



Natick Nights

See more photos on page 2.
 Courtesy photos by Oliver Thom of OJRT Photography

Heat-Seeking Motorists

BY SEAN SULLIVAN

This summer, some Natick residents will take to the roads not to beat the heat, but rather in search of it.

Instead of heading to the coast or local lakes and pools, they'll be driving around town, looking for hot spots - places where temperatures spike to significantly higher degrees during already-hot days.

Natick will be part of a cohort with neighboring municipalities that have signed up to participate in the program. Among them are Framingham, Ashland and Holliston. They are part of a Metrowest team that will create a map comprising a 100-square mile survey of so-called "heat islands" for the program.

Its purpose is to learn what areas and residents might benefit from heat-mitigation measures, in this era when communities are under ever more threat from the extremes of climate change.

"I'm pretty excited about it," said Jillian Wilson-Martin. She is Natick's Sustainability Coordinator.

The volunteers, "citizen scientists," as she called them, will need only drive for about an



NYC Heat Watch participants. Courtesy photo

hour on the chosen day to collect relevant data. Each will navigate along a predetermined route, and their samplings will be combined with other volunteers to produce a wider picture of areas where the mercury rises well above the norm.

The data collection effort won't require sampling over weeks - one hour over the course of a particularly hot and sunny day will suffice. No day had been designated yet for the experiment, which will take place some time this month, as weather forecasts'

reliability diminishes the further out predictions are made.

The project will be overseen locally by Framingham State University's Christa McAuliffe Center for Integrated Science Learning. And Natick's participation will comprise but a small corner of the much-larger mission.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) is spearheading the science, as part of a fact-finding

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Natick Nights

Residents are turning out to enjoy Natick Nights this summer.

Courtesy photos by Oliver Thom of OJRT Photography



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HEAT-SEEKERS

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effort that will involve fourteen states across the country.

“This is a great opportunity



Mystic River Heat Watch

to increase awareness of Urban Heat Islands in Framingham and MetroWest,” stated Dr. Irene Porro, in Framingham State University’s promotional media. She is director of the state school’s McAuliffe Center.

All volunteers will undergo a short training session, done virtually, and will with a few days notice before one sweltering day this month, set out on their fact and Fahrenheit-finding missions. To get a more thorough picture of variations, temperature sam-

ples will be taken at 6 a.m., 3 p.m. and 7 p.m.

Weather and municipal professionals already know what sort of topography tends to generate the kinds of heat islands that volunteers will be searching for. These tend to be places with little or no tree cover, sections of towns and cities where pavement sprawls and leafy shade is scarce.

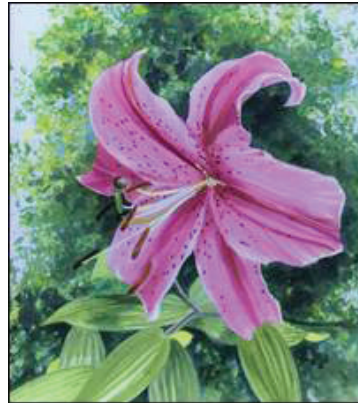
Some of those hot spots, said Wilson-Martin, can really live up to the name. In places where pavement predominates, temps can climb as high as 130 degrees. Focal points in Natick include the town’s train station and the Natick Common. With the data, communities can better determine where heat-mitigation measures (like air-conditioning) might be warranted.

Stationary temperature sensors will be part of the data-collection process, and volunteers will be given versions of the devices that can be fastened outside their car windows. All that’s left is to navigate the prescribed route, and let the sensors do their thing.

“It’s a really fun way to get involved,” said Wilson-Martin.

New Art Exhibit “Glimpses of Nature”

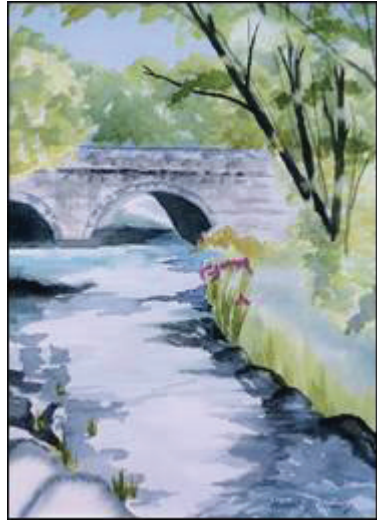
A new solo exhibit by artist Naomi Wilsey is presented by Sweetwaters Coffee & Tea in Natick Center. The title “Glimpses of Nature” represents the artist’s interpretations of scenes from nature. Naomi paints traditional watercolors and Jap-



anese brush paintings, known as “sumi-e,” that reflect her heritage. The public is invited to view the exhibit through July 12, 2023, during Sweetwaters hours. The café is a member of the Natick Center Cultural District. Visitors to Sweetwaters can enjoy the café offerings in a setting like an art gallery.

Naomi Wilsey paints in her

home studio in Needham, MA, and paints “en plein air” outdoors. Her bachelor’s degree is in Fine Arts and Education, and she holds a master’s degree in Communications Management.



With a background in Fine Arts, Naomi taught art in a public school and currently teaches one-on-one art lessons. She owned a graphic design business which led to an advertising job in educational publishing and on to a career in marketing at IBM.

Naomi is a past president of

the Dedham Art Association and former co-president of the Needham Art Association. She is a board member and artist with Needham Open Studios and an exhibiting member of watercolor and art associations. She shares her art by teaching art lessons in



watercolor and Japanese brush painting, exhibiting in local communities and on her website gallery: NaomiWilseyArt.com

From left, “Star Light” watercolor on rice paper panel; “Before the Falls,” Watercolor (along the Charles River); “Celebration,” original watercolor print. Photographs courtesy of the artist

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A Community Barnraising

BY SEAN SULLIVAN

Rising from the ashes of its longstanding forebear, the Natick Community Organic Farm's new barn has slowly been taking shape over the course of the last few years. During that time, fundraising and planning stages have been underway.

In more recent months, actual beams of the new barn have been going up.

The emerging structure might impress even the Amish, a culture renown for its adherence to traditional building techniques and quality of finished product.

There are some threaded, metal fasteners visible here and there, but much of the joinery is achieved and held fast via the old-school system of hammered pegs - hefty dowels tapped into place, protruding ends sawn off. Heavy horizontal beams are snugly fitted into notched recesses to support the structure and supplies that will go above.

"We're not messing around," said Erin O'Brien of the new barn's robust build. She serves as the farm's Marketing and Communications Coordinator.

With her was Nicky Wilson, Assistant Director of Internal Operations at NCOF.

The sun still shone down through ribs of an uncovered



roof upon an earthen floor as we walked under the structure's thick amber bones, though finished plans include a poured concrete floor.

A crew was busy under a hot morning sun that day in early June, nailing machined planks of white pine into place - the new barn's exterior. The wood's pale blonde skin stood in contrast against the golden hue of the barn's beams beneath.

"It fit together so beautifully," said Wilson. "We just couldn't stop watching" as it began and continued to take shape.

The erstwhile barn was claimed in a fire a few years earlier, a loss that made headlines around the region. The exact date of the blaze has been burned into the memories of staff members, and the two recalled and recited it without hesitation. March 17th, 2021. Four o'clock in the morning.

Livestock had long been housed in the barn, and several animals did not survive the fire. A few antique hinges were all that was salvageable from the old building, which dates back to the early 1800s.

"Everybody was affected by this awful event," said Wilson. "It was a huge tragedy. Honoring that history has been really important to the farm."

Wilson is a British expat, and has been in the U.S. for about two years. She's still acclimating to Yankee jargon, a process in which O'Brien has played a key role.

"This is 30 percent of my job," said O'Brien: serving as an interpreter of American colloquialisms for Wilson.

To safeguard the new barn against the fate of its predecessor, it will be outfitted with fire-pre-

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Chuck Tashjian

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Advertising Sales
Susanne Odell Farber
508-954-8148
sue@odellconsult.com

Advertising Sales Manager
Jen Schofield
508-570-6544
jenschofield@localtownpages.com

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Michelle McSherry
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BARNRAISING

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vention measures like alarms and a sprinkler system. No heat lamps will be permitted in the structure, the fixtures cited as a possible cause of the conflagration that consumed the old barn. Safer technologies will instead be installed to keep spaces and livestock warm during darker months and days of the year.

The barn’s designers also took advantage of a generous southern-facing façade, planning a solar array on the steep roof that crowns it. Glass paneling on the same side will also allow for passive use of the sun’s rays, turning much of the south side’s interior into a greenhouse and source of heat for the entire barn.

In keeping with traditional building techniques of yesteryear, one layer of oil will be applied to the bare wood to seal it against the



false floor will be built into the southwest corner. Stairs connecting the levels will be located there as well.

Since the loss of the former barn, the farm has been making use of metal storage containers to keep perishables and other supplies out of the elements. All the additional square footage the new barn offers will allow the farm to buy and store greater quantities of supplies - saving money by buying bulk.

A brand new barn also opens opportunities to create new indoor spaces for programming at the farm. During inclement

weather or other activities, the indoor space could serve as a fun place for gathering indoors - for young students taking part in the farm’s camp offerings.

The new building is the handiwork of New Energy Works, an architectural and building firm that creates heavy timber edifices as its niche. At sites in New York and Oregon, the company cuts components of each building on-site. They then ship them out to clients like Natick Community Organic Farms, where the pieces are assembled into sturdy and slightly structures.

To raise funds toward raising the new barn, friends of the farm ran a successful campaign soliciting donations. The destruction of the old barn was felt acutely by the community, and many individuals and organizations came forward to help replace some of what was lost.

In addition to many small gifts, about 150 donors gave over the \$1,000 threshold. Passersby beneath the beams will note names carved into the thick wood; they identify a handful of major benefactors. One anonymous donor gave \$200,000. Total cost for the new barn came in at around \$1.2 million.

“An awful event has been a chance for us to connect with so many people again,” said O’Brien.

Crowning the growing barn is a cupola, that small, roofed square that has served as an iconic cherry atop such structures for centuries. The cupola (from the Latin cupula: “small cup”) has a functional role as well as an aesthetic one, venting the rising heat and smells from inside the barn upward and outward.

Looking closely, one could see a branch had been placed inside the frame of the unfinished cupola, a tradition in keeping with the barn building practices of old. A birch branch - its leaves still green - was thought to serve as a talisman toward good luck while building was still underway. Birch also symbolizes rebirth, new beginnings, and growth - a fitting tribute to the old barn and the new at NCOF.

As for when the barn will be completed, Wilson and O’Brien wouldn’t hazard an estimate. The end of the building process is in sight, confirmed Wilson, but she demurred from making any definitive predictions.

“It’s really anyone’s guess. We don’t want to jinx it.”



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Find Your Outdoor Reading Room

Local Artists Design and Build Spaces thanks to The New England Foundation for the Arts and Cognex Corporation

The Morse Institute Library invites community members of all ages to read this summer! And thanks to grants from the New England Foundation for the Arts (NEFA) and Cognex Corporation, you can read outside in one of three cozy Outdoor Reading Rooms installed across the community.

In partnership with the Metropolitan Area Planning Council's Arts and Culture Department and Forecast Public Art, the

Making it Public grant program supports artists in their public art making while building municipal capacities to support more equitable calls for public artmaking. "Natick's combined commitment to expand public artmaking, improve green space access and participation, and invite the community to connect further with the library was ambitious. We were pleased to see that the Selection Committee chose emerging artists and students for this

project," said Kim Szeto, NEFA Public Art Program Director.

Each Outdoor Reading Room was designed and built by local artists, inspired by the theme Find Your Voice:

Keefe Technical School Students designed POP!, found at the Cole Center in West Natick. A collaboration of three programs, Design & Visual Communications, Metals Fabrication, and Carpentry, this installation was inspired by the world of graphic novels and the limitlessness of space. It features hand-painted characters and creatures, each designed by different students.

"It's so important that the students have authentic learning experiences. This project gave students the opportunity to go out into the world, make real-life work, and see its impact on the community," said Molly Dee, Design & Visual Communications Teacher.

Perfectly nestled between trees on the Morse Institute Library's front lawn stands Under the Trees by Paul Belenky. "I love reading books under the shade of trees and this installation aims to recreate the essence of reading in a forest," said Belenky. With carved stump seating and painted fabric leaves, the space invites readers to relax amid the hustle and bustle of downtown.

Featuring wooden books in shades of blue and orange, Empower by Deborah Tuck Wirtz, highlights statements, quotes, and messages of empowerment from community members.

"Empower was designed with Connor Heffler Park in mind. The big green book begs you to come sit, relax, and read. My husband, Brian Wirtz, and I worked together on this. We are excited to see how this installation sparks imaginations, reflection, and self-discovery," said Wirtz.

Supporting their global headquarters town for over 40 years, Cognex saw the Outdoor Reading Room project as a great way to demonstrate Cognex's continued commitment to Natick. "The artists' creations wonderfully reflect the company's philosophy of working hard, playing hard, and enhancing vision. We were thrilled to be part of this town-wide initiative and hope to see many readers out this summer!" said Sheila DiPalma, Cognex Chief Culture Officer.

Summer in Natick is when the



community is alive with outdoor events and activities to enjoy the gorgeous weather. "The Outdoor Reading Rooms are perfect additions to our 150th Anniversary celebrations. They also highlight Natick's amazing local artists while supporting our efforts to foster a life-long love of reading," said Miki Wolfe, Library Director.

The Find Your Voice Outdoor Reading Rooms will feature

library- and community-sponsored events throughout the summer, such as visits from local authors, touch-a-truck and story time with Natick Police, Fire and Public Works personnel. Visit the morseinstitute.org for event details and to sign up for Summer Reading. These installations are

READING ROOM
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Real Estate Agent Nina Sable Shares Expert Pricing Tips for Sellers

By CHRISTIE VOGT
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

For home sellers looking for a hassle-free experience, Nina Sable's reputation as an "as-is realtor" is a major draw. And while the housing market continues to be in sellers' favor, Sable stresses that it's important for sellers to know the current best practices when it comes to pricing their properties.



expertise is the pricing of the house, versus if you go on the market on your own, you're likely overpricing your home and then ending up on the market for a longer period." One of Sable's new clients came to her "already burned out," she shared, as his property had been on the market for a year without success.

"A better strategy in this market is to price just below market value or right at market value," Sable advises. "In this market, if you price just under market value, it seems to bring a lot of activity

because perceived market value is very important for buyers. They have to see that they're getting value out of it." With the slowing of the market this summer, Sable says it's crucial to get the price right at the beginning or adjust it soon after the home has been listed if sellers see little activity.

Some sellers turn to Zillow to price their homes, but Sable cautions that the website can be misleading. "The Zillow value tends to follow the realtor value, so it's not really an estimate, it's almost like an appraised value, not a market value. So once the property is on the market, you'll see that Zillow will follow the market value."

In addition to being strategic with pricing, Sable advises sellers to target many different buyer audiences versus selecting a single target group. "Make sure you include multiple groups — new

buyers, investors, downsizers, upsizers — to grab the most audiences possible," she says. Sable assists with this promotional process through advertising, strategic keyword selection, social media and other avenues. "I definitely have an excellent command of the digital piece and would say that I tend to be more proficient than your average realtor on that front," Sable says.

While Sable says she has an open dialogue with sellers about price throughout the process, her job is to make sure their property doesn't sit too long. "I'm here to be your guide," she says, "and I want you to make the best decision given the current climate."

For more information on selling your home, contact Nina Sable at 508-733-8935, nina.sable@raveis.com or visit www.sellwithsable.realtor

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While the market tends to slow down a bit in the summer, Sable says there are still opportunities to sell, and it might even be an optimal time in terms of convenience. "Buyers might be busy with vacations and summer activities, but that doesn't mean it's a bad time to sell," she says. "Sellers, too, might be on vacation, which means their homes are vacant and easier to show while they're out of town." The curb appeal of homes is often at peak

presentation levels, too. "Landscaping tends to look great in the summer, so houses show very well this time of year," Sable says.

Sable has also noticed that the market currently has a large number of for-sale-by-owner listings. "These sellers, especially if they're having difficulties, should really consult with a realtor. Our

READING ROOM

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up through the end of August for all to enjoy.

About the Morse Institute Library

The Morse Institute Library in Natick, Massachusetts envisions a library community where everyone can thrive and find joy in learning, discovery, and personal growth. Our mission is to inspire minds, enrich lives, enable learning, and foster connections throughout our community by

providing open and equal access to cultural, intellectual, and community resources. Learn more at morseinstitute.org.

About the New England Foundation for the Arts

The New England Foundation for the Arts invests in artists and communities and fosters equitable access to the arts, enriching the cultural landscape in New England and the nation.

NEFA accomplishes this by

granting funds to artists and cultural organizations; connecting them to each other and their audiences; and analyzing their economic contributions. NEFA serves as a regional partner for the National Endowment for the Arts, New England's state arts agencies, and private foundations. Learn more at www.nefa.org.

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Ants Ready to Bug Homeowners This Spring

WPC Pest and Termite Control offers pest-prevention tips to keep ants from marching indoors.

Summer is officially here and with it comes one of the most persistent warm-weather pests—ants. As temperatures rise, WPC Pest Control warns that America's number one nuisance pest will invade homes across MetroWest in search of food. While most species present problems in people's pantries and kitchens, some species can deliver painful bites while others inflict property damage. According to a survey from the National Pest Management Association (NPMA), more than half of consumers list ants as their top pest concern.

"As most homeowners know, ants are especially drawn to the kitchen and their sheer numbers can be daunting," said Jim Mazzuchelli, owner at WPC Pest and Termite Control. "Carpenter ants are most likely to invade residential homes this spring, but eliminating food sources can help keep them at bay."

Of all the U.S. ant species, carpenter ants and fire ants pose the most risk for homeowners. Carpenter ants excavate wood in order to build their nests, which can compromise a home's structural soundness. Just seeing 3 to

5 ants a day could indicate an underlying problem that might only get worse and cause major damage to your home.

Although ants can be difficult to control once they have entered a home, the following preventative measures can play a major role in helping to avoid infestations:

- Wipe up crumbs and spills immediately
- Store garbage in sealed containers and remove from the home frequently

- Keep food packages closed or sealed and store products in air-tight containers
- Avoid leaving food out on the counter or pet food out on the floor for long periods of time
- Repair holes or gaps in window and door screens
- Seal cracks and holes on the outside of the home including entry points for utilities and pipes
- Keep tree branches and shrubbery well-trimmed and away from the house
- Replace weather-stripping and repair loose mortar around basement foundation and windows

- If you suspect an ant or any pest infestation in your home, contact a licensed pest professional to inspect, identify and treat the problem

"With more than 700 species of ants in the U.S., many of which create huge colonies, prevention is the key to an ant-free home," added Mazzuchelli.

For more information on ants, please visit www.nobugsnopests.com or call 508-366-1820 to set up a free inspection and a free outside treatment.

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Family Promise Metrowest Awarded \$150,000 Cummings Grant

Natick nonprofit receives three years of funding from Cummings Foundation

Family Promise Metrowest (FPM) is one of 150 local nonprofits that will share in \$30 million through Cummings Foundation's major annual grants program. The Natick-based organization was selected from a total of 630 applicants during a competitive review process to receive \$150,000 over the next three years.

Family Promise Metrowest's mission is to transform the lives of families with children who are facing homelessness by mobilizing a diverse community to provide shelter, education, and comprehensive support. The organization serves low- and moderate-income families with

children who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

The funding received from Cummings Foundation will be used to provide need-based financial subsidies for children and their families across FPM's shelter, transitional, and homelessness prevention programs, including funding for housing, childcare, and transportation. This approach to stabilizing families addresses basic needs, enabling families to then work toward longer-term goals that will ensure their future stability and sustainability.

"Receiving a sustaining grant from Cummings Foundation means we can plan to make trans-

formative change in the lives of more families facing homelessness in the Metrowest area over the next three years," shared FPM's Executive Director, Danielle Conti. "This means more of the children in our neighborhoods will have a safe place to call home."

The Cummings \$30 Million Grant Program primarily supports Massachusetts nonprofits that are based in and serve Middlesex, Essex, and Suffolk counties. This year's grant recipients, spread across 46 different cities and towns, represent a wide variety of causes, including housing and food insecurity, workforce development, immigrant services, social justice, education, and mental health services. Through this place-based initiative, Cummings Foundation aims to give



Family Promise Metrowest staff members celebrate the news of their \$150,000 grant award from Cummings Foundation in front of the Day Center in Natick.

back in the areas where it owns commercial property.

"The way the local nonprofit sector perseveres, steps up, and pivots to meet the shifting needs of the community is most impressive," said Cummings Foundation executive director Joyce Vyrriotes. "We are incredibly grateful for these tireless efforts to support people in the community and to increase equity and access to opportunities."

The majority of the grant decisions were made by about 90 volunteers, who worked across a variety of committees to determine which requests would be funded. These community volunteers included business and nonprofit leaders, mayors, college presidents, and experts in areas such as finance and DEI (diversity, equity, and inclusion).

Cummings Foundation has now awarded \$480 million to greater Boston nonprofits. The complete list of this year's 150 grant winners, plus nearly 1,500 previous recipients, is available at

www.CummingsFoundation.org.

About Family Promise Metrowest

Family Promise Metrowest (FPM) offers a spectrum of services to families that are facing housing instability and homelessness. From a family shelter based in Natick Center to a homelessness prevention program that serves families across the region, FPM has grown exponentially in recent years, now helping nearly 100 families per year access stable housing, sustainable employment, affordable childcare, and educational opportunities. By partnering with local businesses, congregations, schools, and dedicated volunteers, FPM is creating real solutions to the housing crisis facing families. Learn more about FPM's programs and how to become involved or donate at familypromisemetrowest.org and see their recently released Annual Report at tinyurl.com/FPMannualreport2022.

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Glenn Brown

Once David Letterman had frequent guest and a favorite musician of his, Warren Zevon, on for an entire show. Zevon, who'd disclosed terminal cancer, performed and interviewed throughout. Dave at one point asked, "Anything you know now, that I should know?" to which Zevon wittily deadpanned, "Enjoy every sandwich."

Those raising children and helping aging parents often feel rushed and are distracted thinking about what's next, overlooking the beauty of daily, mundane moments.

July is National Sandwich Generation Month, celebrating a generation of people sandwiched between caring for their young children and aging parents at the same time.

I'm a Sandwicher, as are approximately 15% of Americans

between ages 40-60 who face the challenges of planning, communicating and executing for 3 generations at once.

In 2018, my parents were struggling with health to remain independent in NH after 60 years in their home. Stress rained on my mom as a caregiver and daily living/house routines began to slide. My wife, our daughters (then 5 & 3) and I lived comfortably in our Ashland home. The adults agreed on a Plan B supported by updated financial planning. Sell both homes, buy a new home for 3 generations and live as one household sharing in daily responsibilities.

The urgency was greater than anticipated and not without challenges since our move to Holliston. Here's some antidotes for Sandwichers:

Small talks instead of "The Talk". Families don't like to think about declining health and elder care, let alone discuss it. I used single topics tied to a recent story about a friend, asking what they would do. Gained small agreements, the changed topics as would address others another day to frame a mutual plan.

Bring in outside mediators. My aunt shared with my mom that time is not your friend. She encouraged the positives to take action now, rather than later when fewer options are available. Additionally, we consulted with an elder care attorney on

understanding MA Health options, current trusts, POAs and proxies before making the move.

Define their plans for wellness. Far too often, adult children tip-toe around aging conversations with parents for fear it may come across as morbid or worse, inheritance focus. These conversations need to focus on their future ideas of wellness. What is it they foresee for a surviving spouse? When they can no longer remain independent? By having these talks when both parents are in good health, it defines their expectations and allows planning a foundation with greater flexibility.

Your spouse's support is critical. Incredibly fortunate to have a spouse that pushed me to see the positives and embraces bringing family in as "you'd want your daughters to treat you the same someday."

Through the eyes of a child. It's not all about you, the girls show the love and benefits of learning by being around grandma and grandpa. And vice

versa, as health has improved so has activity as the girls provide motivation and energy.

Sometimes timing is everything. I couldn't imagine the anxiety and ill-advised actions my parents would have faced on their own these past 3-plus years.


Your parents sacrificed many things to make sure you had it better, including concealing issues to not worry you. Be open with communication and embrace change, the best ways to prevent costly unintended consequences and ensure positive lasting memories.

The opinions voiced in this material are for general information only and are not intended to provide specific advice or recommendations for any individual.

Glenn Brown is a Holliston resident and owner of Plan-Dynamic, LLC, www.PlanDynamic.com. Glenn is a fee-only Certified Financial Planner™ helping motivated people take control of their planning and investing, so they can balance kids, aging parents and financial independence.

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July and August! Join the SPARK team at Natick Nights on July 27th and at Multicultural Day on August 26th. We also hope you will save the date for our August back-to-school programs.

SPARKKindness.org. Are you interested in joining the SPARK Team as a volunteer? Email: enolangreer@sparkkindness.org for more information.

Bacon Free Library Events

Library Hours
Monday through Friday, 9:30-5:30 with extended hours on Tuesday until 7:00pm

Note: the BFL is closed on Saturdays during the summer.

Curbside pickup is available during all open hours

Check our website for the most up-to-date information and to register for programs: <https://baconfreelibrary.org>

Children’s Programs

Outside Story Times (if rainy, we move inside): Every Monday and Tuesday @ 10 am: We’ll feature a combination of stories for listening and songs for singing & dancing.

Fridays @ 10am -- Baby Time (indoors): Join us for a cozy story time filled with lap bounces, rhymes, songs, and simple stories. Geared toward infants and young toddlers with their grownups.

Dog Tales Story Time -- Monday, July 10th @ 10am. Join us for dog-approved stories and a chance to pet a calm, sweet, and soft therapy dog.

Mindfulness for Kids -- Tues,

July 11th @ 4pm: Families will create mindful moments together at this outdoor workshop with Traci McCubbin from The Mindful Squirrel. This program is geared toward children ages 4-10 with a parent/caregiver. Registration is required.

Jammin with You -- Weds, July 12th & 19th @ 10:30am: Be prepared to laugh, dance, sing, and jam your way through 30 minutes of non-stop family fun! This performance is geared for kids ages 1 – 7, but fun for the whole family. With modern takes on children’s classics and classic original tunes, you’ll be humming and bopping your way all the way home.

Trevor the Games Man -- Friday, July 14th @ 4pm: Join Trevor the Games Man for an uproarious, participatory show featuring stilt-walking and cooperative games! All ages welcome.

Learn Ukulele for Kids - Tues, July 18th @ 4:30pm: Join Julie Stepanek as she shows the fundamentals of ukulele playing. No experience necessary. Ukuleles provided for use during the program! This session is geared toward ages 8 and up and will take place outdoors, weather permitting. Registration is required.

Rockabye Beats - Weds, July 26th @ 10:30am: Join us on the library lawn for some musical fun with Rockabye Beats! We’ll sing, dance, play instruments, and learn a little Spanish. Geared toward ages 0-5.

Read to a Dog -- Friday, July 28th, 3-4:15pm: Kids build confidence and practice reading skills by reading out loud to a registered therapy dog! Children ages 5 and up can sign up for a 15-minute reading session with Sophie, a gentle golden retriever who loves belly rubs, stories, and cuddles. Registration is required.

Science Heroes Saving Earth Together! -- Tues, Aug 1st @ 5pm: Science and stories collide in this interactive STEM program presented by Talewise! Recommended for ages 3-11. Weather permitting, this program will take place outdoors on the library lawn.

Messy Play Time -- Weds, Aug 2nd @ 10:30am: Join us outdoors for some messy, creative fun! Explore simple, open-ended projects like making oobleck, experimenting

with baking soda and vinegar, or finger painting with shaving cream. Geared toward ages 1-6 with adult supervision. Remember to wear clothes and shoes that can get messy!

All Ages Programs

Into the Woods performance -- Tues, July 25th @ 5pm: Grab a blanket or chair and some snacks and join us on the lawn for excerpts from the Actor’s Company of Natick’s play “Into the Woods.” All ages welcome for this fun top-notch performance.

Art display: Virtual Music with artist Kevin Baldwin: on display at the BFL from June 16th through July 26th

Adult Programs

Learn Ukulele (for adults) -- Tues, July 18th @ 5:30pm: Want to try an instrument that is fun and easy to play? Join Julie Stepanek as she shows the fundamentals of ukulele playing. No experience necessary. Ukuleles provided for use during the program. This session is geared toward adults and will take place outdoors, weather permitting. Registration is required.

Adult Book & Film Clubs - registration required for all clubs <https://baconfreelibrary.org/clubs-programs/>

Mystery Book Club - first Thursday of the month @ 1pm on Zoom

July 6th: The Midcoast by Adam White

History Book Club - second Thursday of the month @ 11am on Zoom

July 13th: How the Word Is Passed: A Reckoning with the History of Slavery Across America by Clint Smith

Nonfiction Book Club - fourth Saturday of the month @ 10am, on Zoom

July 22nd: Chasing the Thrill: Obsession, Death, and Glory in American’s Most Extraordinary Treasure Hunt by Daniel Barbarisi

Tuesday Night Book Club - fourth Tuesday of the month @ 6:30pm, both Zoom & in person

July 25th: Afterlife by Julia Alvarez

Cinephile Mondays -- last Monday of the month @ 4pm on Zoom; watch and discuss films. Check the BFL website for the film of the month and to register.

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Sports

NHS Baseball Team Had All The Attributes For Success

Gassett Led Redhawks In Interim Role

BY KEN HAMWEY
STAFF SPORTS WRITER

During the 2022-23 school year there were a variety of positive outcomes by athletic teams at Natick High and near the top of the list was the Redhawks' baseball squad.

The players finished their regular season with a 15-5 record, won the Carey Division championship and qualified for the state tournament at the halfway mark of the season. The Division 1 playoffs, however provided a challenging test and that's where the 13th-seeded Redhawks ended their season, bowing out of the tourney after losing to Springfield Central, 4-2, in the opening round.

Natick's regular season achievements, nevertheless, were dynamic because it was in a transition stage — veteran coach Jason Hoye was serving as the high school's interim principal and Billy Gassett, his assistant for 10 years, took the head-coaching reins, also on an interim basis.

one to take center stage for the Redhawks' outstanding season. He's quick to compliment others. "Matt Lodi, who coaches infielders and serves as third-base coach, helps in so many other ways," Gassett emphasized. "And Nick Robert coaches our outfielders and first basemen. Over time, a system was built and it got results

Gassett's goals in pre-season didn't stress a specific number of wins and there wasn't any mention about winning the division or qualifying for the tourney. His objectives focused on "winning the moment."

"We emphasized to win at practice and to win the pitch, the at-bat, the ground ball and the inning," said Gassett, who played baseball at Natick high and Bridgewater State. "If those

power. An honor student, he'll be playing next year for Colby College.

"Will was one of the most feared hitters in the BSC. He's a special player who was highly recruited and got a scholarship to play at Northeastern. His baseball IQ is high, he called all our pitches and he's got a cannon for an arm. He watches film to improve and he blocked the plate well and was able to cut down opposing teams'

inning, throwing a fastball and a curve," Gassett noted. "He was our shut-down guy. We called on Mark when a game was on the line."

Senior lefty Emerson Davis and junior left-hander Jack Zirlen rounded out the bullpen. "They were ready when called on," Gassett offered. "They're competitive style added to our staff in a positive way."

Natick's infield was a strength.



The 2023 baseball team at Natick High finished its regular season at 15-5 before bowing in the state tourney to Springfield Central. Photo courtesy of Paradise Studio



Billy Gassett (middle) served as Natick High's interim baseball coach and he worked with assistant coaches Matt Lodi (left) and Nick Robert. Above right,

this year."

Early on, the Redhawks realized the 2023 season could be special. They beat Walpole in their opener, 2-0, but a 6-3 loss to defending state champion Milton had an upside.

"We led Milton, 2-0, heading into the seventh inning but the lead slipped away and we lost," Gassett recalled. "We showed we could play against Walpole and we showed Milton that we could compete against one of the best teams in the state."

Gassett listed a half dozen strengths that played a key role and propelled the Redhawks into a power in the Bay State Conference.

"We had a mature team (11 seniors), a high baseball IQ, experience and depth," he noted. "Also, our players were very coachable and athletic. Our defense and pitching were assets because we took care of the ball in close games."

situations are taken care off, then winning usually falls into place. When we won our 10th game and knew we were tourney-bound, the coaches said 'good job,' but we emphasized the importance of getting ready for practice and our next game."

Natick's senior captains — pitcher-DH Charlie Collins and catcher Will Fosberg — were always ready and prepared. Gassett liked their take-charge approach, their dedication and their leadership by example. Collins had a 7-1 record, a 1.93 E.R.A. and 73 strikeouts in 58 innings. The cleanup hitter, he batted .281 and had 16 RBIs. Fosberg hit .345, clouted 3 home runs and knocked in 16 runs. His .345 batting average led the team.

"At 6-foot-4, Charlie was overpowering with his fastball," Gassett said. "A left-hander, his velocity and his control also were outstanding. The ace of our staff, his change-up and curve were effective and at the plate he hit for

running game."

Senior right-hander Hank Beaudoin was Natick's No. 2 starter but he also played right field and third base. He was 3-2 with an E.R.A. of 4.16 and he batted .325. "Hank was crafty," Gassett said. "He got the job done, using a fastball that moves and a change-up and cutter. A spray hitter, he was our set-up guy, getting on base a lot. His baseball IQ was reliable."

Senior right-hander Charlie Doyle was Natick's third starter. He had a 3-0 record, including a no-hitter against Lincoln-Sudbury. "Compiling an E.R.A. of 2.01, Charlie had good placement on his fastball, curve and change-up," Gassett said. "An intelligent pitcher, he frustrated hitters because he threw strikes. He was calm in the moment."

Senior right-hander Mark Cronin was Natick's closer who also was used in the middle innings. "Mark had an E.R.A. of 3.62 and averaged a strike an

Senior Jason O'Keefe played first base, junior Robert Farr handled second-base chores, senior Ryan Jewett was the shortstop, and senior Drew George was at third base. O'Keefe hit .257; Farr batted .333; Jewett hit .277 in the ninth slot and George compiled a .333 average. Farr's 22 hits led the team.

"Jason was our leadoff hitter," Gassett said. "Defense and speed were his strengths. He was a captain in basketball and that experience made his very competitive. Robert hit second in our lineup in his first year on the varsity. An excellent fielder, he was consistent, intense and always thinking.

"Ryan is tall (6-1) and fluid. He made all the routine plays at shortstop and also turned in many spectacular ones. A contact hitter with good bat control, he was fast and speedy on the bases. Drew played quarterback in football. A

Sports

Hamwey to be Inducted into Bellingham's Hall of Fame

Bellingham Bulletin sports writer Ken Hamwey will be inducted into the Bellingham Athletics Hall of Fame on Friday, Nov. 17 at the Coachmen's Lodge.

The 80-year-old Hamwey, a



Bellingham resident who's worked for the Bulletin for 16 years, was a unanimous choice of the selection committee. In addition to the Bulletin, the veteran sports journalist continues to write feature stories in semi-retirement for Local Town Pages, focusing on seven communities — Medway, Millis, Norfolk, Wrentham, Holliston, Natick and Franklin.

Hamwey, who's been a Bellingham resident for 51 years, graduated from Natick High before earning a bachelor's degree from

Babson College. He started his newspaper career in 1967 with the Framingham News, now the Metrowest Daily News. During his first year as a sports reporter, his stories focused on Bellingham's new football program that achieved varsity status in 1967 and was coached by George Anderson. Early on, his reporting ranged from high school and college sports to the professional beat where he covered the Boston Celtics and the New England Patriots.

"I'm honored and humbled to be selected for induction into Bellingham's Hall of Fame," Hamwey said. "It's heart-warming to have a wonderful community like Bellingham recognize me for my reporting. Some of my fondest memories during a 56-year career involve Bellingham's athletes and teams."

Hamwey covered the Black-hawks's baseball and softball teams in 2014 that won state championships on Flag Day, June 14. "It turned out to be a banner day for the town," he said. "The baseball team defeated Monument Mountain Regional and the softball team upset two-time champion Grafton. Both triumphs were in Worcester. The

boys competed at Holy Cross and the girls captured their crown at Worcester State."

Hamwey also covered many of the high school's elite players and coaches. He broke the story on Rick Santos when he was chosen to compete in the Hula Bowl after a dynamic career at the University of New Hampshire. He was on the scene when the Black-hawks won two state titles in field hockey during the coaching reign of Ron Bonollo. He also covered the BHS boys basketball team that defeated Bromfield for a state championship in 2003.

Others to be inducted include Carrie Wernig (field hockey), Mike Trudeau (baseball), Justin Bernard (football), Bob McManus (hockey), Justin Park (hockey), Beth Thornton (field Hockey), Joanne Paquette (field hockey coach), Dave Gibbs (basketball coach), Rick Smith (contributor) and the 1996 field hockey team.

Hamwey, who'll be inducted as a contributor, left the Metrowest Daily News in 1973 and was hired at the Providence Journal where he spent the next 35 years working for the four-time Pulitzer-prize-winning newspaper. He finished his career there as the paper's Night Sports Editor, retiring

in 2008. On Hamwey's last day in Providence, the Rhode Island State Senate read aloud a citation for his efforts and contributions to R.I. athletics. Two years later, in 2010, he was honored by the Mass. Interscholastic Athletic Association (MIAA), which presented him with its Distinguished Friend Award.

At the Metrowest News, which included editions of the Milford News and Country Gazette, Hamwey wrote a popular weekly column — "Yesterday's Heroes" — that focused on athletes' and coaches' past achievements. Many of Bellingham's top-notch coaches and athletes were featured in that column.

In 2007, Hamwey began covering sports for the Bellingham

Bulletin. As Sports Editor at the Bulletin, he launched a column similar to Yesterday's Heroes called "Where Are They Now," reporting on former Bellingham athletes. For the next 16 years, he extensively covered Bellingham sports while also filing stories for Local Town Pages.

Hamwey's upcoming induction will be his second Hall of Fame honor. He was inducted into the Millis Athletics Hall of Fame last year.

Hamwey and his wife Pauline, who taught at Macy School for 35 years, have been married for 34 years. His son, Travis, is a 1989 graduate of Bellingham High and a 1993 graduate of UMass-Dartmouth.

BASEBALL

continued from page 12

singles and doubles hitter. he also displayed a strong arm at third. He could charge a ball quickly and he was a good locker-room presence."

The Redhawks' outfield featured freshman Jack Weierman in left, junior Jack Byrne in center and freshman Braeden Homer in right.

"Jack is tough as nails," Gasset emphasized. "A consistent fielder who handles pressure well, his range was very good and his strong arm was a plus. Byrne hit .297 in the No. 5 slot, had 19 hits and 11 RBIs. He covers a lot of ground in centerfield. His speed is excellent. He's so good that we expect him to get on base. Braeden worked his way into the lineup because he does everything well. He's got a high baseball IQ, he's

a very good fielder and he's competitive, able to work an opposing pitcher for seven or eight pitches."

Gasset coached by relying on an athletic philosophy that emphasizes 100 percent effort, reaching one's potential and having fun." I stressed to not be afraid to be excellent and be comfortable in uncomfortable situations. Life lessons our players learned were to be resilient, overcome adversity and to take care of yourself and the relationships you've build."

Gasset is a 1987 graduate of NHS where he played baseball and football. The baseball team his senior year was Division 1 South champs. As a junior he was on a football team that went to a Super Bowl but lost, 22-20 to Brockton. At Bridgewater State he caught and played the infield. Married, he and his wife Beth have a 16-year-old daughter (Layla).

Calling his interim role fun and exciting, Gasset hopes to return

next year as Hoye's assistant.

"I want my old job back," he said smiling.

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Sports

Pickleball Popularity Picking Up

BY SEAN SULLIVAN

Waiting on Oak Street for traffic lights to change on the north side of Route 9 over the last few years, motorists may have noticed the increasing crowds volleying at Natick's East School. These days, participants there are increasingly likely to be playing pickleball in lieu of tennis.

Communities all over the country, you may have heard, are struggling to keep up with the growing demand for the sport (and also some residents' resistance to it.)

Big picture: more people exercising and having fun outdoors is a good thing. But zooming in, delving into the details, often requires recognizing and reconciling the disparate interests of residents.

The sport's telltale sound, said Natick's Jim Acton, is one of the most-stated objections people have to pickleball courts being situated near the places they live. He has been playing the game

for a few years now, and is well-versed in its culture and sometimes controversy.

Pickleballs - perforated plastic spheres about the size of baseballs - produce a hollow pop when swatted with rigid paddles. Think beach tennis to invoke a similar sound in the imagination, or ping-pong with a baritone voice.

Pickleball borrowed some features from that latter sport, as well as badminton and tennis. But most often an outdoor sport, the game's constant popping can echo off buildings and throughout nearby neighborhoods, nagging the nerves of neighbors.

"It makes a different thwack," than tennis, said Acton. "It's not a great sound."

Though he may have heard pickleball's signature sound emanating from nearby courts those many months ago, Acton said he'd never actually heard of the sport prior to the pandemic. He lives near East School, whose newly-refurbished outdoor recreation

space included pickleball lines superimposed on traditional tennis courts.

The new surfaces came just in time for Covid - an event that would soon sequester much of the world and foster a Renaissance in outdoor recreation.

"I ventured down there and got introduced to the game," he said. That was in March of 2020. "I'm relatively new to the game."

Acton was being a bit modest. He has been teaching pickleball clinics for some time now. He was also instrumental in bringing the sport to Longfellow Health Club post-pandemic, a local gym in Natick to which he belongs. Like everything else, LHC had shut down prior to the summer of 2020, and Acton was looking for a way to keep active.

Covid shutdowns were a hardship for a host of reasons, but Acton credits communities of homebound neighbors with giving the sport a boost.

"It's one sport that the pan-



demic really helped," he said.

Long a feature of more southern states like Florida, Pickleball had been migrating to all points of the country since its inception in 1965.

The sport's combination of a smaller court, informal character, and accessible rules make it a favorite of an older cohort, though pickleball is enjoyed by fans of all ages. In those warmer states

where the game has taken hold, dedicated pickleball courts are ubiquitous.

"The barrier to entry is incredibly low," said Acton. "That's why so many people come to the sport."

And therein too, lies the rub for those who would see the game

PICKLEBALL
continued on page 15

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PICKLEBALL

continued from page 14

adopted in more places. Many of those original outdoor courts have long been free to the pickleball-playing public, and that feature of free play has followed the sport as it has migrated. Play-



ers accustomed to taking part at no cost can experience a sticker shock at facilities that come on

line but offer pickleball for a fee. Adding pickleball lines to already-existing tennis courts is one thing for communities – a small investment for a recreation department. But businesses seeking to offer the sport have often found it difficult to turn people with a passion for the sport into paying customers.

The cannibalizing of tennis courts has also been a source of controversy for pickleball expansion, as devotees of the much-

older racquet sport have often pushed back against the newer kid on the block. Articles detailing the territorial struggles between adherents of the two sports have appeared in the New York Times and other major mainstream media.

“The expansion of court availability is the biggest obstacle facing pickleball, not just in Natick, but all over the country,” said Acton.

For all that, the story of pickleball in Natick has largely been a successful one. A peace accord between players of both sports has been reached, a schedule sharing the courts at East School created.

Another bright spot, at least for Massachusetts municipalities, is the Community Preservation Act. The state program contributes a percentage of public funds to communities like Natick that have chosen to participate. Towns and cities must allocate their own revenue toward certain public improvements to qualify for the match, and recreational projects are part of that list.

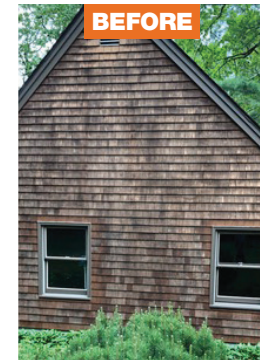
It’s possible that more pickleball might have a place on that menu.



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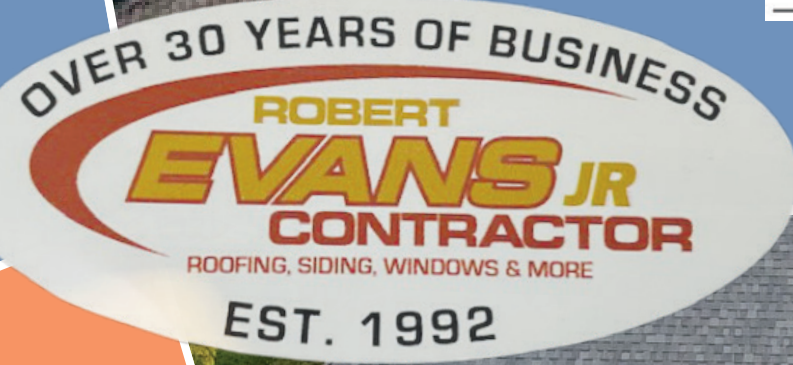
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Senate Overwhelmingly Approves Fiscal Year 2024 Budget

Targets Substantial Investments in Education, Housing, Workforce Development

The Massachusetts Senate approved on Thursday a \$55.9 billion budget for Fiscal Year 2024 (FY24). Following a robust, spirited, and engaging debate process, the Senate approved 478 amendments, adding \$82.2 million in spending to the budget. As the Commonwealth continues to emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic, the Senate's budget prioritizes upholding fiscal discipline and responsibility, and supports the long-term economic health of the state. The Senate budget delivers historic levels of investment in education, housing, regional transportation, health care, workforce development, climate preparedness, and much more, while centering equity and opportunity as part of a broader, more comprehensive strategy to make Massachusetts more affordable, inclusive, and competitive.

"I am so proud that this chamber voted resoundingly for a transformative budget built on the simple principle that our success as a Commonwealth is tied to the success of every single person who calls Massachusetts home," stated Senate President Karen E. Spilka (D-Ashland). "Massachusetts will be competitive so long as people from all over the world can come here to fulfill their dreams — whether by going back to school, advancing their career, starting a business, or finding affordable housing and child care to raise a family. At a time when our world-class educational institutions are more needed now than ever, this budget adds a new chapter in Massachusetts' storied tradition of making education accessible to all through our Student Opportunity Plan. I want to thank Chair Rodrigues, Vice Chair Friedman, Assistant Vice Chair Comerford, the Committee and all my Senate colleagues for their thoughtful and collaborative work on this budget."

"In my five years as Chair of Ways and Means, I've never experienced a smoother or more democratic process than the Fiscal Year 2024 budget the Senate just approved here today," said Senator Michael J. Rodrigues (D-Westport), Chair of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means. "The chamber focused on an overarching goal to meet (and in many cases exceed) the pressing needs of our communities, and the Commonwealth at large. This budget is a forward-thinking and responsive proposal that greatly facilitates our long-term economic health and expands access to opportu-

nities to reinvigorate and reinvest in our workforce economy, lessen the wealth-income divide, and empower our communities as we build an inclusive post-pandemic future that equitably benefits all. Focusing on shared priorities and upholding fiscal responsibility, the Senate specifically targeted investments collectively in education, transportation, local aid, health care, housing assistance, workforce development, greatly strengthened the social service safety net. The Commonwealth's economic foundation is now positioned to deftly deflect ongoing challenges and weather future uncertainty. Thank you to my colleagues in the Senate, especially my colleagues on the Committee, whose advocacy, collaboration, and dedication helped to inform and shape this comprehensive budget plan. A special heartfelt thank you to the Ways and Means staff, whose diligent work over the last several months was largely responsible for producing this budget, their tireless efforts did not go unnoticed! Lastly, a huge and sincere thank you to Senate President Spilka for her resolute and compassionate leadership as we work together to rebuild our economy and bolster our state's long-term economic health."

"I am proud of the Senate's proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2024, which builds off prior fiscal year investments to deliver a comprehensive, impactful set of services and programs for the residents of the Commonwealth," said Senator Cindy F. Friedman (D-Arlington), Vice Chair of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means. "I am particularly proud of the provisions that safeguard preventive health care services like cancer screenings and access to medications for chronic conditions, in the wake of a partisan federal court ruling that threatens access to these important, life-saving health care services. In Massachusetts, we will continue to protect access to commonsense health care for all our residents."

"Historic investment in food security and the Commonwealth's food system. Record investment in regional transit authorities. Transformative levels of higher education funding," said Senator Joanne Comerford (D-Northampton), Assistant Vice Chair of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means and Senate Chair of the Joint Committee on Higher Education. "I am proud of the many ways that this budget rises to meet

the need of the Commonwealth's people while strategically stoking opportunity and growth, maximizing equity, tackling pressing challenges, and seizing the promise of our time. Thank you to Senate President Karen Spilka and Chair Michael Rodrigues for their leadership in crafting this compassionate and responsible budget proposal."

The Committee's budget recommends a total of \$55.8 billion in spending, a \$3.4 billion increase over the Fiscal Year 2023 (FY23) Budget. This spending recommendation is based on a tax revenue estimate of \$40.41 billion for FY24, representing 1.6 per cent growth with an additional \$1 billion from the new Fair Share surtax, as agreed upon during the Consensus Revenue process in January.

Remaining vigilant about the current fiscal environment, the Committee's FY24 budget adheres to sound fiscal discipline and builds up available reserves for the state's Stabilization Fund. The fund has grown to a record high of \$7.16 billion and is projected to close FY24 at \$9.07 billion, ensuring that the Commonwealth continues to have the means to uphold fiscal responsibility during a time of ongoing economic volatility.

The Senate's FY24 budget also sets aside \$575 million to pay for a progressive tax relief package that will center equity and chip away at the headwinds that threaten Massachusetts competitiveness. This tax package will be discussed and debated following the conclusion of the FY24 budget process.

Fair Share Investments

Consistent with the consensus revenue agreement reached with the Administration and House in January, the Senate's FY24 budget includes \$1 billion in revenues generated from the Fair Share ballot initiative voters approved in November 2022, which established a new surtax of 4 per cent on annual income above \$1 million and invests these new public dollars to improve the state's education and transportation sectors.

To safeguard this new source of revenue, the Senate's FY24 budget also establishes an Education and Transportation Fund to account for these Fair Share funds in an open and transparent manner. This will ensure the public is visibly informed about how much revenue is collected from the new surtax and how much of this revenue is being dedicated to improving public education and transportation systems in accordance with the ballot initiative.

Notable Fair Share Education investments include:

\$125 million for Higher Education Capital Funding, focused on reducing backlog of deferred maintenance projects

\$100 million for Financial Aid Expansion to expand financial aid programs for in-state students attending state universities through MASSGrant Plus, bringing the total proposal for this program to \$275 million, more than doubling the amount of scholarship funding provided by the state just two fiscal years prior

\$100 million for Massachusetts School Building Authority Capital Supports for cities, towns and school districts experiencing extraordinary school project costs impacted by post-COVID inflationary pressures

\$30 million for Student Support Services to ensure students in the Commonwealth have success on the post-secondary level through wraparound supports, bringing the total program investment to \$44 million

\$25 million to reduce the waiting list for the income-eligible child care assistance program, which will create approximately 2,200 new slots for children

\$25 million for capital investments in early education and care programs to build capacity and ensure the ability of programs to safely accommodate additional slots

\$20 million for Mass Reconnect, as a first step toward free community college in the Commonwealth for those aged 25 and older

\$20 million for a Free Community College Program for nursing students as a pilot to support a high-need workforce area and build toward universal free community college in the fall of 2024

\$15 million for Free Community College Implementation Supports to collect necessary data, develop best practices, and build capacity for free community college in the fall of 2024

\$15 million for the Commonwealth Preschool Partnership Initiative, which empowers school districts to expand prekindergarten and preschool opportunities through public-private partnerships; this funding is on top of an additional \$15 million in non-Fair Share funding for this initiative

\$15 million to expand upon the Senate-championed program that supports early education and care staff members with paying for their own personal child care

\$10 million for Early College and Innovation Pathways

Notable Transportation investments include:

\$190 million for MBTA Capital Investments for critical capital resources for both the subway and commuter rail systems

\$100 million for Regional Transit Funding and Grants, which will exclusively be used to support the work of the Regional Transit Authorities that serve the Commonwealth, more than doubling the total funding for RTAs to \$194 million, including:

\$56 million to be distributed to RTAs for operating assistance, with special attention paid to those RTAs with historically low state operating assistance

\$25 million for an innovation grant program for transportation providers across the Commonwealth for initiatives such as electrification, infrastructure, capital investments, new and innovative service delivery models, expanded service hours or weekend service, rural connectivity, and connectivity improvements across regional transit authority service areas

\$15 million for fare-free pilot program grants to provide six months of fare-free RTA service across the Commonwealth

\$4 million through the Community Transit Grant Program to support expanded mobility options for older adults, people with disabilities and low-income individuals

\$100 million in supplemental aid for roads and bridges, half of which will be expended consistent with the Chapter 90 program, while the other half will be spent with a focus on the total mileage of participating municipalities

\$50 million for a reserve to provide matching funds for transportation projects that are eligible for federal funds, which will help the state better compete for increased federal transportation funding made available by the Biden Administration

\$50 million for Highway Bridge Preservation, to ensure that consistent funds are provided to make sure that critical infrastructure does not fall into disrepair

\$5 million for MBTA Means-Tested Fares, which will cover initial exploration of the feasibility of implementing a means-tested fare program at the MBTA

\$5 million for Water Transportation, which will cover one-time expenses for a pilot program covering operational assistance for ferry services

Education

The Senate Ways and Means

BUDGET

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FY24 budget proposal takes the first step toward implementing the Senate's Student Opportunity Plan by making high-quality education more accessible and by making record investments to support students across the full breadth of the Commonwealth's education system, from Massachusetts' youngest learners to adults re-entering higher education.

Recognizing that investments in our early education and care system support the underlying economic competitiveness of the Commonwealth, the Senate's budget makes a historic \$1.5 billion investment in early education and care. This is the largest-ever proposed annual appropriation for early education and care in Massachusetts history. For context, this area of the budget has increased by more than 77 percent (more than \$660 million) over the budget from three fiscal years prior. The FY24 budget will maintain operational support for providers, support the early education and care workforce, and prioritize accessibility and affordability throughout our early education and care system.

Notably, this will be the first fiscal year in which the annual state budget includes a full year of funding for C3 grants, signaling a historic commitment to maintain this crucial lifeline for our early education and care sector. Funded at \$475 million, this program, which is open to all early education and care providers, provides monthly payments to programs throughout Massachusetts. These grants, which are received by 88% of early education and care programs in the Commonwealth, have empowered programs to raise salaries, to hire additional staff, to maintain their enrollment levels, and to avoid tuition increases. Without the continuation of these grants, 751 providers (which serve over 15,000 children) have indicated that they would have to close their doors.

Other notable funding includes:

\$45 million for the center-based childcare rate reserve for reimbursement rates for subsidized care, including:

\$20 million in line-item appropriations, and

\$25 million in expected leftover funds from Fiscal Year 2023

\$30 million for the Commonwealth Preschool Partnership Initiative, which empowers school districts to expand prekindergarten and preschool opportunities through public-private partnerships. This is double the amount that was appropriated for this initiative in FY23.

\$25 million in new funding to

reduce the waiting list for income-eligible child care assistance program, which will create approximately 2,200 new slots for children \$25 million in new funding for capital investments in early education and care programs to build capacity and ensure the ability of programs to safely accommodate additional slots

\$17.5 million for grants to Head Start programs, which provide crucial early education and child care services to low-income families

\$15 million, an increase of \$5 million over FY23, to assist early education and care staff members with paying for their own personal child care

\$10 million for professional development and higher education opportunities for early educators, to assist with recruitment and retention challenges in the workforce

\$5 million, an increase of \$1.5 million over FY23, for mental health consultation services in early education and care programs

In addition to these appropriations, the Fiscal Year 2024 budget includes a policy section that will allow subsidized early education and care programs to provide child care discounts to their own staff members.

For K-12 education, the Senate commits once again to fully funding and implementing the Student Opportunity Act (SOA) by FY 2027, investing \$6.59 billion in Chapter 70 funding, an increase of \$604 million over FY 2023, as well as doubling minimum Chapter 70 aid from \$30 to \$60 per pupil. This investment ensures that the state remains on schedule to fully implement the Student Opportunity Act by FY2027 and ensures that all school districts are equipped with the resources to deliver high quality educational opportunities to their students.

In addition to these record investments in early education and public K-12 education, the Committee's budget expands pathways to affordable public higher education for all by building capacity for free community college for all students in Fall 2024. Laying the groundwork for this momentous change to make higher education more accessible, the Senate budget includes \$275 million for the scholarship reserve, \$55 million to accelerate and build up capacity to support free community college across all campuses by fall of 2024, and \$40 million for free community college programs for students aged 25 or older and for students pursuing degrees in nursing starting in the fall of 2023, thereby addressing a critical need felt across the state.

The Committee's budget also welcomes students regardless of their race, national origin, citizenship, or immigration status, making clear that all high school students who attend for three years and graduate from a Massachusetts high school are eligible to re-

ceive in-state tuition at our public institutions of higher education.

Other education investments include:

\$503.8 million for the special education circuit breaker

\$230.3 million for charter school reimbursements

\$97.1 million to reimburse school districts for regional school transportation costs, representing a 90% reimbursement rate

\$15 million for Rural School Aid supports

\$15 million for Early College programs and \$12.6 million for the state's Dual Enrollment initiative, both of which provide high school students with increased opportunities for post-graduate success

\$5 million to support implementation of the Massachusetts Inclusive Concurrent Higher Education law, including:

\$3 million for grants offered through the Massachusetts Inclusive Concurrent Enrollment initiative to help high school students with intellectual disabilities ages 18-22 access higher education opportunities, and

\$2 million for the Massachusetts Inclusive Concurrent Enrollment Trust Fund

\$2.5 million for the Civics Education Trust Fund, after an increase of \$1 million through the amendment process, to promote civics education and civic engagement throughout the Commonwealth.

\$2 million for the Genocide Education Trust Fund, continuing our commitment to educate middle and high school students on the history of genocide.

\$1 million, adopted through the amendment process, for the Department of Higher Education to support Hunger-Free Campuses for both two- and four-year public institutions of higher education and minority serving institutions

Health, Mental Health & Family Care

The Senate budget funds Mass-Health at a total of \$19.93 billion, providing more than 2.3 million people with continued access to affordable, accessible, and comprehensive health care services. Other health investments include:

\$2.9 billion for a range of services and focused supports for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities

\$597.7 million for Department of Mental Health adult support services, including assisted outpatient programming and comprehensive care coordination among health care providers.

\$582 million for nursing facility Medicaid rates, including:

\$112 million in additional base rate payments to maintain competitive wages in the Commonwealth's nursing facility workforce

\$213.3 million for a complete range of substance use disorder

treatment and intervention services to support these individuals and their families

\$119.8 million for children's mental health services, after an increase of \$500K through the amendment process for the establishment of Behavioral Health Pilot Program for K-12 Schools

\$71.2 million for domestic violence prevention services

\$42.9 million for Early Intervention services, ensuring supports remain accessible and available to infants and young toddlers with developmental delays and disabilities

\$33.8 million for Family Resource Centers to grow and improve the mental health resources and programming available to families

\$26.3 million for grants to local Councils on Aging to increase assistance per elder to \$14 from \$12 in FY 2023

\$25 million for emergency department diversion initiatives for children, adolescents, and adults

\$21.5 million for family and adolescent health, including:

\$9.2 million for comprehensive family planning services, and

\$6.7 million to enhance federal Title X family planning funding

\$20 million to recapitalize the Behavioral Health, Access, Outreach and Support Trust Fund to support targeted behavioral health initiatives

\$19.2 million to support student behavioral health services at the University of Massachusetts, state universities, community colleges, K-12 schools and early education centers

\$15 million for grants to support local and regional boards of health, continuing our efforts to build upon the successful State Action for Public Health Excellence (SAPHE) Program

\$12.8 million for Elder Nutrition Meals on Wheels, after an increase of \$1 million through the amendment process

\$6 million for Social Emotional Learning Grants to help K-12 schools bolster social emotional learning supports for students, including \$1 million to provide mental health screenings for K-12 students

\$5 million for Children Advocacy Centers to improve the critical supports available to children that have been neglected or sexually abused

\$4.6 million for the Office of the Child Advocate

\$3.8 million for the Massachusetts Center on Child Wellbeing & Trauma

\$2 million for grants for improvements in reproductive health access, infrastructure, and safety

\$1 million, adopted through the amendment process, for the Public University Health Center Sexual and Reproductive Health Preparation Fund for the purpose of reimbursements to public universities for abortion medications

\$1 million, adopted through the

amendment process, for the development, expansion and operation of freestanding birth centers and support for community-based maternal health services

The Senate's FY24 budget codifies into law the federal Affordable Care Act's (ACA) provisions that protect access to preventive services. By enshrining the ACA protections into state law, insurance carriers across the Commonwealth will be required to provide coverage for preventive services without imposing cost-sharing such as copays and deductibles. With this vital step, the Senate is protecting access to preventive health care services for millions of our residents, including screenings for cancer, diabetes, HIV, and depression, as well as preventive medications such as statins, immunizations, and PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis for HIV), and further protecting the rights and freedoms of residents to make their own health care choices without federal interference.

Through the amendment process, the Senate also took a crucial step toward expanding access to reproductive health by allowing pharmacists to dispense hormonal contraceptives.

Expanding & Protecting Opportunities

The Senate remains committed to continuing an equitable recovery, expanding opportunity, and supporting the state's long-term economic health. To that end, the Committee's budget includes a record investment in the annual child's clothing allowance, providing \$450 per child for eligible families to buy clothes for the upcoming school year. The budget also includes a 10 per cent increase to Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children (TAFDC) and Emergency Aid to the Elderly, Disabled and Children (EAEDC) benefit levels compared to June 2023 to help families move out of deep poverty.

Economic opportunity investments include:

\$444.7 million for Transitional Assistance to Families with Dependent Children (TAFDC) and \$201.4 million for Emergency Aid to the Elderly, Disabled and Children (EAEDC) to provide the necessary support as caseloads increase and to continue the Deep Poverty increases

\$60 million for adult basic education services to improve access to skills necessary to join the workforce

\$36 million for the Massachusetts Emergency Food Assistance Program, after an increase of \$1

Real Estate Corner

The Home Selling Process



John McHugh

REAL ESTATE INSIGHTS

Selling your home may seem simple enough; there are many approaches to take. Let's look at some of the steps which have proven to be suc-

cessful. Most full-service real estate agents begin by meeting with clients and evaluating their needs and goals. All homes are different inside and out, some are showroom ready and some may need some decluttering and organizing. Depending upon the amount and type of furniture, staging may be a good option to consider. Curb appeal is equally important; the exterior and grounds should be well kept. When the inside and outside are ready, it's time for a professional photographer/videographer. It's critical to get great photos to best represent the house. Creative angles and high resolution will show best on the many online sites that begin most home buyer searches.

Drafting a professional write-up describing the prop-

erty and its top features is next. Showcasing all that makes the home special is key and may reference condition, location, proximity to commuter routes, public transportation, or area conveniences. Everything that a potential buyer may find most appealing and desirable. Once we receive the processed photos, we will combine them with the advertising copy and create multiple online advertisements; formatted specifically for each online outlet. We will create a custom feature sheet with a plot plan, floor plan, photos, and listing detail for buyers to refer to during showings and to display at the open houses.

When these preparations are completed, we are ready to put the listing live on the Multiple Listing Service and on

over seven hundred websites—our goal is massive exposure to ensure that any ready, willing and able buyers will definitely know that the property is for sale. Proper price and proper exposure will drive an offer—the best offers will come when the property is exposed to the largest possible audience. Simultaneously we will have a yard sign installed and send Just Listed postcards / e-blasts to our contacts, agent networks, and registered buyers / surrounding properties.

We will contact the seller as showing requests come in to accommodate everybody's schedule and provide feedback immediately following the showing. We will have weekend open houses and a broker's open house is useful as agents can

preview the property for their clients: seeing it in person and developing personal knowledge is best prior to recommending. Weekend open houses are my favorite part of the job! I want to meet potential buyers/current renters, and especially the neighbors.

No two homes are the same and variables always exist. Hiring an experienced agent to discuss the process and create a custom marketing and advertising plan for your home is the best way to approach the home selling process.

To learn more contact John McHugh, Senior Sales Associate with Coldwell Banker for over 20 years. JohnSellsNow@Gmail.com, 978.902.5646.

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BUDGET

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million through the amendment process

\$20 million for the Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund to connect unemployed and under-employed workers with higher paying jobs

\$21 million in Healthy Incentives Programs to maintain access to healthy food options for households in need

\$15 million for a Community Empowerment and Reinvestment Grant Program to provide economic support to communities disproportionately impacted by the criminal justice system

\$15.4 million for Career Technical Institutes to increase our skilled worker population and provide residents access to career technical training opportunities

\$5.8 million for the Innovation Pathways program to continue to connect students to trainings and post-secondary opportunities in the industry sector with a focus on STEM fields

\$5 million for community foundations to provide emergency economic relief to historically underserved populations

\$5 million for the Secure Jobs Connect Program, providing job placement resources and assistance for homeless individuals

\$2.5 million for the Massachusetts Cybersecurity Innovation Fund, including \$1.5 million to further partnerships with community colleges and state universities to provide cybersecurity workforce training to students and cybersecurity services to municipalities, non-profits, and small businesses

\$600,000 through the amendment process for the Massachusetts Downtown Initiative, which will provide municipalities with technical assistance to promote compact, walkable downtowns that have a vibrant mix of commercial and residential uses, cultural and recreational amenities, and access to public transportation.

Housing

As the Senate puts in motion plans to make the Commonwealth more inclusive, home affordability remains on the top of residents' minds. To that end, the Senate's FY24 budget makes a historic \$1.05 billion investment in housing, dedicating resources programs that support housing stability, residential assistance, and homelessness assistance.

The budget prioritizes relief for families and individuals who continue to face challenges brought on by the pandemic and financial insecurity, including \$324 million for Emergency Assistance Family Shelters and \$195 million for Residential Assistance for Families in Transition (RAFT),

which will provide rental assistance that a household can receive at \$7,000. Other housing investments include:

\$200 million for the Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (MRVP), including \$20.4 million in funds carried forward from FY 2023, creating more than 750 new vouchers and allowing the program to move to a payment standard with a benefit of 110% of the federal small-area fair market rental price, significantly broadening housing options for those served by the program

\$110.8 million for assistance for homeless individuals

\$107 million for assistance to local housing authorities

\$39.6 million for the HOME-BASE diversion and rapid re-housing programs, bolstering assistance under this program to two years with a per household maximum benefit of \$20,000

\$26 million for the Alternative Housing Voucher Program (AHVP), including \$9.1 million in funds carried forward from FY 2023. This funding increase will create 250 new vouchers and will pair with \$2.5 million for grants to improve or create accessible housing units. Both programs will also benefit from the inclusion of project-based vouchers in AHVP, which will stimulate the building of new deeply affordable and accessible homes

\$7.6 million for sponsor-based

supportive permanent housing

\$6.4 million for the Home and Healthy for Goodre-housing and supportive services program, including:

\$250,000 for homeless LGBTQ youth

\$500,000 through the amendment process for a matched savings, coaching, and support program for first-generation, first-time homebuyers across the Commonwealth

In addition to these record supports, the budget makes permanent a COVID-era renter protection that slows down the court process in eviction proceedings when the tenant has a pending rental assistance application.

Community Support

The Committee's budget – in addition to funding traditional accounts like Chapter 70 education aid – further demonstrates the Senate's commitment to state-local partnerships, dedicating meaningful resources that touch all regions and meet the needs of communities across the Commonwealth. This includes \$1.27 billion in funding for Unrestricted General Government Aid (UGGA), an increase of \$39.4 million over FY 2023, to support additional resources for cities and towns. In addition to traditional sources of local aid, the Committee's budget increases payments in lieu of taxes (PILOT) for state-owned land to \$51.5 million,

an increase of \$6.5 million over FY 2023. PILOT funding is a vital source of supplemental local aid for cities and towns working to protect and improve access to essential services and programs during recovery from the pandemic. Other local investments include:

\$194 million for Regional Transit Authorities (RTAs) to support regional public transportation systems, including \$100 million from Fair Share funds to support our RTAs that help to connect all regions of our Commonwealth.

\$47.3 million for libraries, including \$16.7 million for regional library local aid, after an increase of \$750,000 through the amendment process, \$17.6 million for municipal libraries and \$6.2 million for technology and automated resource networks.

\$25 million for the Massachusetts Cultural Council to support local arts, culture and creative economy initiatives.

The FY24 Senate Budget will soon be available on the Massachusetts legislature's website: <https://malegislature.gov/Budget/FY2024/SenateBudget>.

A conference committee will now be appointed to reconcile differences between the versions of the budget passed by the Senate and House of Representatives.

Real Estate Corner

Recent Home Sales

Date	Natick	Amount
06/16/2023	34 Silver Hill Lane #12	\$300,000
06/15/2023	6 Woodbury Lane	\$1.85 mil
06/15/2023	40 Stratford Road	\$1.74 mil
06/15/2023	17 Emerson Street	\$695,000
06/15/2023	17 Greenleaf Road	\$695,000
06/14/2023	259 Bacon Street	\$630,000
06/14/2023	95 S Main Street	\$830,000
06/13/2023	17 Walden Drive #6	\$430,000
06/13/2023	23 Village Rock Lane #19	\$308,000
06/13/2023	12 S Lincoln Street	\$1.40 mil
06/12/2023	15 University Drive	\$837,000
06/12/2023	10 Marston Lane	\$1.55 mil
06/09/2023	5 Lakeside Avenue	\$805,000
06/09/2023	14 Greenleaf Road	\$777,500
06/09/2023	22 Eastleigh Lane	\$1.58 mil
06/07/2023	70 Oakland Street Ext.	\$942,000
06/06/2023	9 Morgan Drive #303	\$650,000
06/06/2023	11 Morgan Drive #402	\$595,000
06/02/2023	29 Arbor Circle	\$1.32 mil
06/02/2023	12 Broads Avenue	\$862,000
06/02/2023	158 Cottage Street	\$1.43 mil
06/01/2023	32 Circular Avenue	\$615,000
05/31/2023	1 Hill Street	\$589,900
05/31/2023	11 Lakewood Road	\$1.35 mil
05/31/2023	180 Boden Lane	\$605,000
05/31/2023	40 Nouvelle Way #T834	\$655,000
05/31/2023	8 Coleman Court	\$959,000
05/31/2023	23 Vesta Road	\$1.28 mil
05/30/2023	43 Franconia Avenue	\$1.75 mil
05/30/2023	10 Willow Street	\$499,900
05/26/2023	255 Speen Street	\$675,000
05/25/2023	2 Lacosta Drive	\$915,000
05/25/2023	41 E Central Street	\$1.63 mil
05/25/2023	6 Post Oak Lane	\$390,000
05/23/2023	3 Arrow Path	\$2.21 mil
05/22/2023	7 Tournament Road	\$640,000
05/19/2023	3 Fairway Circle	\$600,000
05/19/2023	2 Fairway Avenue	\$595,000
05/19/2023	9 Village Way #17	\$305,000
05/19/2023	318 Eliot St (1.07 acres)	\$330,000
05/18/2023	15 Perry Road	\$615,000

Source: www.zillow.com / Compiled by Local Town Pages



The house at 41 E Central Street in Natick recently sold for \$1,625,000. Image credit: www.zillow.com



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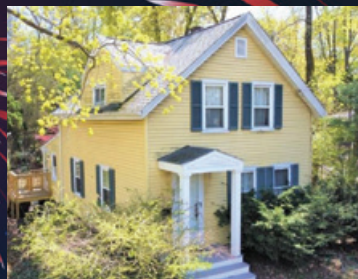
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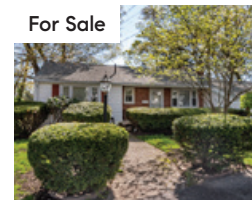
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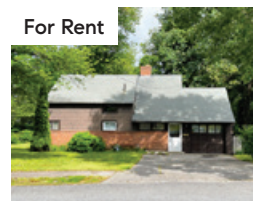
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15 Parkman Street
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8 Spring Valley Road
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29 Westfield Road
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4 Randall Court
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