



Paul Challenger, far left, and members of the Holden Finance Committee. Photo by Martha Akstin

Holden Officials Convene to Discuss Proposition 2½ and Potential Override

BY JANE TITCOMB AND
PAUL CHALLENGER

On October 15, the Holden Board of Selectmen, Finance Committee, and members of the Wachusett and Montachusett Regional School Commit-

tees met with the Wachusett Regional School District superintendent and Holden town manager to build a shared understanding of Proposition 2½, how it works and why it is under discussion. Finance

Committee Chair Paul Challenger led a presentation outlining the law's requirements and clarifying what town offi-

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Keeping Local News Alive and Communities Connected

By JENNIFER RUSSO

For the first time in our newspaper's history, the cost of postage has surpassed the cost of printing. On average, mailing services have increased in price by over 7% in the last couple of years. While the USPS may require this operationally, it does underscore the growing financial challenges facing local journalism today. Paper, ink, fuel, and distribution costs have all risen sharply in the past year, and while we've absorbed those increases for as long as we could, we now find ourselves at a turning point – and we need your help.

Despite these challenges, one thing hasn't changed: our commitment to providing free, local news that keeps our communities informed and

connected. Local journalism is not just about headlines — it's about people. It's about the high school team's championship win, the opening of a new family business, the celebration of a lifelong volunteer, the coverage of town meetings, and ensuring that every story is told.

When you open your community newspaper, you read about your neighbors, your schools, and the heartbeat of your area. You're seeing your community reflected in print - its triumphs, challenges, and spirit. Local news brings people together, fosters accountability, and preserves the stories that make each town unique. Without it, those small but powerful connections risk being lost.

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HOLDEN

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cials can and cannot do to support an override. The session also covered the formal override process, Holden’s financial condition, and the school district’s projected budget needs. This rare joint meeting was recorded and is available at HoldenTV.com. Presentation slides are posted at holdenma.gov/finance-committee.

What Is a Proposition 2½ Override?

Overrides must be approved by ballot vote, called at least 45 days in advance, and must specify the exact dollar amount. A simple majority is required to pass. A successful override does not automatically raise taxes to the maximum; it gives Town

Meeting authority to approve higher budgets - if needed - to maintain services, including education, at levels the residents expect. However, overrides are proposed only when there is a clear need, so some of the increase should be expected to be used immediately.

Overrides Across Massachusetts

Overrides are common statewide. Fewer than 20 of the 351 municipalities have never approved one - mostly small, rural towns. Statewide, 59 percent of override votes pass. At least three Wachusett District towns are considering overrides in 2026. Massachusetts communities are holding override votes at a record pace in response to shared economic challenges.

The Local Process Ahead

Holden Town Manager Peter Lukes is analyzing next year’s budget. If key services that residents expect cannot be funded under current limits, he will recommend an override amount to the Finance Committee. The Finance Committee will then review the recommendation, budget data, and other key factors. If FinCom approves, it moves

to the Select Board, who will review and, if they agree, finalize the amount and set a ballot date.

What is Driving the Discussion?

- Three factors are prompting override consideration:
- High inflation in the early 2020s significantly increased the cost of operating schools and municipal services, while Proposition 2½ limited revenue growth.
 - Declining state aid: Over the past six years, Massachusetts has gradually reduced funding for suburban school districts, shifting more of the financial burden onto towns.
 - School improvement plans: The School Committee has laid out plans to improve the educational results achieved by our students through the addition of teachers, teaching aides and other in-school resources. This is in response to the 2024 MCAS test results that showed that less than half of 3rd to 8th graders are reading at grade level, with only marginally better results in math. Last year the focus was on improving the elementary schools, while next year will be the middle schools, with Mount-



Holden Town Manager Peter Lukes speaks at the October 15 joint committee meeting. Photo by Martha Akstin

view being the focus.

Holden has relied on savings to balance its budget recently, with operating costs now exceeding revenue limits. Without new revenue, significant cuts to education and municipal services are expected.

Looking Ahead

No override has been proposed yet, but the Finance Committee has warned for four years that Holden’s financial path is unsustainable. Continued

reliance on reserves may no longer be prudent. The committee remains committed to transparency and will continue public communication through newspapers, the town website, HCTV, and most importantly, meeting in public session, where anyone can hear the deliberations and see the analysis being considered.

Holden Finance Committee member Jane Titcomb and committee Chair Paul Challenger submitted this article.

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Advertising revenue has always been a vital source of support for our papers, and we are deeply grateful to the local businesses that continue to support us. But as printing and mailing costs rise to historic levels, advertising alone can no longer carry the full weight of production. We recognize that our small businesses are facing similar pressures, and we would prefer not to raise advertising rates too

much. Instead, we’re turning to you — our readers — for help. This November, we’re launching our ‘Support the Newspaper’ campaign. Every donation, no matter the size, helps offset the rising costs of printing and distribution, ensuring that your paper remains free, local, and delivered right to your doorstep or mailbox. Your contribution isn’t just helping to print pages — it’s helping to keep civic engagement alive, preserving our community history, and giving a platform to local voices that

deserve to be heard. We are endlessly thankful for your readership, your trust, and your belief in the value of local journalism. For decades, this paper has been honored to share your stories, celebrate your milestones, and champion the spirit of our towns. With your help, we can continue to do so for many years to come. Please consider a donation, in any amount. To contribute to our community news, please visit <https://bit.ly/SupportTheNewspaper> or scan the QR code to the right. Thank you for your

support. We have been honored to be a part of your community, and we are excited to continue to bring you the news and stories that matter to you each month.



Who kept the dogs in?

A black and white photograph of a black dog, possibly a Labrador, sitting on a wooden fence and holding a stick in its mouth. The dog is looking towards the camera.

Precision Fence Did!

The logo for Precision Fence Co. Inc. features the company name in a stylized font, with 'Precision' in a larger, cursive-like font and 'Fence CO. INC.' in a smaller, sans-serif font. To the right of the text is a graphic of a target with a yellow bullseye and a black arrow hitting the center.

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A small logo for the Associated Fence Association (AFA), consisting of the letters 'AFA' inside a stylized shield or house shape.

Sheriff's Organic Farm Supports Worcester County Nonprofits

Over a decade ago, the newly elected sheriff in Worcester County aimed to revive a program at the Worcester County Jail and House of Correction. That program not only honored the rich farming history of Massachusetts but also focused on modern methods of rehabilitating inmate populations.

Today, Sheriff Lewis Evangelidis is proud that the successful inmate-run organic farm program is not only thriving but benefiting those in need throughout Worcester County.

"Each year the Worcester County Sheriff's Organic Farm Program reaches out to us to donate their organic produce," said Wachusett Food Pantry Board President Pamela Guild. "They have been doing this for many years, and we are so thankful. Our recipients really appreciate the fresh farm produce that we can provide thanks to the sheriff and his team."

As part of the House of Corrections' Work Release Program, qualified inmates are allowed to tend to the grounds of the facility, including the 18-acre farm. The produce harvested by inmates benefits numerous nonprofits throughout Worcester County, such as food banks, senior centers, soup kitchens, homeless shel-

ters, and veteran organizations.

"I go down to the farm and talk to the men during the course of the summer" said Evangelidis about the all-volunteer farming program. "The men learn new skills, realize meaningful daily activities, create a work history, and create a sense of dignity and self-respect. They engage in a full day's work for the benefit of others - and give back to the community."

"We're so appreciative of the fresh produce that the Sheriff's Department drops off for our food pantry," said Cindy Love, Director of the Paxton Council on Aging. "They are also very supportive of our programming throughout the year."

Evangelidis said that the produce is also provided to the inmate population within the facility, which is a savings of between \$20,000 to \$30,000 a year.

"We are fortunate to have the land and the resources to support the Organic Farm program," said Evangelidis. "We have put together a great team here that has put in a lot of effort to develop this popular program."

Inmates eligible to join the work-release program are classified as low-risk and nonvio-

lent. Those who qualify and opt to participate earn "good time" credits each month for their behavior and involvement. Typically, inmates work between 10 to 25 hours a week.

Evangelidis says that in 2025, the program distributed about 40,000 pounds of organic produce to nonprofits in Worcester County. "Our goal is not to compete with farm-stands or stores," explained Evangelidis, "but to help support nonprofits that serve the needy."

"We hope that this program continues to flourish," continued Guild from the Wachusett Food Pantry, "and we look forward to receiving their donations in the coming years."

Since Evangelidis took office in 2011, he has expanded the organic farm from ten to its current 18 acres, the largest organic farm at a Massachusetts correctional facility. "The farm



Wachusett Food Pantry Board President Pamela Guild with Worcester County Sheriff Office Lt. Mullaney. Photo submitted

is huge," said Evangelidis. "We couldn't accommodate more land."

As far as a run for statewide office in 2026? Evangelidis laughed and said that while he would not rule anything out, he is happy where he is now. "I love this job," said Evangelidis.

"The team we have developed here makes a difference. We help rehabilitate and transform people's lives and we help to make the community a better and safer place. I'm not inclined to do anything else."

Martha Akstin contributed to this article.

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On Dogs and the People Who Love Them

New Nonprofit Makes Training about Connection, not Commerce

By FAITH MAYER

In a world where professional dog training often comes with a hefty price, The Free Dog is challenging the idea that only some families can afford well-behaved pets.

Founded and operated by Marnie Fitzgerald of Rutland, The Free Dog is a new nonprofit organization with the belief that all dogs and their owners deserve access to compassionate and effective training. The mission is simple, “The Free Dog envisions a world in which no animal suffers due to misinformation or barriers to care.”

The goal, according to Fitzgerald, is to keep dogs out of shelters and with their families. Fitzgerald remembered she was often frustrated when she was working as an animal control officer (ACO) in Westfield, Mass.

“During that time ... I had the feeling that I was unable to change the outcome of many of the cases I encountered,” Fitzgerald said. “It seemed like the ACO was called once something had already gone very wrong ... I always wondered what may have happened if someone had intervened sooner,” she continued.

Over time, Fitzgerald decided to create a program that would allow full access to dog training



Marnie Fitzgerald and her dog Murphy. Thrown out of a car and abandoned as a puppy, Murphy is also the inspiration for Fitzgerald's nonprofit.

for all, regardless of income or other barriers. She felt strongly that training should be done with positive reinforcement, not through punishment. She also wanted the name to reflect her mission.

“When starting my organization, I wanted to conjure an image of a dog that is running freely; happy and free from pain, stress, and fear,” Fitzgerald said. “For decades, positive reinforcement has been scientifically proven to be the most humane, efficient, and effective dog training method,” she elaborated.

She also wanted to make sure everyone had access to quality information. “I believe that animal welfare knowledge has

historically been distributed for profit,” Fitzgerald said. “This not only limits access to necessary information, but it also compromises the quality of the information,” she explained.

Fitzgerald credits a young bulldog puppy for teaching her how important training can be. This dog had been harshly trained on a choke collar and leash. However, with patience on both the owner's and Fitzgeralds' part, the dog was able to transition to a regular harness and leash without any aversive equipment. On a regular harness, the dog even passed its Canine Good Citizen Test through the American Kennel Club, which includes a leash walking portion. Triple win: the

dog remained at home, and the owner is now a trainer herself.

As Fitzgerald continued to witness dogs being surrendered simply because the owner did not have access to quality training, she knew she could help.

“I believe that everyone should have access to the most scientifically accurate dog welfare knowledge possible,” Fitzgerald explained. “I believe that this should be a right, not something that is hidden behind a paywall. It is my dream to see a world where everyone can provide food, vet care, and training for their dog without worrying about cost,” she continued.

The Free Dog currently offers free group training sessions. However, Fitzgerald admits that this can be difficult for people with reactive dogs who do not do well in a group.

“It is my hope that as our

organization expands, we will have the resources and staff to be able to offer free one-on-one lessons both virtually and in person,” Fitzgerald said.

Fitzgerald hopes to soon start a trainer apprenticeship program. She is also seeking donations, partnerships with vets and animal welfare groups, and volunteers.

“My main goal for the next five years is expanding our reach and impact,” Fitzgerald said. “I believe that helping even just one dog makes it all worth it. I never want anyone to feel like they have no options and nowhere to turn when they are struggling with their dogs,” she said. “I will always do anything I can to help families who are facing surrender.”

To learn more about The Free Dog, to volunteer, donate or partner, please visit <https://www.thefreedog.org/> or email thefreedogorg@gmail.com

Day Trippin'

WFP will publish easy day trips by car from Holden, Paxton, or Rutland to interesting places. If you would like to contribute a short description with photo of where you recommend visiting, please email it to martha@localtownpages.com



We will start with Steven and Helen Urbanovitch's October day trip that followed Route 2 westbound, then meandered along back roads to where the Millers and Connecticut rivers meet at the border of the towns of Montague and Erving. Back up on Route 2, after you cross the majestic French King Bridge that spans the Connecticut River, park in a little lot and then walk back along the bridge. Look north and in the middle of the river you might see the top of French King rock for which the bridge is named.

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Smart financial moves to make before year-end



Anne-Marie Kelley

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As the year winds down, it's the perfect time to make some smart moves before the calendar flips to 2026. Think of it as a financial tune-up that could help with saving money and setting you up for success in the months ahead. Here are some things to consider.

Don't forget about required withdrawals. If you're 73 or older, you'll need

to take your required minimum distribution from traditional retirement accounts to avoid a 25% penalty on any amount you should have withdrawn but didn't. This rule also applies to some people who inherited retirement accounts, including certain Roth accounts.

Use your flexible spending money. Got money sitting in a flexible spending account at work? Remember, these accounts follow a "use it or lose it" rule. Check with your HR department about your plan's specific deadlines for spending the money and submitting receipts. Whether it's that dental work you've been putting off or new prescription glasses you need, now's the time to use those funds before they disappear.

Boost your retirement savings. Consider ramping up your pretax retirement contributions before year-end. Not only will this help your future self, but it might also reduce your current tax bill. If your workplace plan allows it, you can even set up au-

tomatic increases for next year so you won't have to remember to do it later.

Share the wealth through gifting. In 2025, the current tax rules let you give family or friends up to \$19,000 per person without affecting your lifetime gift tax exemption. Married couples can combine their allowances to give up to \$38,000 per person. Plus, you can pay someone's tuition or medical bills directly without these payments counting against your gift limits at all.

Navigate new tax changes. The recently passed One Big Beautiful Bill Act has made several tax provisions permanent, including lower individual tax rates and higher standard deductions. However, it also introduces new changes that might affect your situation. It's worth sitting down with a financial advisor or tax professional to understand how these updates impact your specific circumstances.

Examine your investments. Take some time to review your investment portfolio. Ask yourself: Did your investments perform as expected this year? Do they still match your goals and comfort level with risk? You might need to rebalance things to get back on track.

Build up your emergency fund. It's ideal to have enough cash saved to cover three to six months of living expenses in an easily accessible account. This safety net can prevent you from having to raid your retirement savings when unexpected expenses pop up.

Review your estate planning documents. This is especially important if you've had major life changes like marriage, divorce or a new baby. Don't forget to check the beneficiary designations on all your bank and brokerage accounts as well as life insurance policies – these often override what's written in your will.

Taking care of these financial housekeeping tasks now can help you start the new year on solid ground.

If you're looking for a thoughtful partner to help you bring more clarity to your financial life, contact Anne-Marie today!

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Whispers from the Archives

Forgotten Stories from Local History

Three Strangers Known Only to God

BY MARTHA AKSTIN

Four lichen-covered cement posts stand as silent sentinels in the southwest corner of Paxton's Moreland Cemetery on Richards Avenue. One rises in the mowed grass. A shorter lopsided guard is covered with vines. The other two guardians are hidden inside the woods.

Embedded flat in the grass just past the first post is a stained granite slab with the words: "Three Strangers Known Only to God."

Further in the woods, obscured by weeds and ferns, are three small rough field stones incised with the initials E.M., R.S., and J.T.

Who were these three strangers? Why are their humble markers isolated from the well-tended tombstones elsewhere in the cemetery? Were they enslaved people who worked on local farms? Had they died from smallpox or another infectious disease and so were quarantined after death?

Richard Fenton, chair of Paxton's Historical Commission, was intrigued by whose lives these stones mark. Within days of being asked, Fenton was able to find a description of their lives and deaths written by a local historian and a 1996 newspaper article that described

an afternoon where prayers were said for the three strangers. Fenton credits the dogged determination of town resident and local historian Edward Duane with uncovering the mystery of who these stones remember.

On October 30, 1996, Rev. Donald Whitcomb of the First Congregational Church of Paxton, Rev. John Thomas of St. Columba's Roman Catholic Church, and Ronald Johnson, chair of Paxton's Select Board, said prayers over that corner area. They were there because a farmer had noted three indentations on the ground and alerted town officials of possible unmarked graves. Johnson decided something had to be done to note their internments. Duane helped prepare the site by donating and painting the four cement posts that mark the corners of the plot and found the three rough stones that mark each grave. Empire Granite Co. donated the slab laid in the grass.

The *Telegram & Gazette* published an article the next day describing the ceremony and wrote that Duane had been unsuccessful in his attempts to identify the three people.

But Duane *had* discovered information about who the three strangers were, but too late for inclusion in the *T&G* article. In



his typewritten notes, preserved by the Paxton Historical Commission, Duane wrote:

"On the eve of the article's appearance, I received a telephone call from Mrs. John Hyland of Paxton stating she knew the name of one of the individuals buried in the 'Friends Lot'. Taking the clue I went back to the vital records, found the death record, and then, with the same clue went to the cemetery card file where a reference to 'Friends Section', under 'F', in Moreland (sic) Cemetery, was found. I then went to 'Fn' and found a card with the layout of the Friends Section, the names of the three individuals thus interred and other pertinent information."

Included in the preserved records are Duane's drawing of the six plots in the Friends Lot

and his hand-written notes and typed explanation of his investigation. He then researched burial permits for more information. He identified the names of the three strangers, all laborers who had worked on local farms: Plot 1: John Tribis, died March 11, 1945, age 62 years. Plot 2: Robert S. Smith, died April 28, 1947, age 79 years. Plot 3: Elias or Nikolai Mattila, died December 24, 1953, age 69 years.

Ronald Johnson, who helped organize the 1996 ceremony that honored the three strangers, served Paxton in many capacities during his 60 years living in town. He died on October 8th of this year, leaving his widow Melinda and two sons.

Duane died in 2011 and his dedication to Paxton's history, its veterans, its cemeteries and those buried there, are preserved

in the Historical Commission's collection.

"He was truly devoted," said Fenton about Duane. "He used to spend a lot of time in the town clerk's office where he worked with the help of June Herron, the then-town clerk. I'm sorry that I never got to work with him and know him better."

No longer strangers - thanks to countless hours of dedicated volunteer work by many people and the ongoing efforts to preserve that history.

Three Strangers Known Only to God is the first article to be included in WFP's new historical section, "Whispers from the Archives." If you know of a story that should be uncovered - or would like to submit one - please contact martha@local-townpages.com

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NEWSbitz

By MARTHA AKSTIN

HOLDEN

• **The Wachusett Area Chamber of Commerce** announces a new partnership with the **Massachusetts Small Business Development Center (SBDC)**, bringing expert business support directly to the local community. Beginning in November the SBDC will hold monthly office hours at the Chamber’s office, offering personalized guidance and resources to entrepreneurs and small business owners in the Wachusett area. The services are offered at no cost and are available to the public.

The first session will take place **Thursday, November 20** from 10:00 am to 12:00 pm at the Chamber Office located at 1174 Main St., Holden. To schedule an appointment, contact the Chamber at 508-829-9220 or email info@wachusettareachamber.org. Future dates will be announced monthly on the Chamber’s website www.wachusettareachamber.org.

Munir Khan, an experienced business advisor with the SBDC, will offer no cost, confidential, one-to-one management advice in areas such as business planning, marketing strategies, financial management, and funding sources. For more information about the SBDC located at Clark University and its services, visit www.clarku.edu/small-business-development-center/

• **The Oriol Foundation** announces the launch of its **Accessibility Grant for Neurological Inclusion**, a new community funding initiative designed to make local events and programs more welcoming for individuals living with neurological conditions.

The program offers up to \$1,000 per recipient to help nonprofit organizations, schools, senior centers, and other community groups in **Holden, Paxton, Princeton, Rutland, Sterling, Boylston, and West Boylston** reduce barriers and enhance accessibility at public events taking place in 2026. From sensory-friendly spaces and adaptive communication tools to staff training in

dementia and neurodiversity, the Oriol Foundation is committed to supporting programs that help every individual feel included.

Applications are due Friday, November 14, 2025. Grant recipients will be notified by December 15, with program funding available for events held between January 1 and December 31, 2026. For questions, email info@oriolfoundation.org and to download the application visit www.oriolfoundation.org

PAXTON

• **MBTA Communities Act update:** The Planning Board hosted an informational meeting before it met in session on November 5 to discuss the MBTACA, review the results of the on-line survey that ranked the four parcels that are proposed for the 6-acre by right multifamily overlay zoning, and review wording of the proposed zoning bylaw. The parcel selection and bylaw will be discussed and voted on at the December 1 Special Town Meeting.

Roberta Brien, one of several residents working to inform the town about the MBTACA and its implications, said that the survey generated 180 unique responses: 64 percent chose the West Street location, part of a 55+ acre parcel on the border with Spencer; 58% chose the 6.9 acre site at 95 Asnebumskit Road; 49% chose the 22+ acre site at 1105 Pleasant Street; and 33% chose the 9.9 acre site at 221 Grove Street.

About 20 residents attended the meeting and several voiced their opposition or support of not just a particular location, but also the impact of the Act on communities in the state.

Neil Bagdis, chair of the Planning Board, closed the public discussion after almost 90 minutes and then the Planning Board opened its regular meeting. After debate, the board unanimously voted to present two sites to Town Meeting voters: West Street and Asnebumskit Road. Members also voted 4-1 to add inclusionary wording in the multifamily zoning bylaw,



Sergeant Ronald C. Friberg retired on Oct.31, 2025 after nearly 29 years of service with the Rutland Police Department. Ron joined the department in 1997 after graduating from the Agawam Police Academy and was promoted to the rank of Sergeant in 2004. Thank you Sergeant Ronald C. Friberg for your many years of dedicated service, leadership, and commitment to this department, our town, and its people.

Courtesy of the Rutland Police Department Facebook Page



to the effect that if more than six units are built, 10 percent will be designated as affordable housing. This phrasing mirrors current zoning language. It also helps to address Paxton’s affordable housing shortage, which is now less than five percent of the state-required 10 percent, which means the town is susceptible to 40B development.

Bagdis stressed that unless voters approve a site and the bylaw at the Special Town Meeting, Paxton may face possible punitive actions from the state that might include loss of state grants, being disqualified or put at the bottom for future state grants, and the loss of local oversight and control.

• **10 West update:** At the October 27 Paxton Select Board meeting, it was announced regarding the 10 West building: the tenant is out, the lease has been terminated, and the building is back in control of the town.

While many residents have expressed disappointment that **Darlene Walsh** moved her business to Jefferson on Route 122A, the question now is, what is the future for the little edifice? In the past 50 years, it has been, at one time or another, the site of Helen’s Beauty Salon and Frank’s Barber Shop, offices for the Paxton Police Department, and of course Darlene’s business.

In a call for clarification on next steps, **Paxton’s Interim Town Administrator Robert Birkbeck** explained, “The select

board will have to decide if it is to be put up for sale, or lease, or what direction to take. Everything is on the table.”

Birkbeck is fielding inquiries and compiling a list to share with the select board. While some residents suggest it could be used for the site of Paxton’s Historical Commission, Birkbeck added that people have also suggested it could be used as a community meeting place.

Contact Birkbeck if you have ideas for the next 10 West-iteration.

RUTLAND

• **The Rutland Business Association (RBA)** is proud to announce its official relaunch following the Selectboard’s vote on September 29 to transition the former Economic Development Committee into an independent, business-led organization. The RBA held its first meeting with former members on October 16, marking the start of this new chapter focused on collaboration, growth, and community engagement.

The mission of the RBA is to support, connect, and elevate Rutland’s business community while fostering economic stability and opportunity for all. Membership will now be open not only to local businesses and nonprofits, but also to members of the public who want to contribute to Rutland’s economic and community vitality.

Follow **Discover Rutland** on Facebook to stay informed about how to become a member, upcoming events, and local business updates—all in one reliable place for everything happening in Rutland’s business scene. The next informal RBA meeting will be held on December 4, when the steering committee will finalize the bylaws and membership application process. The RBA looks forward to building a stronger, more connected Rutland together.

No RBA positions have been elected yet. However, the steering committee is comprised of the original EDC. Elections are expected to take place early in 2026.

- FURNITURE REMOVAL
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- ECO-FRIENDLY DISPOSAL

Ushering in the Holidays, Wachusett Style

By MARTHA AKSTIN

Get ready to celebrate the season! Whether it is making a wreath in a DIY workshop, listening to a community chorus singing carols, walking through enchanted, magically decorated trees, or having a picture taken with Santa, the Holiday Season will soon be underway in Holden, Paxton and Rutland.

Holden

Holidays in Holden is back, bringing festive cheer and unforgettable experiences for the whole family. Join them for two days of holiday magic in the heart of the community.

Friday, December 5, 6-11 pm: Jingle and Mingle

Hop on the trolley and tour Holden while sampling local flavors in their holiday drink competition, featuring a variety of local businesses.

Saturday, December 6, begins at noon: Main Event

Visit with Santa, browse the

Holiday Market showcasing local artisans, marvel at the Tree Lighting Ceremony, enjoy the Parade of Lights and other festive activities. Come experience the sights, sounds, and spirit of the season with Holidays in Holden - it promises fun, community, and holiday cheer for everyone!

Paxton

One special night ushers in the Holidays in Paxton, with festivities centered around the Town Common, St. Columba Church parking lot, and Richards Ave.

Friday, December 5, 6:30-8:30 pm: Warm up by the fire pits, make smores, play cornhole, enjoy delicious food, spread holiday cheer, and remember to vote for the best Town Truck Holiday Makeover.

Organizations such as the Paxton American Legion, Richards Memorial Library, Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, Lions Club,



and Country Bank and Fidelity Bank will set up tables. New this year will be dance performances by Alexis Lena Dance Arena. The Paxton Center School Chorus will sing holiday carols and there will be a reading of The Night Before Christmas. The annual tree lighting takes place at 7:30 pm. Take pictures with Santa under the tree. And please bring a nonperishable food donation for the Paxton Food Bank.

Rutland

Rutland has been busy all

year organizing its 25th Annual Festival of Trees, a week-long celebration of the season with activities concentrated in the center of town.

Friday, December 5, 6:30 pm: The Wachusett Chorus kicks off the celebrations with its performance at the Congregational Church followed by a Brownie Sundae Social.

Saturday, December 6, 4-8 pm: The Congregational Church offers hot cocoa and cookie decorating with nativities on display from 2-4 pm. St. Patrick's Church will have snowball races. The Old Fire Station will have an open house with photos next to the old fire truck. Food trucks will be in front of Town Hall. The Rutland Public Safety Building will have holiday activities. The Rutland Historical Society will host an open house at the Wood House with refreshments. At 6 pm gather in the Congregational Church for the name reading and Christmas carols. The 35th Annual Tree



Lighting on the Town Common happens at 6:30 pm.

Sunday December 7, 1-4 pm: Stroll through enchantingly decorated trees, wreaths, gingerbread creations and more at the library. Santa will be available for photos. Hop on the outdoor train, enjoy reindeer games, a strolling magic show, and more.

Tuesday December 9 through Saturday December 13: Festivities continue every day. For information and updates follow Facebook: @Rutland Historical Society or visit the website at www.rutland-mahistoricalsociety.org

Paxton Fire Department Responds to Potential Mass Casualty Incident at Paxton Center School

On Wednesday, November 5, at approximately 8:44 am, the Wachusett Regional Emergency Communications Center received a 911 call from staff at Paxton Center School (PCS). The staff reported that up to 33 students may have been exposed to smoke and/or carbon mon-

oxide during their morning bus ride to school, with some students complaining of symptoms. The Paxton Fire Department (PFD) responded immediately with a first alarm assignment and both ambulances. Due to the number of potential patients, Fire Chief Michael Pin-



Fire trucks and ambulances line up in front of Paxton Center School. Photo submitted

gitore declared a Mass Casualty Incident (MCI), which quickly exceeded Paxton's resources. Mutual aid ambulances from Rutland, Barre, Holden, Leicester, Spencer, and Princeton responded. Incident management support was provided by command staff from Leicester; Barre, West Boylston, Boylston,

and Rutland.

Each student was assessed by emergency medical services personnel and the school nurse who determined that no student required transport to the hospital. Pingitore commended the swift and coordinated response of all agencies. He extended special recognition to the staff at PCS for their quick action and calm professionalism during the incident. "Their efforts were instrumental in ensuring student safety and supporting emergency personnel," said Pingitore. He also noted the collaboration and communication with the Wachusett Regional School District. Pingitore said that Superintendent Jim Reilly ar-



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The team at IA Financial advisors in Holden specializes in retirement planning, specifically helping clients meet their retirement goals.

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“Many people have accumulated funds for retirement in 401ks and other retirement plans and now need to find out how to draw down these funds. This is where a financial planner can add significant value,” said Graham Merk, who has over 40 years of experience in the field.

Ten years ago, he relocated to the area to be closer to family, including his four granddaughters, and he likes the area very much. “The whole Worcester area has developed into a vibrant community including

academic excellence, technology companies, dining excellence, and many other exciting developments.”

When seeking a financial advisor, Merk says it is important the client looks for a fiduciary planner who has experi-



ence. “Many of our clients have accumulated significant funds for retirement but need to know how to invest those funds to meet their risk tolerance, investment goals and time horizon.”

Merk tells the story of a recent client who had accumulated funds in his 401k and was uncomfortable with the risk in the portfolio. “We were able to guide him to a more conservative position while still meeting his retirement income goals,”

said Merk. “We recommend clients talk to a number of financial advisors and then pick one who aligns with their goals.”

IA Financial Advisors include Merk and his business associate, financial advisor Madison White. The company’s values

include people, integrity, communication, and service. The firm regularly offer financial literacy events and educational courses to help people understand their finances by defining terms, concepts, and strategies in a classroom setting.

They also have video resources to share on their website, <https://iafinancialadvisors.com>. The videos cover topics such as:

- 4% Rule
- 401k vs Roth

Business spotlight

- A Wagonload of Worries
- How and When to File Social Security
- Make Your Dream Retirement a Reality
- Marginal Tax Rates
- Market Volatility
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- What is a Fixed Index Annuity
- What Retirement Readiness Looks Like

To find out how IA Financial Advisors can help you with your financial needs, call 774-345-4044, visit <https://iafinancialadvisors.com>, or email grahammerk@iafinancialadvisors.com.

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Source: iafinancialadvisors.com

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Special Town Meetings

The towns of Paxton and Rutland will each have Special Town Meetings this fall.

PAXTON: Monday, December 1, 7 pm, Zecco Auditorium, Anna Maria College, 50 Sunset Ln. This is a change of location from the original plan. Opening date of the Warrant: Tuesday, October 14. Anticipated closing date of the Warrant: Monday, November 10. Warrant posting date: No later than Monday, November 17. Last date to register to vote for the Special Town Meeting: Friday, November 21. The Town Clerk’s office will be open on the 21st from 9 am to 5 pm for residents to register to vote or you can register online on the Secretary of the Commonwealth’s website at <https://www.sec.state.ma.us/OVR/>

RUTLAND: Thursday, November 20, 6 pm, Glenwood Elementary School. The Warrant opened on Monday, September 15 and closed September 19. The final warrant will be posted no later than Thursday, November 6. Last date to register to vote for the Special Town Meeting was Monday, November 10. Among other articles to

be voted on, this year’s warrant includes modifications to the FY2026 operating budget, capital requests for town buildings and equipment, street acceptance requests, and the new



stormwater bylaw. To view the warrant, go to the town’s website at <https://www.rutlandma.gov/838/Special-Town-Meeting---Fall-2025> or scan the QR code.

HOLDEN: No Special Town Meeting this fall.

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From left to right: Peter Conte (3rd gen.), Jay Conte (2nd gen.), Kris Henderson (2nd gen.) and Sarah Conte (3rd gen.)

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By the Numbers

BY MARTHA AKSTIN

Every month, using various data, *WFP* will compare the three towns that the paper covers: Holden, Paxton and Rutland.

We start off with number of registered voters and party affiliations in each town. According to Secretary of the Commonwealth Timothy Galvin’s Election Division, Massachusetts recognizes two political parties: Democrat and Republican. The vast majority of voters in each town are registered as Unenrolled, which many people refer to as Independent, but the correct term is Unenrolled.

In addition to Democrat, Republican, and Unenrolled, there are more than 25 political designations in the state, which were created when 50 or more voters submitted a petition to the Secretary of the Commonwealth’s office for recognition. Some are humorous (the Pizza Party) while others were founded on a political or social idea or cause.

While each town clerk’s office handles in-person voter registration, you can also register to vote by mail or online through the Secretary of the Commonwealth’s website at <https://www.sec.state.ma.us/OVR/>

WFP thanks the town clerks of the three towns for their assistance in obtaining this information: Jeanne Hudson, Holden; Laurie Becker, Paxton; Anita Carlson, Rutland.

Town of Holden - Voter Total Sheet as of 10/21/2025: All Voters - October 21, 2025 - 08:39																				
Ward	Precinct	A	AA	CC	D	G	J	K	L	O	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Z	Grand Totals
0	1			9	421				10	1	2	356	1		1776		1			2577
	2	3	1	3	488	1	1		4	1	1	325	1	2	1705					2536
	3	1		9	505		3	1	5	1		318	1		1838	1				2683
	4	2	1	3	503				10	5	1	316		1	1951			1	1	2795
	5	3		7	486			1	8		1	307			1809					2622
	6	4		13	475	1	1		13	1	1	292		1	1860		1			2663
Ward Totals		13	2	44	2878	2	5	2	50	9	6	1914	3	4	10939	1	2	1	1	15876
Grand Totals		13	2	44	2878	2	5	2	50	9	6	1914	3	4	10939	1	2	1	1	15876

Town of Paxton - Voter Total Sheet as of 10/11/2025: All Voters - October 11, 2025 - 14:12															
Ward	Precinct	A	AA	CC	D	J	K	L	O	Q	R	U	Z	Grand Totals	
0	1	12	1	10	672	1	1	15	3	3	402	2657	1	3778	
Ward Totals		12	1	10	672	1	1	15	3	3	402	2657	1	3778	
Grand Totals		12	1	10	672	1	1	15	3	3	402	2657	1	3778	

Town of Rutland - Voter Total Sheet as of 10/29/2025: All Voters - October 29, 2025 - 11:50																
Ward	Precinct	A	AA	BB	CC	D	H	J	L	O	Q	R	T	U	X	Grand Totals
0	1	4	1	8	396	2	9	1		375		1840		2636		
	2	4		7	308	1	9	1	1	319		1684		2334		
	3	2	1	1	8	441	1		9	1		342	2	1874	1	2683
Ward Totals		10	2	1	23	1145	1	3	27	3	1	1036	2	5398	1	7653
Grand Totals		10	2	1	23	1145	1	3	27	3	1	1036	2	5398	1	7653

- A - Conservative

B - Natural Law Party

C - New World Council

D - Democrat

E - Reform

F - Rainbow Coalition

G - Green Party USA

H - We The People

J - Green Rainbow

K - Constitution Party
- L - Libertarian

M - Timesizing Not Down

N - New Alliance

O - MA Independent Party

P - Prohibition

Q - American Independent

R - Republican

S - Socialist

T - Inter 3rd Party

U - Unenrolled
- V - America First Party

W - Veteran Party America

X - Pirate

Y - World Citizens Party

Z - Working Families

AA - Pizza Party

BB - American Term Limits

CC - United Independent Party

DD - Twelve Visions Party



The Wachusett Youth Football and Cheer 12U tackle team has wrapped up a truly remarkable season, one that will be etched in the memories of players, coaches, and families for years to come. Under the leadership of Head Coach Josh Lowe, the team achieved an undefeated regular season, finishing 8-0 before falling in the semifinals to close the year at 8-1. But the story of this team goes far beyond the wins and losses.

“For the past three years, I’ve had the pleasure of growing with this team,” said Coach Lowe. “We’ve focused on building a culture where kids can learn the game of football, and win or lose, we’re still family. It’s about creating a brotherhood they’ll remember for a lifetime.”

The team is a mix of players with varying levels of athletic ability, but one thing unites them all: heart. “They keep climbing the mountain of success, even when the climb is steep and hard,” Lowe added. “Their dedication to getting better is something every coach dreams of in a player.”

The season began with a nail-biting win against a tough opponent, setting the tone for what would become a dominant run. By Week 4, the team had racked up four consecutive wins, allowing only 12 points across those games. It was then that Coach Lowe began to wonder: Could this be the year they go undefeated?

The answer came in Week 8, when Wachusett capped off their regular season with another decisive victory, finishing 8-0. Over the course of the season, the team scored an impressive 237 points while allowing just 37—a testament to their hard work, discipline, and teamwork.

While their playoff run ended in the semifinals, the season was nothing short of extraordinary, especially considering the team’s journey from two years of losing seasons to this year’s triumph. “To pull this off was absolutely incredible,” said Lowe.

The team’s success was a collective effort, with contributions from a dedicated coaching staff that included Assistant Coaches Dwayne Forbes, Tom Galvin, Dan Kelly, Sean McSheehy, and Mike Mastro. Team Mom Sarah Galvin played a vital role in keeping everything running smoothly off the field. Leadership on the field came from team captains Leium Foley, Vince Mastro, Treyvon Forbes, and Paul Rehrig, who set the tone for their teammates with their commitment and drive.

As the season comes to a close, the Wachusett 12U team can hold their heads high, knowing they’ve built something special—both on and off the field. They’ve proven that success isn’t just about the scoreboard; it’s about heart, hard work, and the bonds that will last a lifetime.



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Homes for Heroes – Diane Luong's Mission to Serve Those Who Serve Others

BY JENNIFER RUSSO

For Diane Casey-Luong, helping people find their dream home isn't just about real estate.

With over 18 years as a Realtor and as a proud affiliate of Homes for Heroes for the last six years, Diane has built her business around a mission that extends beyond buying and selling homes. She is committed to serving those who serve others, from the teachers shaping young minds to the healthcare workers providing care, the firefighters and police officers keeping neighborhoods safe, and the military service members protecting our freedom every day. To date, she is the #1 Homes for Heroes affiliate in Massachusetts and has honored 103 heroes through her business, rewarding them with just over \$275,000.

The Homes for Heroes program was founded in the wake of the tragedy on September 11, 2001, as a way to recognize and support the nation's heroes. What began as a small group of real estate professionals wanting to make a difference has grown into the largest hero-focused real estate network in the country. The program provides real, tangible benefits. When heroes work with a Homes for Heroes affiliate like Diane to buy or sell a

home, they receive significant savings, including cash back after closing, reduced real estate fees, and special discounts from affiliated partners.

“While in other states, the program is quite well known, here in the Northeast, there are many people who are unaware that they are eligible for this benefit. It is a driven passion of mine to help my hero clients buy or sell a home. There is no application process – it’s as simple as being paired with a Homes for Heroes affiliate realtor like me. The reward they receive is completely independent of anything else real estate related – it comes from my own commission, and for me it is an absolute honor to give back,” Diane explains.

Her approach to real estate is rooted in service, education, and compassion. She takes the time to truly understand her clients' goals and walks them through every step of the process, from the first consultation to closing day and beyond. Her goal is not only to help clients find a home they love, but to make sure they feel appreciated and supported throughout the journey.

For Diane, the connection to this mission runs deep. "As soon as I heard about the program from a lender I was

working with, I knew I had to get involved. As the wife of a recently retired police officer, it was important to me to serve the people who spend their lives serving the community and making it strong," shares Diane.

The program also has its own foundation, and through it, Diane nominated a non-profit organization she believes in called the Thin Blue Ride, which helps first responders navigate their battle with cancer. That nonprofit was awarded a \$5,000 grant earlier this year from the Homes for Heroes Foundation.

“It’s really a circle of giving – a revolving door of supporting the foundation so they can then go out into the community and help even more hero workers, whether it be a teacher organization funding children’s needs in a underserved area or a military organization who is combating damage from a natural disaster that also impacted their own neighborhoods and homes...there are

Homes *for* Heroes®

Business spotlight

so many worthy nonprofits out there doing amazing work that we can support,” shares Diane.

Diane helps people buy and sell homes all across Massachusetts and Connecticut and also runs an online podcast with Radio Worcester's Hank Stolz to bring awareness to the program. The podcast features clients sharing their experiences about working with her and Homes for Heroes.

As the housing market continues to evolve, Diane remains focused on her mission: to make homeownership and selling attainable and rewarding for the people who make a difference every day.

"It's not about sales for me," Diane says. "It's about service. Every home I help someone buy or sell through Homes for Heroes feels like a small way to



give back to those who spend their lives giving so much of themselves.”

To learn more about Diane's work with Homes for Heroes, visit her website at www.dianesheroes.com or email her directly at diane@dianesmybroker.com

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INCIDENT

continued from page 8

rived at PCS within minutes and played an active role in supporting the school's response and coordination efforts.

The incident ended a little past 10 am and remains under investigation by the PFD. The bus company, AA Transportation, indicates the issue may have been related to a bus's braking system.

"This incident highlights the strength of regional collaboration and the professionalism of emergency services and school staff," said Pingitore. "The safety of all students is a testament to the effective teamwork demonstrated by everyone involved."



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Letter to the Editor

The Paxton Woman’s Club would like to express their gratitude to the residents of Paxton and its neighboring towns for their generous support during our recent scholarship toll road. Due to your generosity, we will again be able to award a scholarship to a graduating Paxton student who wishes to continue their education at a college or trade school.

Our thanks also go out to the Paxton Lions Club who supplied us with informative signs and safety vests and to the Paxton Department of Public Works who supplied us with safety cones.

Participating in the toll road were Club members Pat Belsito, Lia Carroll, Robin Carroll, Denise Faucher, Sharon Faucher, Anita Fenton, Marianne Girouard, Geri Graham, Cheryl Rossier, Helen Urbanovitch, and Nancy Wilby.

— Paxton Woman’s Club
Paxton

The Wachusett Free Press welcomes letters to the editor. Letters should be 300 words or less (longer letters may be considered - but are at the discretion

of the editor, and will only run if space allows) and must have contact information for confirmation. Only name and town will be published. And please, no politics.

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When Screens Turn Hostile: Cyberbullying in the Age of Social Media

By RICHARD LOPEZ, Ph.D.

Earlier this year, I watched the much-talked-about Netflix mini-series, *Adolescence*. The series offers a raw and unfiltered look at how bullying and harassment have escaped the schoolyard and insidiously followed our children home, persisting at all hours, thanks to the devices glued to the palms of their hands.

It’s a disturbing paradox we must name and confront: the very platforms that promise to connect our kids are often the ones feeding their anxiety and social exclusion. And this isn’t just a TV drama; cyberbullying is a new and pervasive reality for so many young people today. When considering the impacts of social media, scrolling through highlight reels featuring memes and cat videos are one thing, but there is a dark side with harmful ripple effects: persistent threats and harassment on group chats, acts of cruelty that go viral, and the permanent, staying power of a digital mistake. The show *Adolescence* illustrates how social media platforms can quickly become toxic environments where anonymity and distance have made cruelty easy, and empathy incredibly difficult.

So, what can we do? It’s easy to feel powerless, but we are not. As I argued in my previous column, we don’t have to wait for tech companies to fix this. We can build a safer, more resilient community for our children right now.

First, connect with and listen to your teen. Watch *Adolescence* if you haven’t done so already or consider co-watching it with your child if they’re old enough (the show is rated for ages 13-14+). After watching the show together, find a quiet, device-less place where you can ask your child open-ended questions: “Have you ever seen or heard about anything like this among your friends or at school? How does this kind of thing make you feel? Has anyone ever been there for you when you felt this way?”

Second, empower your child so they know they are responsible for their online behaviors. Instead of just logging screen time, let’s focus on building our kids’ resilience and help them to become informed digital citizens. We need to actively teach our kids that their words have tremendous weight, especially online. Moreover, we must emphasize to them that in the age of the internet and social media, there are no “take-backs” when you text, post a comment, or share a picture or video with others.

Third, organize and build resilience in our schools and communities. We must take collective action. Just as some folks coordinate neighborhood potlucks or book clubs, we need to organize as parents. Talk to your friends and neighbors. Share rules and strategies around technology use. Let’s partner with our schools to demand that digital wellness and ethics are taught as core skills and are treated with equal weight as math or reading skills. Let’s create space for local, phone-free events where our kids can practice the awkward, wonderful art of in-person friendship.

Ultimately, social media apps and other emerging technologies will continue to evolve. But our core values don’t have to. We have the power to effect change, starting in our own homes and in our local communities.

Dr. Richard Lopez is an assistant professor of psychology and neuroscience at Worcester Polytechnic Institute. He studies the impacts of digital media use on emotions and mental health. He and his family live in Rutland.

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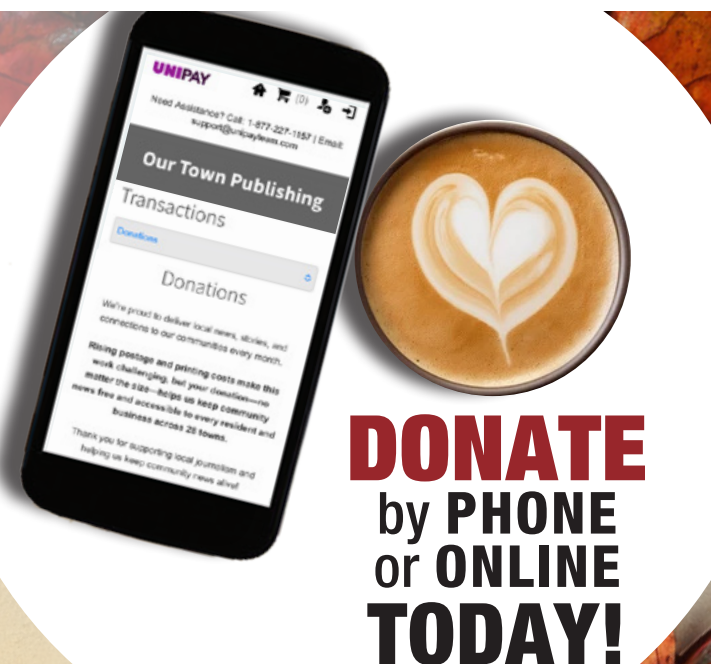
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Sports



WRHS Girls' Soccer Builds on Success

BY CHRISTOPHER TREMBLAY,
STAFF SPORTS WRITER

The Wachusett girls' soccer team had an impressive 2024 season going 11-3-4, which earned them a bid in the Division 1 State Tournament. In a hard-fought game against Franklin, they lost 3-2 in overtime. This season the Mountaineers are looking to take it to the next level.

"We had a fantastic run last year and broke through the glass ceiling," Wachusett Coach Emma Mailman said. "This year we have high expectations and are looking to build off last year's success. We are looking to put Wachusett girls' soccer back on the map while continuing to play competitively and get back into the post-season."

This year the Mountaineer seniors will be the first group that Mailman has coached at the school, so it will be hard for her to coach them for their last year. Leading the Mountaineers onto the field are tri-captains Gabby Gelo, Katlyn Perna,

Gregorczyk and Rylee Gamache. Gelo was the league MVP last fall and at the time of this writing she had already notched seven goals and four assists. She is a competitor that hates to lose, and her pace drives the rest of the team.

"It's a ripple effect: when she is locked in, the team feeds off her energy," the coach said. "I don't want to put pressure on her, but if she's down the team seems to follow suit."

While Gelo is an MVP, it is Gregorczyk who is the mastermind of the midfield. According to Mailman, she has a high soccer IQ, and the team looks to her in the middle of the field where she dominates defensively.

Perna rounds out the Wachusett captains, playing the striker position up top beside Gelo. Not only are the three best friends, but they are also committed to continuing their soccer careers on the collegiate level next fall.

In addition to the captains,

junior Rylee Gamache has been a natural leader on the field since her freshman campaign at the center back position.

"We look to her direction, and she needs to be disciplined and teach those around her," the coach continued. "You really can't ask for more from her as she already does everything and delivers every single time."

Although Mailman was expecting the upper-class players to perform on the field, she has been pleasantly surprised with the performance of sophomore Emma Petterson. As a freshman, Petterson made the varsity squad and has transformed her game this season.

"She took private training and worked out putting on more muscle," Mailman said. "She has made a big impact this year, becoming a technical player with one of the best shots in high school soccer. She broke through a lot quicker than I anticipated."

Wachusett was putting together another successful sea-



Top: Wachusett Regional High School 2025 Girls' Soccer Team. Above: Tough as Nails. Photos submitted.

son as of this writing, having only lost one game. Although chasing Shrewsbury in the Mid Wach A, they are still on target to capture the league championship.

Over the past five seasons, the Mountaineers have continued to improve. They had posted back-to-back state championships prior to Covid and would like to get back to that status again.

"We want to bring back that competitiveness while building a culture that continues to improve," the coach said. "We want to get back to winning titles. Our goal is definitely taking the Mid Wach and getting back into the States, where we want to go deeper and deeper until we eventually win the States."

Sports

WRHS Football Anticipates Turkey Day Tournament

By CHRISTOPHER TREMBLAY,
STAFF SPORTS WRITER

Coming into the year, Coach Mike Dubzinski did not set any type of win totals for his Wachusett varsity football team. Instead, he was looking for the team to improve on a day-to-day basis, which would eventually take care of the wins.

chusett was squaring off against Holy Name on turkey day. With all the changes in the leagues, it only made sense that the two teams renew their Thanksgiving Day rivalry in 2013. During the last 10 games, eight of them were decided on the very last play of the contest. “If you’re looking for an entertaining high school game, this

Jack Smith. Their junior has already provided the team with a couple of 100-yard rushing games this season. However, nothing is possible without that offensive front line. Managing the trenches for the Mountaineers are seniors Liam Macomber, Ryan Leblanc, Ahmad Issa as well as juniors Nick Viano and Owen Quinn.

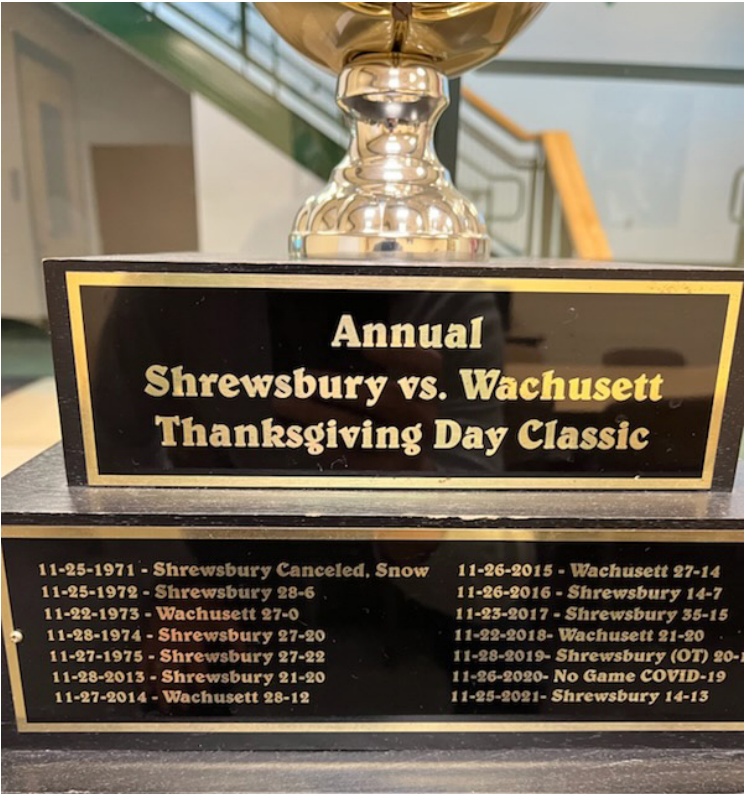
“Without these five – it doesn’t really matter what play we run,” the coach said. “Having them know their assignment is a very integral part of our offensive success.” Defensively, the team is led by Anthony Viano, twins Dan (defensive end) and Troy (linebacker) Greaney, defensive lineman Nash Wyrzykowski and

defensive end Max Brown. Four years ago, Wachusett was able to grab a win in the first round of the MIAA Division 1 state football tournament, but over the past two seasons the Mountaineers have not been able to get out of the first round and were sent home before they could get things started. While the ultimate goal is



“I want the kids to work hard and go into the season with a mindset of improving,” the Mountaineer coach said. “There will be days that the ball bounces our way and others when it bounces toward the opposition. I want to be able to focus on the next game at hand and nothing else. When that game is over, we will shift gears to our next opponent.” While Wachusett has currently gone 4-1 at the time of this writing, one of the biggest games for the team will come Thanksgiving morning when they take on their league rival Shrewsbury. The two teams had played each other on Thanksgiving Day many years ago but drifted apart for some years. During those years Shrewsbury was battling Milford and Wa-

rivalry is the place,” Dubzinski said. “It definitely provides you with entertainment. The schools are very similar. In fact, the freshman and junior varsity teams play the Friday before Thanksgiving, and they are just as exciting and competitive.” A lot of pressure falls on junior quarterback Thomas Anderson as he gets the Mountaineers through the season and into the Thanksgiving Day clash with Shrewsbury. A pocket passer who can scramble when he needs to, Anderson has a variety of receivers at his disposal. The junior has been connecting with senior wide receivers Caden Lane and Jude Hogan as well as junior Luke Becchione. When the junior signal caller is not throwing the call, Wachusett will counter with running back



Above: WRHS 2025 varsity football team. Left: The Thanksgiving Day trophy. Photos submitted.

to get better day by day the Mountaineers do have their eyes set on getting into the tournament and hopefully have themselves a better showing in the first round. But as Dubzinski noted, there is still a lot of football to be played before the tournament comes around and things will definitely change from week to week. The only thing that Wachusett can rely on is that Shrewsbury will be coming to their field on Thanksgiving morning - and the Mountaineers are looking to carve their opponents up.

Regional Calendar of Events

If you have a non-profit event you would like included in the Calendar, please email information to Martha@localtownpages.com

Thursday November 13

10:30 am: What to expect when you enter short-term rehab, a talk presented by Life Care Center of Auburn. Refreshments will be provided. Paxton Senior Center.

1030 am-12 pm: The Craft of Writing workshop with Jennifer Freed on-line via Zoom. Use a child's voice in your writing and why the child narrator might work in a story for adults. Registration required at the Gale Free Library.

6-8 pm: Linen from Flax Seed to Woven Textile lecture with Jane Bridgeman sponsored by Paxton MA Garden Club. This illustrated talk follows linen from flax seed to woven textile including experience growing and processing the plant. Free and open to the public. Rutland Free Public Library.

6:30 pm: Winter Porch Flower Pot workshop with Bernis Farms, hosted by the Paxton Woman's Club, open to all. Come at 6 pm to learn about the Club. \$40 for PWC members; \$45 for nonmembers. Make checks payable to PWC and mail to Kathy Card, 16 Red Oak St., Paxton, 01612. At the Paxton Senior Center.

6:30-7:30 pm: Book Edge Painting for Teens, ages 12-18. Try the trend that's sweeping the book world. Learn how to stencil your book edges for a decorative and personal touch. Bring a book or use one of the library's donated books. All other materials provided. Richards Memorial Library.

7 pm: The History of the Construction of the Wachusett Reservoir and Dam presented by White Oak. Kathryn

Parent, program coordinator of the Mass. DCR will explore historical evidence that chronicled the effort. Refreshments will be served. Holden Senior Center.

Friday, November 14

9-11 am: Monthly food distribution for seniors age 65 and older at Wachusett Food Pantry, 50 Worcester Rd., Sterling. WFP provides emergency food assistance to residents of Holden, Paxton, Princeton, Rutland, Sterling, or West Boylston. No proof of residency required (they just ask for zip code).

10-11 am: Books and Blankies with Community Connections. For babies birth to 24 months and their caregivers. Thank you to Wachusett Community Connections for providing this program. Richards Memorial Library.

1 pm: Greeting Cards class creates a set of two holiday greeting cards using the Stampin' Up method. Registration began Oct. 10 and continues until full. Each person must register themselves in person with \$5 cash at the Holden Senior Center.

Saturday, November 15

9-11 am: Monthly food distribution at Wachusett Food Pantry, 50 Worcester Rd., Sterling, for people of any age. WFP provides emergency food assistance to any resident in need in a contract-free, safe, caring and confidential manner.

9 am-2 pm: Annual Friends of Rutland Council on Aging Craft Fair. Free admission. Local artisans and crafters, baked goods, live music special

From Nov. 17 through Dec. 12, the Holden Senior Center is partnering with the Worcester County Sheriff's Department for a toy drive. Please consider donating a new, unwrapped toy or gift card to benefit less fortunate children in our community.

appearance by Santa. Café Glenwood will be open for breakfast and lunch. At Rutland Senior Center.

11 am-12 pm: Public reception of the Community Art Show in the upstairs lobby at Gale Free Library. The exhibition is of two-dimensional artwork that depicts what comfort means to the artist. Light refreshments. The exhibition continues through Saturday, Nov. 29.

Monday, November 17

Payment due for Friends of Paxton Council on Aging-sponsored bus trip. The Dec. 8 trip will be the last one for 2025 and includes lunch at Steaming Tender Restaurant in Palmer, a stop at Atkins Farm Country Market in Amherst, and ends with a 2.5-mile drive through Springfield's Forest Park, which is decorated with more than 750,000 lights. Leave Paxton Senior Center at 12:30 pm, return 8 pm. Cost per person \$129. For info, email Deb Grensavitch at grensavitchd@aol.com.

1 pm: Has Anyone Seen \$500 Million in Art Lying Around Boston? Bob Ainsworth, author of Duped, a fictional account of the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum robbery, will review the details of the theft, the suspects, and motives behind the world's most valued art theft.

Funded by the Holden Friends Council on Aging. Registration required by calling the Holden Senior Center.

Tuesday, November 18

10 am: Medicare Advantage and Supplemental Plans talk presented by Blue Cross Blue Shield at Paxton Senior Center.

11 am: Arizona Doug, guitarist/vocalist plays hits from the '50s to today. Followed by a traditional turkey meal at noon. Registration required by calling the senior center by 11/13. Paxton Senior Center.

3:30-5:30 pm: Dungeons and Dragons One-Shot for Grades 6+. Join the party for a first-level adventure. Ideal for new and experienced players. At Gale Free Library.

6:30 pm: Cooking Club: Polish Your Polish at Gale Free Library. Join this culinary trip to Poland by bringing your Polish dish with a recipe. For inspiration, stop by the reference desk. Registration required.

7-9 pm: Remembering the Ice Storm of December 11, 2008 hosted by the Rutland Historical Society at the Wood House, 232 Main St. The ice was visible and audible. The weird creaking noises, the snap of branches, the shotgun sound of trees toppling to the ground, the darkness due to power lines being snapped. Rutland residents awoke to find their community "Beautifully Devastated." Come share your stories, view our collection of news articles, and pictures of the storm that changed the countryside forever. All are welcome. Light refreshments will be available.

Wednesday, November 19

10-11:30 am (PST): Grief in the Teenage Years: What We Miss & What They Need. Presented by the Dougy Center, this free webinar will explore the unique ways teens experience and express grief. Register on Hope Lives Here website at <https://www.hlhgrief.org/events>
1:30 pm: Large Wooden Pumpkins workshop. No painting experience

needed. All materials supplied. Registration began Oct. 29 and continues until full. Each person must register themselves in person with \$20 cash at the Holden Senior Center.

4:20 pm: Edible Bird Feeders for ages 4+ with Hands on Nature. Make natural feeders to provide food for local wildlife during the winter. At Gale Free Library.

6-7 pm: Ukulele Group for beginner to advanced musicians. Gale Free Library.

Thursday, November 20

10 am-12 pm: One-on-one business advice with the Small Business Development Center at the Wachusett Chamber of Commerce, 1174 Main St., Holden. Call the Chamber at 508-829-9220 or email info@wachusettareachamber.org to schedule an appointment. Future dates will be posted monthly on the Chamber's website at www.wachusettareachamber.org

6 pm: Rutland's Special Town Meeting, Glenwood Elementary School, 65 Glenwood Rd. For information on the warrant and what will be discussed and voted on, check the town's website at <https://www.rutlandma.gov/838/Special-Town-Meeting--Fall-2025>

Friday, November 21

9 am-5 pm: The last day to register to vote for Paxton's December 1 Special Town Meeting. The Paxton Town Clerk's office will be open for voter registration.

1 pm: Felted Birch Tree Scene class. All materials provided. Registration began Oct. 29 until full. Each person must register themselves in person with \$25 cash at the Holden Senior Center.

Saturday, November 22

9:30 am: Public Gardens Clean-up. Paxton MA Garden Club volunteers meet at Center Fields behind Paxton Center School to form teams to clean up gardens at COA, Public Safety Building, the Common. Sign up on Club's website.

Monday, November 24

10 am-noon: SNAP pre-screening program. Miriam Nyante of the Regional Board of Health dis-

CALENDAR

continued on page 17



2026
PAXTON

HISTORICAL COMMISSION CALENDAR

The Paxton Historical Commission is happy to announce the upcoming sale of its 2026 Historical Calendar, available at the Paxton Marketplace and Richards Memorial Library.

Not only will it contain scenic historic images of Paxton, but it will also be dedicated to the 100th birthday of Richards Memorial Library, which first opened its doors to Paxton residents in its current location in October 1926.

The price remains \$10 since the creation of Paxton's first historical calendars in 2004. Profits are used to benefit town residents.

HOLDEN

Gale Free Library, 23 Highland St., Holden. 508.210.5569; galefreelibrary@gmail.com

Holden Community Garden, Jessica Cosenza, 508.284.6612

Holden Recreation, 1420 Main St., Holden. 508.829.0263; holdenma.gov

Holden Senior Center, 1130 Main St., Holden. 508.210.5570; holdenma.gov

Holden Garden Club, holdengardenclub.org

PAXTON

Paxton Council on Aging, 17 West St., Paxton. 508.756.2833; townofpaxton.net; clove@paxtonma.gov

Richards Memorial Library, 44 Richards Ave., Paxton. 508.754.0793;

rmlpaxton.org; richards@cwmar.org

Paxton Recreation: townofpaxton.net/recreation-department

Paxton Garden Club: paxtongardenclub.com

RUTLAND

Rutland Senior Center, 53 Glenwood Road, Rutland. 508.886.7945; rutlandma.gov; nancyn@rutlandma.gov

Rutland Free Public Library, 280 Main St., Rutland. 508.886.4108;

rutlandlibrary.org; kerry@rutlandlibrary.org

Rutland Recreation, Community Hall, 250 Main St., Rutland. 508.886.4100, ext 3011; rutlandma.gov; cfrohock@rutlandma.gov

CALENDAR

continued from page 16

cusses the process and provides free screening to weigh your eligibility for the program. Holden Senior Center.

1 pm: Movie Monday enjoy popcorn and beverage. Register at the Holden Senior Center.

Thursday, November 27

Happy Thanksgiving Day! Local, state and federal offices are closed.

Saturday, November 29
Annual Plant Sale fundraiser hosted by Paxton MA Garden Club at Paxton Marketplace. Through December 21 (or while plants last). Sign up on the Club's website to donate plants, make cozies, or staff tables at the Marketplace.

Monday, December 1

The Edible Garden Club for ages 7-12 will meet in December to sort and package seeds for next year. Thank you to the Paxton Garden Club for funding the library's Edible Garden. Register to receive email alerts about meetings and tasks at: bit.ly/RMLEdibleGardenClub

1:30 pm: 2026 Calendar DIY workshop using the Stampin' Up method. Registration began Nov. 7 until full. Each participant must register themselves in person with \$8 cash. Holden Senior Center.

7 pm: Paxton's Special Town Meeting to be held at Anna Maria College's Zecco Auditorium, 50 Sunset Ln. Note: This is a location change from original plan. To view the warrant, visit the town website at www.paxtonma.gov

Wednesday, December 3

1:30 pm: Boxwood Tree class. DiMeco's Nursery will lead a class on how to create a boxwood tree. All material provided. Registration began Nov5 until full. Each participant must register themselves in person with \$35 cash. Holden Senior Center.

Friday, December 5

6-11 pm: Holidays in Holden Part 1: Jingle and Mingle Hop on the trolley and tour Holden while sampling local flavors in their holiday drink competition, featuring a variety of local businesses.

6:30 pm: Rutland's 25th Annual

November 3 to November 21
The Town of Rutland will have its 2nd Annual Food Drive to benefit the Rutland Food Pantry. Donations can be dropped off at the lobby of the Town Hall Annex, which is the brick building next to the Town Hall. Items on the wish list include stuffing, cranberry sauce, pie crusts, gravy, coffee/tea/cocoa, canned soups, cereal. For every donation of at least five items, residents can enter a raffle to win a gift basket donated by the local business High Hawk Farm. The gift basket will include eco-friendly household items. Donations received after November 21 will be distributed to the pantry for its Christmas distribution.

Festival of Trees. Rutland kicks off its week-long Festival with a Wachusett Chorus musical performance at the First Congregational Church. The celebration continues with various events throughout the week and culminates on Saturday, December 13. Follow them on Facebook: @Rutland Historical Society or visit the website for details at www.rutlandmahistoricalsociety.org.
6:30-8:30 pm: Paxton Holiday Celebration: Warm up by the fire pits, make smores, play cornhole, enjoy delicious food, spread holiday cheer, and remember to vote for the best Town Truck Holiday Makeover. Community groups and local businesses will set up tables. Dance performances by Alexis Lena Dance Arena. The Paxton Center School Chorus will sing carols and there will be a reading of The Night Before Christmas. The annual tree lighting takes place at 7:30 pm. Take pictures with Santa under the tree. Please bring a non-perishable food donation for the Paxton Food Bank.

Saturday, December 6

12 noon: Holidays in Holden, Main Event Visit with Santa, browse the Holiday Market showcasing local artisans, marvel at the Tree Lighting Ceremony, enjoy the Parade of Lights and other festive activities. Come experience the sights, sounds, and spirit of the season with Holidays in Holden - it promises fun, community, and holiday cheer for everyone!

1-3:30 pm: Holiday greens decoration workshop hosted by Paxton MA Garden Club at the Paxton Senior Center basement. Bows, greens, and natural embellishments are available or bring your own. Bring a donation for the Paxton Congregational Church Food Pantry. Free but advanced registration required on the Club's website.

4-8 pm: Rutland's Festival of Trees Day two, Old fire station open house, decorated trees and displays, pictures with Santa, CTMS Chorus performance, tree lighting, snowball races, food trucks, lighted walkway (enter from behind the town hall to the right of the town pool \$2 per person with a \$10 cap per family), Historical Society open house.

Sunday, December 7

1-4 pm: Rutland's Festival of Trees Day three. Decorated trees, wreaths and displays, pictures with Santa, magically decorated walkway to Santa, reindeer games, outdoor train rides, Steve Charette's Strolling Magic Show – and more.

Monday, December 8

1 pm: Wachusett Community Band Holiday Concert Sing-a-Long. Register at the office or call Holden Senior Center.

Wednesday, December 10

11:30 am: Doors open for the Holiday Luncheon at Val's Restaurant with meal served at 12:15. Registration began Nov. 12 until full. \$15 cash per person due at registration; you can register up to two people at a time. The Senior Center is subsidizing cost of the meal. Buffet menu. Rusty Guertin will provide music.

6:30 pm: Rutland's Festival of Trees. Winter Scene Paint Night with artist Diann Hale at the Rutland Free Library. \$40 per participant, space is limited. Email Rutlandmafot1@gmail.com to register.

Thursday, December 11

1:30 pm: Snowman painting on canvas. No painting experience required. Registration begins Nov. 20 until full. Each participant must register themselves in person with \$10 cash. Holden Senior Center.

6 pm: Rutland's Festival of Trees: Family game night with holiday trivia and more at Rutland Free Library.

6:30-8 pm: Pendant Workshop with Klassic Kreations for ages 12 to adult. Make a funky multimedia pendant necklace. Beginner friendly, all materials and instructions provided. Registration required https://tinyurl.com/RMLPendant. Sponsored by Barre Savings Bank Charitable Foundation. Richards Memorial Library.

Friday, December 12

10 am-4 pm: Rutland's Festival of Trees: stroll through the festival to enjoy decorated trees, wreaths, and gingerbreads.

1 pm: Felted snowman ornament workshop. All materials provided. Registration begins Nov. 17 until full. Each participant must register with \$20 cash. Holden Senior Center.

6:30-8:30 pm: Rutland's Festival of Trees Concert at Lilac Hedge Farm, music by Stomp n' Holler, food by Fired Up Pizza and Savage Wraps. \$5 per person for concert entry.

Tuesday, December 16

7-8 pm: The Fright Before Christmas with Jeff Belanger. Remember the famous Christmas song, "There'll be scary ghost stories and tales of the glories of Christmases long, long ago..."? Belanger brings the spooky to life with this eerie multimedia journey of this haunting holiday. This program is not suitable for young children. Registration: Tinyurl.com/RMLFright

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**BEST
OF CENTRAL MASS
2024**

Real Estate Transfers

Sept. 15 - Oct. 14, 2025

Wachusett Free Press will publish Recorded Land transfers in Holden, Paxton, and Rutland from the 15th to the 14th of the preceding months. For instance, this November issue publishes transfers from September 15 to October 14. This information is gathered from the Worcester Registry of Deeds website. We thank Kathryn A. Toomey, Register of Deeds, for her assistance.

HOLDEN

- 18 Heather Circle 9/15:** Grantors Jon Wilson, Heatherlynn Faith Neu Wilson, and H. Wilson to Grantees Matheus V. Cabral and Rosa Fonseca Raimunda Flaviane Viglioni. \$550,000.
- 187 Cook St. 9/16:** Grantors Jason Kenneth Freeze, Alyssa Andell Freeze and Alyssa Freeze to Grantees Ivanesco I. Oleo Checo and Guanerge B. Ceden Martinez. \$450,000

- 216 Reservoir St. 9/17:** Grantors William Carr and William J. Carr to Grantees William Carr Tr and William Carr Living Trust. \$10.
- 58 Wilde Willow Dr. 9/17:** Grantor Ethel R. Army to Grantees Emily Capers and Daniel Bergman. \$480,000.
- 17 Stoneleigh Rd. 9/18:** Grantor Louis J. Piscitani to Grantees Louis J. Piscitani Jr. Tr, Sumiko Kido-Piscitani Tr, and Piscitani Family Trust. \$100.
- 257 Flagler Rd. 9/18:** Grantors Keith M. Sullivan and Susan H. Sullivan to Grantees Lauren Donovan and Brian Donovan. \$739,900.
- 33 Tea Party Circle 9/18:** Grantors Clifford Charles Coon and Stina Karlsson-Coon to Grantees Robert Band and Joy Band. \$614,000.
- 88 Cannon Rd. 9/22:** Grantors James W. Laroche and Susan A. Laroche to Grantee James W. Laroche. \$100.
- 1134 Main St. 9/23:** Grantors John Michael Richard Tr and 1134 Main St.

- Realty Trust to Grantee Meola's Way-side Ice Cream, Inc. \$700,000.
- 10 Morgan Circle 9/23:** Grantors Nikhil Pundru and Spandana Abbadi to Grantees Ryan J. Testa and Sarah Testa. \$687,500.
- 426 Shrewsbury St. 9/24:** Grantor Frederick M. Bennett to Grantees Frederick M. Bennett Tr and Bennett Family Trust. \$1.
- 69 Sherwood Dr. 9/24:** Grantors Rebecca Amaral and Jerry L. Simatos Est. to Grantees Matthew Coyle and Ariana Coyle. \$535,000.
- 37 Fairchild Dr. 9/25:** Grantor Christopher S. Hopkins to Grantees Maria Hopkins and Christopher S. Hopkins. \$100.
- 60 Mason Rd. 9/25:** Grantor Jeffrey Taylor to Grantees Michael A. Grasso Tr, Cynthia M. Grasso Tr, and Grasso Family Revocable Trust. \$560,000.
- 20 Harold St. 9/25:** Grantors Nancy J. Hancock, Birgit Ingegard Patterson Est. to Grantee Jodi Pirelli. \$487,000.
- 18 Short St. 9/26:** Grantors Paul R. Geary and Robin G. Geary to Grantees Elizabeth Margaret Conley and Karen Venables. \$450,000.
- 103 Manning St. 9/26:** Grantor Margaret Schofield to Grantee Kristin M. Young. \$310,000.
- 105 Wyoming Dr./ Nevada Dr. 9/26:** Grantors Alethea M. Cote Tr, Joseph L. Cote Tr, Nancy M. Cote Tr, to Grantees Evo James Fearnley and Emily Mercier. \$401,988.
- 24 Jordan Rd. 9/26:** Grantors Rene Reyes and Jessica W. Reyes to Grantees Sean Dillon and Michelle Dillon. \$810,000.
- 45 Redgate Ln. 9/26:** Grantors James E. Donlevy Jr. Tr, Helena M. Donlevy Tr, and Donlevy Family 2020 Revocable Trust to Grantees Paul R. Geary and Robin G. Geary. \$550,000.
- 180 South Rd. 9/26:** Grantor Sean C. Carroll to Grantees Madison D. Grey and Brittany Grey. \$735,000.
- 335 Chapel St. 9/26:** Grantors Michaela Lee Becker and Amy R. Becker to Grantees Joel C. Lund and Phyllis Lund. \$700,000.
- 36 Somerset Ln. 9/29:** Grantor Judith B. Sandberg to Grantees Judith B. Sandberg Tr and Judith B. Sandberg Revocable Trust 2012. \$100.
- 79 Shrewsbury St. 9/29:** Grantor Robert Sugar to Grantees IR Realty Trust and Robert Sugar Tr. \$100.
- 60 Deanna Dr. 9/29:** Grantor Jackson Woods Investments, LLC, Rose W. Wanderi, and Brian Kiarie. \$801,438.
- 128 Lovell Rd. 9/29:** Grantors Robert Balough and Rita L. Coco to Grantees Montana Onacki and Thomas Onacki. \$580,000.
- 7 Village Way 9/30:** Grantors Patricia L.

- Craig, Tr and Patricia L. Craig Revocable Trust 2024 to Grantee Emily Joan Phelps. \$345,000.
- 38 Juniper Ln. 9/30:** Grantors Lori A. Favata Tr, Lori A. Flood Tr, and Janet P. Favata Revocable Trust to Grantee 53 Saint Germain Street LLC. \$530,000.
- 44 Putnam Ln. 9/30:** Grantors Allan D. Fernandes, Camila Fernandez Alves, and Camila F. Fernandes to Grantees Seth A. Pitts and Jessica L. Pitts. \$950,000.
- 142 Blair Dr. 9/30:** Grantors Mary-Kate Miller, Mary Katherine Miller, and Joshua Lipschultz to Grantee Nefiola Kaso. \$730,000.
- 17 Birch Ave. 10/01:** Grantors Edward A. Moran and Tiffany Moran to Grantee Brittany E. Smith. \$480,000.
- 29 Brice Cir. 10/01:** Grantors Petersen Family Trust, Michael J. Petersen Jr. Tr, and Jennifer V. Petersen Tr to Grantees Michael J. Petersen and Jennifer V. Petersen. \$100.
- 78 Pleasant St. 10/01:** Grantors Anne R. Gillespie, Kathleen M. Kelly, and Marilyn L. Lawendowski to Grantee Seamus Peter Kelly. \$300,000.
- 41 Valley Hill Dr. 10/01:** Grantors John C. Rokicki, Barbara C. Rokicki Est, Barbara C. Demont Est, and Barbara C. Demont Niemczyk Est to Grantees Ian Dziewietin and Jacqueline Dziewietin. \$480,000.
- 84 Tea Party Cir. 10/02:** Grantors Lisa Marie Birch and Lisa M. Birch to Grantees Jimmy B. Trust and Lisa Marie Birch Tr. \$1.
- 2A Tea Party Cir. 10/02:** Grantors Richard A. Callahan, Jane P. Callahan to Grantees Richard A. Callahan Tr, Jane P. Callahan Tr, and Richard A. Callahan 2024 Tr. \$10.
- 40 Princeton St. 10/02:** Grantors James J. Swalec and Constance L. Swalec to Grantee Antelo Properties, LLC. \$315,000.
- 1904 Oakwood St. EXT 10/03:** Grantor Dennis Leroux to Grantees Robert Webbs and Jacqueline Webbs. \$435,000.
- 25 Courtney Dr. 10/06:** Grantors Steven C. Sendrowski and Susan E. Sendrowski to Grantees Robert J. Sendrowski Tr, Meghan F. Sendrowski Tr, and MFRJS 2025 Irrevocable Trust. \$1.
- 378 Reservoir Rd. 10/06:** Grantor Edward C. Stevens, III to Grantee Kyle E. Stevens. \$100.
- Reservoir Rd. (no street number) 10/06:** Grantor Edward C. Stevens, III to Grantee Kyle E. Stevens. \$100.
- 63 Harvest Cir. 10/07:** Grantors Alan Olderstein and Victoria Olderstein to Grantees Eric J. Olderstein Tr, Kevin M. Olderstein Tr, and Olderstein Family 2025 Irrevocable Trust. \$1.
- 17 Mayflower Cir. 10/08:** Grantors:

- Ronald L. Bacon Jr. and Lisa M. Bacon to Grantee Thomas Leighton. \$215,000.
- 399 Quinapoxet St. 10/09:** Grantor Karen M. Burke to Grantees Ryan E. Burke Tr and Karen M. Burke Irrevocable Trust 2025. \$100.
- 279 Fisher Rd. 10/10:** Grantor Wingspan Properties LLC to Grantees Sean Coveney and Megan Coveney. \$995,020.82,
- 19 Teresa Dr. 10/14:** Grantor Shawn R. Lopriore to Grantee Nicole M. Boyda-Lee. \$100.

PAXTON

- 174 Pleasant St. 9/15:** Grantors Victor H. Lemus and Paula Lemus to Grantees Jackson D. Swain and Maia E. Swain. \$382,000.
- 13 Ridgewood Rd. 9/18:** Grantors Marc A. Medoff and Karen A. Medoff to Grantees Marc A. Medoff Tr, Karen A. Medoff Tr, and Medoff Revocable Living Trust. \$100.
- 116 Richards Rd. 10/02:** Grantors Joseph A. Stranieri, Jr. and Kathleen M. Stranieri to Grantees John N. Stranieri and Michael J. Stranieri. \$100.
- 16 Indian Hill Rd. 10/07:** Grantors Scott J. Lemovitz and Debra L. Lemovitz to Grantees Scott J. Lemovitz Tr, Debra L. Lemovitz Tr, and 2025 Lemovitz Revocable Family Trust. \$1.

RUTLAND

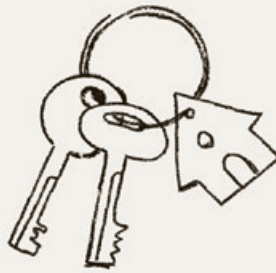
- 72 Crawford Rd. 9/15:** Grantor Suzanne G. Yeskevicz to Grantees Suzanne G. Yeskevicz Tr and Suzanne G. Yeskevicz Family Living Trust. \$1.
- 165 Barre Paxton Rd. 9/17:** Grantors Richard C. Desplaines, Jr. and Patricia A. Desplaines to Grantee Seven Hills Community Services, Inc. \$629,900.
- Peter Ave. (no street number listed) 9/19:** Grantors William G. Knight Est. and Mary P. Knight to Grantees Mary P. Knight Tr and Knight Living Trust. \$1.
- 23 Marjorie Ln. 9/19:** Grantors Sean McSheehy and Erin McSheehy to Grantee Erin Elizabeth McSheehy. \$1.
- Peter Ave. (no street number listed) 9/23:** Grantors Mary P. Knight Tr, and Knight Living Trust to Grantees Family Trust, Knight Living Trust, Kathleen M. Jost Tr and Mary P. Knight Tr. \$1.
- 14 Marjorie Ln. 9/26:** Grantors Leonard R. Clementi and Loretta A. Clementi to Grantees Samantha Tibaudo Tr and Clementi Family Irrevocable Trust. \$100.
- 176 Maple Ave. 9/26:** Grantor Jacques Guerce to Grantee Adris Guerce. \$100.

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Sophia Gibbs, REALTOR®

Sophia Gibbs is a REALTOR® in the family business, Gibbs Realty Inc. She became a licensed REALTOR® in 2019 but has more than 20 years' experience in the field.

"Even before I officially had my license, I was always surrounded by it; I joke with my clients that I actually have over 20 years of experience in the industry," said Gibbs. "I've worn many hats over the years, riding as 'co-pilot' with my parents [firm founders Jeffrey and Christy] to showings in my car seat, helping at our booth at community events, tying ribbons on thousands of pineapples, putting postage on postcards and now I am officially in the driver seat myself and every chapter has taught me something different about the business, about people, and about myself."

She joined the family business because she enjoys the work.

"It wasn't just about following in someone's footsteps. I chose this path because I genuinely love connecting with people, solving problems creatively, and being part of something that's deeply meaningful to others," said Gibbs. "There's something really special about carrying on

a family legacy, while also making it my own."

She says that, since becoming a REALTOR® six years ago, a lot has changed in the business, including tools, tech, a restructuring of commissions and home inspection regulations.

"I love helping people feel informed, empowered, and confident as they take that big step into homeownership. It's incredibly rewarding to be their guide and cheerleader through the process."

- Sophia Gibbs

And clients have changed, too.

"Buyers are walking into open houses with more data than ever. Sellers expect top-tier marketing. Everything is faster, flashier, and more competitive," she says.

But really, the main tenets have remained the same.

"At its core, real estate is still about trust," she says. "No app, website, or AI can replace the feeling of having someone who gets you, advocates for you, and helps you make confident decisions when emotions are run-

ning high. So, while I've had to evolve and stay sharp as things change, my approach remains very human and sincere - rooted in relationships, not just transactions."

Sophia says there is no "typical" client, and that's one of the things she loves most about the field. "In a given month, I might be helping a young couple buy their first home, working with retirees who are downsizing, or advising a family relocating for work. Each client brings their own set of emotions, questions, and goals and I truly enjoy meeting them where they are."

She admits she has a soft spot for the first-time homebuyer which has become one of her specialties.

"Being in a similar stage of life myself, I understand firsthand how exciting and overwhelming that first purchase can be. I love helping people feel informed, empowered, and confident as they take that big step into homeownership. It's incredibly rewarding to be their guide and cheerleader through the process."

And while there is no typical client, what is typical "across the board is that my clients are looking for someone who will really listen, who's patient but



proactive, and who can bring a sense of calm and clarity to what is often a very emotional experience."

Sophia's final advice to anyone looking for a real estate agent, whether to buy or sell, is, "Don't just pick someone who has a lot of listings, flashy ads, and prides themselves on the money. Find someone who really listens to you - someone who will show up, stay present, and help you navigate not just the transaction, but the emotions that come with it. Your home, whether you're buying or selling, holds so much of your life story. You deserve a real estate agent who sees that, and who treats your journey with the care

and attention it deserves."

If Sophia Gibbs can help you on your real estate journey, contact her at 774-329-1887 or SGibbs@GibbsRealtyInc.com.

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REAL ESTATE

continued from page 18

8 Forest Hills Dr. 9/26: Grantors Madison D. Grey and Brittany Grey to Grantees Gabriel Addae and Fosuah Kankam-Ohene. \$520,000.

40 Princeton Rd. and Calamint Hill Rd. 9/26: Grantor Sidneia Lopes Moraes to Grantee Thiago Queiroz Dasilva. \$1,025,000.

22 Kenwood Dr. 9/30: Grantors Carolyn J. Root and David W. Root to Grantees Root Family Revocable Trust, David W. Root Tr and Carolyn J. Root Tr. \$1.

10 Quail Run 9/30: Grantor CB Blair Development Corp to Grantees Na-

thaniel Paintsil and Akousa Paintsil. \$853,280.

176 Maple Ave. 10/01: Grantor Ralph J. Oliveri to Grantees Anne M. Olivieri Tr, Ralph J. Olivieri Tr, and 176 Maple Avenue Realty Trust. \$100.

27 Forest Hills Dr. 10/01: Grantor Wingspan Properties LLC to Grantee Sean McSheehy. \$415,000.

19 Nancy Dr. 10/01: Grantors Diane Lemon and Diane Cronk to Grantee Timothy Cronk. \$100.

130 Fidelity Dr. 10/07: Grantor Harmony Place, LLC to Grantee Richard P. Barrette. \$533,000.

5 Carlsons Way 10/08: Grantors Neal R. Reardon and Nancy E. Reardon to

Grantees Neal R. Reardon Tr, Nancy E. Reardon Tr, and, and Reardon Family Trust. \$100.

2 Nichols Way 10/09: Grantors Kathryn F. Maynard, Est, Kathryn F. Messina Est, and Dail H. Tong to Grantee Dail H. Tong. \$0.

6 Madisyn Ave. 10/10: Grantors Jesse M. Gamble and Tracy L. Gamble to Grantees Brett J. Dion and Portia P. Dion. \$650,000.

235 Glenwood Rd. 10/14: Grantors Mark S. O'Connor, Kathleen J. O'Connor, Kathleen B. O'Connor, Kathleen O'Connor to Grantee Make Investments Great Again LLC. \$205,000.



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