate you coming out and we thank you and appreciate your understanding. We'll see you in two weeks," Green said.

After the announcement, the crowd--talking amongst themselves and each other--dispersed for the evening.

On Nov. 4, the Board of Selectmen addressed the postponement in a meeting in the Melville Room, meeting with Green and other town officials to discuss logistics and how to proceed.

**TROT** from page 1

continue her work and the work Julian started.

A humble, loving, generous, kind and bright young man taken way too soon, Julian left a mark not just on people in his own life, but in the community as well, the event emphasizing even further how much Julian's light inspired so many and will continue to in the years to come.

Hampden County District Attorney Anthony Gulluni not only lent his support to the event along with Hampden County Sheriff Nick Cocchi but also participated in the 5K.

"It speaks to who Tom was, it speaks to all that Tom did for other people and his sense of community and certainly, the Julian Family," Gulluni said.

Lucas reflected on how Julian was "a unique, brilliant student" and was moved by the community honoring him and the Julians.

"His legacy will be honored as we move forward with the science and we value and will acknowledge everyone's contribution to being able to answer the questions that are important to his family and are important to Thomas," Lucas said.

For the Julians, parents Marcy and Mike were beyond grateful.

"It's very hard to describe what I'm feeling right now. It's an incredibly joyful day, it's an incredible tribute to him and we're blessed to have so many friends and supporters," Marcy Julian said.

"It's overwhelming. That's all you can say. The outpouring from the community has just touched us and with me saying thank you for the rest of our lives. But mostly thanksgiving for having such a wonderful boy named Thomas Michael Julian," Mike Julian said.

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# To the communities of Hampden and Wilbraham

After serving as editor of the Wilbraham-Hampden Times for the past three years, this will sadly be my last edition. I've made the difficult decision to move onto a television station in Connecticut, where I will be able to fulfill a lifelong dream of delivering news in my home state as a producer.



**Dalton Zbierski says farewell and thank you for the memories**

What a ride these past three years have been; I wouldn't trade them in for anything. Covering news in Hampden and Wilbraham has always been a privilege and a positive experience. I cherish every interaction I've been fortunate enough to have with the residents of both tremendous and equally unique communities.

Taking my place will be Kristin Rivers, who has served as a staff writer for the past year, covering Hampden and Wilbraham. Kristin is incredibly passionate and will bring renewed energy to the position. I assure our readers, you are in excellent hands.

Thank you to the countless people who have made this job special. I've enjoyed every minute of it. From Minnechaug to Mountain View Restaurant and everywhere and everyone in between, Hampden and Wilbraham will forever have a place in my heart.

It has been quite the journey, and I am forever indebted to our great readers. Be well my friends and keep picking up The Times, I promise you won't be disappointed.

Words can't describe how thankful I am for the way you embraced me. Take care!

— Dalton Zbierski

# Brian Domina named next Hampden Town Administrator

### Board unanimously selects current Whately TA

By Dalton Zbierski  
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HAMPDEN - The Board of Selectmen unanimously selected Whately Town Administrator Brian Domina to be Hampden's next town administrator.



**Brian Domina**

Domina beat out Christopher Caputo and Ryan McNutt. Domina has served as Whately's town administrator since 2016 and was previously a senior planner for the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission.

Craig Rivest complimented his understanding of the town administrator position, as he comes from

a town very similar to Hampden in how it's structured.

"(Domina has) worked a lot on similar projects in Whately that Hampden has coming up, is very knowledgeable and comfortable writing grants, understands and has knowledge of IT, prefers a collaborative environment and has regional planning experience in his previous job," Rivest said.

Before deciding, John Flynn watched each candidate on television and community programs because he felt that spoke a lot to how they would interact with the board and distribute information.

"I think it's fair to say about the three candidates, if only one of them had applied, we could have made it work," Flynn said. "We would not be disappointed if we took any of them."

Like Rivest, however, one candidate stood out to Flynn. That was Domina.

"They all had good resumes in different parts, but I do agree with (Rivest) that one candidate had a fit that was better for the Town of Hampden," Flynn said. "When I watch Whately and watch their Select Board meetings, they're talking about everything we're talking about... I do think one stood out from the other two. My vote would be for Mr. Domina."

Davenport joked that "I tormented my bride for about 10 days" before she finally gave him some advice: don't let the very good get in the way of the perfect.

"It was a good point. I thought all the candidates were great and went back and forth for a long time. I too would think that Mr. Domina would be a good fit for the town," Davenport said.

# Minnechaug grad Carla Patullo strikes gold with Grammy win

By Kristin Rivers  
Staff Writer  
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WILBRAHAM - Recording Artist Carla Patullo struck gold on Feb. 4 when she won her first Grammy Award for her album, "SO SHE HOWLS."

The album won Best New Age, Ambient or Chant Album.

Patullo, who was born in Springfield and later grew up in Wilbraham, graduated from Minnechaug Regional High School in 1997. She has also released three albums with White Widow, over 30+ soundtracks for film and television including the Disney+ film "Maxine" and more.

Reflecting on awards night, Patullo said "It was insane" with tears of joy and disbelief at her win alongside her family and collaborators Tonality, the Scorchio Quartet and Lili Haydn.

"I kind of went into this not expecting this at all. This album came from a very personal, tough place for me. It took a moment to feel like, 'This is really happening,' but then it was I was just thinking about the struggles and what I got through to be here and that made me ever more so grateful for it, just for being recognized in this way by my colleagues and by the Recording Academy. I just



Photo Courtesy of Kaytee Long Becker

**Carla Patullo gives her acceptance speech on Feb. 4 after winning the Grammy Award for Best New Age, Ambient or Chant Album for her album, "SO SHE HOWLS" at the 66th Annual Grammy Awards. Patullo dedicated the award to the women behind experimental cancer trials that saved her life during her battle with breast cancer.**

felt so great," Patullo said. "I'm still pinching myself."

Patullo's win also made history as she became the first openly gay woman to win in her category, crediting Sandra Bernhard and Lauren Karpman for their mentorship and support.

"That's what this is about is getting our voices heard," Patullo said.

A breast cancer survivor, Patullo also reflected on winning her Gram-

my Award on World Cancer Day, which falls on Feb. 4.

"It's just unreal. I think things happen for a reason sometimes," Patullo said.

Patullo had this message for her fans and supporters.

"I just can't thank you enough for listening and giving me a platform, giving me a space to share my music," Patullo said.

## SHOOTING from page 1

forcement agencies responded to the event, as did multiple fire and EMS agencies.

"Several Wilbraham police officers are on administrative leave while this incident is being investigated. This is routine in these matters. Later this week, there will be a voluntary critical incident stress management debriefing for all officers involved in the incident. That's essentially the information we have at this time," Lennon said.

Select Board Chair Theresa Goodrich said that the officer is in the community's thoughts.

"I want to say on behalf of all of us that we wish the officer the best recovery; he's in our prayers," Goodrich said.

Since the shooting, the community has rallied behind the officer, later identified as Cameron Proserpi, through varying fundraising events as he continues his recovery. Ortega, meanwhile, was held without the right to bail and arraigned in February on three counts of assault with intent to murder and three counts of assault with a dangerous weapon.

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## Retiring Town Administrator Bob Markel honored during meeting

By Kristin Rivers  
Editor  
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HAMPDEN - Retiring Town Administrator Bob Markel was honored for his four and a half years of service to Hampden during his final meeting with the Board of Selectmen on March 4.

During the meeting, State Rep. Brian Ashe (D-Longmeadow) and State Sen. Jake Oliveira (D-Ludlow) presented citations from the Massachusetts State House and Senate to celebrate Markel's accomplishments.

"It really has been a pleasure and honor not only knowing you over the years, but being friends with you. Just watching your work from mayor to ending up here and having your knowledge such an asset for our local community and is so greatly appreciated," Ashe said.

Oliveira echoed Ashe's sentiments in his reflections.

"When you find a good town manager or administrator, you want to do everything that you can to keep them and, clearly, Bob, coming here and wanting to spend just a few months, originally, and sticking out for four and a half years is a testament of not just how well you mesh with the community and understand it, but also because of the fact that you bring a whole significant experience under your belt coming into the job," Oliveira said.

Oliveira said Markel's prior experi-



Submitted photos John Flynn

From the left, Selectman Craig Rivest, State Sen. Jacob Oliveira (D-Ludlow), Selectmen Chair Donald Davenport, Retiring Town Administrator Bob Markel, State Rep. Brian Ashe (D-Longmeadow) and Selectman John Flynn in a group shot during Markel's final Board of Selectmen meeting in Hampden on March 4.

ence as mayor of Springfield helped him "understand the challenges facing municipalities from both a city level, a suburban level and here at the smaller scale in a community of just under 5,000 people."

Selectmen Chair Donald Davenport told Markel, "It was wonderful having you here."

"You've done great for the town," Davenport said. "I'm going to miss you."

Craig Rivest also shared his thanks.

"Thank you for getting us through the difficult times," Rivest said.

Markel later expressed his gratitude.

"I leave with a good feeling towards the town and its people and those who are in government, the department heads as well as the elected people," Markel said. "I think things worked pretty well here."

## March

## Hampden celebrates St. Patrick's Day with festive luncheon

Sarah the Fiddler provided entertainment

By Kristin Rivers  
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HAMPDEN - The senior center was a full house on March 15 for a festive St. Patrick's Day luncheon.

The luncheon included a meal of corned beef, cabbage, carrots, red bliss potatoes, rye bread and cake for dessert, with performances by Sarah the Fiddler.

The event was sponsored by the Hampden Cultural Council.

Lifelong friends Audrey O'Connor and Marion Holden were among the many attendees at the luncheon, decked out in St. Patrick's Day-themed attire to celebrate the occasion.

"The meal was great and the entertainment was better. It was wonderful, she could go on all day," Holden said.

"It's been great because you're always looking for things to do now that you're retired," O'Connor said.

Sarah the Fiddler, her real name Sarah Lynn Michel DaSilva, loves bringing her shows to the community to share the power of music and connection, explaining she also performs at nursing homes.

She also works with people who have Alzheimer's and dementia, watching how



Turley photo by Kristin Rivers

Sarah the Fiddler entertains the audience during the St. Patrick's Day Luncheon at the Hampden Senior Center.

music transforms them.

"What's fascinating about music is that they can still sing. It's really powerful. So I can go into a room and know that I got somebody who's Irish and I can play 'When Irish Eyes Are Smiling' and they will start singing," Michel DaSilva said.

Diane Marino, the senior center's activities coordinator, was elated with the event and praised the volunteers who lent their support.

"It was amazing. Everybody was clapping and enjoying it so, so much. Every time someone walked by me when they left, they congratulated the event. 'Please have more of these' and 'Get more people like Sarah.' She was great," Marino said. "It was just so exciting for us to be able to do this for our seniors."

## Al Gag officially inducted into the Fishing Hall of Fame

By Kristin Rivers  
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WILBRAHAM - Albert Gagliarducci, or Al Gag as he's well known, was officially inducted into the International Freshwater Fishing Hall of Fame 2024 Class on March 23.

Gag, a longtime fisherman, owner of Al Gag's Custom Lures and host of "Gone Fishing" on WWLP and WGGW, was recognized for his contributions to the fishing industry.

The International Freshwater Fishing Hall of Fame, located in Hayward, WI, has inducted only 500 people from its 1960 inception to today, including legendary Red Sox player Ted Williams, 26th U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt, Author Ernest Hemingway, sportscaster Curt Gowdy and many more.

The ceremony took place during the Connecticut Fishing & Outdoor Show at the Mohegan Sun Earth Expo & Convention Center, where Gag was also a vendor.

With family, friends, his students, fishing enthusiasts and many more in atten-

dance, Gag joined Kristie Gonsalves, the Fishing & Outdoor Show's producer, atop a 5,000-gallon Hawg Traugh fishing tank, where he was presented with a plaque and performed a ceremonial cast into the fish tank.

Reading a prepared speech from the Hall of Fame's Selection Committee member Jim Grandt, Gonsalves read about the history of the Hall of Fame and how "this honor has not been done at a sports show out east in decades and it's going to happen today."

Gonsalves then got emotional, sharing how Gag has impacted the Connecticut Fishing & Outdoor Show and her family.

"My family has produced fishing shows for over four decades, and you have been instrumental to their success year after year," Gonsalves said.

Gag said the honor "finally feels real" and seeing everyone in attendance to celebrate him made him realize how many people he's impacted, including the Gonsalves and Sousa families.

"I love what I do and I think I manufacture happiness and that's what it is (about)," Gag said.

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## VIEWPOINTS



By Ellenor Downer



Snowy owl

Snowy owls have already been spotted in Massachusetts this year.

They come from the tundra area of Canada into the United States during the winter. Usually, the snowy owls that head to this area are immature. This irruptive behavior may or may not be coordinated with the lemming cycle, one of their primary foods especially during their breeding cycle.

The snowy owl is about 24 inches long and primarily white, yellow eyes and variable amounts of black spots and barring. Immatures are darker than adults and females darker than males.

Snowy owls frequently hunt during the day. Their diet is mainly rodents, Arctic and snowshoe hares, fish, birds including waterfowl and

carion.

They nest on the tundra in a shallow depression on a mound on top or on a gravel mound. They line the nest with feathers and bits of moss. The female lays three to ten white eggs. When prey is abundant the clutch size is larger. They make barking noises during breeding, but are quiet in winter.

They inhabit the open tundra and when they move south, they inhabit airports, beaches, marshes and open fields.

Many years ago, a snowy owl appeared in Oakham during the winter. I was lucky to see it perched on a fence post near an open field in the daytime. People came from all over to see this rare visitor. Logan Airport is a popular winter stop over.

### Bald eagle sighting

On Dec. 2 I received an email from a Brimfield resident. He said, "I've been checking the local ponds but not a lot happening. However, I have seen a bald eagle or two at the pond on New Reed Street four time in the last two weeks and another birder I met there reported seeing eagles there that I missed. On one visit two adult bald eagles were sitting in the same dead tree about fifteen feet apart."

### Christmas Bird Count

He plans to participate in the Allen's Bird Count Christmas Bird Count on Saturday, Dec. 14. National Audubon Society 125th Christmas Bird Counts take place Saturday, Dec. 14 through Sunday, Jan. 5, 2025. This is one of the most popular birding events of the year. It is rarely held on the actual designated holiday itself, counts are scheduled to take place on various days surrounding Dec. 25 within the official count period noted above. Counting takes place anytime during the 24 hours, midnight-to-midnight.

The goal is to find, identify and count all birds within a 15-mile diameter "count circle." All are welcome. Compilers do their best to make sure that beginners join a group with at least one experienced birder. Locations in late December include: Quabbin on Saturday, Dec. 28 compiler Scott Sumner at [ssurner@aol.com](mailto:ssurner@aol.com) and Westminster on Wednesday, Jan. 1, 2025 compiler Charles Caron at 978-874-5649 or [caronev@aol.com](mailto:caronev@aol.com).

People may visit <https://www.audubon.org/community-science/christmas-bird-count> to read about CBC history, science and data.

### Juncos and snow

The Brimfield resident noted a large flock of juncos about 40 the day before the Dec. 5 snow storm. He said, "Storms a commin' I looked out near where the feeding stations are located and where I spread mixed seed on the ground and a quick count resulted in 40 junco. And chickadees and titmice were constantly back and forth to the black oil sunflower seed feeder." I also saw a large flock of juncos on my daughter's lawn in Barre on that Wednesday.

### Pond visits

The Brimfield resident makes frequent trips to ponds in his area. He found most of them frozen over on Dec. 4. He did count 12 hooded mergansers at Holland Pond, a large group of mallards over 200 and three black ducks at Sherman Pond.

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

## Coriander makes a great cookie

Today was the designated day to begin to bake like crazy. Personally, I wish we could cull the number, and honestly the sheer volume of Christmas cookies we make, but if the kids or my husband hear of that I will be banished to Grinch status.

It's a tradition to go through the recipes ahead of time and decide what cookies we'll bake.

One of my all-time favorites, and one I would never consider culling, is the coriander cookie. My family tried a sample at Old Sturbridge Village's Christmas by Candlelight some years back and enjoyed it so much we added the recipe to our repertoire. Yummy indeed!

You may be surprised to learn that Coriander sativum is the Latin name for two herbs. Confused? Most folks are when they learn that the seeds of this plant are called coriander,



while the leaves are known as cilantro.

Both have been used for culinary purposes since the beginning of time! All portions of the plant are edible but some argue that the green portion is barely that.

Read on.

I liken cilantro to be the "marigold" of the herb world. Either you love it or you hate it. I, for one, immensely dislike it and if given the chance to pick it out of my salsa I will certainly do it! Even in a restaurant.

I found it interesting to learn that some people possess a genetically predisposed aversion to it, according to studies by Charles J. Wysoc-

ki of the Monell Chemical Senses Center in Philadelphia.

To me it has a bitter taste that I have a hard time describing beyond that. Dirty? Soil-like?

Most people that do dislike it have a similar lack of descriptive ability; they just can't put their finger on it, but they don't like the taste... or the smell of it.

As I mentioned, cilantro is often used in salsa and other Mexican, Asian and Italian dishes including curries, sauces, salads and soups. If you prefer to grow the plant more for its greens and less for its seeds, manage it as you would spinach.

Sow seeds in the ground in the cool of the season and in succession every two weeks. It dislikes being transplanted but doesn't mind pot culture. Harvest greens rather aggressively - about one-third of the plant at a time.

Just like spinach, there are slow-to-bolt varieties to choose from such as aptly named "Slow Bolt" and "Longstanding."

Coriander seeds, on the other hand, have a pleasant (at least to me!) fragrance once dried.

Please see **GARDEN**, page 7

## Election letters to the editor welcome

The Wilbraham-Hampden Times 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 Wilbraham-Hampden Times, care of Turley Publications, 24 Water St., Palmer, MA 01069, faxed to 413-289-1977 or emailed to [krivers@turley.com](mailto:krivers@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 Wilbraham-Hampden Times.

## Air traffic controller shortage & holiday travel...



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### Correction Policy

The TIMES will gladly correct factual errors that appear in this paper and can be substantiated. Corrections or clarifications will always appear on the editorial pages. To request a correction, send information in an e-mail or mailed communication to the editor at the above address listed above.

The Wilbraham-Hampden TIMES is published every Thursday by Turley Publications, Inc. One year out of town subscriptions are available at \$45, out of state \$50 by calling 800-824-6458 Ext. 201. The deadline for submission of news material, letters to the editor and photos is Monday at 12 p.m. The TIMES is not responsible for submitted photos.



File photo

Members of the Cannellos, Gray and Breglio Families pose for a photo with the Easter Bunny during this year's Bunny Breakfast at the St. Cecilia Parish Center on March 23.

## Wilbraham celebrates Easter at Bunny Breakfast

By Kristin Rivers  
Editor  
krivers@turley.com

WILBRAHAM - Families visited the St. Cecilia Parish Center from 8 to 11 a.m. on March 23 for this year's Bunny Breakfast.

The event was presented by the GFWC Wilbraham Junior Women's Club and supported by LUSO Federal Credit Union.

Throughout the morning, families enjoyed arts and crafts, face painting and temporary tattoo stations, raffle baskets, a photo with the Easter Bunny and a breakfast spread of pancakes, sausage, fruit, juice and coffee.

Lorie Bonavita, president of the GFWC Wilbraham Junior Women's Club, explained the club has sponsored the event for over 25 years.

"It's just great to see all of these families come together and have so much fun. Just to see the smiles on all of the kids' faces," Bonavita said. "It's a great event. We just love having it every year for the families in town and the surrounding towns."

Cailey Mingolla oversaw face painting, sharing she's come to the event since she was a child.

"I used to look forward to it every year. It was always a lot of fun. We would stay here for the whole time and now I'm here face painting where I used to get my face painted," Mingolla said.

Erica Pafumi saw the signs all over town advertising the event, coming with family to meet the Easter Bunny, enjoy the crafts and get temporary tattoos.

"I think it's a great thing. I think there should be more events like this to bring knowledge to groups like that," Pafumi said. "Because I never even heard of them before."

Alicia Belden enjoyed how family-friendly the event was along with the friendly people, hearing about the event through her in-laws, who attend St. Cecelia Church.

"You don't really find that anymore, so it was really a nice event for smaller kids and even the older ones," Belden said.

To learn more, visit [wilbrahamjuniorwomens.org](http://wilbrahamjuniorwomens.org).

# New Wilbraham Senior Center officially opens

Festivities include ribbon-cutting, donor reception and more

By Kristin Rivers  
Editor  
krivers@turley.com

WILBRAHAM - After 14 years of development, fundraising and challenges, the new senior center in Wilbraham has officially opened its doors.

The grand opening comes after the new senior center, located at 250 Springfield St. behind the Town Hall, held its groundbreaking ceremony in February 2023 and, later, a soft opening to the community last month.

The new space is comprised of an information station, lounge space, a cafe area, a library, a large multi-purpose room, a game room with two billiards tables, a fitness room, a wellness room for appointments, a commercial kitchen area and two activity rooms.

Outside, residents are greeted with an outdoor space with patio furniture and bocce courts.

A donor reception was also held on April 19.

### Donor Reception Reflections

Paula Dubord, director of elder affairs, said "small or large, every penny added up," reflecting on the efforts of the Friends of Wilbraham Seniors to fundraise, led by the late Bob Page.

"The list of friends who have had a hand in fundraising and it is long and full of your neighbors who believed in this project. Much like my 14-year-long journey to get a new senior center built, they had their ups and downs, but they persisted," Dubord said.



After years of planning the new Wilbraham Senior Center was opened at the Ribbon Cutting April 20. (From left) Dir. of Elder Affairs Paula Dubord cuts the ribbon with the help of Building Committee Chairman George Fontaine while Rep. Angelo Puppolo and Sen. Jake Oliveira look on. File photo

Select Board Chairman Theresa Goodrich said, "The seniors are the foundation of Wilbraham."

"This was long overdue and I'm so, so happy to see that this building is here today before us," Goodrich said.

### Grand Opening

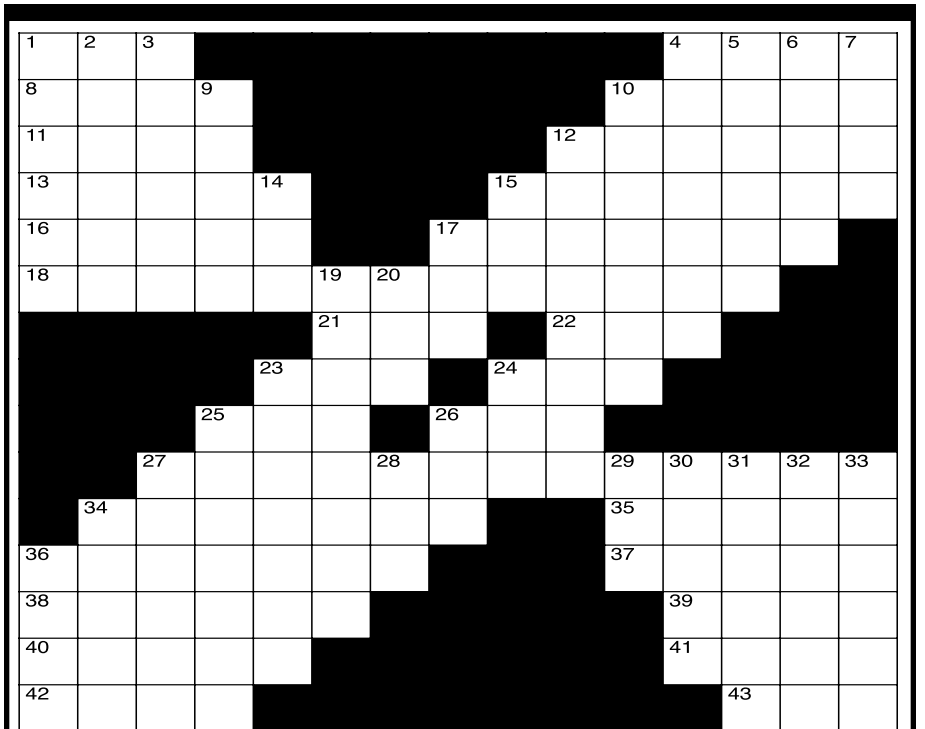
As Master of Ceremonies Dennis Lopata led the grand opening ceremony, State Sen. Jake Oliveira (D-Ludlow) stressed the importance of investment, dedication and perseverance as he presented a citation from the State Senate.

"This community has consistently invested in both its children with its school system and its seniors with this beautiful building behind us,"

Oliveira said. "This is an investment the community made, but also an investment made by all the donors and people who aren't here today."

After the ribbon was cut by Dubord and Lopata, Matt Villamaino, president of the Friends of Wilbraham Seniors, was at a loss for words on the senior center being officially open to Wilbraham.

"It goes to the dedication of different people and we all believed in one thing and that was we need and want a good senior center in our town, and today we have it," Villamaino said.



### CLUES ACROSS

- 1. Americans' "uncle"
- 4. Chair
- 8. Ancient kingdom
- 10. Egyptian city
- 11. Alaskan glacier
- 12. One from Somalia
- 13. Ancient alphabets
- 15. Relating to vocabulary
- 16. Small mongrels
- 17. Natural settings
- 18. Weekend entertainments
- 21. Line from which light seemingly streams
- 22. Your own private code
- 23. Swiss river
- 24. Satisfaction
- 25. A person's brother or sister
- 26. Folk singer DiFranco
- 27. The Blonde Bombshell
- 34. Kids' school project
- 35. Bluish greens
- 36. Classifying
- 37. Cube-shaped
- 38. Choo-choos
- 39. Indian religious god of dissolution
- 40. French department
- 41. Leak into gradually
- 42. Foundation

### CLUES DOWN

- 1. Counterbalancing debt
- 2. In slow tempo
- 3. Glamorous city
- 4. Japanese lute
- 5. Makes law
- 6. Informative book
- 7. Animal's body part
- 9. American playwright
- 10. Blood poisoning
- 12. Angels
- 14. Sino-Soviet block (abbr.)
- 15. Written account
- 17. Unwelcome pest
- 19. Saddle horses
- 20. Type of gibbon
- 23. Delta is one
- 24. NE Massachusetts cape
- 25. Soup cracker
- 26. Yes vote
- 27. Muddy ground
- 28. Physics apparatus (abbr.)
- 29. Type of drug
- 30. German city
- 31. Animal disease
- 32. Martini ingredients
- 33. Get away
- 34. Spanish municipality
- 36. Thrust a knife into

## GARDEN from page 6

The scent is easier to pin-point too; nutty and spicy (ever so slightly) come to mind.

Coriander seed is also well known in various ethnic cuisines and is a favorite in spice blends, curry being the most popular. It is also used in the making of a number of distilled spirits and herbal liqueurs, and cookies.

It's funny that I can like one part of the plant and not the other. Coriander seed can be eaten whole, crushed or powdered.

The Herb Society noted that during World War II the seeds were coated in white or pink sugar and thrown from carnival wagons, earning the name "confetti" or "confetti!" When the seeds were replaced by balls of colored paper the name confetti stuck. Take this one to your next game of Cruise Ship Trivia!

It is easy to harvest the seeds. Simply let the heads dry to brown right on the plant. Clip them and place inside a paper bag; as they dry further they will open and the seeds will pop out.

Even if you are only interested in harvesting the seeds, multiple plantings (or a big garden patch) are necessary to get a de-

cent-sized harvest.

No matter how you like your Coriander sativum, sow the seeds in a sunny, well-drained spot in place for the best success. If you let a few drop their seed each year, chances are you will be blessed with volunteers.

Enough writing, I have four batches of cookies to get in the freezer!

Merry Christmas to all of my gardening friends out there!

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

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# YEAR IN REVIEW

## May

### Wilbraham marks Memorial Day at Crane Veteran Memorial Park

By Kristin Rivers  
Editor  
krivers@turley.com

WILBRAHAM - The community gathered at Crane Veteran Memorial Park on May 26 to commemorate Memorial Day.

This year's ceremony was dedicated to U.S. Navy Veteran Roy Scott, a senior chief, who passed away on May 7.

Director of Veteran Services Jered Sasen stressed how freedom is not free and throughout the nation's history, "there has been a heavy cost involved in the preserving of our way of life" and the nation has shouldered the cost "for many generations of men and women who've fought and died for freedom's sake."

"Today, it is up to us to make sure the legacy of our nation's fallen is passed on from this generation to the next and to all generations beyond," Sasen said.

State Rep. Angelo Puppolo, Jr. (D-Springfield) thanked the community for attending the ceremony, saying, "We owe a great debt of gratitude to all the American Patriots who put country first, before self, before their families and sacrifice their lives so we can continue to live free in this great nation."

Select Board Chair Sue Bunnell thanked Sasen for pointing out the fallen members are, also, being honored and celebrated at the ceremony.

"Those opportunities and freedoms wouldn't exist without the sacrifices



Residents read the names of heroes memorialized at Crane Veteran Memorial Park. The four columns have names of those who served during World War I, World War II, Korea and Vietnam. File photo

endured by folks who were conscripted, drafted and currently are volunteering for this most arduous and dangerous of duty of protecting freedom, and they do it anyway," Bunnell said.

Vietnam Veteran John "Smiley" McLaughlin served as a military policeman during his 13 months of service, sharing he comes to all the veterans events.

"It's a great good-sized crowd here. Wilbraham has a good contingent of people that come out to all these cer-

emonies," McLaughlin said.

Sasen encourages the community to remember what Memorial Day is about while they take time to celebrate at the barbecues and during the three-day holiday weekend.

"Just give it a moment. Let's thank God that these people did exist and let's thank God for the freedoms that we enjoy," Sasen said.

### Hampden commemorates Memorial Day in observance ceremony

Parade canceled due to weather

By Kristin Rivers  
Editor  
krivers@turley.com

HAMPDEN - Showers and thunderstorms did not deter residents from gathering together to commemorate Memorial Day.

However, due to the forecast, this year's Memorial Day Parade was canceled and activities moved indoors, including the hot dog and ice cream socials from the fire and police departments, the Bad News Jazz and Blues Orchestra sponsored by the Hampden Cultural Council's performances and arts and crafts through the library.

The Garden Club's Memorial Day Plant Sale and the Memorial Day Craft Fair outside Federated Community Church continued outdoors with tents.

Jered Sasen, VFW 9397 quartermaster, said the intent of the day "is



Jered Sasen, VFW 9397 quartermaster, accepts this year's Memorial Day wreath from Hampden Garden Club President Lil Fedora on Memorial Day. File photo

not to speak about the glory of battle or pay homage to the heroes or icons, but rather reflect on the person behind the deed" and "remember that all of our fallen comrades for who they actually were: people just like us."

"We must remember and reflect on the lives they left behind. The

next-door neighbors and the kids that lived down the block. They were high school quarterbacks, cheerleaders and class clowns. Some of them were teachers, police, firefighters and plumbers and physicians. They were of every race, creed, color, they came from every corner of our great nation and from countries around the world as well. Together, they defended, protected and advanced the cause of freedom," Sasen said.

Brigadier General Daniel Begin, a Hampden native, shared when he watched the parade and observance ceremony growing up, the American flags along Main Street resonating with him.

"On this day, it is important to acknowledge the family members that still grieve for their individual loss, be it a service member killed in action or still missing in action. The mothers, fathers, husbands, wives, brothers and sisters whose family members went off and fought for their country and never returned. They have our heartfelt condolences," Begin said.



A group photo of Class of 2024 President John Fitzgerald, Vice President Emily Esteves, Secretary Katherine Tzoumas, Communications Officer McKenzie Murray and 2024 President of the Massachusetts Association of Student Councils Abyssinia Haile on graduation day. File photo

### MRHS 2024 class celebrated at graduation

By Kristin Rivers  
Editor  
krivers@turley.com

WILBRAHAM - Minnechaug Regional High School's Class of 2024 was celebrated on graduation day at Symphony Hall in Springfield on June 7.

This year's valedictorian is Siena Dansereau, who had a 4.84 GPA and will be attending Worcester Polytechnic Institute and the salutatorian is Katja Wurm, who had a 4.81 GPA and will be attending Bryn Mawr University.

2024 Class President John Fitzgerald reflected on the past four years as like a book, filled with unfamiliar characters, the taking off of masks--literally and figuratively--after returning to campus post-pandemic, independence and responsibility and stepping up to senior year.

Fitzgerald said how the class "each tried to write the best final chapter of our book."

"We are all Falcons forever and must always remember to challenge, honor, adapt and understand and grow in everything that we do. Thank you everyone and go Chaug!" Fitzgerald said.

School Committee Chair Michal Boudreau stressed how the graduates are entering a world where their curiosity, creativity and compassion "are needed now more than ever."

"You have the power to impact lives positively, inspire change and make a difference. You've already demonstrated this by already supporting classmates, volunteering in your community and standing up for what you believe," Boudreau said.

2024 President of the Massachusetts Association of Student Councils Abyssinia Haile's speech, titled "What I Wish I Knew in High School," had her pondering the musical family of Tizita, which can be described as homesickness, a reminder that the exact moment will never happen again, or at least, not in the same way, telling graduates to hold on to the memories of family, friends and high school.

"So, go forth, do great things and hold on to the good high school brought to us all," Haile said.

Principal Stephen Hale ended his principal's address with these words.

"As you look back on our district and at Minnechaug, always remember us as loving you. I love you and congrats to the Class of 2024," Hale said.

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## LET US HELP YOU MAKE 2025 A GREAT YEAR



July

# PA project for pickleball courts and lighting defeated at Annual Town Meeting

By Kristin Rivers  
Editor  
krivers@turley.com



Donald Flannery voices his support for the lighting and seating at the pickleball courts during Wilbraham's Annual Town Meeting on June 3. File photo

WILBRAHAM - A Community Preservation Act project for pickleball court lighting and seating was defeated at Annual Town Meeting on June 3.

The proposed project, labeled Article 36, would have transferred \$5,000 from the FY2025 Community Preservation Undesignated Fund Balance to provide lighting and seating for the pickleball courts at Memorial School.

When John Hegarty asked for explanation on why the Finance Committee did not recommend Finance Committee Chair Tim Hanks explained, "It's less about the project and more about the fate of the building."

"So, it happens to be about pickleball lighting, but it's really about the fate of the building itself of the property," Hanks said.

Hegarty favors the proposal, saying the town approved funding for the pickleball courts at last year's town meeting and the project is moving forward.

"I think that we should have lighting and seating and I don't think that as an exorbitant expense since we're already spending

over \$300,000 to put the courts in, I think that the players should have seating and lighting," Hegarty said.

Donald Flannery doesn't know how much the lighting is going to cost at Memorial School, suddenly directly addressing Hanks.

"Let me tell you something that you don't have to worry about. You don't have to worry about this \$8 million thing that they proposed for Memorial School because we got it declared as a historic building," Flannery said.

Town Moderator Jane Clark spoke up.

"I think there's a point of order that it doesn't refer specifically to the motion at hand," Clark said.

When Finance Committee member Mike Mazzuca said one of the things that came up was Article 97, Community Preservation Committee Chair Tracey Plantier explained what this means.

"So, for something like Memorial School, if it's protected as recreation property--if we decide to do something different with the property--then that property has to be replaced by another same quality property. Same size, same quality," Plantier said.

On whether Article 97 applies, Town Administrator Nick Breault reiterated how the CPC Funds have already been used.

"So, if we're going to dispose of that property in the future--if Article 97 applies--then we already have that issue with that entire property. But we won't know that unless and until we're going to dispose of that property. That's the opinion of counsel," Breault said.

After residents raised their cards for the vote, Clark then declared, "The nays have it."

# Three people found dead on Main Street

By Kristin Rivers  
Editor  
krivers@turley.com



Local and state police, along with medical examiners, conducting their investigation outside 851 Main St. in Wilbraham after a suspected murder-suicide on June 18. File photo

WILBRAHAM - Local and state authorities are investigating the deaths of three people who were found dead on Main Street in a suspected murder-suicide on June 18.

The Hampden County District Attorney's Office identified the three victims as Sima Setian Pariseau, 56, Dylan Pariseau, 56, and Peter Donaldson, 56, on June 19.

Donaldson was believed to be Sima Setian Pariseau's domestic partner, while Dylan Pariseau was her son.

All three victims were residents of Wilbraham.

A brief press conference was held across the street from the scene at Green Acres Fruit Farm on that day with Hampden District Attorney Anthony Gulluni and Police Chief Ed Lennon.

"An individual who has access to the home was familiar with the decedents came to knock on the residents and made the discovery," Gulluni said. The entire scene is within--as

far as we know at this point--851 Main Street in Wilbraham."

Two residents, who wished to remain anonymous, shared they saw the cruisers earlier that morning and, later on, saw detectives show up at the house.

"(We) figured it probably wasn't a good thing. Definitely something scary considering being in this town. This stuff doesn't happen," they said.

They added what took place was "definitely unfortunate, definitely a tragedy."

In a Facebook post from June 18, St. Gregory Armenian Apostolic Church in Indian Orchard paid tribute to the Pariseaus, who were members and heavily involved in the church.

"Both Sima and Dylan were devoted members of the Saint Gregory Armenian Apostolic Church, with Sima serving as the vice chair of the Board of Trustees for several years. Sima's vibrant personality and unwavering support made her a mentor and source of inspiration for the church community. She was a beacon of light for her family and friends," they said.

"Dylan, a Saint Gregory Church Sunday School graduate and lifelong church community member was often found by his mother's side helping and supporting in every way possible."

Since their tragic passings, the Pariseaus have been remembered fondly by family and friends, including by establishing the "Follow Your Passion" Science Scholarship in Dylan Pariseau's honor. The scholarship was organized by family, friends and the Wilbraham-Hampden Scholarship Foundation.

# Children connect over faith, fun at St. Cecilia's Bible Camp

Week-long camp wraps up with finale celebration

By Noelle Hisgen  
Correspondent



Submitted photos Carolee McGrath  
A group photo of all the students and volunteers on their last day of camp.

WILBRAHAM - On July 12, children stepped into St. Cecilia's Church for the last time as part of their week-long vacation Bible Camp Program "St. Cecilia's Summer Adventure: Diving into Friendship with God."

Rosemary Oldread is the director of the Bible camp and is also the director of youth education and activities at St. Cecilia's.

"We wanted a place for the kids to come back in the summer and enjoy themselves and have fun, and show them that St. Cecilia's, their church, is a place for them to be all the time, not just for Mass. But a place to come and gather with their friends and have a good time and learn songs and we're doing crafts. And we felt it was really important that they had a place of their own here at St. Cecilia's," Oldread said.

Fr. John Connors was ecstatic about the camp. This was an event that he wanted the church to run ever since he came to St. Cecilia's.

"During the summer it's an opportunity for us to continue our outreach to

the children of the Parish. And we give them an opportunity and a fun kind of way to explore not only our faith in a deeper way, but also to have fun doing it," Connors said.

Along with the children, there were many high school counselors for the camp, including Minnechaug seniors Paul Diehl and Ryan Oldread, junior Margaret Fulton and sophomore Leah LoMascolo.

"A lot of them have had a chance to interact with people from other grades because the groups are mixed with different grades. So, then it is good for them to make new friends with people they don't know and aren't used to being around," LoMascolo said.

# Racers gather for 8th Annual K of C College Scholarship 5K

By Hannah Yeasley  
Correspondent



The race begins for this year's Knights of Columbus College Scholarship 5K. File photo

WILBRAHAM - Racers gathered at Soule Road Elementary School on July 21 to run the 8th Annual Knights of Columbus Scholarship 5K.

The event aims to raise money to grant college scholarships to local high school seniors.

This fundraiser initially began in 2005 as the Peach Festival Road Race, and some participants have been along for the ride since then.

One participant, Molly Caltabiano, is a member of St. Cecilia's Parish. She has followed the Knights of Columbus event since it was the Peach Festival Road Race.

"This is only our second year doing this specific 5K, but we love coming to events like this," Caltabiano said. "It creates a sense of community, especially raising money for local kids."

The first-place finisher was Brandon Carpe, a physical education teacher from Simsbury, Connecticut. He finished in just 19 minutes and 16 seconds, and his age group was 40-60. This is the second year Carpe has finished this 5K in first.

"Obviously as a phys-ed teacher, running a 5K is a great way to stay in shape," said Carpe said. "And I'm a high school teacher, so anything that

supports high schoolers is an interest of mine, even if they're not ones I know directly."

Kevin Pfefferle finished behind Carpe with a time of 20 minutes and 10 seconds, placing second overall but first in the 60+ age group.

The third person to finish was Sofia Galvan, with a time of 20 minutes and 49 seconds. Galvan was the first female to finish, and first in her age group of under 20 years old.

"I run a lot of 5Ks," Galvan said. "So, traveling to one that supports students is a good feeling, since I am a student myself."

More information about the Knights of Columbus and their activities can be found at kofcwilbraham.com and their Facebook page.

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August

## Wildlife on Wheels visits Wilbraham Public Library

By Hannah Yeasley  
Correspondent

WILBRAHAM - The Brooks Room at the library temporarily transformed into a zoo on Aug. 1 with a visit from Wildlife on Wheels through the Forest Park Zoo.

Sponsored by The Friends of the Wilbraham Public Library, members of the community had the opportunity to meet and learn about some interesting friends at the Wildlife on Wheels event.

The event, according to Jaime Hageman, the children's librarian, is in conjunction with the theme for their summer reading program.

"The theme is Read, Renew, Repeat," Hageman said. "It's all about conservation."

Stephanie, the lead educator at Forest Park Zoo, brought five different animal species for the event.

The five animals were Aero, a Blue-Tongued Skink, Linguini, a corn snake, Piros, an Argentine Tegu, Meatball, a Lionhead Rabbit, and an African Spur Tortoise named Sully.



A close-up of Linguini, the corn snake. File photo

Stephanie has been with the Forest Park Zoo for years and travels for all kinds of events like birthday parties, classrooms and senior centers.

"The really young kids or the older adults seem to have the most interest, so most of our events target audiences in those age ranges," said Stephanie. "The zoo is closed during the wintertime, but the animals still get taken out for adventures all year round."

## ConCom unanimously rejects 530 Glendale Road Solar Project

Applicant withdraws plans one week later

By Kristin Rivers  
Editor  
krivers@turley.com

HAMPDEN - The Conservation Commission unanimously voted to deny the 530 Glendale Road Solar Project on July 17.

The discussion was continued from the June 25 meeting.

The project originates from a special permit application from Glendale Road Development LLC to allow for the construction of a 4.92 megawatt-ac ground-mounted solar facility with energy storage and associated access driveways, with site grading and utilities located at the address.

The facility in question will be an agricultural-mounted system with an interior array of areas maintained as pasture fields for grazing sheep, cattle and chickens to be managed by Ledge Valley Farm.

The applicant for the project is Rory Walker, president of ZeroPoint Energy Consultants.

The project has been a hot-button issue in town, with many residents expressing concerns about noise, battery energy storage, the parking of commercial vehicles, protection of wildlife and concerns about

impacts on water supply and stormwater.

In an unexpected twist one week later, a request to withdraw the application without prejudice or continuance was filed and later approved by the Planning Board on July 24.

Conservation Commission Co-Chair Judy McKinley Brewer had cautioned the residents not to get too excited about this denial.

"There's about a 50/50 chance that DEP will make revisions and accept it, but one good thing about that would be they would monitor it," McKinley Brewer said. "I'm sure it will be appealed and it still has to go, in any case, through the Planning Board and the Board of Health and the (Board of Selectmen). So, even if DEP reinstates it, it's not a done deal."

Walker later appeared via Zoom along with his attorney, Adam Costa, for the withdrawal request.

"So, the right thing to do--the most efficient thing to do--seemed to be to withdraw the application and, again, go back to the drawing board. What the future might bring, we don't currently know, but, at this time, we don't intend to pursue the current application or the current project in its present form," Costa said.

Walker later returned to the Planning Board on Sept. 25 with a revised proposal. What happens next is to be determined.

## School Comm. to enter negotiations with Hampden Selectmen

By Kristin Rivers  
Editor  
krivers@turley.com

WILBRAHAM - School Committee voted 6-1 on Aug. 22 to enter negotiations with Hampden's Board of Selectmen to return Thornton W. Burgess Middle School to them by June 30, 2025.

Hampden Board of Selectmen Chair Don Davenport explained a letter was sent to the committee about this and the lease requires that "if there's any modification on the lease or amendment on the lease that it has to be in a written agreement" between the school district and Hampden.

"So, I'd like to pursue that this evening

and actually have you take a vote to proceed with us negotiating a change of the lease to release Thornton Burgess School to the Town of Hampden by June 30, 2025," Davenport said.

After Michael Tirabassi asked Superintendent Dr. John Provost if the committee "would be prepared" to enter negotiations, he responded yes.

"At this point, we would be looking to have students moved by second



The School Committee voted to enter negotiations with Hampden's Board of Selectmen to return Thornton W. Burgess Middle School during their Aug. 22 meeting. File photo

semester and we would have staff ready to be moved at any time, really, during that time," Provost said.

Vice Chair Sean Kennedy asked this. "John, do we have a full plan on what the reorganization of the HWRSD would look like for facilities for the coming future?" Kennedy said.

Provost replied, "If the question has to do with the future status of eighth grade and things like that," we "sort of have started to pursue as a result of where things ended up (during) that discussion last year."

Kennedy next asked, "So, any of the future options that are left, would any of them possibly include TWB or not?"

Provost said, "At this point, no."

Davenport said his hope is the new lease agreement would be signed on Sept. 19, which would only include Green Meadows Elementary School after it's signed.

Timothy Collins expressed concerns. "We already don't have enough room in our middle schools and giving up a potential school building at this point in time doesn't seem to make a whole lot of sense to me," Collins said.

Tirabassi said Hampden "is making a very reasonable request."

"We're not using the building. It's definitely a valuable resource to the community of Hampden and the region and, if we're not using it, we should do our part to our partners and turn the building back over to them," Tirabassi said.

On Oct. 10, lease amendment agreements were approved, officially returning the control of TWB to Hampden.



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# SPORTS

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## Falcons get revenge on Lions in rematch

By Tim Peterson  
Sports Correspondent

WEST SPRINGFIELD—After beginning the regular season with an overtime loss to Berry Division rival Ludlow on Dec. 14, the Minnechaug Regional hockey players had a little bit of extra motivation when they faced the Lions again a week later.

The Falcons, who never trailed in the second match-up, escaped with a 3-2 victory at the Olympic Ice Center in West Springfield on Dec. 21.

“This is a huge win for us because we just earned two points towards qualifying for the Western Mass. tournament,” said Minnechaug senior alternate captain Ben Daniels,



Enzo Hrycay hustles up the ice.

who scored what turned out to be the game winning goal at the end of the second period. “We dominated last week’s game, and it killed us losing to them in overtime. We used it as a little bit of extra motivation coming into today’s game.”

The state power rankings have been used to determine which hockey teams qualified for the Western Mass. Class A tournament during the past couple of years.

The qualifications for the 2025 Western Mass. tournament have been changed.

The top four hockey teams in the Berry Division standings will qualify for the Western Mass. Class A tournament. A team earns two points for a win and one point for a tie.

## Longtime referee Lavoie wins MIAA award



Turley photo by Gregory A. Scibelli

Referee Joe Lavoie (center) officiates with his crew on a rainy Thanksgiving morning at Agawam High School this year.

LUDLOW – Last month, long-time referee Joe Lavoie was recognized as the MIAA Football Official of the Year. According to information provided, Lavoie joined the Western Mass Football Officials Association (WM-FOA) in 1974 (51 years) as a junior at AIC in Springfield, MA.

Lavoie was a 3-year starter for Milt Piepul’s 8-1 (‘75) AIC Yellowjackets. He was selected All-New England Honorable Mention by the AP and Boston Herald (‘75), and selected to the ECAC team of the week versus Northeastern University.

After college, Lavoie taught and coached football in Ludlow for Steve Marino and subsequently in Agawam for Roger LeClerc, before joining private industry as a computer systems programmer/analyst. Retired from MassMutual with 30-plus years of service.

He was a 1971 graduate of Ludlow High School playing football for Chick Patullo and baseball for Bill Mullins.

In high school, he was selected All-Suburban League and All-Western-Mass as a tri-captain for Chick Patullo, Jim Cavallo, Dave Dzuira, and Joe Andreis, who instilled the love of football, hard work, and fair play into their teams.



Turley photos by David Henry www.sweetdogphotos.com

Dom Fiorentino navigates through traffic.

Please see **FALCONS**, page 12

Please see **LAVOIE**, page 12



Ryan Ice tries to keep his advantage at 132 pounds.



Kai Lee goes for a takedown at 138 pounds.



William Vezina tries to go high and avoid a takedown.



Lincoln Stiles grapples in the 150-pound match.

Turley photos by Gregory A. Scibelli

Finn Ngyen get their match started at 157.



## Falcons fall to Terriers

WEST SPRINGFIELD – Prior to the holiday weeks, Minnechaug Regional High School wrestling had its first dual meet of the season. The Falcons were defeated at West Springfield 55-22.

# Isles outlast T-Birds in 7-5 track meet

SPRINGFIELD — The Springfield Thunderbirds (13-13-2-1) could not escape a furious push by the Bridgeport Islanders (7-19-2-2) in a high-flying 7-5 contest on Saturday night inside the MassMutual Center.

The Islanders tried to spoil the T-Birds debut for rookie netminder Will Cranley when Liam Foudy opened the scoring on a rebound to the goaltender's right at 7:36.

Springfield would be tested after the Islanders went to a power play at the 13:04 mark, but captain Matthew Peca took matters into his own hands to change the tide. After skating out of his zone with possession, he challenged a forward wide on the left side before surprising Henrik Tikkanen with a short-side snapper to tie the score, 1-1, on Springfield's second shorthanded tally of the season. Peca's tally was his team-leading 12th of the campaign and second in as many nights.

Peca was in the middle of things again just 5:04 later, weaving into the offensive end to create a 2-on-1 outnumbered attack. This time, Peca played the role of playmaker, laying a perfect pass to the blade of Matt Luff in the right circle. With no wasted movement, Luff one-timed it past a sliding Tikkanen, giving

Springfield the 2-1 lead with just 1:26 left in the frame. Peca's assist was his 100th as a member of the T-Birds, making him the first player in club history to hit the 100-assist plateau.

The Islanders gave a glimpse of what was to follow in the middle period when Tyce Thompson one-timed a slapper off the post and off Cranley to tie the game, 2-2, at 3:15 of the second period, as the T-Birds were scrambling to get back into position.

The T-Birds' special teams had the next notable moment just 2:09 later, as Marcus Sylvegard beautifully spotted Luff on a pass from the left corner to the top of the crease, allowing the veteran winger a tap-in for his second of the night to restore the Springfield lead, 3-2, at 5:24.

After a rare stretch of scoreless hockey on this evening, the Islanders found their way to a tie score again when Matt Maggio surprised Cranley with a quick wrist shot from the left circle off a setup from Grant Hutton, evening the game, 3-3, at 14:20.

Before the T-Birds could escape the onslaught, the Islanders got their second lead of the night at 19:06, when a poor Springfield line change set up a 3-on-2

for Bridgeport. Gemel Smith neatly left a puck for Foudy near the crease, and the veteran winger had an open net for his second of the night and a 4-3 Islanders lead after 40 minutes.

Midway through what had been a quiet third period, the T-Birds power play connected for a second time as Sylvegard deflected an attempt from Aleksanteri Kaskimaki over Tikkanen's shoulder, and the game was tied again, 4-4, at 10:04 of the third.

Despite their scrappiness to get back even, the T-Birds could not salvage a point on this night, and Maggio capped his four-point night with a corner-picking wrist shot at 16:20, which gave Bridgeport a 5-4 lead. Cole Bardreau added an empty-net tally at 18:45 to push the lead to 6-4.

That Bardreau tally proved pivotal when Hunter Skinner found the net from the right side with 25 seconds to play, trimming the margin back to 6-5. Ultimately, however, the T-Birds ran out of time, and with the clock about to expire, Marc Gatcomb flung a clearing effort into the empty cage to round out the scoring. Cranley finished his T-Birds debut with 35 saves, while Tikkanen escaped with his first win in six tries with 31 stops.

**LAVOIE** from page 11

As an official, he was elected president of the WMFOA in 1993, and started and taught a first, second, third-year official's training class, and game sign-in requirement for new officials to attend pre-games and work the chains in varsity games. That process is still in effect today. In 1994, amended the training classes to have a separate class for first-year officials and started instructing the second and third-year officials' class, and still instruct that class today.

Among his many accomplishments, he officiated numerous MIAA playoff and championship games around the state and at Gillette Stadium. He joined the Western Mass Basketball Officials Association in 1980, was elected board President in 2013, subsequently elected sec-treasurer from 2015-2017. He still officiates basketball games.

Lavoie earned a CAGS from Springfield College, an MS in management from RPI Hartford, and an MBA from Western New England College. He has taught business and computer systems courses at HCC for over 25 years.

Lavoie has been married to high school sweetheart, Edna (Robertson) Lavoie, for over 45 years, and has three wonderful sons. Two sons live and work in Boston, and one son lives in Longmeadow and is an attorney in Springfield.



Ryan Donovan makes his way up the ice.



Jake Moore heads toward the goal.



Turley photos by David Henry www.sweetdogphotos.com  
Anthony Garib looks to send the puck deep.



Chase Folli tries to make a save.

**FALCONS** from page 11

"Because of the way the Western Mass. Class A playoffs is now set up our Berry Division games are now a little bit more important," said Minnechaug head coach Kyle Bousquet. "The seedings are now determined by points instead of the power rankings. We did get a point in last week's game because we lost to Ludlow in overtime. This week, we earned two points with the win, and they didn't get any points."

While the Falcons evened their overall and league record at 1-1, the Lions had a 2-2 overall record and a 1-2 league mark.

After defeating Agawam and Min-

nechaug in their first two regular season matches by a goal, the Lions, who co-op with Belchertown High School, suffered back-to-back one goal losses to East Longmeadow and Minnechaug.

"We didn't play very well in the first two periods of today's game," said Ludlow head coach Paul Rivest. "We just weren't ready to play hockey, and we allowed them to dictate the pace of the game. This is another frustrating loss."

Neither team had very many scoring chances during the first ten minutes of the opening period.

The Falcons took a 1-0 lead at the 11:12 mark following a goal from junior Dom Fiorentino, which was assisted by sophomore Nick O'Sullivan, who's earned his first varsity point.

With ten seconds remaining in the first period, Daniels had a breakaway opportunity, but he couldn't get a shot attempt off.

Ludlow also had two breakaway chances during the first minute of the second period.

After stealing a pass less than ten seconds into the period, senior Charlie Fijal, who's one of the Belchertown players listed on the Lions hockey roster, fired a shot that deflected off Minnechaug

freshman goalie Chase Folli (10 saves), who made his first varsity start.

Freshman Matt Lafley was the Falcons starting goalie in the season opener.

"This is the first time that I've had two freshmen starting goalies during my coaching career," Bousquet said. "Chase played very well in today's game and earned his first varsity win. Matt played well in last week's game. Both of them are solid goalies."

Another breakaway chance by junior Nick Deroin sailed wide of the net.

The third time was a charm for the Lions, as junior A.J. Stupak put the puck into the net which tied the score 55 seconds into the period. Junior captain Sean Kefalas was credited with the assist.

The score remained deadlocked at 1-1 for the next nine minutes.

The Falcons retook the lead when sophomore Liam Faneuff put a shot into the net past Ludlow sophomore goalie Peter LeBorgne (15 saves) for a power-play goal with 5:32 left in the second period.

Minnechaug's second goal was assisted by the duo of senior captain Brayden O'Sullivan and Fiorentino.

A little more than two minutes later, O'Sullivan assisted on Daniels goal which gave the Falcons a 3-1 lead entering the final 15 minutes of regulation.

"That was my first goal of the season," said Daniels, who's a school choice

student from Monson. "I saw the puck bounce off the goalie and I was able to finish it off."

Daniels, who also plays golf and baseball, has been a member of the Falcons varsity hockey team since he was a sophomore.

"I love going to school at Minnechaug," Daniels added. "It has also been a lot of fun being a member of this hockey team the past couple of years."

The Ludlow faithful supporters thought their team had scored a goal less than three minutes into the final period, but the referee blew his whistle halting the play.

Kefalas blasted a shot into the net at the 10:10 mark, which closed the gap to 3-2. That goal was assisted by sophomore Evan Dias.

The Falcons had a power-play for the final two minutes of regulation, but they couldn't score another goal, but Folli didn't allow the tying goal down at the other end of the ice.

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September

# MRHS celebrates first day of school with pep rally

By Noelle Hisgen  
Correspondent

WILBRAHAM - The Hampden-Wilbraham Regional School District opened its doors for the 2024-2025 school year on Aug. 29, with Minnechaug Regional High School awake and prepared early in the morning for the day ahead.

Principal Steve Hale was at the community entrance welcoming all the students, new and returning.

"We're excited and anxious, all the big emotions are on the first day of school," Hale said. "Hopefully everyone

comes back with a great attitude and have some fun, to engage in their learning, prepare themselves for the future. And as far as new, we are very excited about our 'Vision of the Graduate' that we're continuing to roll out this year."

Assistant Principal Joanne White welcomed everyone to the celebration, introducing the Minnechaug Student Council Executive Board: Co-Presidents Mackenzie DaFonsaca and Ryan Oldread, Vice President Ethan Purcell, Secretary Abdullah Khan, Communications Officer Brayden O'Sullivan, Treasurer McKenna Hale, Junior Delegates Hannah Donovan and Richard Hale, and WMASC, or Western Massachusetts Association of Student Councils, Delegate Evan Liv-erseidge.

White then introduced all of the new faculty members to the school, where they walked to the center of the football field and shook hands with the executive board.

Once the formalities were finished, it was time for the festivities.



Students participate in a hula hoop contest during the pep rally at Minnechaug Regional High School to kick off the first day of school. File photo

Regarding the school year, especially as a senior, Oldread said this.

"I'm excited for all the senior stuff that I'm going to be participating in, and planning all of it especially as a senior will be very cool!" Oldread said.

DaFonsaca was also excited.

"As student council co-president and a member of the graduating class, I am more than excited for this school year as my e-board and I have many great events and improvements we can't wait to introduce to the student body. Being a senior means a lot to me as I've watched my friends and classmates take the stage at graduation and set off to accomplish great things, so to have the honor to graduate with the class of 2025, I am more than grateful," DaFonsaca said.

# Vendors set up shop for Fall Craft Fair

By Hannah Yeasley  
Correspondent

hannah.yeasley@gmail.com

HAMPDEN - The first Craft Fair of the fall was held in the parking lot at Village Food Mart in Sept. 14 beginning at 10 a.m. and running until 3 p.m.

Many folks that were there are craft fair veterans, including SLS-Designs owner Stacey Specht.

"It's nice to see so many people come out," Specht said. "The craft fair in April was one of my most successful ones ever."

Addie Janas is a sixth-grader at Wilbraham Middle School and set up a booth at Saturday's event with the help of her grandmother, Sherry Turowsky.

She has been making bracelets for over a year, and recently decided to turn it into a business.

"I started last August, and I just was making so many for fun and then my family and my friends started asking for customized ones, so I figured why not do that for other people as well," Janas said.

According to Janas' grandmother Sherry Turowsky, the decision to make Saturday's craft fair their first one was a fairly simple one.

"We've been thinking about doing one for quite some time," Turowsky said. "This one was free to join and you just have to bring your stuff and stay the whole time,



Stacey Specht, Owner and Graphic Artist at SLSDesigns, stands with one of her sweaters that reads "Silly Goose University". She had this print in t-shirts, sweaters, and a long-sleeve t-shirt could be special-ordered for no extra cost. File photo

so we figured why not see how it goes."

Saturday's event was the second one since Village Food Mart came under new ownership a year and a half ago.

Nick Line, the head of marketing at Village Food Mart, organized both the spring fair and this fall fair.

"It's nice to get the community out here, especially to encourage folks to shop local," Line said. "We have even more people for this one than we did in the spring, and we're hoping with each fair we get bigger and bigger."

The plan, according to Line, is to have one each spring and one each fall, with the dates for the next one still to be determined.

October

# New Pickleball Courts open

By Patricia Sullivan  
Correspondent

WILBRAHAM - A crowd of delighted pickleball players surged onto Wilbraham's six new outdoor pickleball courts immediately after the Parks and Recreation Department opened them to the public on Oct. 18.

The courts are located behind Memorial School on Main Street in Wilbraham.

"How many years have we been waiting for this? And it's finally happening!" said Deana Burzenski of Wilbraham.

In remarks at the opening ceremony, Bryan Litz, Parks and Recreation director, acknowledged the long process involved in building the courts. He thanked the Wilbraham Community Preservation Committee, the Playground and Recreation Commission and the Wilbraham Friends of Recreation for their support.

Construction of pickleball courts was approved for a different location at the 2022 Wilbraham Town Meeting and approved again for the Memorial School location at the 2023 Town Meeting. The project was then delayed due to concerns about the future of the Memorial School building, but ground was broken soon after the Select Board voted to move the project forward in June 2024.

The cost to build six courts and make minor improvements to the adjacent parking area was \$376,000. Community Preservation Act funds covered \$300,000 of the cost and the nonprofit Wilbraham Friends of Recreation funded the remaining \$76,000.



Art Tiplaldi and John Devine go for a shot down the middle. File photo

Gagliarducci Construction of Springfield was the project's contractor.

P.J. Cambo, member of the Playground and Recreation Commission, praised Gagliarducci Construction's attention to detail.

"The courts are another jewel in the crown of Wilbraham's recreation facilities," Cambo said.

Wilbraham-based pickleball instructor Dennis Windoloski admired the court's construction. "The colors are great and there's plenty of room to move," Windoloski said.

The courts are free to use and will be open to the public until winter weather sets in. Open play at Memorial School's two indoor courts will continue until spring.

Daily indoor pickleball passes, available at the Parks and Recreation office, are \$3 for Wilbraham residents and \$4 for non-residents.

# Thrills and chills at Teen Party

By Amanda Munson  
Correspondent

HAMPDEN - The most asked teen program—the Teen Halloween Party—was back, haunting the library on Oct. 26 with pizza, snacks and a limitless amount of candy, only the start of the spirited time the youth had before the mysterious night began.

The pizza was donated by Casa Bella.

After dark, the library was decked out through the hallway and the Sheila R. Flynn Teen Center into an area the teens would enjoy.

Young Adult Librarian Maxine Girard, one of the organizers of the party, brought up the need and demand for programs like these for this age group.

"We try to have programs that meet the interest of our teens. It's become the hub for our teens in the area, there aren't a lot of spaces here for them. The Halloween party is something that our teens seem to look forward to," Girard said. "We have been continuing to do it because it's popular. Musical chairs, the limbo, and toilet paper mummies are a big hit. We have a few activities mixed into the opportunity for teens to be social, dress up, and have fun. It's a super welcoming space that is safe."



Teens were encouraged to play video games, hang out with new friends and participate in party games like musical chairs, toilet paper mummies and limbo during the Teen Halloween Party. File photo

Meeting up with Library Page Gracen Moriarty, a young adult collaborator with Girard, and para, he talked about his involvement in teen programs at the library.

"Libraries are a social area, they are a place to come together, especially in Hampden. We don't have a lot of those for this age group. I advocated having a virtual reality console and a Nintendo switch. Kids come in and see that we have video games and start playing, then another kid will come up and they start playing together," Moriarty said.

# Women's Club meeting

WILBRAHAM - The St. Cecilia Catholic Women's Club January meeting takes place on Tuesday, Jan. 21 from 11:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Card and Game Party Luncheon: Come enjoy an afternoon of card playing and board games following a delicious lunch and dessert. A raffle with many prizes is held. It's a great way to spend your day while raising money for our charitable contributions. The public is invited!! Hope to see you there!

# Wilbraham Troop 359 hosting bottle & can drive

WILBRAHAM - Wilbraham Troop 359 will have their Bottle & Can Drive on Sat, Jan. 4, 2025 from 8 a.m. to Noon.

It will be held in the St. Cecilia's Church parking lot. All donations to Troop 359 provide support toward camping equipment and supplies, program materials, registration and activity fees throughout the year. People come to the troop's bottle & can drives year after year. The generous community support and donations are greatly appreciated.

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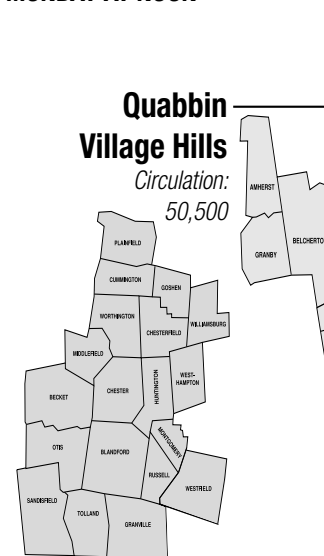


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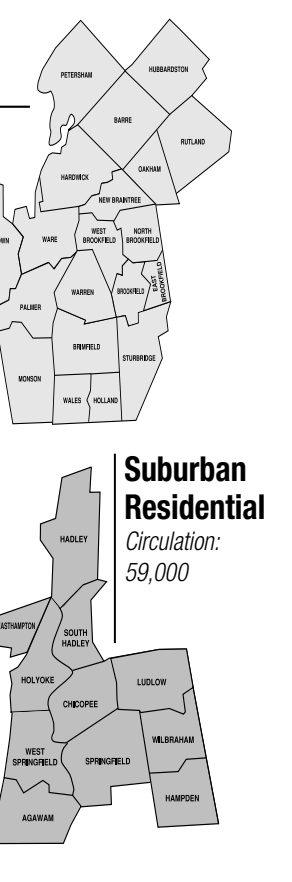
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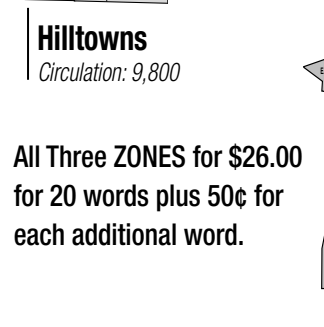
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November

# Wilbraham honors veterans on Veterans Day

Sasen also honored on his final Veterans Day ceremony

By Kristin Rivers  
Editor  
krivers@turley.com

WILBRAHAM - The community gathered at Crane Park Veteran Memorial on Nov. 11 to celebrate Veterans Day.

Noting how it was his final Veterans Day as he heads for a new role with the Massachusetts Executive Office of Veterans Services, Jered Sasen, director of Veterans Services, said serving Wilbraham "has been one of the greatest honors of my life."

"I want you to know that while my role may be changing, my dedication to you and to all veterans remains steadfast. As I carry forward, I will take the lessons I've learned here--inspired by each of you--and will continue the work we began together," Sasen said.

State Rep. Angelo Puppolo Jr. (D-Springfield) said Veterans Day "is a promise that our nation does not take their sacrifices for granted."

"Veterans are examples for all of us. They do not take freedom for granted. They know freedom's true cost, they know the names and faces of the men and women who've paid for it," Puppolo said.

Puppolo later presented a citation

from the State House of Representatives to Sasen.

Select Board Chair Sue Bunnell honored Sasen for his dedication to the town and its veterans.

"I will tell you it's been an absolute joy to see the grace with which he has assumed the mantle of public speaking and organizing events and, most importantly, really ensuring that the veterans with whom he has interacted have received all the benefits that they might be entitled to, including many of which they were com-



The community places their hands over their hearts as they recite the Pledge of Allegiance, with Elliot Sylvester, a member of Scout Troop 359, leading the charge. File photo

pletely unaware," Bunnell said.

Air Force Veteran Kathleen Kennedy was named the 2024 Veteran of the Year and received a citation from the State House of Representatives, the State Senate and a plaque on behalf of the town and Department of Veterans Services.

"I think it reflects change in our country. People are beginning to realize the importance of veterans and what they did," Kennedy said.

# HSC renovation and expansion defeated again at STM

By Kristin Rivers  
Editor  
krivers@turley.com

HAMPDEN - The proposed renovation and expansion for the Hampden Senior Center was defeated again at the Special Fall Town Meeting at Thornton W. Burgess Middle School on Nov. 12.

The latest defeat came after two defeats at the Annual Town Meeting on May 13, the ballot box on May 20 and after this year's Special Fall Town Meeting was postponed from its original Oct. 29 date due to overcapacity.

The vote would have appropriated \$5.96 million—a reduction from the \$6.6 million originally proposed—by borrowing, authorizing the Treasurer—with the Selectboard's approval—to issue any bonds or notes that may be necessary for the purpose of renovating and expanding the senior center.

It, also, would have been contingent upon approval of a Proposition Two and a Half Debt Exclusion, allowing the town to raise the money needed to repay its borrowing share outside the limits established by the proposition.

After 30 plus minutes of discussion, Joe Green presented an amendment to the original motion to appropriate an amount not to exceed \$1.872 million to cover the cost of renovating the senior center.

Town Moderator Richard Green explained after discussion on the amendment, a majority vote on the amendment would be taken.

"If majority passes, we will go to a two-thirds vote on the new number," Green said.

Selectboard Member John Flynn referenced the prior votes, telling the residents to remember how the last vote required a two-thirds vote.

"So, the majority of people here in at-

tendance in May did vote for it. It was successful. It just didn't make the documented two-thirds and then, I think as it was said, it went to a vote afterwards and for whatever reason, people weren't sure about the impact of the vote. It didn't pass there," Flynn said.

Randy Rivest later proposed a motion to go to a secret ballot, which was defeated by a majority vote in both the cafeteria and the gymnasium.

The vote on the amended motion to reduce the number from \$5.96 million to \$1.872 million was defeated by a majority vote in both the cafeteria and the gymnasium.

After being counted manually, the final count was 108 yes, 172 no, with the percentage at .38 or 38%. Therefore, it was defeated by a two-thirds vote in both the cafeteria and gymnasium.



Gary Weiner, chair of the Senior Center Building Committee, conducts his presentation on the updates to the proposed Hampden Senior Center renovation and expansion. File photo

December

# Community enjoys Santa, caroling at Annual Tree Lighting

By Amanda Munson  
Correspondent

HAMPDEN- The Annual Tree Lighting in front of the Hampden Town House on Dec. 1 attracted a crowd that was ready to see Santa and Mrs. Claus, sing along to Christmas carols with the Green Meadows Singers, view the beautiful tree lighting, and support the Girl Scouts Food Drive. Families with young children were happy to meet up with neighbors, friends, and families to enjoy the cold and activity filled night.

The sense of community and pride felt at the tree lighting was shared by everyone, especially Selectboard Member John Flynn.

"I've been attending this tree lighting since I was a kid. It's a ritual, rite of passage, all the words you want to use. It's one of the things that shows that Hampden is a great community," Flynn said. "Everyone remembers. I saw people there with their grandchildren, same thing as me, bonding over when they first started going to these events as kids. That's the part that makes the town unique, especially the people. We are blessed to have the ability to have kids grow up in a community they felt so special growing up in."

Approaching Maryn Rizzuto, a singer of the Green Meadows Singers, she talked about her years participating in the group and her excitement to finally sing this year.



Starting during the pandemic, the HPD started the fire truck parade that allows everyone in town to see the lit up trucks in their own front yard. Here, members of the Hampden Fire Department pose for a group photo with one of the lit-up fire trucks. File photo

"I've been singing for two years and tonight I am here with most of my friends. My favorite song is 'Rocking Around the Christmas Tree' and my favorite thing about the holiday season is receiving presents," Rizzuto said.

With a countdown to the lighting of the tree, the crowd was full of joy and Christmas spirit, right as Santa and Mrs. Claus arrived in tandem in the decorated fire trucks.

"I am very proud to have one of my daughters sing in front of the Town House, it's a really special part of Christmas and to have Santa kick off the season. I couldn't have asked for more!" Rob Rizzuto said.

# United We Ring Handbell Ensemble holds Christmas concert

By Noelle Hisgen  
Correspondent

WILBRAHAM - On Dec. 1, the Wilbraham United Church's United We Ring Handbell Ensemble held their first Christmas concert, "Ring in the Season with United We Ring."

The members, or "ringers," of the handbell ensemble consisted of director Bobbie Morkin, John Colkos, Patti Colkos, Candy Dearborn, Glenna Ford, Karen Kielb, Alesia Peck, Larry Picard, Audrey Pierce, Deb Trimble and Marge Trimble and Kimberly Figueroa on flute.

During songs, there were also words from Audrey Pierce of the Handbell Musicians of America as the Western Massachusetts Representative, as well as Aurora Pierangelo Frias, who spoke on behalf of the Wilbraham Cultural Council, who sponsored the event.

The handbell ensemble is led by Bob-

bie Morkin, who directs the ensemble at the church. She has been with the United We Ring Bell Ensemble for just over three years.

"Bells have the ability to produce many varied sounds all depending on the manner in which they are played. They are a technical instrument. It's so much more than holding a bell and then pushing it forward when you want it to ring," Morkin said.

Deb Trimble, who has been a bell ringer for over 25 years, spoke about her experience with handbells.

"We all have to be there to make the music come together. Bell ringing is both an aural and a visual performance. We have to think of not only how do the bells sound but also strive to make them look beautiful as well. This is the first time some of our players have ever performed in a concert setting and we've worked really hard to bring the beauty of the season through the bells come together," Trimble said.

# Wilbraham lights up Christmas tree in Annual Tree Lighting

By Kristin Rivers  
Editor  
krivers@turley.com

WILBRAHAM - The community came out to Gazebo Park on Dec. 8 to light up the tree at the town's Annual Christmas Tree Lighting.

The event was hosted by the Rotary Club of Wilbraham-Hampden, with attendees enjoying hot chocolate, candy canes and cookies served by LUSO Federal Credit Union--also an event sponsor--sleigh bells, more treats and a snowball throwing game from Landmark Realtors--another event sponsor--and a visit from Santa Claus, who arrived in style on a fire truck with the fire department.

Also, the nativity scene relocating from Crane Park to Gazebo Park, set up by Boy Scout Troop 359 after a Rotary Club member asked if there was something they



Members of the Rotary Club of Wilbraham-Hampden and Santa Claus pose once again for a group photo under the gazebo at Gazebo Park. File photo

could do to give it more visibility. The Select Board unanimously approved the request.

Attendees also presented donations of hygiene products to support the

**LIGHTS** from page 15

Community Survival Center.

After Santa arrived and led the countdown to light up the tree, Rotary Club President Peter Salerno was thrilled with the turnout.

"Santa brings a lot of joy to a lot of different people. We love doing that as a member of the Rotary Club. We will continue to do that as long as we're

able to do it," Salerno said.

Timothy Tracy, the branch manager at LUSO's Wilbraham branch, is also a Rotary Club member.

"We love to sponsor local events and we've done this for a number of years now. It's great to help the community," Tracy said.

Salerno expressed his gratitude to the community for their support,

stressing the Rotary Club is here for them and they want to give back.

"We're very proud of Wilbraham, we're very proud of Hampden, we're very proud of the area and I'm very proud of the people. I've been in town for 53 years. For 53 years, I've enjoyed being a part of the community. I am not the community, I am part of the community," Salerno said.

**PUBLIC NOTICES**

**Wilbraham Conservation Commission LEGAL NOTICE**

The Wilbraham Conservation Commission will hold a Public Hearing on **Monday, January 13, 2025 at 6:00 PM** at the Wilbraham Town Hall, 240 Springfield Street, on the Notice of Intent submitted by CRP Red Bridge LLC. This Notice of Intent was prepared in accordance with the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act and the Wilbraham Wetlands Bylaw. This project includes work within Land Under Water Bodies and Waterways, Bordering Land Subject to Flooding, Bank, Bordering Vegetated Wetland and the 100' buffer zone totaling approximately 34,830 square feet of temporary impacts and 10,640 square feet of permanent impact. This Notice of Intent is being submitted to secure an Order of Conditions for the work completed during the Emergency Certificate issued after the foundation and powerhouse collapse and to continue to perform geotechnical borings to gather needed data to complete final designs for the permanent foundation repair and replacement of the powerhouse. The property is located at 5 Red Bridge Road. Further information relating to this application is on file with the Conservation Commission.

Christopher Brown, Chairman  
01/02/2025

**TOWN OF HAMPDEN CONSERVATION COMMISSION NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING**

In accordance with the provisions of the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act, (MGL CH 131, S 40), it's implementing regulations (310 CMP 10.00) and the Town of Hampden's Wetlands Protection Bylaws, the Hampden Conservation Commission will hold a public hearing on **Wednesday, January 15, 2025 at 6 PM** at the Town House, 625 Main Street, Hampden, on a Notice of Intent, (NOI), submitted by Robert Levesque on behalf of Keith Nicoli for the construction of a single family home at 0 Wilbraham Road, also known as Assessor's Map 17, Block 125. Additional information relating to this request is on file in the Conservation Commission office and available for review by the public by contacting the Commission. Anyone interested in or wishing to be heard on the request may appear at the time and place designated.

Hampden Conservation Commission.  
01/02/2025

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