

localtownpages Hopedale

Vol. 12 No. 10

Free to Every Home and Business Every Month

February 1, 2026

“Extra, extra!! Read all about it!” Memorial School students start school newspaper

The first volume of the “Hopedale Memorial Gazette” has been published thanks to the efforts of a hard-working and creative group of 10 Memorial School students. This motivated student group met with Administration in June of 2025 to share their idea for a school newspaper to be published starting in the 2025-2026 school year. Preparations were underway soon after the start of this school year which led to the publication of the very first volume.

Starting in September, the students, ranging from the 3rd to 5th grades, held afterschool planning meetings to organize



the construct for the newspaper, which resulted in a wide vari-

NEWSPAPER

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Ricardo Lima to become Police Chief later this year

By THERESA KNAPP

At its meeting on Jan. 12, the Hopedale Select Board appointed Lieutenant Ricardo Lima as successor to current Police Chief Mark Giovanella who will retire later this year.

In a letter of recommendation to the board dated Dec. 29, Chief Giovanella said, “Throughout the interview, Lieutenant Lima’s responses reflected strong leadership, sound management judgment, and confidence. He articulated clear priorities, demonstrated a practical understanding of day-to-day operations and long-term

planning, and presented as a steady, accountable leader prepared to guide the department through continued professional growth and service to the community.”

In a Jan. 2 memo to the board, Town Administrator Mitch Ruscitti submitted Lima as the top candidate and noted that there were “fewer than three qualified candidates” who applied for the position.

At the Jan. 12 Select Board meeting, Chief Giovanella

CHIEF

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NEWSPAPER

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ety of articles, games, puzzles, comics and interest polls. The majority of their work was completed outside of school hours and stretched beyond their classroom responsibilities.

Students reported on school renovations, such as the completion of the playground and the creation of our Center for Innovation, Research and Creativity (CIRC). Also included were articles about the Hopedale Youth Baseball, the MES Winter Concert, Hopedale History, December Holiday Traditions and a

“Teacher Feature” celebrating Mr. Bourgerly, “Coach B.,” as he prepares for retirement at the end of January.

The Gazette staff also included two student interest polls: one related to school lunch dessert offerings and a second in which students are asked to note their preference for either a “Jellycat” or a “Labubu.” Students will be submitting their opinions by classroom and results will be obtained after all of the votes are tallied!

“We were excited to use the large format printer in CIRC to produce large copies of our first volume, which is proudly displayed in the hallway for

students, staff and visitors to view. Copies have also been shared with all classrooms and offices throughout Memorial and electronically shared with MES families,” said Brian Miller, principal of Memorial Elementary. “Thank you and congratulations to the Gazette staff: Maddox, Ciaran, Nathan, Andrew, Malerie, Lia, James, Thomas, Alexa and Jayson; and special thanks to Mrs. Pierce as well for her contributions toward the first volume.”

Stay tuned as the staff is working on the second volume with intentions to publish this spring!



Submitted by Hopedale Public Schools

New round of Town Hall bids due this month

No bids were received in first round

By THERESA KNAPP

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The former Hopedale Town Hall, at 78 Hopedale Street, is an historic building built in 1886 and dedicated in 1887 as the town’s first official Town Hall. It is a 21,488 square foot building on a .30 acre lot.

“This building, constructed in the Richardsonian Romanesque style, was a state-of-the-art facility in its day. The granite and brownstone structure is notable for its grand arched entryway, decorative leaded glass windows in the main stair, and community meeting space at the upper level. The building has served the town well. It is a hub of activity in the center of town, and is a reminder of the town’s proud history. The building has aged, however, and its systems have become obsolete. The Town of Hopedale has been anticipating a renovation of this facility to bring it into the current century and provide for current and future needs.” This information came from a “Building Conditions Assessment and Recommendations

“We have had some feedback as to the building being in such a state of disrepair, it will be difficult even with tax incentives to move the project forward.”

*-Town Administrator
Mitch Ruscitti regarding
reuse of former
Town Hall*

Report” written in 2013 to be presented to Town Meeting, 13 years ago.

The 2013 report can be found at bit.ly/HopedaleTownHall-RenovationProjectReport_2013

No action was taken at that time and the building has continued to age, poorly.

In July, the town put out a Request for Proposals for a reuse, renovation, rehabilitation, or



Hopedale Town Hall. Photo credit: Theresa Knapp

disposition of the building. Bids were due on Sept. 1 but none were submitted. Town Administrator Mitch Ruscitti reported that he had received some inquiries but no final bids were submitted. Also, at that time, he estimated the cost to renovate the building would be “about \$20 million.”

In October, a second Request for Proposals went out, this time with a request for bidders to suggest what type of tax incentives

would make the project enticing to them. Those bids are due this month but Ruscitti is cautious.

He said, “We have had some feedback as to the building being in such a state of disrepair, it will be difficult even with tax incentives to move the project forward. We are exploring innovative ideas to ensure the building is reused in accordance with the wishes of residents and stakeholders.”

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CHIEF

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Lt. Ricardo Lima will become Hopedale Chief of Police later this year. He was appointed at the Jan. 12 meeting of the Select Board.
Courtesy photo

said that, when he retires, Lt. Lima will step into the role but, until then, Lt. Lima will be training alongside him, and working to meet the requirements necessary for the job.

“This isn’t a job you just get to walk into,” said Chief Giovanella. “We’re going to be working hand to hand so the transition is going to be smooth.”

Before making the motion to appoint Lt. Lima, Select Board member Bernie Stock said he had worked with many police chiefs in his career. “Mark, I have to say that I think you’ve been the best. And I think one of the things that I’ve admired the most is your ability to find good quality people...and I think this is another one of those really good recommendations.”

The motion passed unanimously, with a round of applause from the room, which included several police officers.

Lt. Lima thanked the board and said, “These are going to be some tough shoes to fill.” He also thanked the chief, police department, fire department, his wife and children, his parents who were watching virtually from Portugal, his siblings, and his grandparents.

He said, “When I started here, I was a 21-year-old kid, I didn’t know anything. All I knew was I was big, strong, dumb and could speak multiple languages to interact with the community, and Chief Giovanella brought me in to start my long career.”

An effective date was not announced.

Adamski named to UW-Madison Dean's List

MADISON, Wis. - The University of Wisconsin-Madison has recognized students named to the Dean's List for the fall semester of the 2025-2026 academic year, among them is Will Adamski, School of Education, of Hopedale.

Students who achieve at a high level academically are recognized by the dean at the close of each semester. To be eligible for the Dean's List, students must complete a minimum of 12 graded degree credits in that semester. Each university school or college sets its own GPA requirements for students to be eligible to receive the distinction.

To view an online listing, visit <https://registrar.wisc.edu/deanslist/>.

‘Historic Hopedale Homes’ to be presented on Feb. 25

Local residents and history enthusiasts are invited to step back in time at Bancroft Memorial Library on Wed., Feb. 25, at 6:30 p.m. for an illustrated presentation on the historic homes of Hopedale.

Dan Malloy, local historian and curator of www.hope1842.com, will present Historic Hopedale Homes, exploring the architectural and social history of the town through its most significant residences.

The program will begin with the Hopedale Community’s famed “Old House,” continue to the Adin Ballou House, and highlight the homes of the Draper, Dutcher, and Bancroft families, along with stories of the people who lived there. A rare historic photograph will also be featured, showing President William Howard Taft seated beside Governor Eben S. Draper on Draper’s porch on Adin Street, offering a fascinating glimpse into Hopedale’s



The “Old House” will be one of the homes featured in ‘Historic Hopedale Homes’ with Dan Malloy, local historian and curator of www.hope1842.com, on Feb. 25 at the library. Source: Bancroft Memorial Library

connections to national history and its enduring local legacy.

Registration is required for this program. Please see the Event Calendar online at www.bancroftmemoriallibrary.org

to register, or call (508) 634-2209 for assistance.

Source: Bancroft Memorial Library

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Memorial Elementary School holds first ever Book Swap

By KELLY BIWER

Memorial Elementary School hosted its first ever Book Swap on Dec. 23, during school hours. This event was created to encourage reading and ensure students have access to books that they love to read. Students were asked to bring in gently used books that they've read and were ready to pass along to another reader. Every student had the opportunity to "shop" for a new-to-them book during the book swap.

Thanks to generous donations from families, staff, and community members, students were able to select a book to take home and keep. The collection included picture books, early readers, chapter books, nonfiction, graphic novels, poetry and even board books for younger siblings at home! We had over 800 books for students to choose from, which allowed every student to find something that matched their interests and reading level. Teachers were able to grab some books for their classrooms as well! When asked if she enjoyed the book swap, one fourth grade student said



Memorial Elementary School participated in its first ever Book Swap in December. Courtesy Photo

her favorite part was picking out a book for her sister. This event was truly a team effort. Teachers helped students

prepare by talking about the book swap in class, staff members created bookmarks and assisted with sorting and organizing

books as they arrived, and PACE volunteers assisted with setting up the book swap and supporting students during the event, by

making sure students were choosing books that were a good fit. Laura Brilliant- Giangrande, of the Bancroft Memorial Library, supported our swap by donating many of the books available for students and supported students by helping them choose books at the swap as well.

Students were so excited to browse the tables and pick their new-to- them book! The positive response from both students and staff made it clear that the book swap was a meaningful and successful addition to the MES school community. Ann Rolo, first grade teacher, shared "students loved being introduced to new literature and were excited to take a chance on experiencing a new genre. As a teacher, it was equally exciting to discover fresh books to bring into my classroom that spark curiosity, engagement, and a love of reading."

We are so grateful for the support that made this event possible and look forward to continuing initiatives that promote a love for reading!

Submitted by Hopedale Public Schools

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Annual ‘Check Out Challenge’ is back this month

Bancroft Memorial Library and Memorial Elementary celebrate literacy

The annual Check Out Challenge is back at Bancroft Memorial Library.

Ms. Laura is thrilled to once again partner with Memorial Elementary School to celebrate literacy and encourage students to make the library a part of their everyday lives.

For the entire month of February, every time a student visits the library and checks out materials, their classroom receives a check mark. The three classrooms with the highest number of check marks at the end of February will receive Amazon gift cards of varying amounts, and the classroom that finishes in fourth place will win a collection of books by popular authors Dav Pilkey and Jeff Kinney - perfect for sparking reading excitement among students.

The challenge is a fun way for students to explore the library, discover new books, and support their classrooms at the same time.

“It’s always a joy working with Memorial Elementary School and all the students and their families,” said Ms. Laura. “The Check Out Challenge brings everyone into the library, where we love helping families discover just-right books, games, movies, and other materials that they will love.”



Nominations now open for Suzan Ciaramicoli Excellence in Volunteerism Award

The Hopedale Select Board is now accepting nominations for the Suzan Ciaramicoli Excellence in Volunteerism Award.

Nominations will be accepted until Wednesday, March 31, via the online form found at www.hopedale-ma.gov/home/news/nominations-are-open-suzan-ciaramicoli-excellence-volunteerism-award.

For more information, contact Kelly Grant at kgrant@hopedale-ma.gov.

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Tap into Spring: Learn how maple syrup is made on Feb. 28

Learn the art and tradition of maple sugaring at a hands-on, family-friendly event at Bancroft Memorial Library on Sat., Feb. 28, at 11 a.m., hosted by local historian Kelly Merchant.

Learn the basics of tapping maple trees, including how to identify suitable trees, when and how tapping is done, and how sap is collected and transformed into delicious maple syrup.

This timely late-winter program offers a wonderful opportunity to connect with local history, seasonal practices, and the natural landscape while gaining practical knowledge about one of New England's sweetest traditions.

Participants will tap trees around the Bancroft Memorial Library and enjoy tasting a few syrup samples.

Registration is required for this program. Please see the Event Calendar online at www.bancroftmemoriallibrary.org to register, or call (508) 634-2209 for assistance.



Winter parking ban in effect through April 1

The Town of Hopedale's winter parking ban is in effect now through April 1, prohibiting overnight on-street parking between 1 a.m. and 6 a.m., and also when the Highway Department must treat and or plow the roads.

Vehicles left on the street during these hours will be subject to fines.

Source: www.hopedale-ma.gov

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Your Money, Your Independence

Model Twice, Execute Once: Roth Conversion Analysis Done Right



Glenn Brown, CFP

One of the most underutilized and often misunderstood strategies in retirement and tax planning is the Roth IRA, particularly Roth conversions. Evolving tax laws, funding options, and legacy planning have made understanding how and when to use this strategy more important than ever.

A Roth IRA provides tax-free growth and distributions with no lifetime RMDs, unlike Traditional IRAs that require taxable withdrawals regardless of need. Despite these benefits, many high earners say, “I make too much money to do a Roth.” While this may limit direct contributions, especially outside workplace retirement plans, it does not eliminate the ability to build Roth assets through other planning strategies.

Contribution vs. Conversion

A Roth conversion moves assets from a Traditional IRA into a Roth IRA, triggering income tax on pre-tax contributions and earnings in the year of conver-

sion. Once converted, those assets grow and can be distributed tax-free, providing long-term flexibility. This is where Roth conversions become a form of tax-rate arbitrage: paying taxes today at known rates to avoid higher or uncertain taxes in retirement.

Understanding the Pro-Rata Rule

When converting, the IRS looks at all Traditional, SEP and SIMPLE IRAs combined to determine the taxable portion. You cannot cherry-pick only after-tax contributions; the taxable amount is proportional to the ratio of pre-tax to after-tax funds across all balances. Ignoring this rule can lead to unexpected tax consequences.

Model Twice, Execute Once

Effective Roth conversions are rarely last-minute decisions. Early in the year, potential conversions should be modeled to estimate taxable income, marginal brackets, and downstream effects such as Medicare premiums or state taxes. Establishing guardrails early provides a framework for decision-making.

Execution should wait until later in the year, after income, bonuses, capital gains, and deductions are clearer. Re-running the model allows adjustment of conversion amount, or skipping a year, to reduce the risk of over-paying taxes.

Use Market Downturns to Your Advantage

Market declines can improve the tax efficiency of Roth

conversions. If stocks or ETFs fall significantly, converting at lower values reduces the taxable amount while allowing future growth to occur tax-free. If this situation doesn’t occur, conversions must still be completed by December 31. Spreading conversions over multiple years can help manage marginal tax rates and plan for cash flow to pay taxes with non-retirement assets.

Today’s Tax Rates Will Change

It’s dangerous to assume federal or state taxes will remain fixed. Even “permanent” laws can change with new Congressional majorities or administrations. Rising deficits, shifting fiscal priorities, and evolving state policies make future tax rates, deductions, and exemptions uncertain. Roth conversions create income insulated from these changes, offering greater tax diversification, flexibility and certainty in retirement planning.

Legacy Benefits Always Overlooked

Many analyses of Roth conversions stop at the death of the second spouse, overlooking benefits for children and grandchildren. Inherited Roth IRA distributions are tax-free, unlike inherited Traditional IRAs, where withdrawals are taxed at the beneficiary’s income rate.

If the original owner was taking RMDs from a Traditional IRA, those taxable withdrawals continue under the SECURE Act’s 10-year rule. With an inherited Roth, heirs face the same 10-year rule but no annual RMDs, allowing assets to compound tax-

free and be withdrawn at the end of the period without generating taxable income or increasing the Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) of mid-career beneficiaries.

Take Ownership

By modeling conversions early, executing with updated knowledge, and taking advantage of market dips, you can reduce future tax uncertainty and preserve flexibility. Consult your Certified Financial Planner to see how Roth IRAs and Roth conversions fit into your holistic financial plan.

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

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

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SOUR GRAPES

by Tim Jones



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For more information on any programs or to register, please call (508) 634-2209 for assistance or check the Event Calendar at www.bancroftmemoriallibrary.org

Library News

The Library will be closed on Monday, February 16th for Presidents' Day.

Helen Symonds Book Group
– Wednesday, February 4th at 1:00pm

The group will be discussing *The Lion Women of Tehran* by Marjan Kamali.

Community Conversations –
Wednesday, February 4th at 6:30pm

Community Conversations will meet to discuss "What's Happening in Local Politics." This meeting can be attended via Zoom; email kbethel-penny@cwmar.org to request the link.

Get help with Jenna – Tuesday,
February 10th from 10:30am-12:30pm

Need help with applications or support services? Jenna, a Community Health Worker with the Blackstone Valley Partnership for Public Health, can assist with MassHealth, Fuel Assistance, Medicare, past-due bills, and more. She works with the Hopedale Board of Health and has extensive healthcare experience. Schedule a free 30-minute appointment via the Library's online Event Calendar or call (508) 634-2209 for assistance.

BVPL Cribbage Tournament –
Wednesday, February 18th from 5:30pm-7:30pm

The next Blackstone Valley Public Library Cribbage Tournament will be held at Millbury Public Library. Registration is mandatory; please contact the hosting Library directly to sign up.

Maker Monday – Monday,
February 23rd at 6:00pm

This month the adult crafting workshop is Make Your Own Junk Journal! Registration is required.

News from the Friends of the Hopedale Library:

Historic Hopedale Homes with Dan Malloy – Wednesday, February 25th at 6:30pm

Local historian Dan Malloy will present an illustrated talk exploring Hopedale's architectural and social history through its most notable houses and residents. The program will feature the Old House, the Adin Ballou house, and the homes of the Draper, Dutcher, and Bancroft families, and will include a rare historic photograph highlighting Hopedale's connection to national history. Registration is required.

Maple Tree Tapping with Kelly Merchant – Saturday, February 28th at 11:00am

Learn how to tap maple trees and make your own syrup with local historian and Hopedale resident Kelly Merchant! Participants will tap trees around the Bancroft Memorial Library and enjoy tasting a few syrup samples along the way. Registration is required.

National Clean Off Your Bookcase Day is Friday, February 20th!

Observe National Clean Off Your Bookcase Day while supporting the Friends of the Hopedale Library! This day encourages book lovers to declutter, reorganize, and refresh their shelves by donating books they no longer need, rediscovering old favorites, and creating a more inviting reading space at home. We will gladly accept donations of gently used, like-new books to benefit our Ongoing Book Sale this day from 1-5pm. We welcome children's books of all

ages, as well as adult hardcovers and paperbacks published within the last 10 years. Please note that we are unable to accept textbooks, cookbooks, or older titles. Your quality donations help fund library programs and services - thank you for helping keep our shelves (and yours!) fresh.

Free Seed Library! – Beginning February 14th

Beginning on Saturday, February 14th, get free seeds from our Seed Library. There is no limit! If you don't need a full packet, there are smaller envelopes available to take what you need. Sponsored by The Friends of the Hopedale Library.

About the Friends of the Library

Founded in 1983, the Friends of the Hopedale Library is a volunteer non-profit that supports the Library by funding equipment, materials, and programs beyond the regular budget. We meet on the second Wednesday of each month, September - June, at 6:30pm. New members and ideas are always welcome!

News from the Marjorie Hattersley Children's Room:

February is Check Out Challenge Month!

For the month of February, Hopedale students in grades K-6 who check out items from the Library will earn checkmarks for their class and compete for prizes! The top 3 classes win gift cards and 4th place will receive a collection of books by Jeff Kinney & Dav Pilkey.

National Take Your Child to the Library Day! – Saturday, February 7th at 11:00am

This annual event encourages families to visit libraries and discover all we have to offer! Take part in a book character scavenger hunt around Bancroft Memorial Library, get your face painted and pick a free book to take home!

February Vacation Week is February 16th – 20th: All ages are welcome to join Ms. Laura and participate in prehistoric fun with DINOSAURS!

Tuesday, February 17th 11am-12pm: Join our Dinosaur Dance party filled with bubbles, music, glow sticks and disco lights!

Wednesday, February 18th 6-7pm: Animal Adventures presents their Dino-Adventures program! A hands-on dinosaur program featuring fossils, skulls, claws and live animals - perfect for any dinosaur lover! Registration is required.

Thursday, February 19th 11am-12pm: Enjoy a dinosaur story then ROAR on over to make a fun take-home craft!

Friday, February 20th 11am-12pm: Make some Prehistoric Ooze!

Tummy Time Play – Tuesdays 2/3, 2/10 & 2/24 at 10:00am, ages 0-18 months

Join us for some infant fun in a safe environment! There are fun, developmentally appropriate toys that encourage gross motor development. Drop in!

LIBRARY

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“ WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU! ”

- Have an upcoming event?
- Do you have a concern about things happening around town?

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LIBRARY

continued from page 8

Toddler Tunes – Thursdays 2/5, 2/12 & 2/26 at 10:00am, ages 18 mos– 3 years

This program is perfect for energetic toddlers! Along with a story, we will work on gross motor skills and play with balls, a parachute, instruments, bean bags, scarves and more. Drop in!

Builder Saturday – Saturday, February 14th from 10:00am-1:00pm

If you love Legos, we've got thousands to play with! Use our Legos to create a masterpiece that we can put on display for all to see. Drop in and all ages welcome!

Movie Matinee – Saturday, February 21st from 11:00am-1:00pm

Join us for a movie at the Library! Bring some snacks, a cozy blanket, get comfy and enjoy a family friendly flick!

Volunteer Saturdays for High School Students – Saturday, February 28th 11:00am-1:00pm

Each month there will be an opportunity for high school students to earn 2 hours of volunteer time from 11am - 1pm. Registration is required.

***NEW!* F.A.I.R. - Family Adventures in Reading – Monday, February 9th 6:30-7:30pm**

Six families will have an opportunity to come together to enjoy a book, a snack, and a craft. When the meeting is over the family will get to keep their copy of the book. Registration is required.

Genre Book Club – All ages

Join the Genre Book Club and create your own bookmark with a cable ring. Read any book you choose on your own schedule; after each finished book, stop by the Children's Room to collect a genre badge. The club has no scheduled meetings, is open to all and can be joined at any time.

Reading Dragons: A Card Game Reading Club – All ages

Reading Dragons allows readers to earn collectible dragon cards through logged reading time. Every 30 minutes recorded on a Time Tracker earns one card, and completing two hours earns all four stages of a dragon. The card game can be played with friends as additional dragons are earned. Readers are invited to add book recommendations as "Book Scales" to the dragon display in the Program Room. The program runs on a rolling basis and can be joined at any time.

1000 Books Before Kindergarten

Bancroft Memorial Library offers the 1000 Books Before Kindergarten program for young families and early readers. At registration, you will be provided a starting kit with a library book bag, cable for achievement tags, program information, suggested book list and a log for books 1–100. Every 100 books read earns a tag for the cable, and reaching 1,000 books earns a lawn sign celebrating the achievement. This program runs on a rolling basis and can be joined anytime.

B.A.S.H. (Bancroft After School Hangout) – Grades 4-6

A drop-in after-school program, Monday–Thursday, 2:30–4:00 PM. Kids can play games, use laptops, or do arts and crafts in a safe, social environment. Students must be able to reach a parent/guardian and follow Library rules.

For updates throughout the month, Friend us on Facebook and sign up at www.wowbrary.org to discover the Library's newest books, movies and music. Our webpage is www.bancroft-memoriallibrary.org

Bright Beginnings Center Preschool Registration is underway

As the new year begins, some families in Hopedale are preparing for one of the most important milestones in their children's early lives. The Bright Beginnings Center (BBC), the preschool program for the Hopedale Public Schools, has officially announced that online registration for the 2026-2027 school year opened for town residents on Jan. 20.

Known throughout the region as one of the top-performing early childhood centers, BBC continues to set a high bar for early childhood experiences in the Blackstone Valley. The school's reputation is built on a foundation of professional expertise and a deep commitment to the developmental needs of young learners. At the heart of BBC's success is its highly qualified staff. All of BBC's classroom teachers are licensed through the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). This ensures that students are not only in a safe and nurturing environment but are also receiving instruction from professionals who are ex-

perts in early childhood development and special education.

The Bright Beginnings Center utilizes research-based early childhood curriculum programs that align with state standards while maintaining a focus on the "whole child." By blending academic readiness with social-emotional growth, the program ensures that Hopedale's youngest students are well-prepared for the transition to kindergarten and beyond. Through hands-on activities, students explore STEM concepts, literacy, and social skills in an environment that encourages curiosity and problem-solving. This play-based approach allows children to experiment, ask questions, and develop a genuine love for learning.

One of the most unique features of the Bright Beginnings Center is its innovative Forest Friends program. As one of the first public school districts in Massachusetts to embrace the forest-based learning model, BBC offers students the chance to take their education into the great outdoors. The For-

est Friends program utilizes the beautiful natural setting of the Hopedale Parklands and the center's own outdoor classroom. In this nature-based setting, children are encouraged to build physical resilience and motor skills, engage in child-led exploration of the local ecosystem, and develop a deep connection to the environment through all four seasons.

New student registration on January 20th is open to all Hopedale residents, children of staff members of the Hopedale Public Schools, and siblings of current non-resident students. Any new non-resident families who are interested in registering at BBC will be able to do so on February 9th. The online registration form will be available through the district website at hopedaleschools.org. Families should select BBC under the Schools menu and then select Registration. With spots in high demand due to the school's stellar reputation and unique offerings, early registration is highly recommended.



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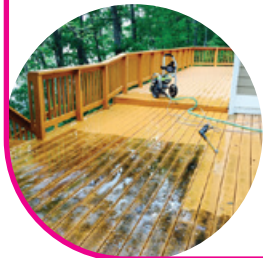
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Heather Welch honored with 'Promising Practices' award

On Dec. 16, educators throughout the Blackstone Valley gathered at the Three Seasons Restaurant at the Blackstone Valley Regional Vocational Technical High School to honor our Promising Practices Award Recipients for 2025, one of whom was Hopedale's Heather Welch.

Nominated by superintendents, curriculum directors, and principals, Promising Practices recipients are selected because they motivate and inspire students. Their lessons are snapshots of instruction that are engaging, encourage collaboration between students and staff, and demonstrate best practices in meeting student academic and social-emotional needs. Most important, the recipients' lessons serve as exemplars in cultivating higher order thinking skills across all content areas.

At the Promising Practices celebration, the recipients give an overview of their lessons and try to "plant a seed" of new and innovative teaching practices into the minds of the other educators attending the event. This year's Hopedale recipient, Nurse

Heather Welch was recognized for her life-saving contributions to student safety. The honor highlights her tireless work in implementing Project ADAM and the Healthy Hearts Initiative within the Bright Beginnings Center, establishing a gold standard for cardiac emergency preparedness.

Project ADAM (Automated Defibrillators in Adam's Memory) is a national program dedicated to preventing sudden cardiac arrest deaths in schools. In addition to emergency response, the Healthy Hearts Initiative emphasizes proactive wellness. Welch has been instrumental in:

- Staff Training: Coordinating comprehensive CPR and AED certification for teachers and administrators.
- System Drills: Implementing "Cardiac Emergency Response Drills" to ensure the school's response team can reach any location on campus with life-saving equipment in under three minutes.

- Student Education: Introducing age-appropriate ways to talk about heart health and the importance of "helpers" in the school clinic.

This award serves as a formal "thank you" from the community for her commitment to keeping our children's hearts, and their futures, safe.

Submitted by Hopedale Public Schools

Nurse Heather Welch, center, is a 2025 Promising Practices award recipient. With her are Hopedale Superintendent of Schools Karen Crebase (left) and Kristen Poisson, principal of the Bright Beginnings Center.
Courtesy photo



Hopedale's Bri Frongillo collects second NEWMAC Offensive Player of the Week while at Emerson

Emerson College senior guard Bri Frongillo has been named the New England Women's and Men's Basketball Athletic Conference (NEWMAC) Offensive Player of the Week, presented by SKYBOKX 109, for women's basketball the Conference announced today.

Frongillo earns the weekly award for the second time this season and seventh of her career after averaging 18.5 points per game on 48.1-percent shooting in a 2-0 week for Emerson. She connected on 4-of-9 (44.4%) three-pointers and converted all seven free-throw attempts while also contributing 4.0 rebounds, 4.0 assists, and 1.0 steals in 39.5 minutes per game over the week. It marks the third week this season the Lions have

collected NEWMAC Offensive Athlete of the Week with sophomore Jessie Silk (Newton, Massachusetts/Beaver Country Day) earning the honors on Nov. 17 and Frongillo collecting her first recognition of the season on Dec. 15.

Last month, Frongillo paced Emerson to a 73-62 win over Salve Regina University in the NEWMAC opener with a game-high 27 points on 9-of-20 shooting, converting all seven free throws and adding seven rebounds and four assists. And rounded out the Lions in double figures in a 58-56 win at Worcester State University with 10 points on 4-of-7 shooting, canning both three-point attempts, with four assists and two steals.

Frongillo, named a preseason

All-American by D3Hoops.com, has started eight of the nine games she has played since returning from a first semester internship on the West Coast. She ranks second among NEWMAC scoring leaders with her team-best 19.3 points per game on 41.7-percent shooting (ninth NEWMAC), including 42.3-percent (22-for-53) from three-point distance (3rd), while shooting a NEWMAC-best 96.3% (26-27) from the free-throw line. Frongillo averages 2.4 three-point field goals per game (3rd), 3.1 rebounds, 2.6 assists and a steal per game in a NEWMAC-high 38.0 minutes per contest.

Frongillo has scored in double-figures in eight of nine games played this season, with

20-plus points in three games and six career 30-point outings. She has led the Lions in scoring in seven of the nine games since her return and 42 times in her career overall. The reigning NEWMAC Athlete of the Year and an honorable mention All-American by the Women's Basketball Coaches Association (WBCA), is a two-time All-NEWMAC first team selection since transferring from Division I Bryant University. She has scored 1,100 of her 1,156 career points at Emerson, including 56 as a first year at Bryant, also totaling 208 rebounds, 234 assists and 70 steals in her 65 career games played. She is a 44.8-percent shooter during her time at Emerson, including 37.9% from beyond the arc,

having converted 87.4% of her free-throw attempts.

Frongillo, a College Sports Communicators (CSC) Academic All-District and two-time NEWMAC Academic All-Conference performer, has scored in double figures in 51 of the 65 games she has played in her collegiate career. She has recorded three career double-doubles – all with points and assists – netting 20-plus points 29 times in her career, including 30-plus points six times with a pair of 40-point games. She netted a career-high 44 points with a career-best 12 assists in a win over Coast Guard Academy last January.

Submitted by Emerson College

Hopedale Public Safety Log

Uxbridge response, unattended death, hit and run, more

Between Dec. 15 and Jan. 15, the Hopedale Police and Fire Departments responded to hundreds of calls, many related to motor vehicle stops, vehicle accidents/crashes, traffic complaints, preventative patrolling, community policing, well-being checks, illegal parking notifications, theft/larceny/forgery/fraud, burglar alarms, lost/found property, property watches, animal complaints, road hazards, LTC/FIC (license to carry/firearms identification card) matters, suspicious persons/activity, summons service, court appearances, safety details, school resource officer, requests for public assistance, cell checks, general information, and record requests.

This is not meant to be an exhaustive list. Entries of note include:

Dec. 15 at 7:50 p.m., Neck Hill Rd., arrest. A 56-year-old Hopedale male was charged with assault with a dangerous weapon.

Dec. 15 at 8:26 p.m., Plain St., well-being check

Dec. 16 at 8:33 a.m., Milford District Court, prisoner transport

Dec. 16 at 2:16 p.m., HPD station, car seat installation

Dec. 16 at 7:12 p.m., Bancroft Park, animal complaint

Dec. 16 at 11:34 p.m., arrest. A 78-year-old Hopedale female was charged with assault and battery on a family/household member.

Dec. 18 at 7:23 a.m., Mill St., suspicious activity

Dec. 18 at 4:03 p.m., Williams St., disturbance, peace restored

Dec. 18 at 8:57 p.m., Bancroft Park, well-being check, arrest. A 61-year-old Hopedale female was charged with possession of a Class B drug

Dec. 20 at 2:28 a.m., Mendon St., suspicious activity

Dec. 21 at 8:03 a.m., Sacred Heart Church, well-being check

Dec. 22 at 2 a.m., Liberty Cir., breaking and entering

Dec. 25 at 9:25 a.m., Inman St., animal complaint

Dec. 26 at 8:18 p.m., S. Main St., motor vehicle stop, arrest. A 32-year-old Milford male was charged with having a warrant from another jurisdiction.

Dec. 27 at 4:24 p.m., records request for a 41-year-old Hopedale female with three outstanding warrants.

Dec. 28 at 12:18 p.m., Laurelwood Dr., theft/larceny/forgery/fraud

Dec. 28 at 2:37 p.m., Mellen St., unattended death

Dec. 29 at 12:43 a.m., suspicious activity/person/vehicle, arrest. A 39-year-old Mendon male was charged with OUI-liquor OR .08%, negligent operation of a motor vehicle, failure to wear seat belt, assault & battery on a police officer.

Dec. 31 at 3:27 a.m., Laurelwood Dr., 911 hang-up/abandoned/open line

Dec. 31 at 2:26 p.m., HPD, theft/larceny/forgery/fraud

Jan. 3 at 10:50 p.m., Bancroft Park, disturbance

Jan. 5 at 3:29 a.m., S. Main St., suspicious activity/person/vehicle

Jan. 6 at 4:05 p.m., Mendon St., hit and run

Jan. 8 at 4:01 p.m., S. Main St., motor vehicle stop, arrest. A 26-year-old Milford male was charged with operating a motor vehicle with license suspended, motor vehicle not meeting RMV safety standards, and outstanding warrant.

Jan. 9 at 7:45 a.m., Uxbridge, Central Massachusetts Law Enforcement Council (CEMLEC) motorcycle unit

Jan. 14 at 7:36 a.m., Uxbridge, CEMLEC motorcycle unit

Jan. 15 at 7:25 a.m., Uxbridge, CEMLEC motorcycle unit

Jan. 15 at 8:11 a.m., HPD, threats

Jan. 15 at 3:16 p.m., HPD, threats

Source: Hopedale Police Department

Community invited to HJSHS ‘Snowcase’ Curriculum Fair on Feb. 5

Hopedale Junior-Senior High School (HJSHS) Principal Derek Atherton and the HJSHS faculty are officially inviting the community to the Second Annual Snowcase Curriculum Fair and Art Show. Scheduled for Thursday, Feb. 5, from 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m., this open-house event is designed to give current families and parents of future students an inside look at the school’s evolving academic landscape.

Held in the Media Center, the Snowcase serves as a bridge between the classroom and the community, highlighting the school’s commitment to “authentic learning”—projects where students apply their knowledge and the school Portrait of a Graduate skills to the real world.

The fair will feature a dive into Hopedale’s most recent academic initiatives. Visitors will have the chance to see student projects from Project Lead The Way (PLTW), DECA, and

the school’s Innovation Career Pathways, which focus on high-demand fields such as Business, Biomedical Science, and Manufacturing (MET).

One of the night’s anticipated highlights is the Anatomage Virtual Dissection Table display, a state-of-the-art tool that allows students to explore human anatomy through high-resolution 3D visualization.

For parents looking toward the 2026-2027 school year, the Snowcase offers a vital opportunity to meet with Academic Department Heads and School Counselors. Staff will be available to answer questions regarding:

- The Program of Course Studies: Understanding course offerings and requirements.
- Student Scheduling: Navigating the transition between grade levels and graduation requirements

- Core Initiatives: Learning about the MY Career and Academic Plan (MYCAP), Hopedale’s Portrait of the Graduate, and Relevant and Engaging Authentic Learning (REAL) opportunities.

Beyond the academic displays, the evening aims to celebrate the Blue Raider spirit. All attendees will be automatically entered into a raffle for a chance to win gift cards from the Hopedale Athletic Department and the Blue Raiders School Store.

This is an opportunity to see our students’ authentic learning in action. Whether you are a parent of a 7th grader just starting their journey or a senior preparing for their capstone or internship experience, the Snowcase provides a comprehensive look at the excellence Hopedale Jr Sr High School has to offer.

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Living Healthy

World-Class Eye Surgery Closer to Home:

Why the Cataract Surgery Center of Milford Is Special

By: ROGER M. KALDAWY, M.D.

For patients facing cataract surgery, choosing where to have the procedure can feel overwhelming. Many assume the best care requires traveling to a major academic hospital in Boston. In reality, some of the most advanced, safest, and most patient-centered cataract surgery in Massachusetts is happening right here at the Cataract Surgery Center of Milford, operated by Milford Franklin Eye Center.

Milford Franklin Eye Center has served the community for more than four decades, earning a reputation for comprehensive care grounded in continuity, accessibility, and physician involvement. Unlike practices that rely on rotating or visiting surgeons, the ophthalmologists here most of them live and they all work

in the community, provide emergency coverage, and care for patients before, during, and after surgery. That continuity is a key reason patients trust them.

A major distinction of the Cataract Surgery Center of Milford is that surgery is performed in a fully licensed, Medicare-certified, and QUAD A-accredited ambulatory surgery center—not a standard office. This distinction has important safety and financial benefits.

Office-based cataract surgery often requires patients to pay out-of-pocket office use fees. This is because many insurance companies decline coverage for office-based surgery because of safety concerns for surgeries performed outside accredited centers. At the Cataract Surgery Center of Milford, this is not a concern: these charges are covered by insurance.



The center meets strict standards for sterility, anesthesia, staffing, infection control, and emergency preparedness—comparable to hospitals—ensuring patient safety and avoiding unexpected costs.

Patients are encouraged to

ask questions when referred for cataract surgery. They should ask their optometrists whether the ophthalmologist performs surgery in an accredited center or an office, and whether any commercial relationships may influence the referral. Transparency helps patients make informed decisions about safety and cost.

The center is also a regional leader in innovation. It was among the first in Massachusetts to adopt laser-assisted cataract surgery and advanced premium intraocular lenses, helping many patients reduce or eliminate dependence on glasses. More recently, it became the first in the state to implant the Clareon Pan-Optix Pro trifocal lens, a next-generation implant providing sharp vision at near, intermediate, and distance ranges.

The center also leads in glaucoma care as well. It was the first in the region to offer Direct Selective Laser Trabeculoplasty (DSLT), which delivers laser energy without touching the eye, making treatment faster, more comfortable, and precise while maintaining a strong safety profile. With this laser, patients often reduce or eliminate daily eye drops. The center was also the first in New England to use iDose TR, an advanced treatment that delivers sustained-release medication for cataract patients, a milestone covered in a Channel 5 news story.

The center was also the first to install the Unity Cataract System, a fully integrated surgical

platform that combines imaging, fluidics, and phacoemulsification in one system. This allows surgeons greater control, consistency, and efficiency, improving safety and outcomes.

The center remains deeply patient-centered. Cataract surgery is typically performed using topical anesthesia—eye drops rather than injections—combined with gentle IV sedation. Patients are awake but comfortable, and follow-up care is provided by the same surgeons who performed the procedure, reinforcing continuity. Compare this to the sad and scary situation of office-based surgery, where only a pill is given and additional sedation cannot be administered due to the lack of IV access and no anesthesiologist present.

The Cataract Surgery Center of Milford offers a rare combination: hospital-level safety standards, cutting-edge technology, transparent insurance coverage approved by all insurers, and local care. Patients do not need to travel far, go outside their insurance network, or pay out-of-pocket fees to receive exceptional cataract and glaucoma treatment. For many in Milford and surrounding communities, world-class eye care is not only accessible—it is right here at home.

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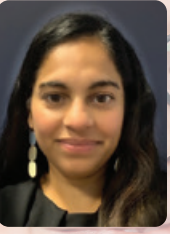
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Sue Ciaramicoli named ‘Champions of the Blackstone’ VIP volunteer, earns 10-year pin

Blackstone Heritage Corridor (BHC) celebrated its Champions of the Blackstone Awards Reception in December, highlighting award recipients and Volunteers-In-Parks (VIP) volunteers for their commitment and dedication to the Blackstone River Valley.

Sue Ciaramicoli of Hopedale was awarded a 10-year pin, and was named a VIP volunteer.

BHC Executive Director Anya Wilczynski congratulated the Corridor’s National Park Service VIP volunteers for contributing \$859,521 in service in fiscal year 2025. A total of 234 volunteers logged 24,706

hours—valued at \$34.79 per hour. Volunteers who serve 250 or more hours are awarded a complimentary America the Beautiful Pass, granting access to more than 2,000 federal recreation sites. In addition to Ciaramicoli, 11 other volunteers achieved over 250 hours of service in 2025, including Alan Salemi, Albert Menard, Betty and Carlo Mencucci, Brian Garrett, Bruce DeVault, Edward and Kim Walker, John Marsland, Paul Schaefer, and Rich Keene.

The event took place at the Singh Performance Center at Alternatives’ Whitin Mill, and recognized John H. Chafee

Leadership Award recipients, as well as the Student of the Year, Partner of the Year, and Suzanne Buchanan Volunteer of the Year. Bank Hometown and UniBank sponsored the reception.

About Blackstone Heritage Corridor

Blackstone Heritage Corridor, in collaboration with community partners, provides strong leadership to preserve, promote, and celebrate the Valley’s historic, natural, and recreational resources for current and future generations.

Source: BlackstoneHeritageCorridor.org

Cribbage tournaments start this month

Do you love playing cribbage? Bancroft Memorial Library has partnered with other Blackstone Valley Libraries to host monthly cribbage tournaments.

Whether you're a seasoned pro or a beginner, this event is open to players of all levels. Enjoy an evening of strategy, fun, and great company.

The tournaments all start at 5:30pm. The schedule is as follows:

Wed., Feb. 18, Millbury Public Library

Wed., March 18, Bancroft Memorial Library

Thurs., April 16, Grafton Public Library

Wed., May 13, Shrewsbury Public Library

Wed., June 10, Millbury Public Library

Registration is mandatory. Please contact the hosting Library directly to sign up. While cribbage boards and cards are provided, participants are encouraged to bring their own, if possible.

Source: Bancroft Memorial Library

Hopedale Police Department shares 2025 statistics

In a Facebook post on Jan. 10, the Hopedale Police Department reported, “In 2025, the Hopedale Police Department Communications Center processed a total of 16,338 calls for service,” which included 14,813 Police calls and 1,525 Fire/EMS calls.

Specific statistics included:

- Calls for Service: 14,813
- Arrest/Summons: 316
- Incident Reports: 637
- Mental Health: 52
- Burglar Alarms: 109
- OUI: 25
- Disturbances: 102
- Crash Reports: 97
- Property Checks: 3,627

In addition, there were 3,228 Traffic Stops, which included:

- Civil Citations: 481
- Written Warnings: 1,278
- Verbal Warnings: 984
- Arrest/Summons: 277
- No Action Taken: 208

Source: Hopedale Police Department

Pet of the Month: Sydney

Is seasonal affective disorder hitting you hard this winter? Come meet Sydney! This adorable, affectionate girl wants nothing more than to love and be loved! Sydney is always ready to give you a hug if you need one. It’s okay with Sydney if you occasionally need some alone time, she is also totally fine entertaining herself. She likes to explore her surroundings and find fun toys to bat around.

Full disclosure. Sydney has a food allergy. It’s very important that she be on a prescription diet. For this reason, Sydney should be the only pet in the home.

Sydney is such a happy girl. She is looking forward to spending her days with a family who loves her. Could it be yours?



For information on meeting Sydney or the other cats at the Milford Humane Society please visit <https://www.milfordhumane.org/>

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State Officials Issue Annual Reminder on Open Burning Season

Fire Safety, Environmental Health, and Injury Prevention are Top Concerns

STOW—Massachusetts' fire and environmental leaders are reminding residents to use caution, care, and common sense if they plan to burn certain agricultural waste during open burning season, which runs from January 15 to May 1.

State Fire Marshal Jon M. Davine, Commissioner Bonnie Heiple of the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP), and Chief Fire Warden David Celino of the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) said restrictions on open burning are imposed at the state and local levels.

"Open burning season applies only to specific types of fuel and is always limited based on the daily fire hazard, environmental concerns, and location," said State Fire Marshal Davine. "Even where burning is authorized, you must have a permit from your local fire department and you must be able to extinguish the fire on a moment's notice. Please make safety your priority when burning."

"Improper open burning creates safety risks and can harm air quality," said MassDEP Commissioner Bonnie Heiple. "Only burning approved natural materials — like driftwood and prunings — and burning on 'good air days,' when pollution levels are low and air circulates well, ensures these fires can be managed safely."

"Massachusetts residents have seen just how quickly outdoor fires can grow out of control," said DCR Chief Fire Warden Celino. "We encourage everyone to exercise caution - don't risk a fire that puts you, your home, or your com-

munity at risk. Burn only approved materials, always get a permit from your local fire department, and ensure that any fire is extinguished properly and completely."

These restrictions are authorized by 310 CMR 7.07, which sets baseline requirements based on air quality and allows for "no burn" days; MGL chapter 48, section 13, which prohibits any open air fire unless a permit is issued; and the Massachusetts Comprehensive Fire Safety Code, which gives local fire chiefs the authority to impose additional limits.

Open burning is prohibited year-round in the cities and towns of Arlington, Belmont, Boston, Brookline, Cambridge, Chelsea, Chicopee, Everett, Fall River, Holyoke, Lawrence, Lowell, Malden, Medford, New Bedford, Newton, Somerville, Springfield, Waltham, Watertown, West Springfield, and Worcester.

In the remaining communities, open burning season runs from January 15 through May 1 with the following limitations. Local fire departments may deny a permit or set additional limitations if circumstances make open burning hazardous.

Only certain agricultural waste may be burned. This includes brush, cane, driftwood, residential forestry debris, fruit tree and bush prunings, raspberry stalks, infected bee hives, trees and brush from agricultural land clearing, and fungus-infected elm wood if no other acceptable means of disposal is available. It is unlawful to burn leaves, grass, hay, stumps, tires, household trash, construction materials, demolition debris, or

brush, trees, cane, or driftwood from commercial or industrial land clearing.

Open burning may only be conducted:

- With a permit issued in advance by the local fire department;
- Between 10:00 am and 4:00 pm;
- At least 75 feet from all dwellings and without causing a nuisance;
- As close as possible to the source of material being burned; and
- When it will not cause or contribute to a condition of air pollution.

Persons who burn unlawfully or allow a fire to grow out of control could be held liable for firefighting costs or face fines or even jail time.

Open Burning Safety

- An adult should tend to the fire at all times and keep tools to extinguish it close by.
- Burn small amounts at a time.
- Never use gasoline, kerosene, or other accelerants to start the fire.
- Don't wait for the fire department to tell you that it has become unsafe to burn: put the fire out if winds pick up or the weather changes. Most fires get out of control during sudden wind changes.
- If the fire gets out of control, call the local fire department right away.

Town officials issue statement regarding Dec. 25 raccoon incident

On Dec. 26, Hopedale Town Administrator Mitch Ruscitti posted the following joint statement, with the Chief of Police, on Facebook.

"The Town of Hopedale is issuing this joint statement to address public concern and misinformation circulating regarding a police response involving a raccoon in a residential neighborhood earlier this week.

"On 12/25/25, HPD received multiple calls reporting a raccoon behaving aggressively during daylight hours in a densely populated residential area. Earlier in the day, the animal had reportedly attacked an individual. Additional calls described the raccoon as disoriented, wobbling, and acting erratically — behavior widely recognized by public health authorities as consistent with potential rabies infection.

"Officers responded and located the animal. Based on its behavior, proximity to residents, and the earlier reported attack, the raccoon posed an immediate and ongoing risk to public health and safety. Rabies is a fatal disease, and suspected rabid animals that have already exhibited aggressive behavior require prompt intervention to prevent further exposure to residents, including children and pets.

"Due to the density of the neighborhood and the presence of nearby homes and residents, the use of a firearm was not a safe or appropriate option. Officers therefore employed the safest available method under the circumstances to euthanize the animal and eliminate the threat. The animal was then located to the side of the road for pickup by Animal Control.

"The actions taken by the responding officer were lawful, necessary, and fully authorized under Massachusetts law and public health guidance. The Town unequivocally supports

the officer and the Police Department in carrying out their duties to protect the community and prevent serious harm.

"The Town is concerned by reports that individuals have attempted to identify, harass, or publicly speculate about the mental health or fitness of the officer involved. Personal attacks, doxing, and harassment — whether directed at law enforcement officers or any Town employee — are unacceptable and place individuals at risk. Such conduct does not contribute to informed public discussion and may have real-world safety implications.

"Residents are free to express opinions and ask questions. However, publicly targeting individual officers, spreading misinformation, or encouraging harassment crosses a clear line. Conduct of this nature may violate state law and can expose individuals to criminal and civil liability. The Town will continue to address concerns through appropriate and lawful channels and will respond accordingly if conduct escalates.

"Incidents involving wildlife can be upsetting to witness. However, the safety of residents and the prevention of serious, potentially fatal disease must remain the Town's top priority. The responding officer acted professionally, responsibly, and in the best interest of the community under difficult circumstances.

"The Town of Hopedale stands firmly behind its Police Department and appreciates the many residents who have expressed their support. Residents with legitimate questions are encouraged to contact the Town Administrator's Office or the Police Department through appropriate channels."

Source: @HopedaleTownAdministrator/Facebook

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Sports

Captains want to return to finals with better results

BY CHRISTOPHER TREMBLAY
STAFF SPORTS WRITER

The Hopedale boys basketball team put together an impressive 18-2 record earning themselves a number two seed in the Division 5 State Tournament last winter. After opening the playoffs with two blowout wins, the Blue Raiders found themselves in two hard fought close matches that allowed them to advance into the Division Finals against Pioneer Valley Regional, the number one seed. Unfortunately for Hopedale their run through the tournament would end there as



the Black Panthers – and not Hopedale - would take home the State Championship.

The Blue Raiders graduated four out of their five starters from last year's potential championship and will be relying on Captains Keigan Murphy and JJ Douglas to guide this team back to the promised land. While Douglas was the team's sixth man off the bench, it was Murphy who was a starter last season.

"Keigan provided us with some great defense and was part of our success at going to the State Finals. This year he comes back with experience and will give the team its toughness," Coach Tony Cordani

said. "JJ, a shooting guard, will bring back his terrific shooting skills to our offense. This year, we are expecting him to bring us some scoring capabilities with his overall play."

Both athletes play only basketball for the Hopedale Jr/Sr High School. Murphy grew up playing the sport with the older kids in his neighborhood and has stuck with the sport, while Douglas is a year-round basketball player finding himself with a basketball in his hands at all times. Prior to transferring to Hopedale from Milford a few years ago, Douglas was also playing volleyball for the Scarlett Hawks, but since Hopedale doesn't have the sport, he focused more on basketball.

Douglas found himself coming off the bench around the five-minute mark of every game and giving it his all as the Blue Raiders made their run to the State Championship game, while his counterpart knew the school had a decent team but was somewhat flabbergasted by them getting all the way to the finals.

"Last year was totally surreal," Murphy said. "I knew that we had a good team, but making the State Finals was not what I expected from this team. However, losing to a really good team in the finals has given me motivation to get back there this year."

Both Hopedale captains are eyeing a return to the State

the rest of the team to bring that same toughness that I play with, we'll be ok."

The duo knows they need to bring the energy night in and night out if they are to get back to where they were last year. According to Murphy, defense leads to offense and he would like to keep up the pace, which he set during the early part of the season, of five or six steals a game.

Douglas wants to get the team to keep practicing hard while continuing the culture that was developed last year. If they can continue to do that, then they will continue to get better as the season goes on.

"We have a strong seven- or eight-man rotation that feeds off one another," he said. "We'll need to not only move the ball more but shoot the ball more as well. Last year, we got better as the year went on, learning from our previous game whether win or loss."

Murphy and Douglas want to pick up their game while hoping the rest of the team follows in their footsteps. If they do, the captains firmly believe they can finish what they started last year.

"Last year, we didn't have the mentality to close it out," Murphy said. "But this year, JJ and I feel good about this team and doing it right."

If the captains' insights are correct and the rest of the Blue Raiders can follow in their footsteps, Hopedale just might be the last man standing when it comes the end of the playoffs.

Championship game with different results this winter.

"As a captain, I want to be a good role model for the rest of the team," Douglas said. "Individually, I want to perform well and show the rest of the team that hard work is worth it; and if we all get on the same page, we can get back and win. Bringing home a State Championship this year is our number one priority."

Murphy is in agreement with his co-captain and believes that, along with Douglas, Nate Rutkowski should be a big time contributor this year. Murphy noted that the team is looking to build off last year's success. He said, thus far, the team has looked really good and he is not particularly worried.

"Last year, rebounding was a big part of our success," Murphy said. "We were a tough team that brought the physicality to the game. If I can get

Real Estate Corner

Recent Home Sales

Date	Hopedale	Amount
01/09/2026	130 Dutcher St.	\$630,000
01/09/2026	106 Adin St.	\$682,500
01/08/2026	104 Jones Rd.	\$250,000
12/17/2025	76 Jones Rd.	\$555,000
12/15/2025	11 Heron Ln.	\$827,000

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



The 4-bed, 3-bath, 3,100-square-foot house at 106 Adin Street in Hopedale recently sold for \$682,500
Image credit: www.zillow.com

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