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REMEMBRANCE



Turley photos by Kristin Rivers
Jered Sasen, VFW 9397 quartermaster, accepts this year's Memorial Day wreath from Hampden Garden Club President Lil Fedora on Memorial Day.



Turley photos by Kristin Rivers
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.

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 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."

Sasen said on Memorial Day, "It is our duty to remember their sacrifice and keep their memory alive."

"We must remember and reflect on the lives they left behind. The next-door neighbors and the kids that lived down

Please see **HAMPDEN**, page 4

Wilbraham marks Memorial Day at Crane Veteran Memorial Park

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

During the ceremony, Boy Scout Troop 359 member Demetri Pappanikou led the Pledge of Allegiance, the Minnechaug Regional High School Choir performed the National Anthem while the high school's band performed "God Bless America" and "TAPS;" the garden club presented the Memorial Day Wreath, Dakota Joseph and Cody Erskine from Minnechaug's Military Community Club conducted the POW/Missing in Action presentation and Jered Sasen, director of Veterans Services, and U.S. Army Sgt. Robert Kelliher, Jr., the

2023 Veteran of the Year, laid the wreath. This year's ceremony was dedicated to U.S. Navy Veteran Roy Scott, a senior chief, who passed away on May 7.

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."

Sasen reiterated the importance of reminding America and the world how freedom is not free.

"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. "We must ensure that the youth of tomorrow have an

Please see **WILBRAHAM**, page 20

School Comm., Finance Comm. and Select Board discuss school budget concerns

Compromise is reached

By Kristin Rivers
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WILBRAHAM - The School Committee, Select Board and the Finance Committee gathered in the senior center's event room on May 21 for a joint meeting on the school budget.

The meeting comes after the School Committee discussed concerns over mismatched town warrant numbers for the school budget on April 25.

Select Board Chairman Sue Bunnell opened the discussion by thanking everyone for coming together for the meeting, ex-

pressing her main concern is going to the floor of town meeting with "a lack of agreement" between the three bodies "will undermine the confidence that the community has in their leaders."

"Having been part of this process for 30 years and having gone through six superintendents--participated and engaged with six superintendents--it is a complicated process, it requires a lot of attention and our taxpayers and voters look to these bodies to set an example," Bunnell said.

Finance Committee Chair Kevin Hanks provided an overview of the votes made by the committee in recent meetings, followed by an apology.

"There was a vote made. The initial vote for the school was made. There was a target to-



Turley photos by Kristin Rivers
School Committee Vice Chair Sean Kennedy offers his perspective and thoughts during the May 21 joint meeting with the School Committee, Finance Committee and the Select Board on the school budget.

wards a specific area of the budget and of programming in that budget. The subsequent week, we realized, as a committee, that was not really the right approach. We acknowledge that in falling short at that time to an extent," Hanks said. "I will apologize here, again, if there was any target towards a specific program or line item, it was not the long-term intention of the Finance Committee."

Hanks said in that following meeting, a subsequent vote was made to balance the gap the committee looked at along with other departments that were being finished up for the town budget, which "basically gave what we could to try and close that gap."

Please see **BUDGET**, page 7

Historian to speak in Brooks Room

WILBRAHAM – If one wanted to learn about the history of Wilbraham in an easy-to-understand way, they should attend the Old Meeting House Museum talk by historian Dave Bourcier at 2 p.m. Saturday, June 8 in the Brooks Room of the Wilbraham Library. The slideshow and talk is part of the goal of the museum to entertain and inform as overseen by the Atheneum Society of Wilbraham.

Following Bourcier's presentation, refreshments will be served down the street in the museum.

The Old Meeting House Museum came out of hibernation in May during the Monson Road Hill Climb weekend with a refresh of exhibits and the first full use of its new accessible entrance that doesn't look like a ramp but provides easy entrance from the parking lot.

The museum greeted guests with

a redesigned gift shop restocked with "Wilbraham" tee shirts for townies and visitors alike, and an inventory of Wilbraham history books for those who want to know more about the town's origins.

The museum is owned by the town and overseen by the Atheneum Society with its tradition and goal to inform residents, new and old, of the history of Wilbraham going back to the 1730s, all museum events, from guest lectures to kids' activities like the historical Scavenger Hunt at the Christmas Tree Festival, are free and open to the public. For more information about the museum or the Wilbraham Atheneum Society email president@wilbrahamatheneum.org. See the Old Meeting House Museum's Facebook page or log on to the museum's website at www.wilbrahamatheneum.org.

Transfer Station permit price increase

HAMPDEN - In response to increased costs, the Hampden Selectmen voted on May 13 to increase the price of the Transfer Station permits.

The increase will be starting May 20.

For Seniors over 65 the price will be \$30 for the first permit and \$15 for any additional permits for those residents meeting those criteria and car registered to that person or person.

For those residents that are under 65 the cost is \$70 for the first permit and \$35 for any additional permits for those residents meeting the criteria.

Hampden Board of Health and Selectmen

Arts and Crafts Fair June 8

WILBRAHAM - The Wilbraham United Church will host an Outdoor Arts and Crafts Fair on Saturday June 8 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Over 30 craft vendors, a bake sale, a café and other offerings will be on hand! Crafters offerings include children's clothing and doll's clothes, handmade handbags, stained glass, greeting cards, sports cards, shadow boxes and container gardens, homemade dog biscuits, wreaths and jewelry.

Parking is available in the lot at the rear of the church. Wilbraham United Church is located at 500 Main Street in Wilbraham.

Theatre Guild of Hampden holding auditions for 'Driving Miss Daisy'

HAMPDEN – The Theatre Guild of Hampden will hold auditions for our October production of the award-winning play "Driving Miss Daisy."

The auditions take place on June 3

and 4 at 7 p.m. at the Hampden Town Hall.

For more information, call Mark Giza at 413-204-5333.

Town Election Ballot Question 1 questions answered

By Kristin Rivers
Editor
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HAMPDEN - We now have answers regarding the mystery behind ballot question one's return to the town election ballot.

To recap, on May 13, Hampden held its Annual Town Meeting where Article 11 surrounding the expansion and renovation of the senior center was discussed, with debate on both sides in support or against the proposal.

The article was defeated by a 62.5% vote after a manual vote count, with some demanding a recount.

It was then clarified the ballot question for the election would be removed.

However, on May 16, the Times, along with the community, learned ballot question one would be on the ballot after all, with a clarification posted to the town website later that day and robocalls going out on May 17 to announce the change.

The ballot question read as follows:

"Shall the Town be allowed to exempt from the provisions of proposition two and one half, so-called, the amounts required to pay for the bond issued in order to expand the Town's Senior Center located at 104 Allen Street?"

Fast forward to the town election day on May 20, ballot question one was then narrowly defeated, with 298 voting no while 220 voted yes, a difference of 78 votes.

So, what happened?

Town Administrator Brian Domina explained that when a project has a debt exclusion, as in the case of the senior center expansion and renovation project, two votes have to be taken.

"One that's taken at town meeting, which is for the appropriation for the project, and then the second one would be ballot questions at an election which would exempt an amount for the project from Proposition Two and a half," Domina said.

According to Mass.gov, Proposition Two and a half, first implemented in the state in 1982, "limits the amount of revenue a city or town may raise, or levy, from local

property taxes each year to fund municipal operations."

On the ballot question appearing on the ballot, Domina said how the town election warrant is signed at the same time as the town meeting warrant, so the ballot question was on the election warrant and the annual town meeting warrant.

"So, the question was going to be on the ballot regardless of whether the appropriation passed at the Annual Town Meeting," Domina said.

When the clarification was learned on May 16, Domina said the town council researched the legal aspects and logistics, later consulting with legal council on how to proceed.

"So, the question was, would those results be valid when they were voted on at the election, and the advice that we received from legal council was that, yes, the results would be valid," Domina said.

Domina stressed on something like this, it's important that, whatever the results, "the process is done correctly" in the town.

"Policy decisions like this are not for town administrators. They're for the voters, so we just want to make sure that whatever the voters do the process is legal and it stands up," Domina said. "We want to do the process right."

Domina credits Town Clerk Eva Wiseman, the Board of Selectmen and the town council for their work and diligence.

"They did get the process right," Domina said.

On what happens now with the project itself post-election, Domina said it's up to the elected officials, the Board of Selectmen and the Senior Center Building Committee on how they want to move forward.

"So, the same requirements they had to meet previously are still in place, obviously. They'll need to meet and decide how to move forward," Domina said. "Again, it's not my decision to make. It's their decision to make."

The Times will follow any additional developments, if applicable, as they become available.

Clarification on Hampden Town Election Results

It was brought to our attention that there were questions about the numbers regarding how many Hampden residents voted during

the May 20 town election.

Upon further review, the 4,267 that was reported, actually, pertains to the number of eligible voters in town. The actual vote count was 532 voters. The 0.125% percentage was correct.

We apologize for the error.

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Garden Club hosts Annual Plant & Bake Sale

By Noelle Hisgen
Correspondent

WILBRAHAM - It was a beautiful day for all of Wilbraham to go outside and be with their friends and family in the community on May 11.

Especially for the Garden Club, who used this day to hold their annual Plant and Bake Sale at the public library.

The Garden Club, which was established in 1960, hosts the annual sale to help the community including maintaining the grounds of the library, the remodeling of the Brooks Room, taking care of the Veteran's Park and various other donations throughout the community.

The plants that were being sold at the sale were grown by the members of the Ladies Gardens of the Garden Club and the majority of the plants were grown in Wilbraham. Every plant and baked goods were donated by the members of the Garden Club themselves.

Lisa Lafleur, a volunteer at the Plant and Bake Sale for nine years, sold baked goods inside of the Brooks Room, which she is extremely grateful for.

"Sometimes the weather wasn't always good so there were issues with the wind or cold. This has been a good fit for us, having it here in the library," Lafleur said.

The Garden Club is very involved with the community as they help support the library as they decorate it with wreaths for Christmas time and maintain garden planters for the different seasons.

All the money made from the sale goes to the Garden Club's monthly meetings and sponsoring guest speakers in relation to gardening. They also continue to give donations to the library. Recently, they helped donate to the outdoor walkway located outside of the library and also continue to make donations to the library regularly.

Along with the library, they also support the Wilbraham Senior Center and various community projects such as donating wreaths to the Memorial Day Ceremony and maintaining the flowers at Memorial Park.

Lafleur wants people to know that "It's a wonderful group of women, you can learn a lot by becoming a part of the club."

Christine Scibelli, the chairperson for the Club's annual plant sale, expressed her gratitude for the library for letting them host the garden sale this year on their



Turley photos by Noelle Hisgen

From the left, Pat Tutty, Eileen Ziomek and Lisa Lafleur work inside of the Bake Sale, part of the Annual Plant & Bake Sale on May 11.



Invested customers look at the plants for sale at the Annual Plant & Bake Sale.



Some small plants are perched nicely under a tree outside of the Wilbraham Public Library.

grounds.

"We are very happy and pleased to be on the library grounds," Scibelli said.

When asked about the garden club and connecting with the community, she stated that "The goal of the Wilbraham Garden Club which was founded in 1960 was to beautify the town of Wilbraham and maintain the beauty of the town."

The library was filled with many

colorful flowers and delicious baked goods that were contributed by the members of the Garden Club themselves. Everyone, either in the library for baked goods, or outside for flowers, made the environment as lively and beautiful as the sunny weather.

One of the attendees, John Morse, greatly enjoyed his time at the sale.

"Hats off to the Wilbraham Garden Club for putting this event on every year. It's a wonderful event and we like to plant in our yard so we enjoy coming here," Morse said.

The Garden Club shows that it's important to get outside and be with the community. Whether it is gardening, baking or simply giving back, they encourage people to get themselves out there and meet new people.

They highly encourage trying something new and meeting new people in the community, something that their 60-year-old group has always prioritized.

And even after 1960, the Garden Club still remains strong, continuing to push their long-lasting initiative in Wilbraham to beautify the community that is around them through giving back all throughout the year.

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Cody Erskine and Ella Gagliarducci, members of the Minnechaug Regional High School Military Community Club, conduct the POW/Missing in Action presentation inside the Town House Auditorium on Memorial Day.



Pastor Kwan Kim watches as Board of Selectmen Chair Don Davenport shares the history of Memorial Day during this year's observance ceremony. Jered Sassen, VFW 9397 quartermaster, looks on.



Brigadier General Daniel Begin, a Hampden native, reflects on sacrifice during his remarks at the Memorial Day Observance Ceremony in Hampden.



Marcy Hyde of In the Aim Floral Arrangements smiles with one of her creations during the Memorial Day Craft Fair taking place at Federated Community Church in Hampden.



Karen Kielb and Nancy Willoughby pose for a photo during the Memorial Day Craft Fair taking place at Federated Community Church in Hampden.



Members of the Minnechaug Regional High School Choir perform the National Anthem.

HAMPDEN from page 1

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," Sassen said.

During the ceremony, Hampden-Wilbraham Girl Scout troop members led the Pledge of Allegiance, the Minnechaug Regional High School choir sang the National Anthem, Pastor Kwan Kim from Federated Community Church presented the invocation, Cody Erskine and Ella Gagliarducci of Minnechaug's Military Community Club conducted the POW/Missing in Action presentation, the Memorial Day Wreath was presented by the garden club and the VFW Firing Detail rendered three volleys in salute, followed by a performance of "TAPS."

Board of Selectmen Chair Don Davenport reflected on the history of Memorial Day, calling it "a time to remember, honor and celebrate the lives and legacies of the brave men and women who gave their lives in service to our country."

"Memorial Day represents unity. It's a day when Americans come together to honor the fallen and pay tribute to their sacrifice. It's a day we set aside our differences and celebrate the things that unite us. Our shared history as a nation, our common values, our shared commitment to freedom and democracy," Davenport 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.

Begin said, "That vision of Main Street USA, draped in the flag of our country" was recalled often during his time serving in Iraq and Afghanistan.

"That stands as a reminder of what we are fighting for. What our soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines and Coast Guardsmen have fought for for over 200 years. To protect our country from those that would do us harm. To protect the ideals that this country is founded on: life, liberty, freedom, equality and the pursuit of happiness," Begin said.

Begin's message was to take a moment to remember and honor those who gave the ultimate sacrifice and comfort the families left behind.

"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.

Lil Fedora, the garden club's president, said the plant sale's proceeds will help beautify Hampden, stressing Memorial Day is more than just the barbecues and picnics.

"It's so important," Fedora said. "When you come to a service on Memorial Day, you actually realize the importance of all our men and women that fought for us over the years for our freedom. I think we take it for granted."

Marcy Hyde of In the Aim Floral Arrangements enjoys the craft fair as an opportunity to connect with the community, selling floral arrangements, wreaths and signs with inspirational words.

For Hyde, remembering the fallen is something to keep "in consideration every day."

"Because of them, we're able to do this. If they didn't do what they do, we wouldn't be sitting out here doing what we do," Hyde said.

Hyde's message was this. "We do have a lot to be thankful for," Hyde said.

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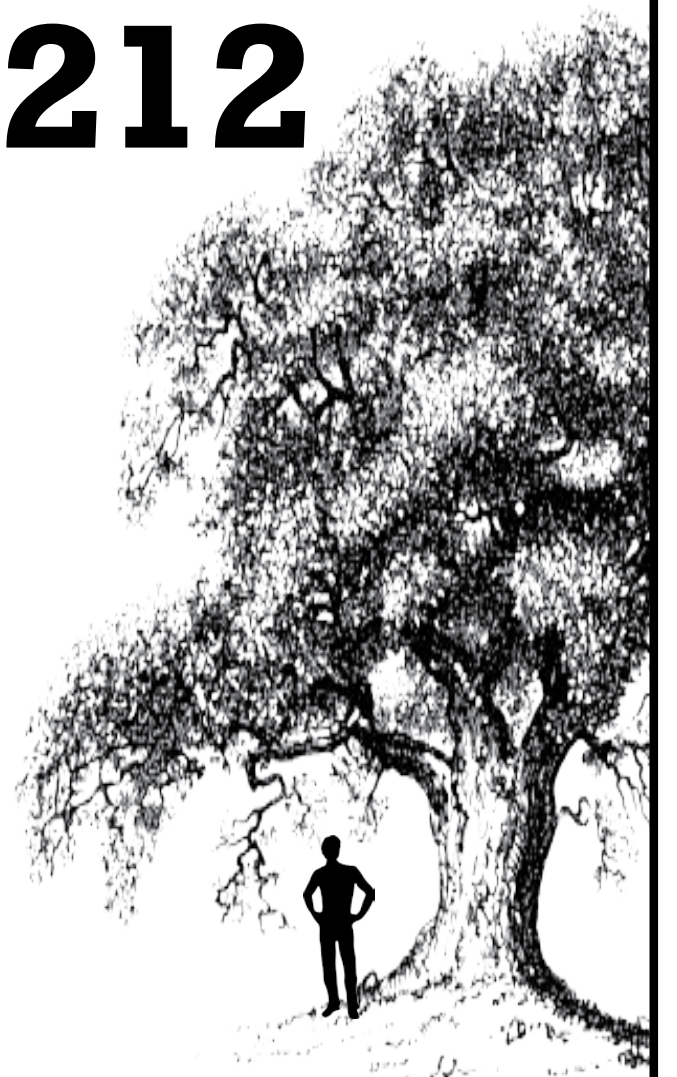
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VIEWPOINTS



By Russell Gloor

Can I claim Social Security and still work?

Dear Rusty

I will be turning 63 soon. Can I apply for Social Security and continue to work?

Would I be limited to how many hours or how much I could make? I know my monthly SS amount would be cut by 30% or somewhere around there, but how would working affect me? I was trying to read up on this, but the \$1 and \$2 thing confused me. I have an offer to take a work-at-home position and need to decide soon, but it is a cut in income. The cut would be okay if I could draw my Social Security too.

Signed: Wanting Work at Home

Dear Wanting

If you claim your Social Security to start in the month you turn 63, you'll be claiming 4 years before your Full Retirement Age of 67, which means your monthly benefit at 63 will be about 25% less than it would be if you claimed SS at age 67. And if you are working before your FRA, you'll be subject to Social Security's "earnings test."

The 2024 earnings limit for those collecting early Social Security benefits is \$22,320 (this limit changes annually). If your annual earnings exceed the limit, Social Security will assess a penalty of \$1 for every \$2 you are over the limit. They will recover that penalty amount by withholding future benefits until they recover what you owe.

If your work earnings are under the annual limit, you will get all your monthly SS benefits. But if you exceed the limit, they will find that out after you submit your income tax return (the following year) and issue you an overpayment notice, telling you how much you owe for exceeding the limit last year.

They will then withhold your benefits until they get back what you owe or you can repay them in a lump sum. To avoid the overpayment notice, it is best to inform Social Security in advance that you will exceed the annual earnings limit and they will simply withhold your monthly SS benefits during the year for enough months to avoid overpaying you.

So, what you should do depends largely on how much your earnings from your new work-at-home position will be. If your earnings are below the annual limit, no penalty will be assessed. If you only exceed the annual limit by a little bit, then you can still work and earn and simply repay them what is owed for exceeding the limit or have your SS benefit temporarily withheld.

If you only exceed the earnings limit by a little, you'll still get benefits for most months of the year. But if you significantly exceed the annual earnings limit, you could even be ineligible to receive SS benefits until you either earn less or reach your full retirement age, the earnings limit goes away at your FRA.

So, what you should do depends on what "a cut in income" means in terms of your expected annual earnings amount. If your total annual earnings will be under the annual limit, your SS benefit won't be affected. If you only exceed the limit by a little bit, then you will get SS benefits for most months of the year. But if your annual earnings are significantly over each year's annual earnings limit, then you won't get SS benefits for most months of the year and may even be temporarily ineligible to receive benefits.

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

What to do when and how to do it

The last few gorgeous days got us all outside and into our home landscape. Maybe you looked at this or that and said "Now what do I do?" Here is a column straight from the archives to best guide you through the next oh so fun (and busy) weeks in the garden.

DO remove spent blooms from spring flowering bulbs. Once "deadheaded" the bulb won't expend energy making seeds, instead, it will store it and delight you with an even healthier stand of flowers next year.

DO NOT cut, braid or otherwise alter bulb foliage. It may not be the prettiest, but as long as it is green, (and to some degree even when it is yellowish) it is photosynthesizing, making a storehouse for next spring's blooms.

DO turn under your cover-crop of winter rye now, a few weeks prior to planting your vegetable garden. Plant residues will have a chance to break down without stealing valuable nutrients from newly transplanted seedlings.

DO NOT add fresh manure to garden plots as it will burn plants. Be sure to compost it for at least six months prior to use. Make your compost pile "hot" by balancing the amount of green and brown ingredients and by turning it regularly. The result is a near neutral weed-free source of organic matter.

DO prune spring flowering shrubs soon after blooming. Forsythia and lilac for example, bloom on the previous season's wood. By pruning once their blooming period is complete you will allow enough time for regrowth without sacrificing next year's blooms.

DO NOT prune fruit trees now. Better to wait until the trees are dormant. You can, however, rid apple trees of pencil sized or smaller water sprouts in mid summer. Simply grab one with your hand and give it a quick jerk. Removing a small portion of the branch from which it grows will likely prevent future sprouts in this area.

DO begin to harden off homegrown seedlings and garden-bound indoor plants over the course of the next few weeks. By gradually acclimatizing plants to the outdoors you will likely prevent transplant shock and other maladies such as sunscald and windburn. Start off with a few hours outside each day, working up to all day and

overnight. Then, as long as the threat of frost has passed the plants can successfully be planted in the ground.

DO NOT plant pepper seedlings until the soil has sufficiently warmed (usually by the first week in June). Research indicates that planting peppers in cold soil will stunt plants and reduce yields. You can warm the soil where peppers (and other heat lovers) are to grow by laying down sheets of IRT mulch a couple of weeks prior to planting. Then simply cut holes in the plastic and plant as normal.

DO cut asparagus with a knife just under the surface of the soil. In established plantings you can harvest spears for about

six weeks. Leave those that are thinner than a pencil. Although we wish the season could go on forever, allowing foliage to form will only return energy to the roots, making for tasty shoots next spring!

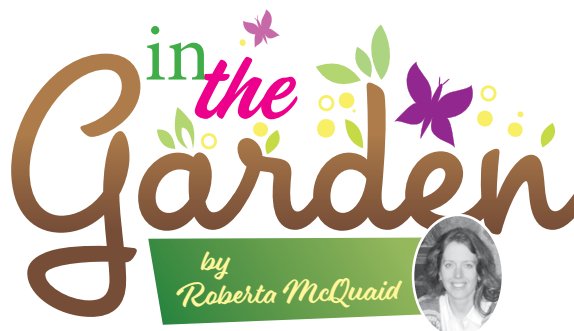
DO NOT allow weeds to take over the strawberry patch! Applying a mulch of shredded leaves, composted sawdust or pine needles will not only keep the weeds at bay, but it will feed the plants and keep developing berries clean at the same time!

DO sow grass seed soon, before crabgrass has a chance to take hold. Or better yet, sow seed in late August, or early September, when this dreaded weed is near done its life cycle. Water sown areas daily to promote timely germination.

DO NOT rototill patches of perennial weeds; you are merely spreading them about the garden! Better to hand weed, digging out the roots completely. After planting is complete mulch around plants to cut down on future weeds, conserve moisture, and add organic matter to the soil. When applying mulch around trees and shrubs remember to pull it back, away from the trunk to prevent girdling.

DO have fun in the garden this spring!

Roberta McQuaid graduated from the Stockbridge School of Agriculture at the University of Massachusetts. For 31 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.



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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.



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School Committee member Sherill Caruana shares her perspective during the May 21 joint meeting with the School Committee, Finance Committee and the Select Board.



Finance Committee member Xiomar Albán DeLobato provides her thoughts on how to move forward.



Superintendent Dr. John Provost shares a thought as Finance Committee member Mike Mazucca looks on.

Turley photos by Kristin Rivers

BUDGET from page 1

“It was an effort to get closer--it did get us closer--albeit it didn't get us there,” Hanks said.

Later, Hanks added the school budget represents 56% of the total budget and, also, 58% of the total budget increase.

School Committee member Michael Tirabassi expressed concern about the school district “rapidly entering a very financially precarious position.”

“I'm concerned about the financial well-being of the schools. I feel the pressure and the crux that have been going on, particularly the last couple years, are starting to have a real impact on delivering services to the students,” Tirabassi said. “I know we're not looking at a huge dollar amount, but I feel that we worked very hard in putting together the best possible budget. I'm just disappointed that FinCom didn't agree with that.”

Finance Committee Vice Chair Todd Schneider shared there were conversations on the side with them and the School Committee's Budget and Finance Subcommittee, including one on Good Friday, about a hit to the schools being around \$35,000.

Schneider said at the time, the subcommittee said that number “would not impact a child” as they were making cuts to the number of overhead projectors, admin laptops and Chromebooks requested.

“So, that's why we went back and we said, ‘Okay, if we can vote on that number, then we'll co-op,’” Schneider said. “I think--and I don't know because we really haven't had a conversation since then in FinCom--I think there could be an appetite for tonight for FinCom to--we would have to open up three or four budgets--but come up with \$40,000 if the schools can take about a \$27,000 hit, which is \$3,000 less than even what we said on Good Friday.”

School Committee Vice Chair Sean Kennedy appreciated the Finance Committee's work but expressed disappointment, feeling the two committees were in agreement at the time on keeping the increase under a million dollars and one-time laptop expenses for the town being put back in the budget.

Kennedy stands by the budget, including funding for vocational exploratory for ninth graders.

“We can cut whatever we have

to cut, whether it's projectors, whether it's laptops, whether it's a teaching position. I don't want to do them either, because the School Committee doesn't get the money. We don't get paid anything. It's students that's going to get affected, it's the teachers, the paras, the administrators. That's who are going to suffer from this,” Kennedy said. “And it was our mistake for cutting too much to the bone. We thought that we were all working together and that last bit was a surprise for us.”

Finance Committee member Joseph Lawless clarified the \$1.7 million increase to the budget, which equates to \$1 million this year and \$700,000 of taxpayer dollars, is not a budget cut.

Lawless added he understands the importance of education as he has two children in the district, but “we have to also look at the sustainability of these, of keeping our taxes reasonable.”

“A lot of people in town are very frustrated with taxes going up, so we have to balance budgets and a \$1.7 million increase in the budget is a lot of money,” Lawless said.

Superintendent Dr. John Provost later clarified the actual increase was better reflected in slide 18 from the budget presentation, which was \$1,299,219.

Provost explained the increase in the assessment was larger “mainly because there was more money in reserves that went into the budget in this current cycle” and there will be less money going in next time.

“So, that additional is catching up that gap, but it's not \$1.7 million. \$1.3 million would be a better estimate,” Provost said.

Finance Committee member Jeff Farnsworth said, “We don't get the money either” and they deal with every single budget in town, along with contractual obligations.

“We don't want to cut anybody. We don't want to cut police, we don't want to cut fire,” Farnsworth said. “There's a lot of strains that this group spends tireless amounts of time trying to be fair to everybody and main-

tain something and we've had some very serious, long discussions about what's coming down the road with what we're going to be facing next year.”

Farnsworth added that the committee “looked at every single department, no matter how small they were or how large they were to try to hold the line as best as we could.”

“We understand that next year is going to be a difficult year. You have to prepare the best that you can for that going down the road,” Farnsworth said.

Bunnell then asked if “there's a way we could come to a solution tonight” so there could be an agreement on the floor going into Annual Town Meeting, which takes place on June 3.

After Hanks reiterated the consensus on \$40,000, Schneider added the remaining gap the School Committee would need to cover would be \$27,671.

School Committee member Sherrill Caruana expressed hopes in “keeping true to what we're supposed to do.”

“We're supposed to educate children and we found that, as I look over 20 years, individu-

al year after year, we're not growing. We're losing students every single year and the reason is what we offer,” Caruana said. “And I was excited about this year's

budget more than I have been for several years been excited because we were going to get into letting students at the high school level, starting in ninth grade, go into the trades and help them with that. I thought that was a really bold move forward. We're a little behind the time because a lot of schools are already doing it and I don't see how that fits in. Maybe it does because whatever budget number we get. My fear is that's cut out completely.”

After School Committee Chair Michal Boudreau asked if the School Committee could come to a consensus, School Committee member William Bontempi expressed hope in finding a resolution.

Bontempi was fine with the amount and stressed the lanes of separation, highlighting the School Committee's powers as setting district-wide policy, hiring the superintendent and setting the budget.

As a final thought, Finance

Committee member Mike Mazucca encouraged the School Committee to reach out to them for support and they will offer help.

“Let us help, so when it comes to the following year, we can take care of the students, we can take care of the taxpayers and we're not sitting here fighting at the last minute on a budget,” Mazucca said.

The conversation concluded like this.

The School Committee agreed in a 6-1 consensus on the \$40,000 presented by the Finance Committee and, while they did not take an official vote during this joint meeting, they will hold a meeting to formally vote on an official agreement and decide where to pull the other funds for the \$27,671 gap they will need to close.

As for the Finance Committee, they formally voted to pull the \$40,000 previously allotted for stabilization to go towards increasing the school budget.

The motion carried six yes, with one abstention.

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.

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Bradley Gregory asks a question during the Finance Committee's public forum on the town budget on May 21.



Select Board Clerk Marc Ducey provides his perspective as Select Board Chairman Sue Bunnell and Select Board Vice Chairman Michael Squindo look on.



Finance Committee member Xiomara Alban DeLobato shares her thoughts with attendees.

Turley photos by Kristin Rivers

Finance Committee hosts public forum on town budget

By Kristin Rivers
Editor
krivers@turley.com

WILBRAHAM - Finance Committee hosted a public forum on May 21 for the community to hear about and ask questions about this year's town budget.

The forum took place in the senior center's event room.

Chair Kevin Hanks said for this year, the revenue and budget for fiscal year 2025 comprised \$47,290,728 with a 2.5% allowable increase to the tax levy, debt exclusions for Minnechaug Regional High School and \$500,000 in new growth.

"There are \$1,918,206 in estimated state receipts, local and enterprise fund receipts make up nearly \$7.5 million. We started the year with \$2.8 million in free cash," Hanks said. "What that does is bring the total revenue in available funds to \$58,685,075."

An important note Hanks added was on fiscal years 2024 and 2025 for the increased tax and new growth revenues available.

"That is the increase year over year available to Finance to be able to provide or fund the increases for requested budgets were \$1,532,351 and \$1,622,317 respectively," Hanks said.

Hanks said Wilbraham is in "a strong financial position" and approximately \$1 million under the levy limit, with \$700,000 recommended for the Capital Stabilization Funds.

After he shared how part of this year's town warrant includes bonding for a fire truck to be purchased in a few years, Vice Chair Todd Schneider elaborated further.

"The warrant asks us to approve the bond, so that gives us the ability to say to the vendor we can order it...we don't actually have to bond for it until it gets delivered," Schneider said. "But, our plan is to either increase stabilization up to a point where we can get it out of free cash and/or whatever use of. It all depends on what works coming down the road."

For this budget year's challenges, Hanks said they included heating and electric across all departments, facilities and council on aging, Memorial School

upgrades and more.

"The library, for example, we started a little bit--I think it was \$12,000 over the state-mandated mark--unfortunately, we had to kind of pare that back," Hanks said. "The library worked with us to kind of see where we could make that work and then that's going to be a constantly changing budget, as they all are."

On anticipated impacts to fiscal year 2026, Schneider explained the numbers include \$365,000 in new senior center debt hitting the budget, \$300,000 for roads and sidewalks, \$200,000 for group insurance, \$300,000 in stabilization funds to pay for the rest of the engine purchase or debt for the fire truck and \$100,000 for an IT subscription.

"So, already, we know of, or we're anticipating \$1.265 million worth of increases that we know of, and if you look at the first slide when we can only increase \$1.6, \$1.7 million, that does not include schools," Schneider said. "So, there's going to be a lot of work for the budget period 2026 to try and stay under the \$1 million levy limit and keep a balanced budget."

Bradley Gregory was happy to hear the town was in a strong financial position, asking this.

"I guess I just need a little help understanding what that means," Gregory said.

Schneider replied it means "we achieved our goal of keeping a million dollars under the levy limit."

"Did everybody get what they want?"

No. Did we make sure that everybody had the right amount of money for electric and heating? Yes. So, it's one of those things," Schneider said.

Finance Committee member Joseph Lawless commented about residents sharing their priorities, as that theme came up during the committee's planning this year.

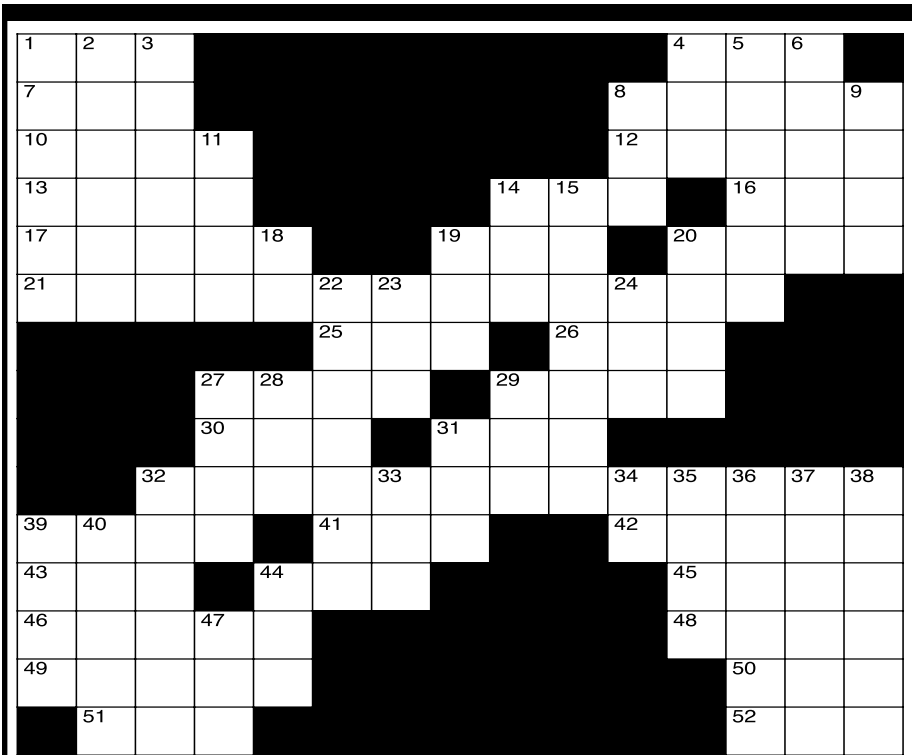
"I think it's important for the community to speak up about what their priorities are because that does help the town understand, helps the Select Board and our board understand about what our goals are for the future," Lawless said.

Linda Dagradi agreed, adding there should be a survey every few years that could help engage residents and encouraging the town to be more proactive in engagement.

"This meeting is a good example of an opportunity for people, but we need to have that more regularly," Dagradi said.

The forum concluded when Finance Committee member Mike Mazucca encouraged the community to attend town meeting.

"This is important, because in that three hours, that \$56 million is either going to be spent well or it's going to be sidetracked with questions. This is important, it's going to get harder and harder as time goes on," Mazucca said. "So, please, three hours. Tell your neighbors. Tell your friends. Tell people who may not be your friends. Get them to town meeting."



CLUES ACROSS

- 1. Fashion accessory
- 4. Engine additive
- 7. Small, faint constellation
- 8. Gives a job person
- 10. Self-righteous person
- 12. Caucasian language
- 13. Surinam toad
- 14. Sino-Soviet block (abbr.)
- 16. Former French coin
- 17. Levels the score
- 19. What stage performers do
- 20. Egyptian Sun god
- 21. Localities
- 25. Spherical body

- 26. Licensed for Wall Street
- 27. Perfect
- 29. It's on many people's heads
- 30. Boxing's GOAT
- 31. Photo
- 32. Popular HBO show
- 39. Popular music awards show
- 41. Pouch
- 42. Lake in Botswana
- 43. Unruly group
- 44. One-fourth coin
- 45. Very eager
- 46. Edward ___, author and writer
- 48. Flying insect
- 49. Dragged forcibly
- 50. Thus far
- 51. Not just "play"
- 52. Commercials

CLUES DOWN

- 1. Occur
- 2. Show up
- 3. Capital of Taiwan
- 4. Brother or sister
- 5. Secret get-togethers
- 6. Type of tea
- 8. Where the action is
- 9. Cast out
- 11. Crime group
- 14. Type of vessel (abbr.)
- 15. Accept and handle
- 18. Sacrifice hit
- 19. One who buys and sells securities simultaneously
- 20. Month
- 22. Most thin
- 23. Naturally occurring

- material
- 24. Luke's mentor ___-Wan
- 27. Postmodernist Austrian "House"
- 28. Aquatic salamander
- 29. Baseball stat
- 31. Beginning military rank
- 32. Talk rapidly and unintelligibly
- 33. Paddle
- 34. Caregiver (abbr.)
- 35. Old Irish alphabet
- 36. Japanese city
- 37. In a way, acted
- 38. Things to see
- 39. Nursemaid
- 40. Type of tooth
- 44. To be demonstrated
- 47. Defunct European group

Wilbraham Hunting Club posts hikes for June

WILBRAHAM -The Wilbraham Hiking Club has posted seven different hikes for June on its pages at the TeamReach App.

- a quicker-pace guided hike on the "back-roads" of the Norcross Wildlife Sanctuary
- a challenging hike at Mt. Tom
- a different route at the Stebbins unit of the Conte Wildlife Refuge

- a hike at Bray Lake or Fitzgerald Lake
- and relaxed pace hikes in West Brookfield, Amherst, and South Hadley

For more information or to RSVP for a hike, please check the club's pages on TeamReach. To join the club on TeamReach, use the code WHC01095. If you do not use apps, you can join the club by writing to wilbrahamhiking@gmail.com.

Hampden Senior Center Trips

HAMPDEN - The following senior trips are made available through the Hampden Senior Center. A minimum of 40 travelers are needed for any trip to run. All prices include a driver's tip. Flyers are available at the senior center on Allen Street. Coach seat assigned as your \$20 deposit is received (unless otherwise noted).

Please write a separate check to Bobbi for each trip; note trip name in the check memo.

JULY 10, Wed - Log Cabin 'Margaritaville Band' Jimmy Buffet Tribute, Choice of Twin Lobster OR Prime Rib; Self-Drive \$92 per person. Full Payment Due June 14.

AUGUST 6, Tue - Mt. Washington Cog Railway, box lunch, train ride to summit; observatory, gift shop & restaurant on your own; \$180 per person. Full Payment Due July 19.

AUGUST 26, Mon - Newport Play-

house "Nonsense: A Musical"; Delicious buffet lunch, show and cabaret; \$125 per person. Full Payment Due Aug 7.

OCTOBER 23, Wed - Fall Foliage Trip - American Heritage Museum in Hudson, MA; Lunch at O'Connor's Restaurant (menu choice on flyer) in Worcester; Wine Tasting @ Hardwick Vineyard & Winery; \$135 per person. Full Payment Due Oct 3.

LATE NOV- Radio City Music Hall for Rockettes matinee Christmas Show; \$ to be determined.

DECEMBER 11, Wed - Aqua Turf show "Deck the Halls Christmas" w Buddy Holly & Elvis; family-style

Lunch; \$131 per person. Full Payment Due Nov 20.

Questions/comments call 413-566-8271 or email bobbijg2@charter.net. Flyers available at the Senior Center or via email.



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A COMMUNITY GALLERY



Hampden Fire Department rescues ducklings

The Hampden Fire Department received a call on May 20 for ducklings stuck in a storm drain in town. With assistance from Hampden Animal Control and the Hampden Highway Department, the fire department successfully rescued seven ducklings that were stuck in the drain.

The ducklings were then returned to their mother and later happily splashing along in a nearby pond.

Photos courtesy of Hampden Fire Department



Life in & CHA **WILBRAHAM-HAMPDEN**

Readers are encouraged to send in medium to high resolution photos for this page by e-mail to dzbiwski@turley.com or mail to TIMES, 24 Water Street, Palmer, MA 01069. Please note that if you send us a photo of the Times in different parts of the world, please include a recognizable landmark in the background. Examples: Eiffel Tower; castle in Spain.



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WILBRAHAM HAMPDEN



Crews from the Hampden Fire Department, Hampden Police Department and Wilbraham Fire Department responded to a rollover crash on Glendale Road on May 22. The road was closed for a time between Monson Road and Ames Road, with one person suffering minor injuries and being transported to Wing Hospital. The road later reopened at 10:40 a.m. Photo courtesy of Hampden Fire Department

Community Bulletin Board

Happy 16th Birthday
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Happy Birthdays, Anniversaries, etc.
We will pick one each week to run here free of charge, please keep it to less than 50 words. Please send to krivers@turley.com



Rick's Place families go fishing during Spec Pond Fishing Derby!

Families from Rick's Place were among the many attendees to have fun and spend time with one another during the May 18 Spec Pond Fishing Derby. A great time casting a line, learning how to fish and getting trophies for catches of the day were enjoyed by all.

Photos submitted by Betsy Flores



Wilbraham Police Department thanks community

The Wilbraham Police Department expressed thanks to the community for their support during National Police Officers Memorial Day on May 15. The annual visit took place during Police Week, which offers honor, remembrance and peer support, while allowing law enforcement, survivors and citizens to gather and pay homage to those who gave their lives in the line of duty. Tens of thousands of law enforcement officers from around the world also head to Washington, DC to participate in a number of events to honor those that have paid the ultimate sacrifice. Photo courtesy of Wilbraham Police Department

Matt and Jane Villamaino celebrate 50 years in Italy!



Matt Villamaino, president of the Friends of Wilbraham Seniors, and his wife, Jane, celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary with a trip to Vienna. Here's the happy couple in a horse and carriage buggy in front of St. Stephen's Cathedral, built in the 1500s. Photo submitted by Matt Villamaino

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Boy, Girl and Cub Scout Troops place flags on Veterans' graves



Photos courtesy of Wilbraham Veteran Services

A group photo of Boy, Girl and Cub Scout troops who took part in the flagging of veterans' graves throughout Wilbraham on May 12.



Children hold American flags as they go grave by grave to mark them, honoring veterans in Wilbraham.



A mother and daughter place American flags at a veteran's grave in Wilbraham.

By Noelle Hisgen
Correspondent

WILBRAHAM - On May 12, local Boy, Girl and Cub Scouts worked together with the Department of Veteran Services to

place flags on the graves of veterans to honor them for their service to the country.

In just an hour, the troops were able to come together, all from different age groups and backgrounds, to mark the graves

of the veterans who were laid to rest in town cemeteries.

Jared Sasen, who oversees the Veteran Services for Wilbraham, reached out to each of the troops and asked them to honor the veterans by marking graves

with clean, new American flags.

They started in Adams Cemetery and together removed all of the old flags, repositioned the war markers and put new flags next to each veteran's grave. Then they moved on to the Glen-

dale and East Wilbraham Cemeteries and did the exact same thing.

Sasen, who organized the event, was very appreciative of the troops and all their hard work with the event.

"I am proud of our Scout Troops for their impressive display of respect towards those who made the ultimate sacrifice for our country, as well as our veterans, showcasing the positive impact of their community efforts," Sasen said.

Jen Powell, a Troop Leader for the Girl Scouts, engaged in the grave flagging with her troop. She is one of five Girl Scout Troop Leaders in Wilbraham and her senior troop consists of girls in 9th and 10th grade.

She emphasized the importance of the event with the statement that "A Girl Scout has a pledge to serve her country."

With the implementation of the pledge, the Girl Scouts were very involved and dedicated in the process of implementing the new, clean flags as a form of gratitude for the fallen.

Powell wants her troop to take away from this experience one important piece.

"The importance of service. Serving those who will never be able to thank them and to do it anyway out of respect for what those people gave to others while they were alive," Powell said.

With the flagging a week prior to Memorial Day, it was important that the troops took time out of their day to acknowledge those who have made a sacrifice to their country and recognize that they have been a part of the nation for so long and dedicated their lives to the protection of those in the country.

For the community, Powell stated the importance of those who have made a sacrifice to America.

"We all benefit from the service of our military and we should all take a moment to thank them," Powell said.

Powell's daughter, Charlotte, who is a Girl Scout in her mother's troops, also added to the value of helping those in the community while being a part of the Grave Flag-

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RESIDENCES AT
mill 8

50 State St. Ludlow, MA 01056

NEW APARTMENTS FOR AGE 55+ AFFORDABLE RENTAL LOTTERY IN LUDLOW, MA

30% LIHTC/PBV			60% LIHTC/PBV		
HH Size	Unit Size	Max Income	HH Size	Unit Size	Max Income
1	1BR 1BA	\$23,010	1	1BR 1BA	\$46,020
2	1BR 1BA	\$26,280	2	1BR 1BA	\$52,560
3	2BR 2BA	\$29,580	3	2BD 2BA	\$59,160
4	2BR 2BA	\$32,850	4	2BA 2BA	\$65,700

# of Units	Size	Monthly Rent	% Income	Program Type
11	1BD 1BA	\$616	30%	LIHTC/PBV
38	1BD 1BA	\$1,232	60%	LIHTC/PBV
1	2BD 2BD	\$739	30%	LIHTC/PBV
5	2BD 2BD	\$1,479	60%	LIHTC/PBV

FOR SEPTEMBER 2024 MOVE-IN

Four 1BD 1BA w/Den affordable units will be available for households requiring an accessible unit, one 2BD 2BA affordable unit will be available for households requiring an accessible unit, one 2BD 2BA w/Den affordable unit will be available for households requiring and accessible unit, and one 1BD 1BA affordable unit will be available for households requiring hearing and visual accessibility.

Submission of an application will not guarantee housing for occupancy. There will be a screening process. Once the initial lease up has been completed, your housing application lottery placement number will become your waitlist number for future occupancy. Once completed and signed, applications will be considered for the lottery.

Anticipated occupancy is September 2024. For more information or reasonable accommodations, call The Residences at Mill 8 at 413-308-5300, TTY/TDD: (800) 439-2370 or email mill8@winnco.com.

Applications will be available April 15, 2024, through June 15, 2024, at the following locations:

- The Residences at Mill 10 Leasing Office located: 68 State St Ludlow, MA 01056, Mon-Fri 9:00AM-5:00PM
- Hubbard Memorial Library: 24 Center St Ludlow, MA 01056, MWF 9AM-5PM, T/TH 9AM-8PM & Sat 9AM-1PM
- Ludlow Housing Authority: 114 Wilson St, Ludlow MA 01056, M-TH 8:30AM-12PM and M-TH 12:30PM-4:30PM

You may also request an application by emailing mill8@winnco.com or calling 413-308-5300. Visit www.livemill8.com for more details.

Informational Public Meetings:

Residences at Mill 10 Community Room located at 68 State St Ludlow, MA 01056: Saturday, May 11, 2024, at 10:00AM and Tuesday, May 21, 2024, at 6PM.

Housing Lottery:

Residences at Mill 10 Community Room located at 68 State St Ludlow, MA 01056: Tuesday, June 4, 2024, at 6PM. Applicants and the public are welcomed to attend. Applicants are not required to be present.





From the left, Firefighter Joseph Borowiec, Lieutenant Nick Bertrand and Deputy Chief Patrick Farrow hold the celebratory cake donated by Vantage Care.



The Hampden Senior Center fed community members steak and cheese sandwiches before the fire department presentation.



A Hampden Senior Center member marks her bingo card.

Turley photos by Alisiana Marshall



A community member wins a pair of oven mitts to prevent burn injuries while cooking.

Turley photos by Alisiana Marshall



Deputy Fire Chief Patrick Farrow gives a fire safety presentation before hosting the bingo game.



Diane Marino, activities coordinator at the Hampden Senior Center, helps hand out slices of cake to appreciative seniors.

Fire Department hosts bingo, talks fire safety to seniors

By Alisiana Marshall
Correspondent

HAMPDEN – A happy buzz hummed through the senior center on May 16 to enjoy a provided lunch followed by a presentation and good old-fashioned bingo hosted by the fire department.

“We are here doing senior safe fire prevention,” explained Lt. Nick Bertrand. “We’re going over some at-home safety tips such as cooking and electrical concerns. The biggest safety tip would be not leaving cooking stuff unattended. Always have an eye on the stove. If you do have a stove fire, cover it with a lid, just making sure you are attentive while cooking.”

In terms of prizes for the winners of the few rousing rounds of bingo? The fire department had safety at the top of their mind.

“We have some oven mitts to give away to prevent burns while cooking. We also have a few fire blankets just in case you have a fire in your home so you can smother it,” Bertrand said.

Taking the lead on the presentation, Deputy Chief Patrick Farrow stressed to attendees that the local fire department is there to help.

“We’re all trained in different aspects and disciplines and often when you call us we can come out. There is no charge for you to call the fire department, we are happy to come out, even if it is three in the morning and two feet of snow. We do it and we love doing that,” Farrow said. “If you need any assistance getting up from the ground or someone needs assistance getting out of a car, these are all things that we do and enjoy doing. Our roster

is about 25 men and women and we thoroughly enjoy coming out and helping our residents and guests of the community.”

Farrow also addressed primary concerns around circuit breakers and extension cords.

“When it comes to your circuit breakers and extension cords, be very careful. When you go home tonight take a look at them. Make sure they’re not overloaded. Make sure you don’t have an extension cord, plugged into an extension cord,” Farrow said. “We see this a lot around the holidays, but it’s something that you should take a quick second to look at and assess how much power you’re running out of those circuit breakers because those can cause fires.”

Farrow then introduced a new big fire safety concern around

lithium batteries.

“A lot of our tablets and tools nowadays are being run by lithium batteries. They work and they charge well, as long as you are following the manufacturer’s recommendations and you’re charging appropriately,” Farrow said. “Where we’re starting to get a little bit of data, as this is new, is when we’re using the off-brand chargers what happens is that the battery pack will overheat and it will explode and start a fire. It’s new to the fire service, but there’s a large increase in incidents with these lithium batteries.”

Smoke and carbon monoxide detectors were also a big point of emphasis.

“There has been a large increase in fatal fire deaths found with non-working smoke detectors,” Farrow said. “When those

smoke detectors go off, you’re going to hear them and know that something is going on. That is buying you time to get out of your house. We had a structure two months ago and working smoke detectors saved three people in this town. Responding to that fire and the information we were given, I had a pit in my stomach thinking that it was going to be a not-so-good outcome. We learned afterward through our investigation that working smoke detectors alerted that family to get out of the house.”

If you are a senior in Hampden who needs your smoke or carbon monoxide detectors replaced, please contact the fire department at 413-566-3314 or Fire@HampdenMA.gov. or check out

Hampden Fire Department on Facebook.



Troop leaders and volunteers mark veterans’ graves with American flags in Wilbraham.



A wide shot of troop members and volunteers walking grave by grave to place a flag for a veteran in Wilbraham.

FLAGS from page 12

ging. “It was a good experience to get together with the younger girl Scouts and Boy Scouts with the veterans of Wilbraham who were really glad we were there helping. Sometimes all people have to do is ask for help and

we will do it!” Powell said. The Grave Flagging showed the value of giving thanks to those who make it possible to live safely in the nation. It was a way for the young scouts to learn about those who have made a sacrifice for them. By bringing the troops together, they were able to learn more about

the veterans, their stories and the importance of what they have sacrificed for them.

By the inclusion of the members of the community, a large number of people were able to acknowledge those who have made a sacrifice to the nation that they live in.

NOTICE

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

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Town of Wilbraham Veterans Director Reelected to Executive Board of National Veterans Advocacy Group

DENVER, CO. - Jered Sasen of Town of Wilbraham, Massachusetts, was reelected May 15, 2024 to the Executive Board of the National Association of County Veterans Service Officers (NACVSO) at their Annual Training Conference.

Sasen assists veterans and their families from across the area by advocating for veterans to obtain the benefits and services they deserve. As a member of the E-Board, he will serve in the governing body of NACVSO, which oversees multiple lines of service and the overall operations of the 30-year-old organization.

In addition to his reelection, Sasen was recognized for his work with NACVSO by receiving the President's Award during the organization's Annual Banquet.

"I am beyond excited and honored to continue working with the executive board of this incredible organization," said Sasen. "Looking ahead, I'm looking forward to helping with the expansion of many of our programs. The future is looking bright!"

Along with serving veterans and their families, Sasen is a veteran himself, having served in the United States Navy from 2006 to 2016.

Since 1989, NACVSO has advocated for government policies that serve veterans and supported the nation's approximately 2,200 county veterans service officers. CVSOs are local government employees responsible for helping veterans and their families in their communities access their benefits. CVSOs can



help advocate for veterans and their families with the VA, connect them to state and local resources and identify gaps in policies that serve the veterans in their communities.

In addition to the elections, the event was marked by two historic events for the organization: the first was the NACVSO-VA Claims Clinic wherein all week, Denver-area veterans were able to meet with Veteran Service Officers, receive help filing claims for VA benefits, complete claims-related exams, and some received decisions right on site.

The second historic event was hosting the US Court Appeals for Veterans Claims, which allowed attendees to witness a live hearing before the court - a first for NACVSO and for the Court in front of a

Veteran Service Organization.

Other speakers included VA Under Secretary for Benefits, Joshua Jacobs, who commended NACVSO for their dedication to veterans and partnership with VA, acknowledging the NACVSO-VA Claims Clinic as a milestone in their continued partnership.

"The foresight to utilize the collective knowledge and experience of this conference's attendees to improve the lives of Colorado Veterans, Families, Caregivers and Survivors is truly astonishing," said Jacobs. "When I heard you were putting on this clinic, I knew if there was an organization that could pull it off, it was you-- NACVSO."

State Auditor seeks signatures for ballot question

By Paula Ouimette
Editor
pouimette@turley.com

WEST BROOKFIELD - State Auditor Diana DiZoglio has one wish for her birthday on June 5, and that's to gain the 13,000 signatures needed to get a question on the November ballot.

This ballot question would allow voters to compel the Legislature to be audited. The audit would be performative, and also look at how tax dollars are being spent.

"This is the same type of audit we do for every other entity," DiZoglio said. "Legislature is the only one refusing."

Last fall, over 75,000 residents across the commonwealth signed a petition after DiZoglio's request to audit the Senate and the House of Representatives was denied by the House Speaker and Senate President. DiZoglio and her office staff have been traveling to towns and cities, asking for help to collect the necessary signatures before the deadline, making a stop in West Brookfield on May 5.

DiZoglio said she has a "deep love and affection" for policy making and transparency in the Legislature, after spending six years as a state representative and four years as a state senator before taking her current office in 2023.

"We do so many great things here in Massachusetts," DiZoglio said.

Despite this, the commonwealth is ranked one of the least transparent state governments, she said.

"As your state auditor I've been given the really unique opportunity to have a platform; a singular voice,"

she said. "We need transparency. There are a lot of tough conversations that need to be had."

DiZoglio said she has been reflecting on the saying, "knowledge is power," and she feels that this applies to a legislative audit, and how its results will spread knowledge and power back to the voters.

"I've seen knowledge hoarded, essentially, by people in power," she said. "If we have knowledge about state budget and government, we have an opportunity to join in - to rise against or support."

DiZoglio said her office works to "bring light" to over 200 state entities. She is it is common practice in many other states to audit the Legislature regularly as well.

"The decisions that impact us all should be made in the light of say," she said.

DiZoglio said no system is perfect, but that the government should strive to be better.

"Our goal and our mission is to help," she said of the State Auditor's office. "To make sure everyday people get the best services."

DiZoglio said the government cannot improve its service to constituents if potential problems can't be identified and addressed. She said it's "deeply concerning" that her office's efforts to get access to the Legislature have been demonized and talked down about.

"It doesn't say a lot of good things about how our system is running. What is there to hide?" she



State Auditor
Diana DiZoglio

said.

DiZoglio said there have been 113 audits of the Legislature completed by her office dating back to 1849. Now, they are unable to get access to information about public tax dollars, she said.

DiZoglio said the audit is a nonpartisan issue, and it's more about those who have power and those who do not.

"Leadership has a lot of power," she said.

Retaliation is also a common occurrence in the Legislature, DiZoglio said, adding that this behavior is "unacceptable."

She said retaliation directed at herself personally is missing the mark, and coming back on the voters who elected her.

"This is something that need to be talked about over and over again... This is not the Massachusetts we know and love," she said.

DiZoglio urged residents to "have a seat at the table" before decisions are made in the Legislature, asking them to help gather the remaining signatures for the ballot question before the June 5 deadline.

"You have the power to make change, I cannot do this without you," she said.

For more information about the audit or to sign the State Auditor's petition, visit dianaforma.com. For more information about the State Auditor's office and its role in state government, visit www.mass.gov/org/office-of-the-state-auditor.

PUBLIC NOTICES

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, June 5, 2024 at 6 PM** at the Town House, 625 Main Street, Hampden, for a **Request for Determination of Applicability, (RDA), submitted by Shawn Sullivan for the repair of failing retaining walls in close proximity to the Scantic River, 23 Walnut Road, Hampden.** 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.

On Behalf of the
Conservation Commission,
Judy McKinley-Brewer,
Ted Zebert,
co-chairs

05/30/2024

TOWN OF HAMPDEN CONSERVATION COMMISSION NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

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On Behalf of the
Conservation Commission,
Judy McKinley-Brewer,
Ted Zebert,
co-chairs

05/30/2024

WILBRAHAM PLANNING BOARD

The Wilbraham Planning Board will hold a Public Hearing on **Wednesday, June 12, 2024, at 5:45 PM** in the Town Office Building, 240 Springfield Street, on the application of Daniel Fernandes for site plan approval as required under Sections 3.4.1.4 and 13.5 of the Wilbraham Zoning By-Law to allow construction of a 30 foot by 45 foot farm stand on a portion of the property owned by Charles L Merrick Trust located at 651 Main Street as shown on information on file in the Planning Office and posted for public viewing on the Planning Board page of the Town of Wilbraham website at www.wilbraham-ma.gov/123/Planning-Board. Both in person and virtual participation are available. To participate virtually go to <https://meet.goto.com/244871717> or call 866-899-4679 (Access Code: 244-871-717).

John McCloskey
Chair

05/23, 05/30/2024

Town of Hampden Notice of Public Hearing

The Hampden Planning Board will hold a Public Hearing on **Wednesday, June 12, 2024 at 6:30 PM** in the Town House, 625 Main Street, Hampden, MA on the application of Raymond Kuselias to amend or modify a Special Permit Decision dated September 27, 2023 under Section 7.2.4 of the Hampden Zoning Bylaw for a Substandard Frontage Lot on property owned by the applicant on Burleigh Road, Parcel 28-029-000 Information related to this application is on file in the Town Clerk's Office and is available for review by the public during normal business hours.

For the Board,
Madison Pixley, Chair,
Hampden Planning Board
05/23, 5/30/2024

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

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The Minnechaug girls tennis team lines up.

Turley photos by Gregory A. Scibelli

Falcons beat Ludlow in semis, fall in finals

WILBRAHAM – The Minnechaug Regional High School girls tennis team was edged 3-2 by Longmeadow in the Western Mass. Class A Tournament finals last Friday afternoon. The Falcons defeated Ludlow in the semi-finals 5-0 before reaching the finals held at Longmeadow. Two of Minnechaug’s singles competitors, Norah Dumala and Ellie Gaudreau were winners in their matches. But Longmeadow prevailed in the other singles match and both doubles matches. The Falcons will face Ludlow again to open the state tournament.



Mary Woytowicz goes low to get a hit.



Ellie Gaudreau lunges for a return hit.



Rose Caltabiano keeps playing going with a return hit.

Falcons beat Brownies to advance to WMass finals

By Tim Peterson
Sports Correspondent

WILBRAHAM—When Mike Delia and Joe Heney were teammates on the Springfield College men’s lacrosse team 15 years ago, they always talked about coaching against each other someday.

That has taken place twice so far this spring.

During a span of eight days, Delia guided the Minnechaug boys’ lacrosse team to a pair of victories over Agawam, which is coached by Heney.

The second meeting of the 2024 campaign between the two high schools took place in the Western Mass. Class A semifinals.

The second-seeded Falcons scored the final four goals of the match enroute to a 7-3 home victory over the third-seeded Brownies, last Friday afternoon.

“We just made a couple of halftime adjustments, which worked out in our favor,” said Delia, who’s wrapping up his second season as the Falcons varsity coach. “I’m proud of the way my guys played in today’s game, especially after we just played Agawam eight days ago.”

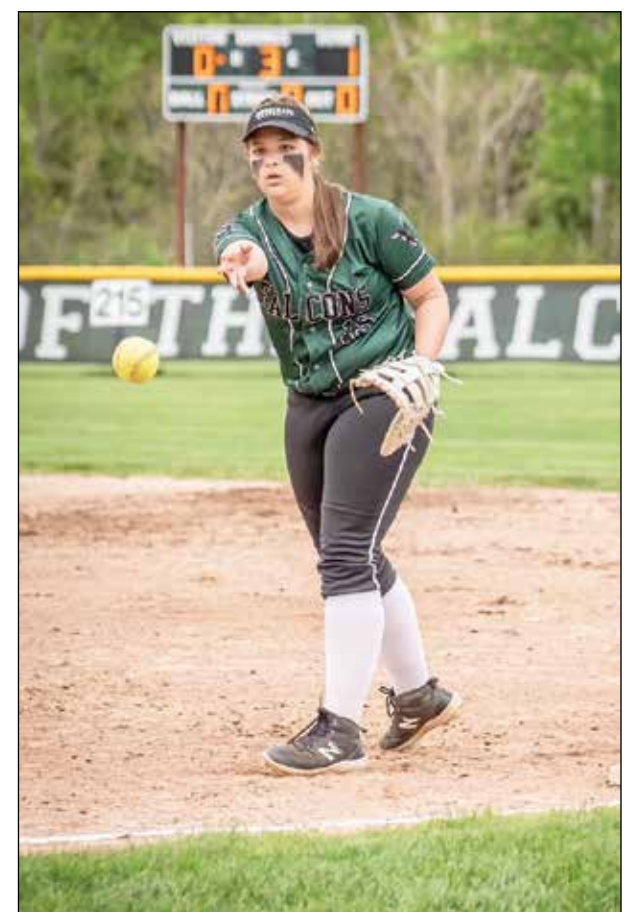
Delia and Henry were both Physical Education majors at Springfield College.

“Joe and I have coached a summer league lacrosse team together in Connecticut during the past couple of years,” Delia said. “It has been a lot of

Please see **FALCONS**, page 16



Veronica Ouimet rounds third.



Hannah Prechocki underhands the ball to the pitcher.

Turley photos by Sofia DiGrande

Tough finish to season leaves Falcons on bubble

WILBRAHAM – In order for the Minnechaug Regional High School softball team to reach the Division

2 State Tournament, the Falcons will need to finish in the top 32. The Falcons finished with a 7-12 record,

leaving them below .500 and need-

Please see **SOFTBALL**, page 16

Doiron dominant in Granite homecoming

CLAREMONT, N.H. - The last time the Granite State Pro Stock Series raced at Claremont Motor-sports Park, Joey Doiron turned in a dominant performance to take home the big winner's purse.

And neither a year away from the tricky third-mile nor a different car could keep the two-time GSPSS champion from the winner's circle.

Doiron led every lap of Sunday night's Key Auto Group 125, earning his seventh career GSPSS win and a \$5,000 check.

The veteran racer from Berwick, Maine, was quick all night, turning the fastest lap in time trials and handily winning his qualifying heat. Former series regular Jeremy Sorel lined up alongside Doiron after his own heat win, but Doiron jumped out to an early lead as Sorel faced challenges from Casey Call and Cory Casagrande.

Call and Casagrande settled into second and third, and as the field stretched out over a long green-flag run, the three leaders drew closer together, setting up a thrilling battle for the closing laps.

Contact between Alex Quarterley and Ryan Green brought out the race's second caution on lap 77, though, and as the yellow flag waved, Call made a beeline for the pits with a flat tire. Casagrande, still searching for his first GSPSS win, lined up alongside Doiron for the restart, but Doiron slipped away with the advantage.

Once again, Casagrande reeled in Doiron, closing the gap as the laps wound down. But he could not catch Doiron to make a move, and the veteran racer held on for his third career win at Claremont.

"I don't know how much [Casagrande] had left," Doiron said after the race. "But if that was all he had, I had a little bit more in the tank."

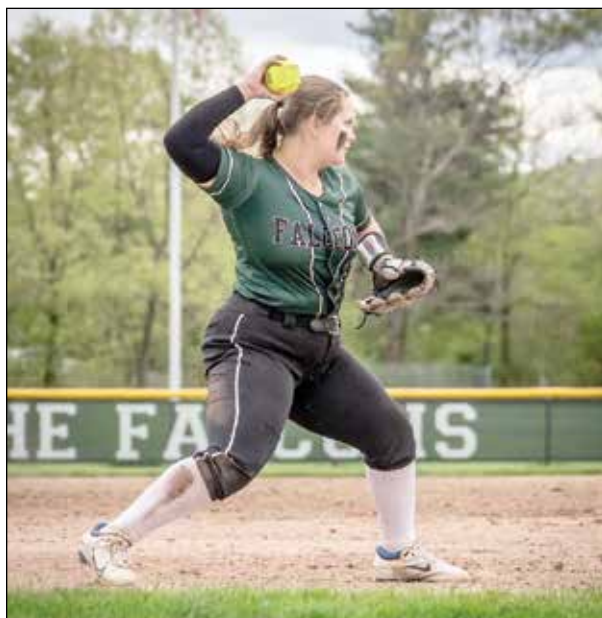
Doiron joins Gabe Brown and Ray Christian III as drivers who have scored consecutive GSPSS wins at Claremont. Doiron's third win also ties him with Brown, Christian and D.J. Shaw for the most series wins at the track.

Casagrande matched his GSPSS career best with his runner-up performance. Outside polesitter Sorel matched his own career best in third. Call drove back from his flat tire to place fourth, while Sorel's teammate and crew chief, Quarterley, was fifth in his GSPSS debut.

With top-five finishes in the first two races of 2024, Casey Call unofficially leads the point standings headed to the series' next race, a stop at Speedway 95 in Maine on June 16.



Amy Dunklee slides into third.



Alexa Sherman fires to first.



Turley photos by Sofia DiGrande

Abby Peyman send a pitch to the plate.

SOFTBALL from page 15

ing to be in that top 32 to get in. Minnechaug was ranked No. 31 heading into last Friday. The Falcons would likely have a preliminary round game if they do qualify for the tournament, which is set to begin late this week.

FALCONS from page 15

fun coaching against him for the first time. We do have a ton of respect for each other. We're planning to play each other again next year."

Heney, who has been coaching the Brownies for the past ten years, gave his thoughts about coaching against his college teammate for the first time.

"Mike and I played on the same college lacrosse team together and now we're coaching against each other," Heney said. "I was very excited when he was named as the head coach here."

Agawam assistant coach Eric Balslov was also teammates with Heney and Delia at Springfield College.

Minnechaug (10-8) was scheduled to face top-seeded Westfield in the Class A finals at West Springfield High School on Tuesday night. The Falcons have lost to Longmeadow in the Western Mass. finals the past two seasons.

The Brownies had a 9-7 overall record following the semifinal loss.

"We tried to do some different things in today's game, but they didn't work out for us," Heney said. "We just had too many turnovers and Minnechaug took advantage of them."

The Falcons also defeated the Brownies, 5-2, at Harmon A. Smith Field in Agawam on May 16.

Following the semifinal victory, Delia gave junior Matt Beaudin the Grind Bucket.

"We normally give a player the Grind Bucket following a win," Delia said. "Matt didn't have a ton of points in today's game, but he did almost everything else on the field very well."

Another candidate for the Grind Bucket in the Falcons semifinal victory against the Brownies was senior Jackson Derosia, who recorded a hat-trick and added an assist.

Derosia is planning to play lacrosse at Lake Forest College, which is located

near Chicago, Illinois.

"I've been a member of this team for the past four years," Derosia said. "This was probably my final game on this field, and it just feels amazing to score a hat-trick. I'm also looking forward to playing lacrosse at Lake Forest College. It's going to be a brand-new experience for me."

Sean Murphy, who's another senior listed on the Minnechaug roster, will be playing lacrosse at Bentley University.

The Falcons other two seniors are Derek Semanie, who'll be playing lacrosse at the University of New England, and Nicholas Patrakis, who'll be playing football at Sacred Heart University in the fall.

"It's always great to see your seniors play a sport in college," Delia said. "Those guys work very hard during the season and in the offseason."

The Falcons starting goalie Zach Kozub, who's a sophomore, was credited with a total of 13 saves.

Down at the other end of the field, Agawam sophomore goalie Jordin Agosto made 16 saves.

Derosia scored his first goal 2:02 into the opening period, which was unassisted.

Agawam senior Nicholas Ugolini scored the equalizer a little more than two minutes later following a high shot into the cage, which was also unassisted.

The other Agawam seniors are Gavin Moreau, Hayden Dupre, Brandon Bourgeois, Nathan Corriveau, and Peter DiBella.

The score was still tied entering the second period when a goal by sophomore Jaden Holloway with 11:12 remaining in the first half gave the Brownies a 2-1 advantage. Sophomore Brayden Federico was credited with the assist.

With 56.5 seconds remaining in the second period, junior Thomas O'Toole netted the tying goal for the home team.

Derosia scored his second goal less than a minute into the third period. The duo of junior Matt Noonan and O'Toole were credited with the assist.

The Brownies tied the score for the final time following a goal by Dupre with 8:15 remaining in the third period.

Noonan scored the go-ahead goal. He then assisted on a goal scored by Beaudin, as the Falcons entered the final twelve minutes of the contest with a 5-3 lead.

Minnechaug's final two goals were scored by Derosia and Noonan in the fourth period.

The two teams could face each other for the third time this spring during the Division 2 state tournament, which begins this week.

Wilbraham-Hampden Times

OBITUARY POLICY

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Community casts a line during 9th Annual Spec Pond Fishing Derby



Turley photos by Kristin Rivers
Owen and Mark Benninger pose with their catch of the day during the Spec Pond Fishing Derby on May 18.



Isabella and her mom, Mary Yacovone, pose with a miniature fishing trophy and their fish during the Spec Pond Fishing Derby.



Jim Lagacy, aquatic resource education coordinator for MassWildlife, talks with a family about their fish at the Massachusetts Department of Fisheries and Wildlife tent.



From the left, Don Vacon, Jim Lagacy and Gerry Wroblewski from the Massachusetts Department of Fisheries and Wildlife pose for a group photo.



A group shot of attendees fishing during the 9th Annual Spec Pond Fishing Derby at Spec Pond in Wilbraham.

By Kristin Rivers
Editor
krivers@turley.com

WILBRAHAM - The community gathered at Spec Pond from 9 a.m. to Noon on May 18 to take part in the 9th Annual Spec Pond Fishing Derby.

The event was presented by The Friends of Recreation, the Parks and Rec Department and the Massachusetts Department of Fisheries and Wildlife.

The main sponsor was Westfield Bank while supporting sponsors were Rice's Fruit Farm, Dick's Sporting Goods, Country Bank, Secure Energy and Rooney Insurance & Financial.

Throughout the derby, attendees had fun fishing while enjoying free coffee, water and donuts from Rice's, raffle prizes from American National and the Massachusetts Department of Fisheries and Wildlife providing bait and fishing instructions.

The biggest fish that was caught was a rainbow trout measuring 14.5 inches, with another close contender measuring 13 3/8 inches.

At one point, an attendee also caught a frog.

Mark Manolakis, president of the Friends, was elated with the turnout, sharing they get children from ages two and up, parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles and a family from Baltimore, MD, that attends every year.

"It's just great to be able to throw an event that gets full families together and something that anyone can do," Manolakis said.

Manolakis explained the Friends has been around since 1990 and works with Parks and Recreation to help with goals and building up program facilities.

"A lot of our investment over the years has gone into the Spec Pond complex. We have a few things coming up this year in building out the pickleball courts and redoing much of Pinney Pavilion," Manolakis said.

Manolakis added Pinney Pavilion is named after Brad Pinney, a former member who was also a firefighter and instrumental in the redesign of Spec Pond.

"So, we always try to keep it in the best shape we can for his memory," Manolakis said.

Jim Lagacy, aquatic resource education coordinator for MassWildlife, shared the

organization offers education during the derby and they go all over the state providing learn-to-fish events.

Lagacy said the angler education program has been around for over 30 years and introduces people to fishing, with over 100 programs throughout the state every year.

"We want people to realize how wonderful it is to be outside, away from the devices and just get connected with the outdoors and fishing is an easy way to do it," Lagacy said.

Lagacy was thrilled with the turnout, emphasizing the importance of partnering together with town municipalities to hold community events like this.

"Partnering is huge and all of our events have partners. It's wonderful for the community to see so many different partners involved. We have state partners, federal partners, municipal partners, private partners to run these events and it's just lovely to see," Lagacy said.

For Betsy Flores, program manager at Rick's Place, the event is not only an opportunity to learn how to fish herself, but provides an outlet for community for the children and families supported by the non-profit.

Flores explained how when programming ends during the summer, families are still looking for grief support.

"So, this was really fun for them to just come and talk and get to know each other in different ways. We had all moms come together to support their children and we know that fishing, sometimes, is seen as a

father-child sport a lot of the time, so that can be challenging," Flores said. "So, having all of our moms here with their kids showing up and giving them this opportunity was just really wonderful and I think really great for the kids."

Flores was grateful to the town for the event.

"It's this safe family-friendly event where people can come together and find new hobbies, find new things that they can do with their kids. The fact that it's open to all, so people that are skilled, people who have never fished before, they make it really inclusive and I think that's really important," Flores said.

Manolakis wants the community to know they are focused on keeping Spec Pond beautiful and hope to expand on Memorial School, as a third of Parks and Rec programming takes place there.

The Friends, also, are always looking for new members.

"We're always looking for new people to bring new ideas into the fray," Manolakis said.

Flores thanked the organizers for the event.

"Thank you so much just for welcoming everyone here and for putting this on. We had a great time and we'll definitely be back!" Flores said.

To learn more about the Friends, visit www.wilbraham-ma.gov/364/Friends-of-Recreation.



Emery Maloni smiles with her trophy after winning this year's Spec Pond Fishing Derby. Maloni caught a rainbow trout measuring 14.5 inches and also won a Dick's Sporting Goods giftcard.

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Cody Erskine stands at the POW/Missing in Action table during the Memorial Day ceremony at Crane Veteran Memorial Park on May 26.



Jered Sasen, director of Veterans Services, provides remarks during this year's Memorial Day observance ceremony.



Attendees stand at attention, salute or place a hand over their heart as "TAPS" is performed during Wilbraham's Memorial Day observance ceremony.



State Rep. Angelo Puppolo, Jr. (D-Springfield) reflects on Memorial Day and the sacrifice of the fallen during Wilbraham's Memorial Day observance ceremony.

Select Board Chairman Sue Bunnell reflects on Memorial Day.



WILBRAHAM from page 1

awareness and understanding of whom it is they should likewise honor and exactly why we should honor them."

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."

"So, on this Memorial Day, let us reconnect to the genesis of our nation's innumerable freedoms and remember, that our way of life has been shaped and made possible by

those who have served and those who are lost," Puppolo said.

Puppolo shared that at the state level, the support for veterans continues, with the HERO Act recently passing unanimously in the House of Representatives and heading to the Senate.

"It doesn't happen too too often, but I think when you get 160 members of the House of Representatives to support our veterans, I think it shows a strong commitment. That certainly sends a strong message for our support," Puppolo said.

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

"It's both solemn and celebratory the gift that they have given us in terms of supporting freedom and independence, the right to gather and to speak as we are doing here today. We wouldn't be here," Bunnell said. "Those opportunities and freedoms wouldn't exist without the sacrifices 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."

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

McLaughlin appreciated residents coming out and showing

their support.

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

McLaughlin encourages more people, including younger generations, to take the time to attend these ceremonies.

"You should go to a service. Go to a Memorial Day service," McLaughlin said.

Sasen shared what he misses about Scott, who was heavily involved in Wilbraham from the school system as a chaperone and St. Cecilia's Church to the scout troops.

Scott, he added, was also the first to volunteer in anything the

Department of Veterans Services needed.

"I miss, honestly, the colorful conversations that we would have swapping sea stories. It's always really special to be able to speak the same language with somebody," Sasen said. "It's followed very closely with just his care and his dedication to this town."

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.

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