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Teens publish 'We of Wilbraham'



From the left, Jennifer Powell, Allison Demetri, Charlotte Powell and William Powell with "We of Wilbraham."

Turley photos by Kristin Rivers

Girl Scouts, Brownie Brother collaborate on civic service project

By Kristin Rivers
Editor
krivers@turley.com

WILBRAHAM - What began as a Girl Scouts project became a civic service project uniting community

as three teens worked together to publish a book called "We of Wilbraham: Stories and Pictures of People in a Massachusetts Town."

The book was put together by Allison Demetri, Charlotte Powell and William Powell, taking two years to complete through compiling interviews and portraits of people in Wilbraham. It was based on "Humans of New York" by Brandon Stanton.

On April 29, the book was officially launched and

family, friends, interviewees for the book and many more gathered at The Corner Studio on Boston Road to celebrate. As attendees got copies of the book, they also received a free box of Girl Scout cookies and heard remarks from Jennifer Powell, mother of the Powell siblings and leader of Girl Scout Troop 64587, and Jared Demetri, the father of Allison Demetri, along with the newly minted authors sharing their reflections on

the project.

Also, on May 5, State Rep. Angelo Puppolo Jr. (D-Springfield) presented an official citation from the Massachusetts House of Representatives to the teens for their accomplishment.

There's currently a copy of the book at the library, with plans in the works to get it out into the community more.

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Hampden residents approve FY27 budget

School budget major discussion highlight

By Kristin Rivers
Editor
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HAMPDEN - Residents approved the town's FY27 budget by majority vote during the May 11 Annual Town Meeting, with the school budget being a major highlight of the discussion.

The recommended operating budget was \$18,600,891, with the HWRSD school budget assessment for Hampden at \$9,424,428.

Gary Weiner began his thoughts by thanking the Advisory Committee and the Selectboard "for their hard work in holding down the regional school budget number," and that he would vote in favor.

"But, number three, I think that I would have to say that our School Committee, our superintendent and all the people in the circular firing squad that they'd like to point

to—the state, our legislators or people or whomever—are failing our students," Weiner said. "If you look at the April 2025 MCAS results, 41% of our students in this district are reading at grade level. That leaves 59% of our who are basically below grade level. The same applies in the mathematics area of education. Whatever the School Committee and the superintendent and the teachers and the curriculum and all of the people that are supposed to be educating our children are doing are obviously failing."

Weiner explained when his two children went through the regional school district in the late 1990s and early 2000, HWRSD "was in the top 25 of all the of the school systems in Massachusetts."

"Right now, we're about 150. So, obviously something is wrong in the way that we are educating our students and most of them are failing," Weiner said. "I will vote for this budget, but I would point

Please see **HAMPDEN ATM**, page 8



Screenshot courtesy of Town of Hampden

The eyes have it as residents voted to approved the FY27 budget.



Turley photo by Kristin Rivers
Superintendent Dr. John Provost presents information on the school budget.

Wilbraham approves FY27 budget

School budget major highlight

By Kristin Rivers
Editor
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WILBRAHAM - The FY27 budget was approved by majority vote during the May 11 Annual Town Meeting, with the full budget at \$57,018,471.

Listed as Article 19, the budget consists of

\$56,474,009 and \$544,462 from free cash.

FinCom Overview

Finance Committee Chair Todd Schneider explained due to the regional agreement formula, Wilbraham was "limited to a \$1,147,062 increase of about 3.76% for the Hampden-Wilbraham regional school budget."

"Our neighboring and partner in the district had some constraints this year and that ended up limiting to

how much we could actually give to the schools," Schneider said.

Other significant changes for FY26 were the fire department's budget with hiring four new firefighters/paramedics, the library funded \$64,000 over the Municipal Appropriation Requirement and the town—outside of schools—varied from 2021, an overall pay increase of \$3,262,064, with the overall increase from 2025 an increase of \$1,749,350.

Schneider said, overall,

the town was in a good financial position and continued "the precedent of not spending to the levy limit."

"So, we were able to hold the amount of spending to \$1 million under the levy limit. We also recommended adding \$300,000 to Capital Stabilization Funds. Those funds—I believe—are somewhere around \$2.8 million in each one of them to almost \$3 million in it in one of them.

Please see **WILBRAHAM BUDGET**, page 5



Natalie Proulx

Proulx reflects on her time at the Times

By Natalie Proulx
Correspondent

WILBRAHAM - I am sad to say that my time at the Wilbraham - Hampden Times is coming to an end.

As a senior graduating from Minnechaug Regional High School in June, I'll be going off to Suffolk University to major in Journalism this fall. Writing for the Wilbraham - Hampden Times has been a wonderful experience and I appreciate everyone who has helped to make it happen, from my amazing Editor Kristin Rivers taking a chance on an eager young writer, to Elizabeth Goncalves who helped me set aside time for this passion during the school day in the form of a yearlong

Please see **PROULX**, page 15

HSC hosts KENTUCKY DERBY-themed Party

By Kristin Rivers
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HAMPDEN - The senior center hosted a Kentucky Derby-themed Party event to

great fanfare on May 1.

The festivities included festive fascinator hats worn by attendees, a Kentucky Derby-themed beef stew provided by Greater Springfield Senior Services, mint juley mocktails and chocolate chip

Derby pie for dessert provided by Westfield Technical Academy and the senior center staff racing their horses to the finish line in a game of Kentucky Derby Dice.

Please see **DERBY**, page 9



A close-up of one of the many Kentucky Derby-themed hats.

Photos courtesy of Tina Doran

LEFT: A group photo of the jockeys with their horses at the ready.

COMMUNITY

Lachenmeyer running for 12th Hampden District

By Kristin Rivers
Editor
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WILBRAHAM - Michael Lachenmeyer will be running against incumbent State Rep. Angelo Puppolo Jr. (D-Springfield) to represent the 12th Hampden District in this year's state election.

Lachenmeyer, who grew up in Wilbraham, currently lives in Springfield and is a former educator and journalist who studied Political Science and International Relations as an undergrad before pursuing his master's degree in history from the University of Chicago. He's a former educator alum of AmeriCorps out of Tulsa, Oklahoma.

"After finishing my education, I moved back to Wilbraham and I worked for a time as a subcontractor for Google fact-checking AI for them," Lachenmeyer said. "I have always felt a calling towards public service. When I was in college, I founded a chapter of the Indivisible Movement and when I was living in Tulsa, I led a chapter of the Sunrise Movement. Those are two progressive groups. One is more focused on electoral politics, the other is more focused on environmental issues."

When he returned to Wilbraham, Lachenmeyer explained he wanted to get more involved in political activism again and was inspired to run for political office.

"The reason I picked this specific seat is because back in March 2025, I went to Beacon Hill to go lobby Representative Puppolo on a bill that would create a single-payer universal healthcare program for the state of Massachusetts and he wasn't at that meeting, but his staffers told me and the activist that I went with that he liked the idea, but wasn't willing to go on the record supporting it," Lachenmeyer said. "So, that responses frustrated me and I started looking into his record more and I saw a lot of things that I disagreed with

that I felt like it was important that somebody challenge him because the last time somebody challenged the incumbent was in 2018 and the last time somebody did in the Democratic primary was in 2006. So, I don't think that there can be democracy without competition, and I think that the people of Wilbraham and this district deserve to have a choice in their elections. So, I thought that I could do a service to the community by providing competition and by providing a choice."

Lachenmeyer said his three big pillars of focus are affordability, transparency and accessibility.

"For affordability, I'm trying to make life in Massachusetts more affordable for working-class people by creating a single-payer universal healthcare program. I want to create a graduated income tax in this state, so that people who are earning \$500,000 don't get taxed at the same rate as people who are in \$60,000 a year. Eventually, I'd like to move towards a model that is not based on income but on wealth," Lachenmeyer said. "I also want to create or legalize the pilot programs payable to taxation so that big institutions that are currently tax-exempt, like WMA or Baystate, can contribute more because they're major property holders in this district and, hopefully, that can help offset some of the property taxes that we're going to have this year or are happening across Western Mass right now."

He also wants to expand the child family tax credit.

On transparency, he noted the state audit enacted, ban legislators from doing stock trading while in office and a ban on them becoming lobbyists after they serve.

On accessibility, meanwhile, those include regular townhall events, continue

constituent services Puppolo has provided and have an office in the district.



Michael Lachenmeyer

If elected, Lachenmeyer said his vision in his first six months would be a town hall meeting to give constituents a chance to meet and talk with them about their concerns and what policies he should look into to help them out.

"I want to have regular office hours so they could come meet with me and talk about that too. But, as policy, there's a lot of big issues going on at the state level right now. I think one of the biggest is that there's going to be a massive deficit in the state budget next year because of some of the cuts that are happening at the federal level so the state needs to look at ways to raise revenue and, also, offset some of these property tax increases," Lachenmeyer said. "So, my priority would really be looking at ways to get that revenue without burdening working-class people or seniors. People who are on fixed incomes and are already struggling to get by as is and already have these issues because of fuel and oil, gas, tazes going up and everything else, prices going up and everything else."

Noting the Fair Share Amendment money now, he added he's willing to consider advocating "for some of that to be moved from stuff like transportation and post-secondary education to fund primary and secondary education."

"Because I feel that is really foundational. Even though I support universal access to community colleges and free tuition to community colleges, I can't justify having that at the expense of the municipalities when property taxes are going up and up and up and so many people are being taxed out of their homes, literally," Lachenmeyer said.

Utilities are also a priority, wanting to move "towards a model of publicly owned utilities."

"With oil prices spiking right now, there's a lot of people who aren't even going to be able to get oil to heat their houses. That's a really serious issue that needs direct attention to," Lachenmeyer said. "Issues of affordability, I would say, are the top priority for me in my first year in office or six months in office."

On what separates him from Puppolo, Lachenmeyer mentioned how he's been in office for 20 years while he's running for office for the first time, wanting to provide new ideas and a new way of approaching issues.

Also, he doesn't take donations from corporate lobbyists or PACs.

"Representative Puppolo has been against the Fair Share Amendment. He voted against raising taxes on the richest people in Massachusetts. He was even against there being a referendum of ballot question on that. He also has voted to incarcerate trans people for up to five years for going into the bathroom or locker room that aligns with their gender identity—and as somebody who has many trans friends and a partner who's non-binary, that doesn't work for me at all—I think that that's a serious stain on his record," Lachenmeyer said. "As far as stock ownership goes, I believe that legislators do not own stocks while in office. Representative Puppolo owns stock in EverSource and in Comcast, according to some filings that he has to do with the State Ethics Commission annually. So, for the past five years that we have filings for, I could see that he owns stock in those companies. I think it's a clear conflict of interest. If you own stock in the corporation, you should not be in charge of regulating that at the same time."

Wilbraham-Hampden Scholarship Foundation announces upcoming raffle

WILBRAHAM/HAMPDEN - Dear Hampden and Wilbraham Neighbors, Since 1961, the Wilbraham-Hampden Scholarship Foundation has been awarding scholarships to graduating seniors of Minnechaug Regional High School residing in Hampden and Wilbraham.

Last year, we proudly awarded 53 scholarships totaling a record \$101,750. To sustain our ongoing work, the Foundation depends on the generosity of people in our community. Our biggest fundraising initiative each year is our "Annual Spring Raffle."

This year we are again offering the convenience of two enclosed raffle tickets for \$25 each.

For a chance to win one of our wonderful prizes which have been generously donated, complete the ticket stubs and return them with a check payable to WHSF using the enclosed pre-addressed envelope prior to our Facebook Live drawing on Wednesday, May 27, 2026.

You can also enter by making a payment through PayPal using the QR code

below or by visiting wilbraham-hampdenscholarship-foundation.org/donate. Be sure to include your name, phone number and email address in the note field so that we may complete and enter your raffle tickets on your behalf.

If you would prefer to donate to the Wilbraham-Hampden Scholarship Foundation in lieu of purchasing the raffle ticket, we will be most grateful for your contribution. Use the enclosed envelope to mail your donation or donate online at wilbraham-hampdenscholarshipfoundation.org/donate.

The Foundation is recognized under Section 501(c)(3) of the IRS code, making your contribution tax deductible.

We appreciate your support of our mission to assist the Minnechaug seniors from Hampden and Wilbraham in furthering their education. Please help us give a great send off to the deserving 2026 graduates of Minnechaug!

Sincerely,

The Board of the Wilbraham-Hampden Scholarship Foundation

Chicken Raising Workshop at the WPL on June 2

WILBRAHAM- The Wilbraham Public Library will present "Raise The Coop: The Ultimate Guide to Backyard Chickens" on Tuesday, June 2 at 6 p.m.

Presented by Mark Gostkiewicz of Tri Gable Lea Farm, this class will teach you everything you need to know to start and maintain a happy, healthy flock of chickens, all while using sustainable and organic practices.

You'll learn about choos-

ing the right number and breed of chickens, where to source chicks and adult hens, how to select the perfect coop and run for your flock, tips for designing a coop that suits your chickens' needs, raising chicks into healthy layers, and more.

Registration is appreciated for planning purposes, but seating is available on a first come, first served basis. This free program is sponsored by the Wilbraham Friends of the Library.

Memorial Day Plant Sale

HAMPDEN - The Hampden Garden Club is

looking for perennial plant donations for their Memorial Day Plant Sale.

If you are looking to thin out your perennials, garden members will come and dig the plants you want to donate. Please contact Lil Fedora at 413-566-1137 to set up a dig day.

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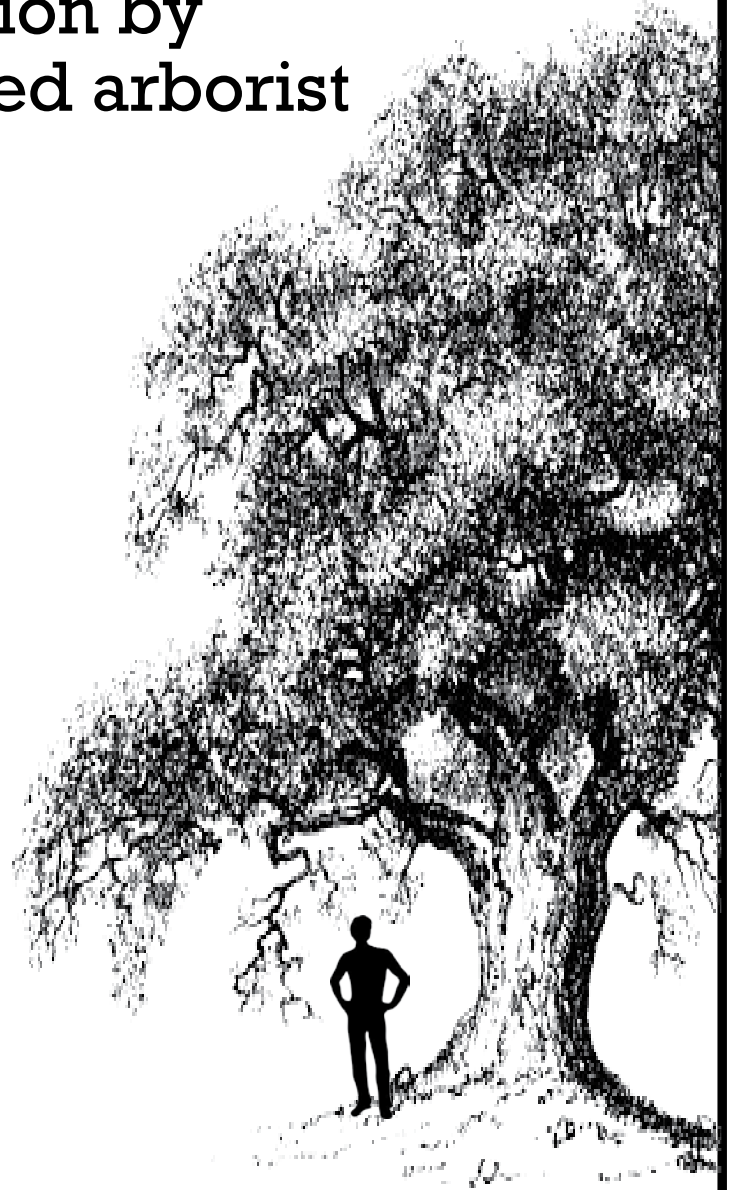


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INSURED AND CERTIFIED

WILBRAHAM BUDGET
from page 1

Recommending \$250,000 to the Other Post Employee Benefits account, or OPEB," Schneider said.

One major challenge this year was Memorial School funding, with Schneider explaining that the committee has been looking for the town to have a plan.

"It was going to cost us 80% more next year to keep Memorial at the current state because of the increased cost of heat and electricity," Schneider said. "We got together with the Rec Commission, Select Board and the Finance Committee. We were able to find synergies between our facilities and the Rec Department to save about \$27,000 with the savings and we feel like we are funding Memorial for a year at the current rate. It was a great collaboration between the Rec Department, Finance Group and the Select Board. Part of that conversation was, by one year tonight, next year at Town Meeting, that there will be a plan put together and presented to the town for Memorial."

After sharing how the library funding kept the library certified, Schneider said with the schools, the district had done "a deep study to their budget" and cut \$2.2 million. Other challenges were future increases to pensions and insurance that "will cause challenges to the budget for both the town and schools."

Wilbraham's assessment for the school budget is \$31,662,062.

Anticipated impacts for FY28, Schneider said, included over \$10 million "on schedule for HWRSD capital improvements," an over \$3 million increase "in capital improvements for town needs," a \$300,000 pension increase and a \$200,000 group insurance increase.

School Budget Presentation

Superintendent Dr. John Provost explained the School Committee approved a budget of \$63,794,617 and the biggest cost driver was health insurance costs, with increased rates about 11.2%.

"This has been a real challenge for districts and municipalities this year, with many communities seeing increases in range of 10 to 20%. While our core budget increased at a rate of 4.58%, our offsets and income are projected to increase at a faster rate, which will bring down the assessed rate for towns, and in recognition of the fiscal headwinds facing towns, we have significantly pared back our capital requests for FY27," Provost said. "Additionally, the student population has shifted slightly towards Hampden this year, affecting the ap-



Sean Kennedy, a member of the School Committee, shares his thoughts.

portionment of costs. The net effect of the reduced apportionment and reduced capital costs is to bring down the assessment significantly for Wilbraham, has already been discussed."

The capital projects were these.

- MRHS Boiler: to be supported through the Minnechaug Capital Stabilization Fund
- IDF Switches and Network Upgrades for MRHS, Soule Road School and Wilbraham Middle School: eligible for 50% e-rate funding, with amounts at \$75,000 and the e-rates matching it
- Schematic roof designs for Mile Tree School and Stony Hill School: eligible for reimbursement through the MSBA
- Air handlers, asbestos abatement, ejector pumps, dump truck and a fence project

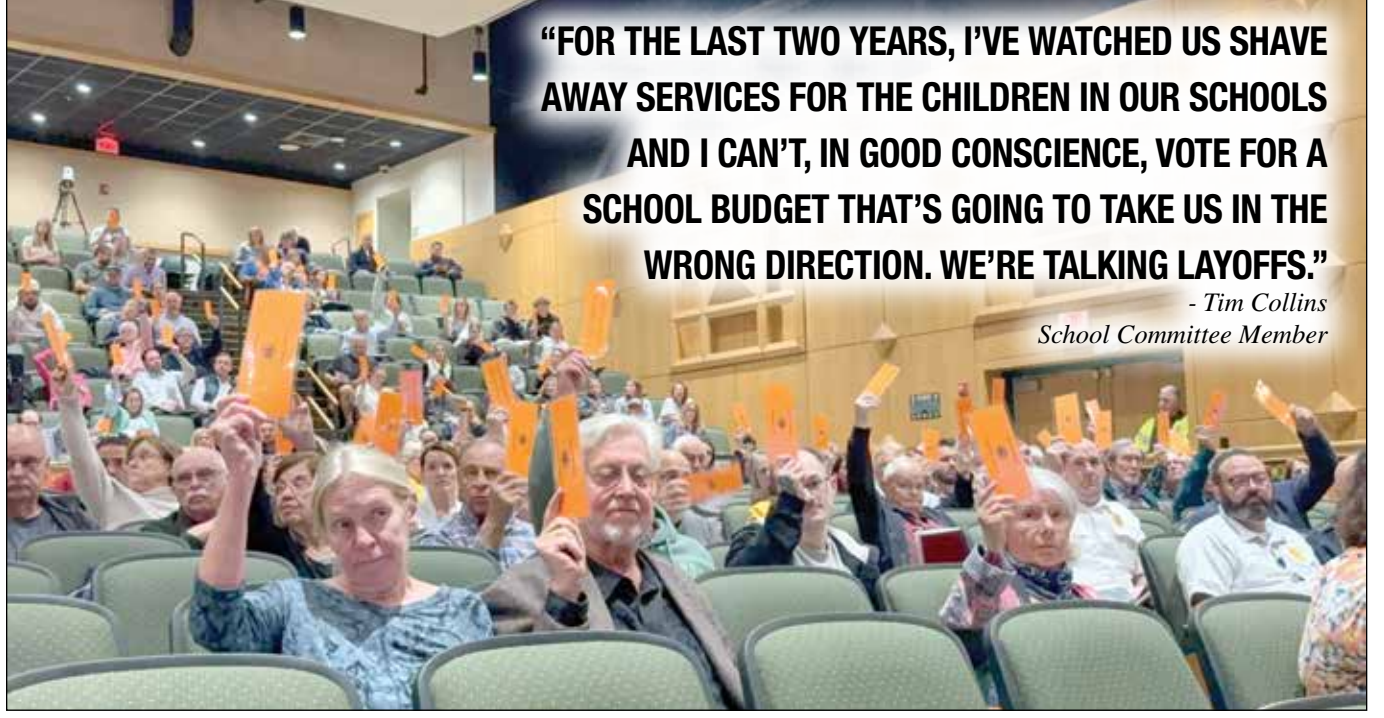
"Like many districts, we are feeling the squeeze this year. This budget includes reductions through both layoffs and attrition. It includes fee increases and further reductions in transportation services. I think it's fair to say it's not the budget that anyone on the school side hope to bring to you this year," Provost said. "It is, however, a budget that we hope will be within the reach of the voters for the two communities. It's a budget that preserves our current class sizes, it preserves our music program, it doesn't require dramatic cuts to athletics, it maintains our robust honors and Advanced Placement opportunities. In short, it's a budget that allows us to continue to provide varied and high-quality learning experiences for our young people, so I ask you to support our request tonight."

Residents Speak

School Committee Member Tim Collins shared he and his colleagues "worked long and hard and made some really difficult choices," proud of the work they've done.

However, he was planning to vote against the budget.

"For the last two years, I've watched us shave away services for the children in our



"FOR THE LAST TWO YEARS, I'VE WATCHED US SHAVE AWAY SERVICES FOR THE CHILDREN IN OUR SCHOOLS AND I CAN'T, IN GOOD CONSCIENCE, VOTE FOR A SCHOOL BUDGET THAT'S GOING TO TAKE US IN THE WRONG DIRECTION. WE'RE TALKING LAYOFFS."

- Tim Collins
School Committee Member

Residents raise their cards to cast their vote on the FY27 budget.

schools and I can't, in good conscience, vote for a school budget that's going to take us in the wrong direction. We're talking layoffs," Collins said. "I've been amazed and proud of the work that people working in our schools have done. Implementing the Strategic Plan, the work they have done on training has been phenomenal. A perfect example of that, when DESE said the school district was suspending too many kids, they went to work on that and they implemented a plan that reduced those suspensions and, at the same time, the growth, academically, of our students continued to increase. That's an amazing accomplishment. I don't know how you keep it up when we're going to be cutting the teacher leaders who help train and facilitate the collaborative efforts to implementing our strategic plan."

Collins thought the school district "did their best not to overburden the taxpayers," but added both communities should reach out to other regional districts and urban districts, noting the impact of the foundation formula shifting to Gateway Cities when they struggled, such as Springfield and Holyoke. However, he added, those cities had an over 30% increase in state revenue, while HWRSD had an 8% increase.

"Our students deserve the same kind of support that they get in those other communities," Collins said.

John Guerin asked this. "If our town wanted to add more money to that budget, would that be possible without Hampden or do we have to do it hand in hand? I just don't know how these things operate, but that's my general question," Guerin said.

Select Board Clerk Sue Bunnell answered this question.

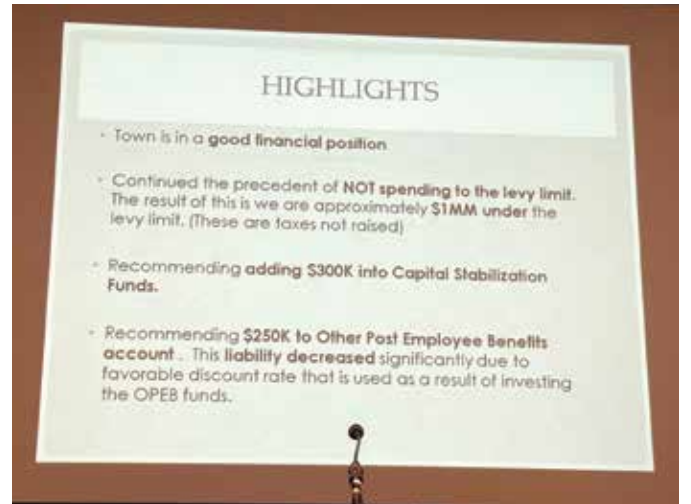
"The short answer there is that because we are a region-



Select Board Chair Michael Squindo answers a question during the discussion.

al school district, the budgets have to match. So, if the budget for the district were to fail in either community tonight—their Town Meeting is now as well—then there's a process it goes through. It goes back to the School Committee right out of the gate for them to reevaluate. If the budget is lowered or does not pass, the School Committee then would have the opportunity to decide if they could live with the lowered budget," Bunnell said. "If it's an increase to the budget, it would only work if, in fact, Hampden was doing the same thing at this moment in time. The two towns must hit numbers that are equivalent to each other based on the formula."

School Committee Member Sean Kennedy disagreed with Collins.



This slide shares some of the highlights of FY26.

"It's very hard when you're trying to make a budget for the schools, for our students, for our children. It's very hard to put it together in a way that is responsible to the taxpayers. We get money federal, we get money from the state and then usually it falls on the towns, it falls on you, it falls on me, to come up with the difference that we don't get," Kennedy said. "Usually, Wilbraham is the deciding factor, but this year, as Todd Schneider had just said before, it falls on Hampden. They're having some issues over in the town, so the financial burden has been shifted a little bit. Population has shifted and stuff, so it's a greater burden to them this year."

Kennedy said, "I don't want to make any cuts. We've had to make cuts" and added

how the committee has done its best, along with Provost and Assistant Superintendent for Finance, Operations and Human Resources Dr. Douglas Slaughter "to really try to make the cuts as painless as possible" so that it's fair to both towns, students, teachers, administrators, paraprofessionals and everybody.

"I think we've done as good a job as we could do and this has been a very long, ongoing process. I do have to thank everyone on Finance. I think this is the smoothest it's gone in a long time. Thank you very much for your support and I hope that everyone here we would have your support for this budget as well," Kennedy said.

More on other Town Meeting highlights from both towns in future editions.

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VIEWPOINTS

SOCIAL SECURITY

Matters

By Russell Gloor

I'm still working; why didn't I get a higher Social Security benefit?

Dear Rusty:

I began collecting benefits at age 72 and am now 78.

Since that time, I have continued to work and have contributed over \$40,000 to Social Security over the last six years. At the time of my retirement, I was informed that the Social Security Administration would review my contributions annually and replace lower-earning years from my 35-year record with my current higher-earning years.

Despite my current annual income exceeding \$100,000, I have not seen an increase in my benefit amount over the past six years. I recently met with an SSA representative, who confirmed that my benefits are being reviewed annually but did not provide specific details or evidence of these adjustments. Could you please advise me on how to formally verify that my benefits are being accurately reviewed and updated to reflect my continued contributions?

Signed: Collecting and Still Working

Dear Collecting:

For information, your contributions from Federal Insurance Contributions Act payroll taxes to Social Security over the last six years are not what determines if you get an increase to your monthly SS benefit.

Although you contributed to SS since you started receiving SS benefits, those contributions do not affect your monthly SS benefit. Your monthly SS benefit is based only the highest inflation-adjusted 35 years of earnings over your lifetime. And for your monthly benefit to change, your current earnings each year would need to replace at least one of those 35 historical, inflation-adjusted year earnings.

We regularly hear from those who do benefit from SSA's regular review of work earnings after they start receiving monthly SS benefits, and our Advisory staff includes two individuals with a combined 70 years of service with the Social Security Administration. Thus, we are comfortable saying that SSA does, in fact, review your earnings annually to see if your monthly SS payment should be higher.

From a process standpoint, SSA receives your annual earnings information from the IRS (i.e., directly from your annual tax return) by mid-year annually, after which SSA evaluates your recent earnings to see if an increase in your monthly SS benefit is warranted. If so, that increase is automatically applied, usually around October each year and you are paid the extra amount retroactively to the beginning of the year.

What you may not realize is that your lifetime earnings (your historical

earnings) are adjusted for inflation. This is a good thing, because that means your current monthly SS benefit is calculated using today's dollar values for your past earnings, rather than the actual money amounts you originally earned and received.

For example, \$50,000 of 1990 earnings would be worth about \$125,000 today. Which also means that those 1990 earnings would only yield a higher current Social Security benefit if your recent earnings were more than \$125,000. And this is true for all 35 years of lifetime earnings used to calculate your current monthly Social Security benefit.

The best way for you to ensure that you are getting the right monthly benefit amount is to first obtain your lifetime earnings history from Social Security. This is most easily obtained through your online "my Social Security" account at www.ssa.gov/myaccount. If you don't have an online account set up, you can also request an "Earnings Statement" by calling Social Security at 1.800.772.1213 (or call your local SS field office to request it). Next, I suggest you use Social Security's "Online Benefits Calculator" explained and available at this link: <https://www.ssa.gov/benefits/retirement/planner/AnyApplet.html>

If, after this, you believe you should be getting a higher monthly SS benefit because of your recent earnings, you can again contact SSA and tell them you believe they did not properly adjust your current SS benefit for your most recent earnings. Following that, you can submit a "Request for Reconsideration" (form SSA-561) which will result in a full separate review of your case by an independent SSA person, followed (some months later) by a formal written determination on your assertion. If you received a letter from SSA because of your previous meeting with them, include a copy of that letter with your "Request for Reconsideration."

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

To The Editor:

The Wilbraham Friends of Recreation (FOR) would like to extend our sincere gratitude to everyone who supported the Memorial School article at Annual Town Meeting. This vote marks the fourth significant commitment to the Memorial complex in just five years. A testament to how much this community values what it has built together. We are deeply grateful to those who let us place signs on their property, championed our effort behind the scenes, spoke at Town Meeting, and showed up to vote. This was a true team effort, and it showed.

Letters to the Editor

Thank you for approving ATM Article 32

We also want to acknowledge and thank the Finance Committee for collaborating with the Recreation Commission and FOR to come to a resolution on keeping Memorial open for another year. The Finance Committee faces an extraordinarily difficult task each year, balancing the needs of many competing priorities with limited resources. Though we disagreed on this article, we remain confident in our shared commitment to funding the programming Wilbraham residents consistently call for, and we look forward to continuing that work with the Finance Committee. We also look forward

to the Business Utilization Committee's upcoming recommendations. This group has invested considerable time and effort over the past year examining how the town can best use its facilities, and we have no doubt their findings will prove valuable. There are exciting possibilities on the table, and should the town commit to a long-term plan, the FOR stands ready to support a large-scale fundraising effort.

Wilbraham has a great deal to look forward to. Thank you for being part of it.

Wilbraham Friends of Recreation

Rhubarb, a perennial fruit worth growing

Recently I was chatting with a coworker who has a dozen varieties of rhubarb.

Yes, rhubarb. He asked if I wanted a division or two.

Although I love all things old, and this fruit (yes, fruit) is considered about as old-fashioned as they come, I politely declined. Rhubarb and I don't particularly get along.

But, that doesn't mean I'll knock anyone who can eat it and not visit the bathroom. All the more power to them.

Read on for some rhubarb trivia that just may earn you a prize on your next cruise.

Back in the day when everyone made time for baking, or baked out of necessity, rhubarb was indispensable in the garden. Today, most folks figure they can buy what they need when they long to make a strawberry-rhubarb pie or some preserves.

I say, "Why buy it, when it is so easy to grow?" And, as an added bonus, it may just out live you!

Rhubarb was featured on a cooking show and a lengthy discussion evolved between the celebrity cooks about whether it was a fruit or a vegetable. I never did hear the resolution, but did a little research of my own.

Apparently, rhubarb is a vegetable but after a court decision in 1947 it is legally a fruit and was not subject to taxation of the time.

The best time for planting rhubarb is early through mid-spring. If you are lucky enough to know someone with an established patch, it is very likely they will give you all of the divisions you need and then some.

You can also purchase roots or small potted plants from local nurseries. For an average family of four, plan

on two or three divisions.

Rhubarb will do best in a spot in the yard that is in full sun or light shade. Most gardeners locate it separately from or at one end of the main vegetable garden.

tentively.

When it's time for your plants to make their way to a permanent spot, dig holes two to three feet apart. The depth of the holes will depend on the size of the divisions you have and how big their roots are.

Plant them at the same depth they were growing in your friend's garden or in the pot you bought them in. If you are planting roots, go by the buds – they should be planted about two inches below the soil surface.

During the first growing season your emphasis should be on root building. For that reason be sure that you water well and keep weeds at bay.

Do not pick stalks until the following spring, but do break off any flower buds that form. Once your patch has established itself there is no stopping it! All you'll need to do to maintain it is provide a topdressing of compost or rotted manure each spring and weed as needed.

Of course, you will also want to pick as much as you can! No knife is needed: simply hold the stem near the base and give it a quick pull along with a gentle twist.

Use only the stem since the foliage is known to be toxic.

The patch will need dividing every 5-10 years; the perfect time to offer up divisions to your friends!

Roberta McQuaid graduated from the Stockbridge School of Agriculture at the University of Massachusetts. For the last 34 years, she has held the position of staff horticulturist at Old Sturbridge Village. She enjoys growing food as well as flowers. Have a question for her? Email it to pouimette@turley.com with "Gardening Question" in the subject line.



Remembering
Their Sacrifice
Memorial Day

The Wilbraham-Hampden
TIMES

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The Wilbraham-Hampden Times is published every Thursday by Turley Publications, Inc., 24 Water St., Palmer, MA 01069. Telephone (413) 283-8393, Fax (413) 289-1977.



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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 800-824-8458 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.

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. 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.

Life in &

Readers are encouraged to send in medium to high resolution photos for this page by e-mail to krivers@turley.com or mail to TIMES, 24 Water Street, Palmer, MA 01069.

WILBRAHAM HAMPDEN

Where Do Pollinators Go in the Winter?

Submitted photo and caption Cheryl Phillips

On April 30, the Wilbraham Red Hatters sponsored a program on pollinators in New England. Caro Munoz Agudelo, Ph.D, Director of Public Programming and Research at Norcross presented a lively program explaining how pollinators survive New England winters and practical ways to support them throughout the year. Our next adventure is a boat trip leaving South Hadley and traveling along the Connecticut River. Date has yet to be determined.



Wilbraham Women's Club Fashion Show

Submitted photo and caption Sue Agnew

The Wilbraham Women's Club held a Fashion Show, April 23, at the Saint Cecilia Parish Center. The fashions by Chicos were modeled by members of the club. Left to right are Amy Basile, Leslie Barone, Kathy Perry, Kelley Bourcier, Kathy Gajda and Gale Candaras.



WFD assists in brush fire response

Photos and caption courtesy of Wilbraham Fire Department

WFD assisted the Hampden Fire Department with a large brush fire in the area of Ames Road on April 23.



All About Them Florals!

Wilbraham resident Dee Mitchell visited the Holland Michigan Tulip Festival on May 2. These were taken in the Tulip Festival's Immersion Garden and are only some of its tulips. All of these were planted in individual pots. Many others had been planted all over the city. And of course, a copy of the Times was along for the ride!

Submitted photos and caption Dee Mitchell



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COMMUNITY

TJO Animals Annual Jack Rome Memorial 5K & Fun Walk surpasses goal

SPRINGFIELD – The Foundation for TJO Animals held its annual Jack Rome Memorial 5K & Fun Walk on May 2, raising over \$58,000 to benefit animals at the TJO Animal Control & Adoption Center.

The Foundation signature event brought in a record breaking 373 registered participants alongside their families and pets to honor the animals who have changed their lives, and to support those still waiting for care and compassion. Patrons enjoyed music, raffles, vendors, food trucks, inflatable games, and superhero themed activities. The Foundation surpassed their goal and raised over \$58,000. Now in its fourth year, the Jack Rome Memorial 5K & Fun Walk was created to celebrate the life and legacy of Jack, a beloved dog whose memory continues to inspire hope and healing for animals in need. Since its inception, the event has raised more than \$190,000 for the Foundation's mission.

"This event continues to grow in the most meaningful ways," said Janna Brown, Executive Director of the Foundation for TJO Animals. "Even in the rain, our community showed up in full force. It's a powerful reminder that people care deeply about these animals and are

willing to step up to make a difference".

The event was made possible through the continued partnership of Gary Rome Auto Group and Western Mass News, whose support has helped grow the event into one of the region's most impactful animal welfare fundraisers. Other significant sponsors include the Richard & Barbara Whitcomb Foundation and Alekman DiTusa, and Integrity Veterinary Center.

Participants also heard remarks from State Senator Jake Oliveira, and the event welcomed several community partners and nonprofit organizations, including Broken Wings, Magic for Maddie, and Each Moment We're Alive. Chicopee Mayor John Vieau, and members of the Hampden County Sheriff's Department were also in attendance, including Deacon, one of their therapy dogs. While Sheriff Nick Cocchi was unable to attend, he generously pledged \$3,000 in support of the Foundation's work.

"The energy, even on a rainy day, was incredible," added Brown. "This event is about more than just a race, it's about community, compassion, and coming together to give animals a second chance."



Snow and his people.

The Foundation for TJO Animals raises funds to provide resources and support for critical veterinary care and enrichment for the animals at the Thomas J O'Connor Animal Control and Adoption Center. The Foundation is a 501(c)(3) organization and depends on the generosity of its supporters to achieve its goals.

Founded in 2007, the Foundation for TJO Animals is dedicated to raising much

needed funds to help local, homeless animals at the Thomas J. O'Connor Animal Control and Adoption Center, serving the cities of Springfield, Holyoke, and Chicopee, Massachusetts. With a focus on providing financial assistance and grants for veterinary care, the Foundation has had a direct impact on saving lives of animals in the shelter.

Local student launches junk removal business

WILBRAHAM – A new local junk removal business is now offering affordable hauling and cleanup services throughout the Wilbraham and Hampden area.

Services include furniture removal, garage cleanouts, yard waste removal, appliance hauling, and general junk cleanup. Free estimates

are available, and same-day service may be offered depending on availability.

The business aims to provide fast, reliable, and affordable service to local residents while helping keep neighborhoods clean. For more information or a free quote, call or text 413-537-0226.

Hampden Garden Tour/Plant Sale set for May 24

HAMPDEN – Edward Salerno, a resident of Hampden, will be holding a Garden Tour/Plant Sale on Sunday, May 24 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at 299 Wilbraham Rd.

An avid gardener, Salerno has developed a nursery with

over 100 plant varieties consisting of Hosta, Daylilies, Astilbe, Sedum, Peonies and more.

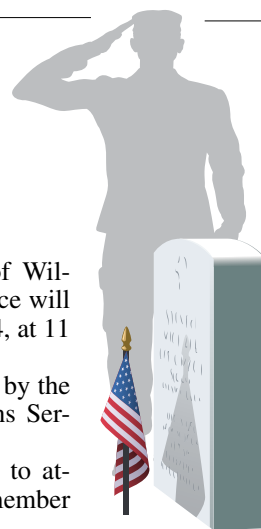
Salerno looks forward to seeing the community come out and encourages them to stop by for the event.

Memorial Day Ceremony set for May 24

WILBRAHAM – The town of Wilbraham's Memorial Day Observance will be taking place on Sunday, May 24, at 11 a.m. at Crane Park.

The annual ceremony is hosted by the Wilbraham Department of Veterans Services.

The community is encouraged to attend to honor our heroes and remember the fallen.



HAMPDEN ATM from page 1

out and ask all of the people who are supposed to be educating our children and helping them to please change direction. Our children deserve better than what they are getting for the funding that we're going to vote tonight."

Gabrielle Fisk said, "I don't think it's the educators that are failing."

"It's not our teachers that are failing. It's our teachers that are rising to every single occasion with minimal and continuing decline of resources. So, I would just like to note while yes, there is absolute transparency and accountability that needs to be had at the decision-making level, put some respect on the names of our teachers because they're doing a hell of a lot with zero support," Fisk said.

Matthew Bean shared

how MCAS is not a graduation requirement now.

"I've been an educator in Springfield since 1999. I've been through MCAS a lot and MCAS is going through a big, big shift, and so to look at recent data, it's our first period of data without it being an MCAS requirement," Bean said. "Schools are taking, sometimes, different approaches. So, I think when we look at that data, it's a new batch of data with new rules, new expectations and some schools are shifting, so that data point is really a brand-new data point given that the state of Massachusetts no longer uses MCAS for a graduation requirement. So, I think that data point's a little bit iffy."

Selectboard Member Don Davenport then asked if any members of the School Committee were in attendance as he had two questions.

"Number one, is the school contract settled?"

Davenport said.

Assistant Superintendent for Finance, Operations and Human Resources Dr. Douglas Slaughter answered his questions.

"So, as far as the contracts are concerned, the final two that we had that were unsettled were our Unit A and our Unit C, which is our teachers and our para educators. They recently took a vote last week to see about ratification of what was offered. Unit A, the teachers, approved and ratified the contract and the para-professionals did not. So we have one still outstanding," Slaughter said.

On Davenport's second question, he said "the answer to the first question answers my second question."

After this the overall operating budget, listed as Article 7 on the Town Meeting Warrant, passed.



Assistant Superintendent for Finance, Operations and Human Resources Dr. Douglas Slaughter answers questions.



Gabrielle Fisk offered her thoughts on teachers.



Gary Weiner was among the speakers on the school budget.

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The setup is ready for the attendees.



It wouldn't be a Kentucky Derby-themed party without some hats!



Smiles were all around throughout the event.

HSC hosts KENTUCKY DERBY-themed Party



Photos courtesy of Tina Doran. The event also brought a touch of spring with all the bright colors.

RIGHT: Some Kentucky Derby-themed décor.

DERBY
from page 1

The lineup included "Director's Choice" from Executive Director Rebecca Moriarty, "Second in Command" from Assistant Director/Outreach Coordinator Wendy Cowles, "No Nonsense" from Receptionist Sharon Woodin, "Serenity" from Receptionist Joi Giuggio, "Ready for Take-off" from Volunteer Coordinator Tina Doran and "Neat & Tidy" from Custodian Rudie Voight.

Prizes were also awarded for best hat/outfit. Enjoy this photospread highlighting the event and, of course, it's safe to say this will be back next year!

RIGHT: Attendees smile for the camera as they celebrate the Kentucky Derby.



Attendees were excited to dress up for the occasion.



Multi-Family Rummage Sale May 29 and 30

WILBRAHAM – Evangel Assembly of God on 348 Stony Hill Road in Wilbraham will be holding a Multi-Family Rummage Sale from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on May 29 and 30.

There's a little bit of everything from small furniture, rugs, and home appliances to clothes, toys and books. The proceeds support the church's teenagers who will be going to do hurricane relief work in North Carolina this summer.

Molly Olsen completes intensive research project

WORCESTER – Molly Olsen, from Wilbraham, a member of the class of 2027, majoring in Computer Science and Data Science at Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI), was a member of a student team that recently completed a professional-level research-driven project titled "Improving Zoo Praha's Mobile Application and App Marketing."

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PROJECT from page 1

Charlotte Powell explained how the book originally started as a Girl Scout project to achieve the Silver Award, blossoming into an unforgettable community project.

"The goal of it is to bring the community together, so you kind of know a story about these people that you see every day. You have some town representatives and we have teachers and people you see every day and it's just kind of to learn about who your neighbors are," she said.

Her brother, William, who always supported and contributed to the Girl Scout Troop, was honored to get involved in the project from interviewing people to photography and more.

"It's also a great thing to talk to everybody in the community and get to know everybody and I think, honestly, more people should do things like this and get out there and talk to as many people as we can. I think that's what a community's supposed to do," he said.

Demetri agreed with the siblings.

"It's a great community effort to just bring everyone together. A time where people are so divided, you can learn stories of people. Probably like, 'Oh, I didn't know that she could juggle' or like 'I didn't know that when she was a kid she actually drowned,'" Demetri said. "It's like random stories you would never guess from people. It just helps to kind of foster community in a way that you wouldn't expect."

After sharing how moved the teens were by the community support—including some of the people featured in the book coming out to celebrate and meet each other—they shared some of the lessons they learned along the way included public speaking, gaining confidence, photography skills and more.

"The main thing I learned is so many people have such similar lives, but at the same time, are astronomically different. Like some people would say, 'Oh, I learned this lesson from my father or my mom' or 'I learned this lesson' and they'll have the exact same words for the lesson they learned, but their own way of how they learned it, how they implemented it into their lives is very interesting to see," William Powell said.

"I learned that it's amazing the kind of life you can live in a small town. A lot of people think it's not that interesting and there's nothing going on, but this book is an example of these people who've lived extraordinary lives," Charlotte Powell said. "It's surprising,



State Rep. Angelo Puppolo Jr. (D-Springfield) presented citations to the authors on May 5.



Jared Demetri, father of Allison Demetri, reflects on the teens and their impact on the community.



Karen Gatchell, one of the people interviewed for the book, signs her autograph.



Donna Pikul, also featured in the book, signs her name in a copy of the book as Allison Demetri looks on.

but a lot of them think like, 'Oh I'm not that interesting.' Most of our interviews started that way, like 'I don't know why you're interviewing me. I'm not that interesting,' and then they reveal this amazing story that nobody else has ever said before. It was amazing. I touched on this on my speech, but I learned a lot of lessons of going into the future, you can change your path sometimes. All of these people have had six different careers or they've been willing to change their path. As a high school senior, it was really refreshing to hear that and know that that could happen."

"I love that the community's willing to step up when given the chance," Demetri said. "People wanted to be involved, people wanted to come together and work on something bigger than themselves and I learned that that's



Inside the book, we find stories about Deb Trimble and Rachel Haggood.

really important, like just giving people a chance to go beyond normal."

The teens thanked the community and encouraged them to check out the book.

On favorite people to interview, Charlotte Powell's was Bradley Gregory, Allison Demetri's was Gail Lima and William Powell's was Bruce Earl.

"Go out and read it, learn about your neighbors," Charlotte Powell said. "Talk to people you've never talked to before. You never know what you're going to learn. A lot of people are nicer than you actually think they are."

"Be sure to talk to people that have different perspectives. There's some people that have different ideas than I did and it was still very interesting to see how everyone spoke to each other. I feel like as a society, we've been sticking to our close groups and I think

branching out of it more," William Powell said. "Like the things we're doing right now. Again, talking to your neighbor, talking to that person you see at the supermarket, waving hello to people in your car. Just being a talkative person if you can."

"Open up to your neighbor," Allison Demetri said. "Even if you're different, just talk about anything, because people are more than just their party affiliation, where their kids go to school. Connecting on a very human level is very important just for everyone."

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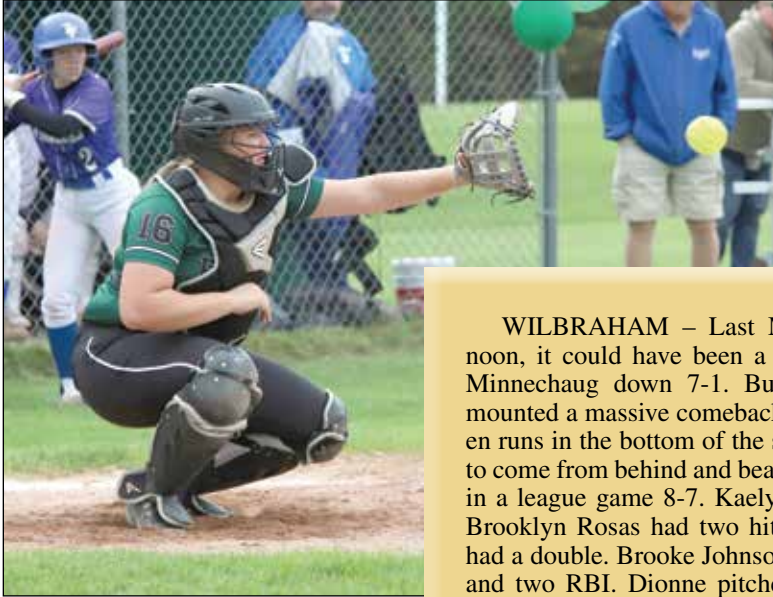
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Falcons walk off against Turners Falls



Brooke Johnson frames up a strike.

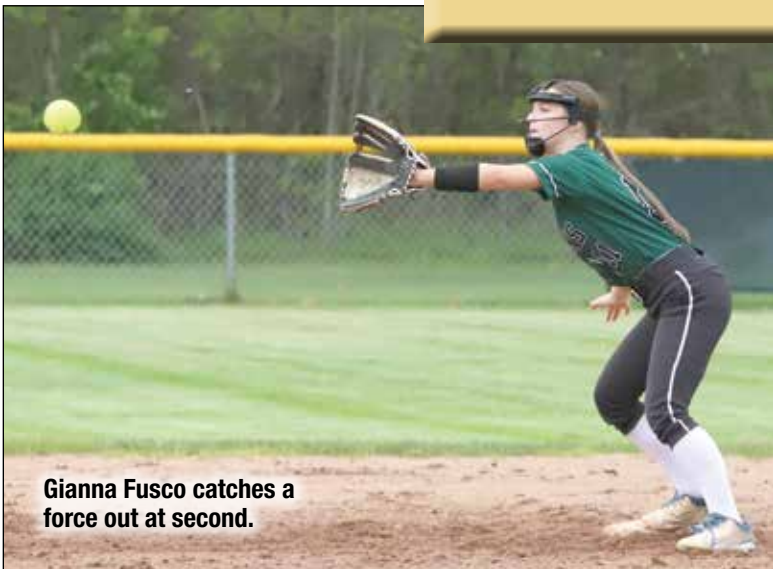
WILBRAHAM – Last Monday afternoon, it could have been a lost cause for Minnechaug down 7-1. But the Falcons mounted a massive comeback, scoring seven runs in the bottom of the seventh inning to come from behind and beat Turners Falls in a league game 8-7. Kaelyn Dionne and Brooklyn Rosas had two hits each. Rosas had a double. Brooke Johnson had two hits and two RBI. Dionne pitched a complete game and got the win. The Falcons finished the regular season at 11-7.



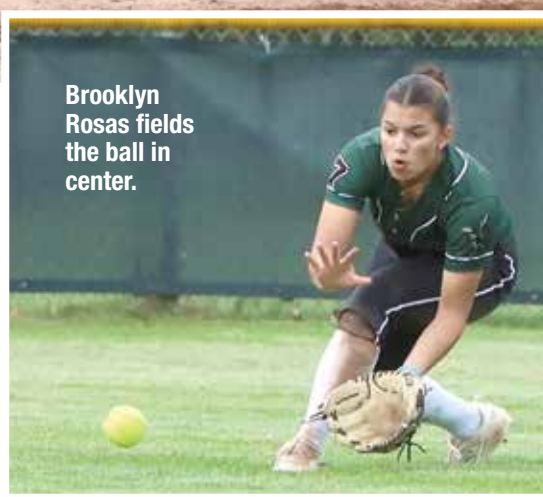
Kaelyn Dionne sends a pitch away.



Aezlin Rost makes the catch heading for foul territory.



Gianna Fusco catches a force out at second.



Brooklyn Rosas fields the ball in center.



Mylie Mittler looks around after catching a cutoff throw.

Turley photos by Gregory A. Scibelli

Boys lacrosse defeated by Longmeadow



Mason Jones receives a pass.

Turley photos by Gregory A. Scibelli

WILBRAHAM – Last Thursday evening, Minnechaug boys lacrosse was defeated by Longmeadow 13-2. Minnechaug's only goals came from Jake Hisgen and Thomas Hutcheson. Ricky Hale made 13 saves. The Falcons were 11-5 heading into their final regular season game.

David Quinn picks up a loose ball.



Patrick Roach circles around toward the goal.

Falcons clinch spot in tourney

WILBRAHAM – Last Thursday evening, Minnechaug Regional High School football found themselves needing a big win to qualify for the state tournament. Minnechaug lost to West Springfield in a five-set marathon last Tuesday. The result was a 9-9 record heading into their finale against Springfield International Charter School.

Fortunately, the quest to punch their playoff ticket went well, as Minnechaug swept SICS 3-0 to finish the regular season with a 10-9 record, guaranteeing a .500 record to make the state tournament.

T-Birds steal Game 2 over the Penguins

WILKES-BARRE, PA - The Springfield Thunderbirds authored one of the most remarkable comebacks in team history, storming back from three behind to shock the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton Penguins in overtime, 4-3, on Thursday night in Game 2 of the Atlantic Division Finals inside Mohegan Arena at Casey Plaza. With the win, Springfield evened the series at one win apiece and stole home ice advantage.

The Penguins' newest offensive weapon again proved to be a thorn in the T-Birds' sides at the 8:42 mark of the first. With Wilkes-Barre/Scranton operating on its first power play of

Please see **T-BIRDS**, page 12



Richard Hale makes a play in goal.



Thomas Hutcheson sends a pass away.



Andrew Dolaher winds back and readies to shoot.

SPORTS

Pioneers get 2026 campaign underway with win

By Tim Peterson
Sports Correspondent

LUDLOW— Since joining USL League Two in 2019, the Western Mass. Pioneers have qualified for the league playoffs each season. A new group of Pioneers players are hoping to continue the post-season tradition this spring.

In front of a large crowd at historic Lusitano Stadium in Ludlow, the Pioneers began the 2026 campaign with a 4-2 victory over the Albany Rush, last Friday night.

"Most of the players on last year's team graduated from college, so we do have a lot of first-year players this season," said Pioneers head coach Federico Molinari. "I thought we played well in tonight's game. We had a lot of opportunities, especially in the first half."

The Pioneers posted a 10-1-3 regular season record a year ago. They lost to FC Motown STA, 2-1, in the Eastern Conference quarterfinals.

A couple of the Pioneers players from last year's squad have signed with professional soccer teams.

"It's really nice to see our players playing soccer at a high level," said Molinari, who's been leading the Pioneers since 2012. "That's our main goal every year."

One of the local players listed on the 2026 Pioneers roster is Thomas Wadas, who's played soccer for the Ludlow Lions and is currently a member of the UMass-Amherst men's soccer team.

Wadas has been listed on the Pioneers roster for the past several years. He made his first start for the Pioneers in the season opening match.

"I used to watch the Pioneers games from the stands, so I've been looking forward to this moment for a long time," said Wadas, who's a midfielder. "Being a starter in the season opener is a very special thing to me. We played hard for the whole 90 minutes of tonight's game."

When we come together as a cohesive team, we can look forward to another strong season. Anything less than making the playoffs seems like a failure."

Wadas was a starter in ten of the 15 games that he played in for the Minutemen as a freshman last fall. He finished the 2025 season with two goals and three assists.

"It was a big adjustment going from the high school level to the collegiate level," Wadas said. "All of the players are bigger and stronger in college. The game is also a lot more physical. I'm just glad that I was able to contribute as a freshman. Playing for the Pioneers is only going to help me prepare for my sophomore season at UMass."

A first-year player member of the Pioneers is Michael Gouvin, who's from Monson. His older sister, Laura, played for the New England Mutiny several years ago.

Gouvin, who comes from a soccer family, attended Avon Old Farms before playing two seasons for the men's soccer team at the University of New Hampshire. He decided to transfer to Bentley University before the start of last season.

"I used to play youth soccer games on this field. It feels awesome to be back here playing again," said Gouvin, who's a starting defender. "I've never played a game in this type of environment before. Winning our first game of the season feels incredible."

The Pioneers have won every match that they've played against the Rush since 2022. They outscored them, 11-0, in both matches last season.

Prior to the start of the match, third grader Brooke Lamothe did an outstanding job of performing the National Anthem.

The Rush ended their scoreless spell against the Pioneers when Lucas Horja fired a shot into the back of the net past Western Mass.



Turley photos by David Henry www.sweetdogphotos.com

Michael Gouvin, of Monson, sends a pass away.

goalie Ben Alexander for an unassisted goal during the 11th minute of the opening half.

The Pioneers quickly took over the momentum.

The home side had five corner kicks before scoring the equalizer in the 37th minute.

An Albany player fouled Wadas, which gave the Pioneers a free kick. Pearse O'Brien booted the ball into the box and Matiws Rumley managed to score the tying goal.

Two minutes later, an Albany player fouled O'Brien inside the box resulting in a penalty kick.

O'Brien, who's from West Hartford Conn., stepped up to the spot and lined a shot into the back of the net giving the Pioneers the lead for the first time.

Horja scored the tying goal nine minutes into the

second half.

Five minutes later, Gouvin sent a pass into the box from the right wing where Felipe De Andrade, who had just entered the match as a sub, headed the ball into the net.

"I saw that Felipe was open and I just sent him the ball," Gouvin said. "It was a perfect play. My main goal in every game is to make an impact."

The duo of Alfred Baafi and Martin Echarren, who also came off the bench, hooked up on the Pioneers final goal during the 82nd minute. Echarren flicked a shot into the net for his first goal as a Pioneers player.

The Pioneers are scheduled to play a road game against the Seacoast United Phantoms on Wednesday night before returning home to face NEFC at 7:30 on Saturday night.



Sam Montalto looks to pass.



Jaiden Williams, of Belchertown, competes with an opponent.



Fernando Delgado dribbles up the field.

T-BIRDS from page 11

Game 2, Bill Zonnon parked himself just outside Georgii Romanov's goal crease and deflected a Mikhail Ilyin shot behind the Springfield goalie to make it a 1-0 Penguins lead.

Romanov was the far busier netminder in the first 20 minutes, with the Penguins heftily outshooting the T-Birds 14-4 in the frame, but the Springfield goalie continued his stellar work to keep the deficit at just a single goal heading into intermission. Sergei Murashov had little work to do in the first himself, needing to stop just four Springfield attempts.

Springfield's deficit grew almost instantaneously in the middle period, when Ilyin freed up a loose puck in the right circle, allowing Tristan Broz to rip it home just 16

seconds into the second, making it 2-0.

Springfield's power play received two chances to try to take a bite out of the two-goal hole, but Murashov and the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton penalty kill answered the bell with successive dispatchings.

Then it was the Penguins' turn to return to the power play late in the period, and Avery Hayes made no mistake, taking a cross-ice setup from Rutger McGroarty and whipping a forehander past Romanov's blocker at 18:16.

The Penguins began the final period with another power play and a chance to put the T-Birds away. Instead, Springfield began their comeback for the ages when Hugh McGing rifled home a

one-timer, shorthanded, past Murashov just 55 seconds into the period to make it 3-1.

Springfield tilted the ice heavily in their favor for the entirety of the final period, unleashing 20 shots in 20 minutes on Murashov. Still, it would take the T-Birds until the final four minutes to get closer when Dillon Dube deflected an Alek Kaskimaki attempt behind Murashov with 3:24 remaining to cut the margin to 3-2.

The veteran forward was far from finished, as Dube picked up his second 6-on-5 goal with 1:50 remaining, parking himself off the right post and jabbing a loose puck behind a helpless Murashov following a Calle Rosen slap-per to make it a 3-3 tie and

force an improbable overtime period.

The T-Birds carried the overtime period as well, as the visitors finished the night with 31 of the game's final 43 shots on net. Finally, it was Akil Thomas who ended the festivities with a fortuitous bounce at 13:44 of the overtime. Thomas was spilled on a breakaway down the slot area, but still got a shot away that rocketed off the end boards, careened back to the net front, bounced off Murashov's back, and squeaked across the line to win it for Springfield.

The magical third period and overtime marked Springfield's largest third period comeback win in their post-season history. Romanov improved to 6-2 in his post-season run, making 39 saves in the win. Murashov finished with 41 stops for the Penguins.



This Week in Rec

Counselor in Training Program

Alex Soares
Administrative Clerk

WILBRAHAM - As one of the unique opportunities offered through Spec Day Camp, the Counselor in Training (CIT) Program provides campers ages 14 and 15 with the chance to continue their camp experience in a new and rewarding role. Designed for campers who have aged out of traditional camp participation, the program allows teens to stay involved at camp while developing valuable leadership and communication skills in a fun and supportive environment.

Under the guidance of a designated CIT Director, participants gain hands-on experience working with younger campers while assisting staff with daily camp activities, program planning, communication, safety practices, goal setting, and team building. The program is designed to challenge and engage participants while helping them build confidence, responsibility, and teamwork

skills that will benefit them in future academic, professional, and personal endeavors.

The CIT Program is offered in either a three-week or six-week session, with limited spots available each summer. Candidates are selected through an application and interview process. While the CIT position is unpaid, accepted applicants receive discounted camp tuition rates. Each three-week session costs \$275 for Wilbraham residents and \$300 for non-residents.

Those interested in applying can download the CIT application packet from Wilbraham Parks & Recreation. The application packet includes the following materials:

- Registration and Agreement Form
 - CIT Questionnaire
 - CIT Application Essay
 - Teacher Reference Form
 - Personal Reference Form
 - Waiver Form
- Completed applications must be submitted to the Recreation Office by Friday, May 29.
- For more information, please visit WilbrahamRec.com

Racing season opens up at Stafford Speedway

STAFFORD SPRINGS, CT - Stafford Speedway returned to action with its first Friday night weekly racing program of the 2026 season on Friday, May 8. Feature winners on the night included Keith Rocco in the SK Modified feature, Adam Gray in the Late Model feature, Robert Bloxson, III in the SK Light feature, Gary Patnode in the Limited Late Model feature, and Brandon Warren in the Street Stock feature.

In the 40-lap SK Modified feature, Troy Talman took the lead at the drop of the green flag with Dylan Kopec, Keith Rocco, Dylan Izzo, and Matt Vassar all lined up behind him. Kopec took the lead from Talman coming out of turn 4 on lap-3 before the caution came out for Chase Cook, who spun and came to a stop in turn 2.

Talman took the lead back on the restart with Kopec in second. Rocco and Izzo were side by side for a lap fighting for third placed before Izzo got loose in turn 2 and slid back several spots. Vassar was fourth with Mikey Flynn in fifth. Flynn took fourth from Vassar on lap-6 while Kopec took the lead before surrendering the lead to Rocco on lap-9. Talman was now third behind Rocco and Kopec with Flynn fourth and Glen Reen up to fifth.

Marcello Rufrano was on the charge as he took fourth place from Talman on lap-12 as Rocco continued to lead Kopec and Flynn. Anthony Flannery was now sixth with Reen, Alex

ander Pearl, Izzo, and Jon Puleo making up the top-10. Rufrano charged his way past Flynn on lap-15 to move into third and now he was challenging Kopec for second place.

Rufrano took second from Kopec on lap-19 and now set his sights on Rocco in the lead. The caution flew with 24 laps complete as Meghan Fuller spun in turn 2 with Chase Cook. Cook was black flagged by Stafford officials for making contact with Fuller.

Rocco took the lead back under green with Rufrano taking second. Kopec was third with Flannery fourth and Flynn fifth. Pearl was sixth with Izzo, Talman, Michael Christopher, Jr. and Puleo making up the top-10. Rufrano nearly took the lead from Rocco on lap-28, but Rocco was able to fend off his challenge. With five laps to go Rocco was still leading Rufrano with Kopec, Flannery, and Pearl making up the top-5.

Rocco led Rufrano to the checkered flag to pick up his first win of the 2026 season. Kopec finished third with Flannery and Pearl rounding out the top-5. Following post-race inspection, the car of Kopec failed to meet the minimum ride height requirement and the car of Flannery exceeded the maximum allowable left side weight and both cars were disqualified from the feature finish. This moves Pearl into third with Christopher and Flynn rounding out the new top-5 behind Rocco and Rufrano.

WE ♥ OUR READERS

Officer of the Month: Ofc. Taylor Beaudry

Submitted by Greta Rust

WILBRAHAM - As part of my eighth grade Civics Class, all students have to pick a national problem that affects citizens on a daily basis.

We then filtered the topic down to a local level. My topic is community police relations and how to improve them.

The Officer of the Month is designed to connect local law enforcement with the community. By doing so, citizens can get to know those who serve our community behind the badge on a personal level, making connections and understanding that we are all in this together is really important for a safe environment for everyone.

Ofc. Taylor Beaudry is a patrol officer with the Wilbraham Police Department.



Taylor Beaudry

She has been at the WPD for almost two years.

Officer Beaudry is a local Massachusetts resident and has been for most of her life. She enjoys the beach and go-

ing on hikes. She also loves dogs, taking them to the park and inventive cooking.

Family and friends are also a priority to her, she says. That having a support system is really important in her line of work.

Before working as a police officer, she was a dog trainer for five years.

Officer Beaudry became a police officer because, since she was a little girl she had wanted to. She looked up to them and liked how she could always count on them in the community.

She wants people to understand that at the end of the day we are all human. Officers and citizens alike have good days and bad days, have had similar experiences, and just want to get along.

Life Care Center of Wilbraham named a U.S. News & World Report 2026 Best Nursing Home

WILBRAHAM - U.S. News & World Report recently released its list of 2026 Best Nursing Homes, and Life Care Center of Wilbraham, located at 2399 Boston Road, made the list.

How the List was Made

U.S. News & World Report produces a list of top nursing and rehabilitation providers every year, evaluating close to 15,000 nursing homes in the United States. The consumer organization primarily uses data from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) with a few other factors, and it rates facilities on Short-Term Rehabilitation and Long-term Care. Those that score as High-Ranking in one or both categories are named Best Nursing Homes.

Life Care Center of Wilbraham is listed as a Best



Nursing Home for both Short-Term Rehabilitation and Long-Term Care.

Life Care's Rankings

Fifty-nine skilled nursing and rehabilitation centers across the United States run by Life Care Centers of America achieved the Best Nursing Home designation this year.

"Since Life Care was

founded in 1976, our mission of providing the best care possible to our residents and patients has been of foremost importance," said Todd Fletcher, Life Care Centers of America president. "Seeing results like this from a prestigious organization like U.S. News & World Report speaks

Please see **LIFECARE**, page 15



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PROULX from page 1
internship.

In stories, we often meet characters who embark on journeys for some broad reason, later learning that there is a much deeper lesson to that journey beyond a character's initial motivation. That was the Wilbraham - Hampden Times for me.

I've always known I wanted to pursue a career in the writing field, but I also wanted my work to have an impact.

In the beginning of my junior year, I attended a meeting for Minnechaug Juniors who would be interested in working with the Wilbraham - Hampden Times writers. There I met Kristin, whom I had been in correspondence with previously about my interests in the

role as a journalist. Kristin is one of the most kind-hearted individuals I have ever met and takes the time out of her day to make you feel seen in every interaction. She has genuinely taught me so much and I've been proud to have her as my mentor over the last year. I have only been writing for the Times for about 9 months, but I owe it all to her.

One of my favorite pieces I've ever covered, one that influenced a bit of my college decision, was a piece about Minnechaug's own librarian, Dr. Georgina Trebbe, going to the Boston State House to testify. The process of getting to go to the State House—during a school day—getting to speak to those who testified, interviewing Senator Jacob Oliveira one-on-one about the bill

itself, that was what solidified everything for me. I got to see a glimpse of my future in Boston as well as the power of the people and our stories.

Writing for the Times has given me so much more confidence in my capabilities to get out of my comfort zone and talk to people. I never knew how much actually went on around me in Wilbraham until I took a closer look. Whenever you attend an event, generally you have a good idea of what's going on, but never exactly how it will go. I think that unpredictability has directed my path in such a special way.

I always like to include a larger message in my articles to make it more than just an event that has passed in history. In doing that, I highlighted a lot about what people think

a certain event's impact has on the greater whole of the community, along with any messages that they would like to share, especially around holiday seasons.

But you don't need a special occasion to share your message with the world. The greatest piece of wisdom that I've acquired, something that anyone who knows me will hear me say almost daily, is that everything happens for a reason. I think it's very human to try and control the trajectory of our lives, planning what we want to do and who we want to be down to a tee. But sometimes things don't work out the way that we plan and maybe that's just a bigger part of the plan. I've seen this proven too many times to count both in my life and in this job alone.

I have a couple more articles coming out over the next few weeks and I plan to write a little over school breaks but as I am graduating and heading off to college in the fall, I would like to thank everyone who has supported my journey, Editor Kristin Rivers, Turley Publications and all the readers for having me and allowing me to flourish at the Wilbraham - Hampden Times.

As I step back from this role, I would like to take the time to highlight three new writers stepping into this correspondence role, a sort of passing of the torch: Reese Magee, Selena Nguyen and Riddhi Patel, all Minnechaug juniors stepping into their senior years like I was. I can't wait to see you all evolve as I have.

LIFECARE from page 13

volumes about the dedication of our associates around the country to that mission, and I am so proud of them."

Life Care Centers of America manages more than 200 skilled nursing, post-acute, Alzheimer's, and senior living campuses in 27 states. For more information about Life Care, visit lcca.com. For more information about Life Care Center of Wilbraham, visit LifeCareCenterof-Wilbraham.com.

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PUBLIC NOTICES

**Commonwealth of Massachusetts
The Trial Court
Probate and Family Court
Hampden Probate and Family Court
50 State Street
Springfield, MA 01103
(413)748-7758
Docket No.
HD26P1046EA
Estate of:
Thomas Franco
Date of Death: 04/07/2026
CITATION ON PETITION FOR FORMAL ADJUDICATION**
To all interested persons:
A Petition for Formal Probate of Will with Appointment of Personal Representative has been filed by Eric T Franco of Wilbraham, MA requesting that the Court enter a formal Decree and Order and for such other

relief as requested in the Petition.
The Petitioner requests that Eric T Franco of Wilbraham, MA be appointed as Personal Representative(s) of said estate to serve Without Surety on the bond in unsupervised administration.
IMPORTANT NOTICE
You have the right to obtain a copy of the Petition from the Petitioner or at the Court. You have a right to object to this proceeding. To do so, you or your attorney must file a written appearance and objection at this Court before: 10:00 a.m. on the return day of 06/10/2026. This is NOT a hearing date, but a deadline by which you must file a written appearance and objection if you object to this proceeding. If you fail to file a timely written appearance and objection followed by an affi-

davit of objections within thirty (30) days of the return day, action may be taken without further notice to you.
UNSUPERVISED ADMINISTRATION UNDER THE MASSACHUSETTS UNIFORM PROBATE CODE (MUPC)
A Personal Representative appointed under the MUPC in an unsupervised administration is not required to file an inventory or annual accounts with the Court. Persons interested in the estate are entitled to notice regarding the administration directly from the Personal Representative and may petition the Court in any matter relating to the estate, including the distribution of assets and expenses of administration.
WITNESS, Hon. Claudine T.

Studemire, First Justice of this Court.
Date: May 13, 2026
Rosemary A Saccomani, Register of Probate
05/21/2026
SALE OF MOTOR VEHICLES
This ad is pursuant to MA Gen. Law Ch.255, Sec. 39A as of May 22, 2026 the following motor vehicles will be for sale to satisfy a garage keepers lien:
Vehicle: 2001 GMC Sierra
VIN: 1GHTK29U31E25G247
LKO: Tina Kearns
40 Sutton Rd.
Millbury, MA
PO BOX 181
South Grafton, MA 01560
Vehicle: 2014 Ford Escape
VIN: 1FMCU9G99EVA31771
LKO: Richard Weldon

24 Lower Hampden Rd.
Monson, MA 01057
Vehicle: 2012 Chevy Impala
VIN: 2G1WG5E3XC1252863
LKO: Krystaczia Phoxy-Flascher
567 East St.
Ludlow, MA 01056
R & S Assoc. Inc
PO Box 543
Wilbraham MA 01095
413-596-4374
05/07, 05/14, 05/21/2026
TOWN OF WILBRAHAM PUBLIC HEARING: VARIANCE REQUEST
(Posted 5/11/2026)
The Wilbraham Select Board, serving as the Board of Health, will hold a hearing at Wilbraham Town Hall, 240 Springfield Street, Wilbraham, MA in the

Select Board Meeting Room on **Monday, June 15, 2026 at 7:05 p.m.** to hear a Title 5 variance request from Zachery & Jessica Carr regarding their property at 6 Hitching Post Lane. The hearing will consider allowing a variance from the requirements of section 310 CMR 15.223 to permit the use of a single-compartment tank for a multifamily facility. All those wishing to comment will be heard. This hearing will be conducted in person and virtually (virtual meeting access info. available on Select Board's meeting agenda).
WILBRAHAM SELECT BOARD
Board of Health
05/21, 05/28/2026

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Wilbraham Hampden Times

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

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3 Find a quick link to the state of Massachusetts' public notice web site to search all notices in Massachusetts newspapers.
Public notice deadlines are Friday at 3 p.m.
visit www.publicnotices.turley.com

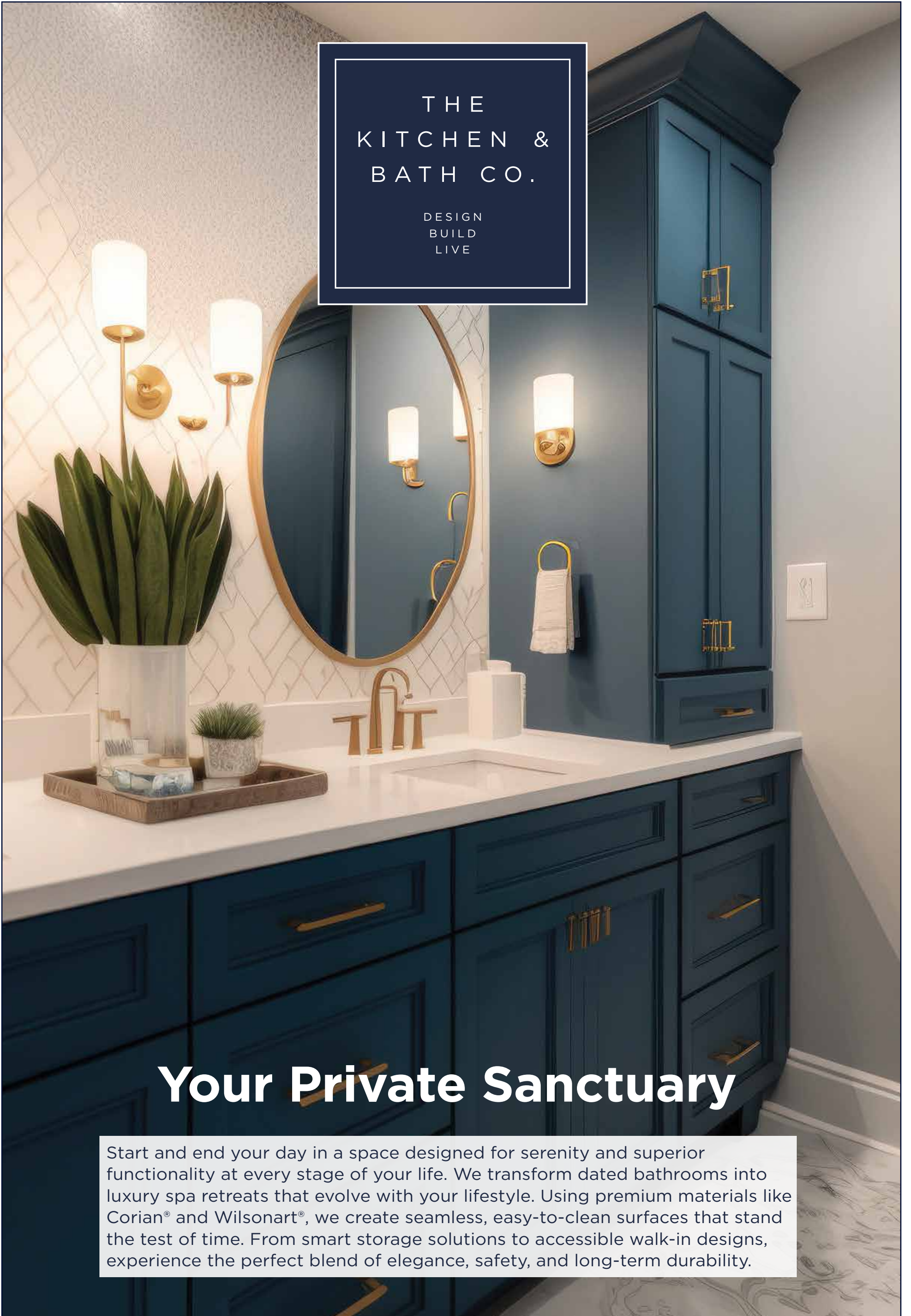
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Jamie Joslyn
24 Water Street, Palmer, MA 01069
Email: jamie@turley.com

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CLUES ACROSS
1. Government lawyers
4. The back of a person's neck
8. Mild yellow Dutch cheese
10. In a less flashy way
11. Living room piece
12. Shepherd dog
13. A citizen of Iran
15. Moved slowly
16. Small finch
17. Previously
18. What a kid does on Halloween
21. Monetary unit
22. Using dry humor
23. Ocean
24. Greek goddess of the dawn
25. Not close
26. NHL legend Bobby
27. A ballplayer would love to do this
34. Charity
35. City in Finland
36. Loomed over
37. Vaccine developer
38. Avoids capture
39. We all need it
40. Openwork fabrics
41. Get away
42. Something you might hit
43. Soviet Socialist Republic
CLUES DOWN
1. Abstain from
2. Admirer
3. Expedition to observe animals
4. Act that is legally void
5. WW2 combatants
6. A tool
7. Looked at
9. Showing wild excitement
10. Banknotes
12. Tired
14. Printers need it
15. Women's patriotic group
17. When you anticipate getting somewhere
19. Functions
20. Breed of sheep
23. Mocking pieces
24. A major division of geological time
25. Andiron
26. Many not ands
27. Cuban city
28. He voiced "Olaf"
29. Criticize
30. "Thundercats" character
31. Markings
32. Gets up
33. MLB lefty reliever A.J.
34. An assembly of witches
36. High energy lasers (abbr.)



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BATH CO.
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BUILD
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