



Trevor Brusco and the NaloxBox in the lobby of the Holden Public Safety Complex, 1370 Main Street. Photo by Martha Akstin

Holden Expands Access to Naloxone

Announces Public Trainings and Community Listening Sessions

BY TREVOR BRUSO

reverses opioid overdoses,

Residents of Holden can now access naloxone, a life-saving medication that

NALOXONE

continued on page 2

Rutland Historical Commission Takes on DCR to Preserve Prison Camp

BY MARTHA AKSTIN

In response to the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation's (DCR) plans to demolish the re-

maining Rutland Prison Camp buildings, the Rutland Historical Commission (RHC) held a series of community forums in January.

About 14 people attended the

January 24 meeting and unanimously opposed demolition as the answer to DCR's concerns over safety and alleged hate-filled graffiti. RHC suggests public stewardship and seeks alternatives to the DCR plan.

After RHC Chair Peter Pasierb described the challenges facing the site, RHC member Lindsay Maus gave a history of the prison, which was built in 1903 to house minor offenders. Maus noted that there were no fences around prison nor were there ever any reports of escape attempts.

Maus said inmates farmed 150 of the 914 acres, where they grew potatoes, raised



The cell block. Photo by Lindsay Maus.

PRISON CAMPS

continued on page 3



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NALOXONE

continued from page 1

free of charge and without an appointment. Through a partnership with the Leicester Regional Public Health Coalition (LRPHC) and the Community Naloxone Program, the Holden Board of Health has installed a NaloxBox in the outer lobby of the Public Safety Complex at 1370 Main Street.

The NaloxBox is available during building hours. Anyone in need can simply open the box and take a naloxone kit – no questions asked and no registration required.

Naloxone reverses overdoses caused by opioids such as heroin, fentanyl, and oxycodone and has become a critical tool

in preventing overdose deaths. “Providing easy access to naloxone is one of the most important steps we can take locally to address the opioid crisis,” said Trevor Brusco, Director of Public Health for the Town of Holden. “Christopher Wilson, the Regional Epidemiologist for the LRPHC, and I have led many trainings across the region on how to recognize an overdose and how to administer naloxone. Making this medication widely available saves lives.”

To further expand community education, the Holden Board of Health and the LRPHC will host a free public naloxone training for area residents on February 10 at 6:00 pm in the conference room at the Holden Public Safety Complex.

The training will cover how to recognize the signs of an opioid overdose, what naloxone is and how it works, what to do in an overdose emergency, and how to administer naloxone, including hands-on scenarios.

“Last year we had more than 35 participants from Holden attend this training, and this year we hope to meet



Trevor Brusco and Christopher Wilson discuss free access to naloxone and upcoming trainings for area residents. Photo by Martha Akstin

or exceed that number,” said Wilson. He added that the training is open to all Wachusett area residents. “At the end of the program, every participant will receive a free overdose response kit that includes naloxone, a rescue breathing mask, fentanyl test strips, and educational materials.”

The Worcester County District Attorney’s Office will also be present to highlight their outreach programs and available resources. “From the very beginning, we have worked

closely with the district attorney’s office,” Brusco said. “Their participation in these trainings emphasizes the level of coordination and collaboration needed to truly address the opioid crisis.”

In addition, the Town of Holden will host a community listening session on February 11 at 6 pm also in the conference room at the Public Safety Complex, to gather public input on how to use opioid settlement funds that Massachusetts communities are receiving.

“This is an extremely important opportunity to hear directly from our residents,” said Brusco. “If you are struggling with opioid use, are in recovery, have lost a loved one, or care about someone affected by substance use, we need to hear from you. Your experiences and ideas will help shape how Holden uses these funds locally.”

All residents are encouraged to attend and participate. For those who cannot attend in person, a community survey, which takes approximately five minutes to complete, is available on the Board of Health’s website at www.holdenma.gov/health/

Brusco added that two additional listening sessions will be held on March 10 and March 14. “When it comes to local public health, community input is essential. We want to make sure these resources are used in the most effective and meaningful way possible,” said Brusco.

Trevor Brusco is Director of Public Health, Holden Board of Health. For questions, email him at: tbrusco@holdenma.gov *

Martha Akstin contributed to this story.

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SOUR GRAPES

by Tim Jones



PRISON CAMPS

continued from page 1

chickens and dairy cows, and sold milk to the City of Worcester.

Danny Suchocki, a third generation Rutland resident, remembered his father recount-



The root cellar. Photo by Lindsay Maus.

ing how he played baseball with the prisoners, which demonstrated the open campus of the prison and how accessible the prison - and prisoners - were to town residents.

In 1907, a tuberculosis hospital was added to the site. However, in 1934, the camp and hospital were abandoned because the land became watersheded to protect the newly built Quabbin Reservoir. The root cellar and the remains of a cell block are all that stand silent today, along with stone walls, several foundations, and a cemetery where the prisoners who died while incarcerated are interred.

According to a DCR spokesperson, concerns center around the prison block and root cellar, which represent significant safety hazards. While DCR partnered with the town to install gates in front of the openings to the prison block and root cellar, those gates were vandalized or stolen. DCR

proposes to demolish the prison cell block and modify the root cellar to prevent access to its interior.

Suggestions to counter demolition include installing heavy steel gates to deter motor vehicle access. Instead of security cameras, which have been destroyed, install trail cameras

there is broken glass around the structures and footing can be tricky. However, one person wondered how much it would cost to make the site safer instead of demolishing it. Suggestions going forward included community clean-up and painting days. Peterson said she would approach the artist who often paints in the area to see if he would create a mural or other artwork on the cell block.

State Representative Kimberly Ferguson and State Senator Peter Durant are aware of DCR’s concerns and the push-back by Rutland residents.

“The cells and root cellar which were part of the prison camp are significant in the town’s history and it’s important to try to preserve them,” said Durant. “The Historical Commission is working to create a proposal and wants to work with DCR to protect and maintain the structures. I support their efforts and urge DCR to consider ways to save the structures because once a piece of history is gone, it is gone

PRISON CAMPS
continued on page 4

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PRISON CAMPS

continued from page 3

forever.”

“Representative Ferguson has been supportive of the Town of Rutland and keeping the historic prison camp site open,” said Elizabeth Kazinskas, Ferguson’s district director. Kazinskas said that Ferguson had included monies in the FY22 budget for fencing and site improvements. She said that Ferguson is in contact with Pasierb and town officials and that she has followed up with DCR. “She is awaiting discussion with them and Senator Durant,” said Kazinskas.

According to the DCR spokesman, the agency is in contact with the town to explore alternatives to demolition and is waiting for a response from the town.

The RHC has asked to meet with both the fire and police chiefs to include their concerns and suggestions. In the interim, the RHC asks supporters to sign the on-line petition to take a stand for history, community, and cultural continuity.

“History is not just a connection to our past,” said Maus, “it’s a connection to our future and future generations. I love taking my kids down to the Prison Camp. I wonder who built that, who lived there,

where did they walk and work? Today, when so many people are glued to our screens, take a walk down these trails to come face to face with a unique piece of Rutland’s history. If these pieces are destroyed, it will be a loss of a connection with these people. It will be a loss of connection with each other. And it will be a loss of a sense of gratitude – and wonder - for those who lived there.”

Pasierb said the RHC will collate all the ideas and comments they gather from the community and present their findings to DCR to see if an alternative to demolition is possible.

For more information, visit the website <https://lindsayt-maus.wixsite.com/save-our-structures>

To sign the petition, go to <https://c.org/wpj6c7d8mc>

If you have any questions, email saveourstructures@gmail.com *



Pine Tree Road Development Moves Forward Under Prior Approval

BY RILEY FRANKIAN

Construction activity along Pine Tree Road in Holden has drawn increased attention from residents recently, prompting questions about what is being built, how long the work has been planned, and whether the project is connected to the town’s ongoing debate over the MBTA Communities Act. Town officials say the development, known as Pine Tree Estates, is proceeding under plans and approvals that predate by several years the efforts to comply with the state zoning law.

The Pine Tree Estates project was approved by the Holden Planning Board in 2022 as a residential subdivision under the town’s existing zoning. Planning documents show the development includes a mix of single-family homes and multi-unit residential buildings, along with new internal roadways, utilities, stormwater infrastructure, and pedestrian improvements. While visible site work has only recently begun, the project has been part of the town’s planning record for years.

According to Town Manager Peter Lukes, the project has not undergone substantive changes since its original 2022 approval.

Planning Board minutes show that ownership of the Pine Tree Estates project transferred to Wingspan Properties in May 2025 when the company formally acquired the property and recorded the deed. At a Planning Board meeting, Mike George of Wingspan Properties reported to board members that the company is now the official owner and has been working with the Planning Department and Department of Public Works to move the project forward.

According to the Planning Board minutes, the approved development consists of 96 residential units divided into five phases. Phase 1, located off Salisbury Street, includes a mix of single-family homes, duplexes, triplexes and quadplexes and will be built along a roughly 1,300-foot roadway with a single egress. Later phases include duplex construction as well as 10 to 12 single-family homes

that are not expected to begin until Phase 1 is substantially complete. Board members voted unanimously to require Wingspan to post the full \$4.37 million bond for the project before construction proceeds.

“The applicant requested an Extension on their Order of Conditions in July 2024, the Orders are now valid through Oct. 12, 2027,” Lukes said.

Some residents have raised concerns about pedestrian safety

nical concerns addressed by the impact and access study, Lukes said questions related to those findings are still being researched.

“Those issues pre-date our current planner,” Lukes said.

Lukes indicated that any further details regarding implementation or follow-up assessments need to come from the current town planner. As of now, there have been no publicly announced updates to the



Photo by Riley Frankian

and traffic impacts, given the project’s proximity to Dawson Elementary School. The Planning Board’s approval included conditions requiring the developer to either construct a sidewalk or contribute funds toward sidewalk construction.

As construction progresses, some infrastructure elements such as sidewalks and certain safety measures will not be addressed until later phases of the development. Lukes said there is no established timetable yet for when those improvements will be installed.

“The sidewalk issue has not been resolved yet because it is not triggered until a later phase of the project,” Lukes said.

A traffic impact and access study was submitted by the applicant and reviewed by an independent traffic engineering firm hired by the town. That peer review, completed in February 2020, identified several technical issues and recommended revisions, including updated crash data, a longer analysis horizon consistent with MassDOT guidelines, clarification of unit counts, and pedestrian safety improvements.

When asked about the tech-

traffic analysis and no additional public outreach sessions related to the project.

The timing of the construction has led some residents to speculate about a connection to the MBTA Communities Act, which Holden is scheduled to vote on at a Special Town Meeting on February 23.

The MBTA Communities Act requires certain municipalities to adopt zoning that allows multifamily housing as of right, but it does not mandate construction. Pine Tree Estates, by contrast, was approved years earlier under Holden’s existing zoning and never relied on the MBTA Communities Act for its authorization.

The Pine Tree Road project and its regulatory processes have been in progress long before the current zoning debate, with approvals granted and conditions established well in advance of the state law’s enforcement efforts.

For now, the project is proceeding as approved, with oversight continuing as construction advances, with additional information expected to be reviewed publicly by the Planning Board as later phases move forward. *

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A head-and-shoulders portrait of Dr. Barbara K. Boman. She has long, straight, light brown hair with blonde highlights, parted in the middle. She is wearing a dark, possibly black, jacket or top. She is smiling slightly and looking directly at the camera. The background is a neutral, textured grey.

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NEWSbitz

BY MARTHA AKSTIN

On January 26, the four officers of the **Wachusett Regional School District's Special Education Parent Advisory Committee (SEPAC)** resigned. Their resignation followed a January 21 community forum with **WRSD Superintendent James Reilly** and **Special Education Director Joan DeAngelis**.

On the SEPAC Facebook page, Chair **Laura Ybarra**, Vice Chair **Lindsey Lukason**, Secretary **Dr. Katie Jones**, and Treasurer **Katie Antinarella** wrote, "After much thought, the SEPAC Officers have made the difficult decision to resign from our roles, effective immediately. We stepped into this work because we believe in strong, respectful partnerships between families and the district. Recent events made it clear to us that the level of collaboration and openness needed for that partnership to be successful is not currently present. ... At this point we can no longer devote our energy to trying to build partnership where there is not a shared willingness to engage in meaningful change. ... We remain committed to supporting one another and advocating for our children."

On February 1, **Maleah Gustafson**, Wachusett Regional School District Committee member, posted a letter to parents signed by WRSDC chair

Lauren Salmon-Garrett, citing that under Mass. General Laws, the School Committee is responsible for establishing a SEPAC and to that end a meeting, "to be held virtually per SEPAC tradition," will be held on February 11, from 7-8 pm to nominate SEPAC members and on February 25, 7-8 pm, another Zoom meeting will be held to elect new SEPAC members. For the Zoom link to these meetings, visit the Facebook page: Maleah Gustafson Wachusett Regional School District Committee – WRSDC. *Wachusett Free Press* will follow and report on this story as it develops and will post links to the Zoom meeting on our own Facebook page.

Holden

• **Wachusett Area Chamber of Commerce** offers scholarships for graduating seniors who reside in the Wachusett area. This year, four scholarships will be awarded. Three \$2,500 scholarships are designated for students pursuing a degree in business at a two- or four-year college. A fourth \$2,500 scholarship will be awarded to a student entering a technical field of study. This scholarship is intended to support students preparing for technical professions and reflects the Chamber's commitment to strengthening the region's workforce. Applicants with exceptional community service may also be considered

for the **Brian R. Forts Memorial Scholarship**, which includes an additional award.

Applicants must reside in one of the towns served by the Chamber: Boylston, Holden, Paxton, Princeton, Rutland, Sterling, or West Boylston. The scholarship applications can be obtained from the guidance department at area high schools or on the Chamber's website: www.wachusettareachamber.org. The deadline to apply is April 30, 2026. The winners will be announced prior to high school graduation, and the awards will be given out at the Chamber's annual meeting in June.

The Chamber hosts events throughout the year to fund this program, including the **Scholarship Scramble golf tournament** scheduled for Monday, May 18 at Sterling National Country Club in Sterling.

• **Keep Holden Beautiful Committee**, a seven-person volunteer nonprofit, is fundraising and applying for grants

will help pay a landscaper to maintain the flowers throughout the growing season. The committee has received town approval for the project.

The Committee has organized three town-wide litter pick-up days and placed 33 whiskey barrels filled with flowers throughout Main Street last year. Checks can be made out to Keep Massachusetts Beautiful (put "Holden Chapter" in the memo line), and mailed to 702 Oakwood Street Extension, Holden MA 01520. As a non-profit, donations are tax deductible.

Paxton

• **Richards Memorial Library** kicked off its **Centennial Celebration** on January 15 by hosting a get-together with drop-in



Patrons help Richards Memorial Library kickoff its Centennial Birthday Celebrations on January 15. Photo by Fidelity Bank.

activities for patrons, trustees, Friends of the Library, and sponsor **Fidelity Bank** - who brought the made-to-order cookies.

• In news from **Anna Maria College**, **David McCauley**, the school's executive director of athletics, announced the expansion of women's sports by adding flag football and competitive cheer/dance. **Bridget D'Amelio** was named inaugural head coach of women's flag football and **Dr. Erin Blette** was named as the inaugural head

competitive cheer coach.

• **Baypath Regional Vocational High School** will partner with the town to do all the renovations that will turn the building at **10 West St.** into a community meeting place. Renovations will begin the week of February 8 – so if you drive by and see a Dumpster in the parking lot, no need to worry. All materials for the renovations will be paid for by an insurance settlement that the town received that covered damage to 10 West. Once renovations are complete, the building will be named in honor of former Police Chief **Robert J. Mortell**, who was killed in the line of duty on February 1, 1994.

• **Paxton Municipal Light Department**, a member of **Massachusetts Municipal Wholesale Electric Company (MMWEC)**, was recently awarded \$1,180,039 to replace and upgrade a substation transformer and associated equipment to modernize infrastructure. Work will include the installation of a backup transformer foundation, containment and work area so the existing transformer can be retained as a spare in the event of a failure. Paxton was one of six municipal utilities awarded grants under the 2021 Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, said the MMWEC. The funding, under the U.S. Dept. of Energy's "Preventing Outages and Enhancing the Resilience of the Grid," grant opportunity program, is being administered by the Mass Clean Energy Center (MassCEC).

Rutland



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Keep Holden Beautiful's vision for hanging flower baskets along Main Street.

to support the installation of floral hanging baskets on Main Street. The \$35,000 project will purchase 65 specialized metal brackets to affix to the lamp posts, metal floral hanging baskets, plants from a local nursery, a 150-gallon water sprayer, and

Letters to the Editor

Thank you, *WFP*, for your excellent article of January 8 (“Fact Check: Claims About MBTA Misrepresent State Law and Holden’s Role”) explaining that the MBTA law requires ZONING, not construction. Nothing is required to be built, and nothing may ever BE built, contrary to a hysterical letter bewailing the burden on town services if we suddenly have 750 new housing units. That will not happen now, soon, or probably ever! All that will happen is that we will avoid the loss of state grants and a state takeover of our zoning process.

I only wish our town manager and Select Board Renzoni would provide factual information and rational leadership on this issue. Instead, they spend money on fruitless lawsuits and fan the flames of fear and distrust with misinformation.

— Robin Van Liew, Holden

Reading your article, “Fact Check: Claims About MBTA Misrepresent State Law and Holden’s Role” seems like watching a preschooler rationalize barely acceptable behavior. The fact checks are correct but leave out the result.

If the MBTA zoning law is passed in Holden, will a thinking person believe a developer won’t purchase the zone to build? Then a flood will be released.

The result will force town tax increases to pay for town water and sewer expansion; school construction; additional teachers, town workers; and street expansion.

Consider, also, all of the increased traffic. For existing Holden taxpayers/residents, how is this good?

— Edward Baxter, Jefferson

The WFP issue of 1/8/26 contains a “fact check” about our site. No one from the Holden Republican Town Committee was contacted.

1. The MBTACA mandates zoning changes, not construction.

This is a half-truth. It does not “force” construction. However, 177 communities were mandated to zone for this. Why? Because the Commonwealth claims to have a housing shortage. Zoning alone cannot help.

2. Our website said property taxes would increase “up to” \$1400 a year. Your op-ed says the law does “not require” tax increases. That’s misleading. Implementing the law will cause taxes to go up because more services will be needed, likely higher than \$1400.

3. You say compliance involves hearings, reviews, and a Town Meeting vote. However, after that, public input is done. We can’t complain about its implementation. That’s what we meant by “eliminating public input.” You then mention the Working Group. They were mostly Democrats appointed by Democrats to implement a law written by Democrats. The “public” meetings were often on Zoom with no comment allowed.

Irony: the Party claiming to fight for “our democracy” is pulling out all the stops here to subvert “our democracy.” Last May, we had a vote on implementing the MBTACA at Town Meeting. It was defeated. The AG rattled her saber and we have to vote again, albeit with different parameters. If it fails, the State will threaten again . . . and again. That seems more like blackmail than democracy.

4. How about a “loss of

State funding?” The way the law was written we would not be eligible for some grants. However, the particular grants we would lose out on would amount to less than \$20,000 a year.

5. Full implementation would grow the population by 10% or more. The so-called “Working Group” claims the new folks moving in won’t have cars. If the new folks do have cars, the Group theorizes they won’t use Main Street! Furthermore, the Group claims there will be no more than 0.19 children per new unit of housing. How did they get that? By comparing Holden with Winthrop. The comparison of these two towns is a farce. Winthrop has a fraction of the land Holden has; Winthrop is far more dense, population-wise.

6. Is the MBTACA “good” for Holden? If the MBTACA is implemented in Holden, we get more traffic, more density, and more tax burden. There is no “good” for Holden whatsoever.

7. Our biggest objection is this: Holden has no business being an “adjacent community.” We receive no MBTA services. I suspect a tiny percentage of Holden residents work in Boston. The reality is that taking public transportation to Boston from Holden would probably make for a 13 to 14 hour work day, including commute.

Sadly, your “fact check” misrepresents State Law and Holden’s role. Our Committee has held a forum on this matter with Selectman Renzoni (U). We are also holding one with Selectman Faulkner (D) on 1/29. We believe voters need to be informed on this issue.

Thank you,
— Steve Cooley
Chair, Holden Republican Town Committee

The Wachusett Free Press stands behind its reporter and the article that was printed in the January 8 issue. We encourage everyone to

research the subject from primary sources. We thank Mr. Cooley for his comments.

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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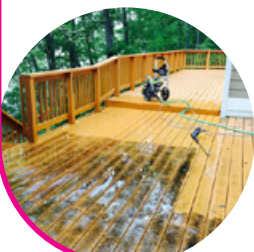
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Attorney General Sues Municipalities Over MBTA Communities Act as Holden Vote Nears

By RILEY FRANKIAN

Massachusetts Attorney General Andrea Joy Campbell has filed suit against the nine municipalities that have not yet complied with the state’s MBTA Communities Act (MBTACA), a law that requires cities and towns served by or adjacent to MBTA transit service to create zoning districts where multifamily housing is permitted as of right.

The lawsuits were filed after the law reached the five-year compliance window following its passage in 2021. The MBTACA was adopted as part of a broader effort to address Massachusetts’ ongoing housing shortage by increasing housing capacity near public transit. Under the law, affected communities are required to adopt compliant zoning districts and submit a district compliance application to the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities. The law does not mandate that housing be built, but it does require zoning that will allow multifamily housing

development without special permits.

According to Deputy Press Secretary Allie Zuliani of the AG’s Office, the lawsuits do not seek financial penalties. Instead, the state is pursuing declaratory and injunctive relief, asking the court to formally declare that the municipalities must comply with the law and submit the required zoning documentation. Zuliani also said the lawsuits will be dropped when the municipalities come into compliance.

In a statement accompanying the lawsuit, Campbell framed the issue as a statewide responsibility. “Massachusetts is in a housing crisis – every community in the state has a responsibility to step up and do their part,” Campbell said.

The Attorney General’s Office also emphasized that it has offered guidance and techni-

cal assistance to communities working toward compliance. That support included reviewing proposed zoning language ahead of town meetings, answering procedural questions, and providing resources

on zoning changes required under the MBTACA. A “yes” vote would bring Holden into compliance with the law, allowing the town to avoid potential legal action and preserve eligibility for certain

state funding programs tied to compliance.

According to a February Boston.com story, the town of Middleton lost a \$2 million safety grant after MBTACA noncompliance. While the grant was awarded in October 2024, the Executive Office of Eco-

nomics Development warned that it would not be awarded if the town remained non-compliant with Section 3A of the Act. Officials said the loss of state funding halts major safety upgrades at one of the North Shore’s most dangerous intersections. Middleton had brought the MBTACA to town meeting twice, where it failed both times.

Holden Town officials have repeatedly stressed that the MBTACA requires zoning changes, not the immediate construction of housing. However, the upcoming vote will determine whether Holden formally adopts the zoning framework required under state law.

Over the past several months, Holden’s MBTACA working group has been tasked with identifying a zoning district that would have the least impact on the community while still meeting state requirements. The group is made up of representatives from the Select Board, Planning Board, Finance Committee, Conservation Commission, as well as town residents.

In its deliberations, the working group considered factors such as traffic patterns, population density, existing infrastructure, land ownership, and the overall character of the town. Members also weighed public feedback and opposition expressed during meetings and listening sessions. The group has said it believes the proposed zoning overlay minimizes potential impacts should development ever occur. It has identified two sites: the 39-acre Trap Rock site, 2077 Main St. and the 11-acre Halstead Apartments site on Newbury Dr. that when combined make up 50 acres needed to comply with the law.

If Holden voters reject the zoning proposal at the Special Town Meeting, the town could face consequences beyond the pending lawsuit. Under state law, if a municipality fails to adopt compliant zoning, the state may designate a zoning district on the town’s behalf. Town officials have warned that such an outcome would remove local control from the process.

With the Attorney General’s Office actively pursuing enforcement of the MBTACA, the February 23 vote is expected to play a significant role in determining Holden’s legal standing, planning authority, and relationship with the state. *

In Holden, the timing of the Attorney General’s lawsuit comes as the town prepares for a pivotal vote on February 23 where a “yes” vote would bring the town into compliance, allowing it to avoid potential legal action and preserve eligibility for state funding programs tied to compliance.

to help municipalities engage with residents. According to the office, these efforts are ongoing and available to communities that are actively moving toward compliance.

In Holden, the timing of the lawsuit comes as the town prepares for a pivotal vote. A Special Town Meeting, to be held at Wachusett Regional High School’s auditorium, is scheduled for February 23, (check-in 6 pm; start-time 7 pm) when residents will be asked to vote

on zoning changes required under the MBTACA. A “yes” vote would bring Holden into compliance with the law, allowing the town to avoid potential legal action and preserve eligibility for certain state funding programs tied to compliance.

According to a February Boston.com story, the town of Middleton lost a \$2 million safety grant after MBTACA noncompliance. While the grant was awarded in October 2024, the Executive Office of Eco-

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By the Numbers

BY MARTHA AKSTIN

This month, *WFP* asked the assessors from each town it covers (Holden, Paxton, and Rutland) for tax rates for fiscal years 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025 and the amount of revenue generated by these tax rates in those respective years.

But stepping back a minute, what does the assessor’s department do? This mission statement is from the Rutland town’s website:

The Assessing Department is responsible for accurately determining the value of all real and personal property, whether residential, commercial or industrial, located within the Town of Rutland for the purpose of taxation. Assessors are obliged to determine the full and fair market value of all property as of January 1st each year for assessment on the fiscal year beginning the next July 1st, and to submit those values to the Department of Revenue for certification annually. The Assessors calculate and set the annual tax rate and submit the Tax Rate Recapitulation Sheet to the Department of Revenue to be certified. The department is responsible for the administration of all property tax data records and maintains accurate parcel ownership data based upon transactions recorded at the Worcester Registry of Deeds.

WFP thanks Rosemary Scully, Holden’s principal assessor; Diane Peterson, Paxton’s chief assessor; and Amy Evanowski, Rutland’s principal assessor, for their assistance in compiling this data. *

Fiscal Year	Tax Rate	Revenue raised by Tax Rate
HOLDEN		
2020	\$17.00	\$42,681,770.64
2021	\$17.40	\$44,856,449.18
2022	\$16.56	\$46,316,743.82
2023	\$14.99	\$48,002,545.81
2024	\$14.15	\$50,533,302.40
2025	\$13.86	\$52,930,463.36
PAXTON		
2020	\$19.73	\$11,351,869.07
2021	\$19.73	\$11,678,077.86
2022	\$18.98	\$12,010,360.40
2023	\$17.58	\$12,413,036.55
2024	\$16.07	\$12,575,076.57
2025	\$14.74	\$12,721,536.63
RUTLAND		
2020	\$17.61	\$16,898,343.28
2021	\$16.70	\$17,557,616.16
2022	\$15.79	\$18,342,944.65
2023	\$13.72	\$19,188,165.41
2024	\$14.83	\$21,409,138.69
2025	\$14.24	\$22,456,994.49

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 one of your favorite places to visit, please email it to martha@localtownpages.com



Photo by Steve Urbanovitch

BY STEVEN URBANOVITCH

Helen is checking out the collection of more than 300 Saturday Evening Post covers at the Norman Rockwell Museum in Stockbridge, Mass. The museum houses the world’s largest collection of Rockwell’s original artwork and memorabilia. It also has other exhibitions on display and interesting programs, making a visit to this museum an enjoyable experience.

Address: 9 Glendale Rd., Stockbridge, MA. The museum has a café, on-site parking and offers tours. Phone: 413-298-4100. Hours are Mon, Tues, Thurs and Fri 10 am-4 pm; Sat and Sun 10 am-5 pm; closed Wed. Admission: Members, children, and active military free; adults \$25; seniors and retired military \$23; Mass. teachers \$22; college students \$10.

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Feb. 28: Auntie Trainwreck - 7-10:30 p.m.



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Sports

Frozen Focus: Wachusett Hockey Looks to Better Last Year's Record

BY CHRISTOPHER TREMBLAY,
STAFF SPORTS WRITER

A few years ago, the Wachusett ice hockey team was bumped up from Division 3 to Division 1 and over the years the Mountaineers have been trying to increase their regular season schedule with some tougher teams. Last season Wachusett was able to put together a 15-4-1 season that got them into the Division 1 State Tournament where unfortunately they had to square off with the number four seed, Catholic Memorial, in the first round. The Knights, who would go on to capture the State Championship, shut out Wachusett 5-0 and sent them home sooner than they would have liked.

Three seniors graduated from that team, and 17 players came back, including 10 seniors. The Mountaineers are looking to improve upon that season's record, especially in the playoffs.

"This year we are looking to win as many games as we did last year and although we are on pace to do that (at the time of this writing Wachusett was 6-1-1) it's going to be a challenge playing only 20 games," Coach Matt Lane said. "We are also hoping to reduce our goals against aver-

age and get it below 2.0."

The team's main objective, according to the players, is to host a Division 1 Tournament game, but to do that they will need to be seeded 16 or lower when the regular season comes to an end. Wachusett is currently ranked 16th.

Lane is looking for senior captain and the team's only four-year player, Cody Penniman, to lead the team back into the post-season. With an assist against Grafton, the senior forward eclipsed the 100-point mark for his illustrious career with Wachusett. Coming into the season, Penniman sat at 86 points and through the team's first eight games scored 10 goals while handing out eight assists to put him at 104 total points - with over half the season still on the docket.

"Cody is the first player in six years to accomplish the feat, there have only been six players in the school since 2000 to do so," Lane said. "This year I am looking for him to continue to lead us offensively and thus far he has been all over the ice and meeting our expectations."

Penniman will play on the red line with Ryan Flaherty and Travis Laidlaw, the team's high fly-

ing, move the puck, number-one line offensively. Flaherty currently has six goals and eight assists for 14 points, while Laidlaw has netted two goals and assisted on nine others for 11 points.

The green line consists of three role model players; the trio are gritty, hardworking, blue collar in the corner players. They also consist of four, five and six scorers. Center Matt Brouseau (three goals, seven assists) and wingers Caden Lane (four goals, five assists) and Brayden Allaire (three goals, three assists) compose the green line for the Mountaineers.

Senior Aiden Boyce is the anchor to the white line and according to the coach, he is a two-way hockey player who can play all three zones on the ice.

"Aiden is a really solid role player and had a shorthanded goal for us against Scituate," Lane said. "He has two goals and one assist, but that is not indicative of how he plays and has represented the team."

The defense is made up of six players who could be paired with one another on any given night. Leading the Mountaineers on the blueline is Jake Penniman, twin to Cody, who has notched 10 goals

through the early part of the season. Other defensemen are sophomore Colin Carson (four points); junior Ethan Bennett, a three-year player with excellent skating abilities and an offensive-minded defenseman; sophomore Owen Ambach, junior transfer Erik Nordahl and junior Pat Vallee, another three-year player who is a stay-at-home defenseman. The coach is extremely happy with how all six of his defensemen have played so far.

Playing behind the talented defensemen and in between the pipes, Lane has not one, but three goalies - any of whom can play the position on any night. Currently, senior Kevin Shaw is the top dog in net having played in five games posting a 3-1-1 record while allowing only 10 goals on 118 shots, while posting a 1.96 goals against average and a .915 save percentage. Shaw also has the team's only shutout thus far.

Sitting behind Shaw is sophomore keeper Reed LaBaire who is undefeated with two wins, allowing four goals on 56 shots for a 2.00 goals against and .929 save percentage. Rounding out the netminders is senior Trevor Staiti, who has allowed only one goal in his only win, posting a

1.00 goals against and a .909 save percentage.

Although Shaw is currently the team's number-one goalie, Lane is not afraid to put any one of the players between the pipes and expect the same results.

"Typically, we'll go with the goalie who has been playing the best during practice leading up to the game, who has the hot hand," Lane said. "It's a challenge to get all three playing time, but a nice problem to be in."

Since making the switch from playing in the Division 3 to the Division 1 State Tournament, Lane and his coaching staff have been dropping the D3 teams that they had been playing and picking up some D1 teams during the regular season in order to improve their strength and get themselves a better seeding for the post-season.

Lane is pleased with where his team currently finds itself although they were unable to finish off Shrewsbury.

"Not being able to finish has been a thorn in our side on occasion," Lane said. "We control our destiny and if we can play our game for a strong 45 minutes then I am confident that we can beat just about anybody." *

Wachusett Cross Country Recap

BY CHRISTOPHER TREMBLAY,
STAFF SPORTS WRITER

Prior to the cross-country season getting underway, Wachusett Coach Patrick Bova sat down with his team and the Mountaineer boy runners came up with three goals that they wanted to accomplish: go undefeated during the regular season, win their league championship, and qualify for the All-State Meet.

During the regular season, the Mountaineers were able to run the table and finish 5-0, then went on to capture their first league championship since 2018 while qualifying for the All-State Meet for the first time in seven years. Wachusett placed 8th at

the D1A State Meet and 12th in the All-State Meet.

"We entered the season with high hopes, and our varsity group came into camp having put together a good summer's worth of work," Bova said. "We had a very strong top seven group that had a good amount of varsity experience."

Over much of the season, senior captain Benjamin Duffy found himself as the Mountaineer's top runner and set the tone for the rest of the squad. Running right on Duffy's heels was junior Brady Bartley. As the number-two runner, Bartley was able to pick up his performance and take it to the next level

come the end of the season. He became the team's top runner over the last three meets, where he was the individual champion at the League Meet, finished 12th at the State Meet and 18th at the All-State Meet. Bartley's performances were the best by a Wachusett runner since the format changed in 2021.

In addition to the team's top two runners, Wachusett was also paced by senior captains Chris Pickett and Elias DeWeese as well as senior Colin May. Junior Heath Hebb and sophomore Ryan Godfroy also made huge contributions to the team, especially down the stretch where they finished as the number

three and four runners, respectively.

According to Bova, the team's success this season was based on the competitiveness and a team-first culture that the captains helped build.

Although the Mountaineer boy runners were able to have success this past season, the squad will be losing four of its top seven runners and Bova will be looking for others to step up and move into varsity roles. Bartley, Hebb and Godfroy will give the Mountaineers a formidable top three that they can build upon, but the coach knows that both Algonquin and Shrewsbury will be returning three of their top

runners as well.

"Our goal will be to be in the mix for the League Championship again and that will likely be decided by whichever team in our league has their four to seven runners step up the most," Bova said. "On the state level, we are also looking to stay in the hunt for a state qualifying spot, but like I said before, we are really going to need our younger guys to put in the work between now and then for that to happen."

Much like the boys, the girls' cross country team was not only

Holden: What Have We Become?

By BRIAN P. DOWD

After over a decade of traveling around the United States and finding new homes in such places as the City of Angels and the City of Presidents, I've recently returned home to the place that started it all: Holden, MA. To die? Who could say. Not me. I'm not a psychic or a doctor, and I don't much believe in either; thank you very much.

Anyway, through my many travels I've encountered a number of men and ladies, and even a couple of buds, who asked me to describe the place where I grew up. A little nosy, but I don't mind these kinds of deep heart-to-hearts after a couple wines or beers or what have you.

How do you describe Holden? What is Holden? I found the best I could come up with was the following little quip:

"Holden is a place where the women wear Lululemon, but there's no Starbucks."

I felt it encapsulated things perfectly. It's the kind of place where people have money, but with a sort of down-home podunkery that kept the big bad corporations at bay. Sure, we have Dunkin', but I'm pretty

sure that's written into the state's founding charters so as not to cause open revolt in the streets of any given Massachusetts town. Otherwise, we believed in our small town, our small businesses, and our small smallness.

It's quaint and cute and charming in a way few things are these days, or at least not all three. I've been to Nowhere, Arkansas, where the liquor store was a rickety shed, and buddy, it was small, but there wasn't anything cute or charming about it, brother. Not like Holden.

So, you'd imagine my surprise when I rolled back into town and saw something that shook me to my core. And no, I don't mean the closure of Holden Institution and the rumored mafia front Orbit Pizza, though I did shed one manly tear for those delicious tuna Syrians.

No, I'm talking about the big old Starbucks-shaped building that's popped up in town.

"That looks like a Starbucks," I thought.

"It is," said the sign. "Coming soon, buckaroo."

"Holden is a place where the women wear Lululemon and there is a Starbucks?" That could be anywhere. That's liter-

ally anywhere. Are we no better than Shrewsbury?

Now look, to be fair, Starbucks did not consult with me and my little quip before deciding to set up shop in my hometown. And between you and me, sometimes, in my darkest hour, I start to think Starbucks doesn't even know who I am. I'm sure there are a whole bunch of people excited to get their pink drinks, their bear-shaped collectible coffee mugs, and their egg bites right here in the home of your Wachusett Mountaineers. Far be it from me to deprive you of the little corporate treats and joys you need to get by in this crazy, mixed-up world.

It's just shocking, is all. And not in the nice way.

I stopped at Barilla's drive-through and ordered a flat white.

"We don't do flat whites in the drive-through."

I panicked and ordered a Sunshine Latte. Delicious.

I think we're going to be okay.

Thanks for reading. Check out my Substack "locker room guy." BrianpDowd.substack.com. ✱

CROSS COUNTRY

continued from page 10

excited to begin the new season, but they also knew that they had the capability to be competitive against most teams they would be facing. Coach Mike O'Malley noted that the team's goals are always the same: they wanted to compete well and try to win all their dual meets while gaining experience running as a team at the early mid-season invitationals. With those goals being accomplished, Wachusett could look to perform at their peak during the championship meets at the end of the season.

During the September Bay State Invitational, the female Mountaineers finished in second place just three points behind Bishop Feehan, the winner of the race. O'Malley was happy with the team's results, especially running against some of the better teams in the state. The girls would go on to win the Wachusett Invitational and finish in the

top 10 of the Twilight Invitational, a race in which many of the top teams compete.

During their dual meet season, Wachusett managed to once again go undefeated and continued to run well at the League Championship Meet, taking home the title. Entering the Division 1A State Tournament, the Mountaineers were looking to improve upon last year's top 10 finish.

"The girls turned in a great performance, finishing fifth overall and earning a place to compete as a team in the State Meet," O'Malley said. "We finished the season at the State Meet finishing ninth overall, which was another of our goals to start the season."

The team was led by senior captains Madi Mulroy, Tea Morini, and junior captain Naomi Witt. They set the tone at practices while getting the team to compete at the level they did during the season. Individuals who took on major roles at different times throughout the

season were freshmen Annika Kindorf, Sarah Martin, Julia Hall, and Keira Chabot; sophomores Amelia Gracey, Emily O'Connor, Izzy Abdella, and Maya Lussier; juniors Kailyn Brenn and Clara Robinson; and seniors Jayla Bertrand and Mari Munzert.

"All played a role in making the team what it was, along with the rest of the girls that made up our team," O'Malley said. "We are certainly looking forward to next year, with all the young talent we will have returning, and thank our seniors for their time in the program."

The Mountaineers will be only graduating one girl from this year's squad and will have six experienced runners coming back next fall. With a high percentage of runners returning, O'Malley will once again be looking for the squad to get stronger as a team and repeat, if not better, the results from this year. ✱

NEWSBITZ

continued from page 6

This award is given annually to a resident or town employee who has exemplified excellence in public service. This year's award will be given for performance during the 2025 calendar year.

Past recipients include **Detective John Songy, Jeffrey Stillings, Ronald Marsh, Kenneth Lowe, Jr., and Ruth Lowe.** Nominations will be accepted until February 20 and the winner will be announced at the March 2nd Select Board Meeting. Go to the town website [rutlandma.gov](https://www.rutlandma.gov) and search

for the Moses How Award nomination form.

• **The Town of Rutland** reminds residents that the **FY2027 budget process is well underway.** They encourage residents to visit the budget page online (<https://www.rutlandma.gov/718/Financial-Budget-Information>) for updated documents, schedules and more. Residents are encouraged to attend budget hearings, all of which are held at the Rutland Library, or watch the recorded meetings on Rutland Community Television. The schedule for the hearings can be found on the same budget page. ✱



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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

Starting February 1, all month

Rutland Summer Fun Camp registration has opened. For more info, see the Recreation page on the town website.

Gale Free Library introduces patrons to Hygge. The Danish art of “taking time away from the daily rush to be together with people you care about – or even by yourself – to relax and enjoy life’s quieter moments.” Visit the library to learn about different facets of this practice. The library will provide a bingo sheet of activities, and you can win Hygge-related prizes for participating. Learn more at the Reference Desk.

Matthew C. Waite’s artwork will be displayed at the Gale Free Library. Landscapes in Different Forms focuses on the wide range of styles, media, and narratives that Waite enjoys painting. Sponsored by the Friends of the Library.

Tuesday, February 10

7 pm: Rutland Historical Society’s monthly meeting at the Wood House, 232 Main St.

Three Community Listening Sessions

February 11 at 6 pm, March 10 at 6 pm, and March 14 at 11 am hosted by the Holden Board of Health in the conference room at the Public Safety Complex, 1370 Main St., to gather input on how to use opioid settlement funds that Massachusetts communities are receiving. No need to pre-register, free and open to the public.



Wednesday, February 11

10:30 am: Woodcarving Talk by Paxton resident Dave Warren who will discuss the ideas and processes of creating beautiful woodwork. Open to all and sponsored by the Paxton Veterans’ Group. At the Paxton Senior Center.

10:30 am: Floral Workshop where you will create your own Valentine arrangement. Step by step instructions by Sam’s Stems. Pre-registration required. \$5 includes all materials. Call the Paxton Senior Center.

1:30 pm: Bob Jordan Concert. This performance will entertain you with music from the 1920s to the 1970s. Register at the Holden Senior Center

2 pm: First meeting of a support group for families affected by a loved one’s mental illness. Mental illness - including substance use disorders - knows no boundaries and affects individuals and families of every background. If someone you love is struggling, please know that you’re not alone. We are forming a new peer-to-peer family support group designed to provide understanding, shared experiences, education, and hope. This group offers a safe and confidential space to talk openly, ask questions, and learn about resources that may help you and your family navigate this journey. Join us at our first meeting at the Rutland Senior Center.

6 pm: Community Listening Session hosted by the Holden Board of Health in the conference room at the Public Safety Complex, 1370 Main St., to gather input on how to use opioid settlement funds that Massachusetts communities are receiving. No need to pre-register, free and open to the public.

Thursday, February 12

8:30 am: Gentle Yoga using acupuncture Reiki with Dawn. \$5 payable to the instructor. Register at the Holden Senior Center.

11:45 am: Annual Valentine’s Lunch followed at 12:30 pm by entertainment featuring the Blackstone Valley Strummers, ukeleles and other acoustic instruments. RSVP to the Paxton Senior Center for this popular annual event. Snow date Feb. 19.

6 pm: The Paxton Woman’s Club’s

monthly meeting (second Thursday of the month) at the Paxton Senior Center. Not a member but interested in learning about the club and what they do for the community? Curious residents are welcome.

6-7:30 pm: Cozy up at the Gale Free Library as they set up their Program Room with tables, comfy chairs, snacks, and a fireplace (faux, but just as comforting!). Read, knit, work on a puzzle or quiet game, or finish a project you’ve brought from home. Our toasty, cheerful room is yours for the night. Repeats February 26. No registration necessary.

Friday, February 13

10 am: Kidding Around Yoga with Miss Nicole at Gale Free Library. Little ones learn basic poses with lots of music, movement, and literacy included. To register email communityconnections@wachusettcfe.com For ages 2-5

2:30-4:30 pm: Friends of Richards Memorial Library Book Sale and Donation Days Donate books. Shop for books. All on the same day! Proceeds benefit library programs. The Friends will accept book donations ONLY during scheduled dates and times. We accept gently used books, DVDs, CDs, and video games. (We do not accept textbooks, magazines, encyclopedias, VHS tapes, or bootleg CDS/DVDs.) Please do not leave books when we are not open. Future dates: the second Fridays, 2:30-4:30pm and Saturdays, 10:30am-1:30pm, of each month.

Saturday, February 14



10 am: Every Mile Matters is a monthly community walking program in partnership with the Greendale YMCA and UMass Chan Medical School’s Medicine in Motion. The event combines brief health talks by UMass physicians with group walks designed to encourage movement, connection

and health education. At Saint Vincent Hospital Atrium, 123 Summer St., Worcester. QR code to sign up is on the flyer.

Sunday, February 15

Lunar New Year Celebration at the EcoTarium. Enjoy the Lion Dance performance by the SUN Lion Dance Team from the Southeast Asian Coalition of Central Mass. Visit ecotarum.org for more information.

1-3 pm: All Roads Lead to Rutland. Over the years, various forms of transportation have led the way to Rutland. Come view the history. Light refreshments will be served. At the Rutland Historical Society.

Monday, February 16

Presidents Day This federal holiday honors Washington and Lincoln in particular. Local, state and federal offices are closed.

Tuesday, February 17

4 pm: 25th Anniversary Committee meets to plan the Rutland Library’s grand celebration on June 10, 2026. The committee is seeking members to serve and help plan events to mark this celebration of the library’s current building at 280 Main Street. All interested in helping, please come.

6:30 pm: Finger Foods are enjoyed at the at the Gale Free Library’s Cooking Club. Sweet or savory, add different items on a plate and enjoy everything at parties, tailgates, or work. Bring your recipe and join the fun. Registration is required.

Tuesday February 17

Drop In Olympics Week at Richards Memorial Library. Drop in anytime during open hours for February Vacation Olympics Week at the library. Design a gold medal. Create a mini torch. Try the STEM snowboard challenge and solve an Olympic riddle.

Feb. 17 – Feb. 28

Olympics Riddle Scavenger Hunt at Richards Memorial Library.

Find sports clues hidden in the J/Y room. Match the letter clues and numbers to solve an Olympics riddle and earn a small prize.

Wednesday, February 18

1:30 pm: Restoring Foot Health and improving balance with Katie Lund who will give a presentation on health facts and myths. Learn how foot strength affects balance and fall risk. Register at Holden Senior Center.

6-7 pm: Ukulele Group, Holden’s Gale Free Library. While the Feb. 4 Ukulele Group was canceled due to construction on the library’s second floor, the group is back on the 18th! If you have any questions, or are new to the group, contact the Reference Desk. Ages 16+.

February 18 – March 15

It’s Maple Days at Old Sturbridge Village on select dates when the village’s working sugar camp demonstrates how maple sugaring was done in early 19th century New England. Visit osv.org for more information.

Thursday, February 19

10:30 am-12 pm: Craft of Writing Workshop explores “Complicated Love” via Zoom hosted by the Gale Free Library and discusses poems that address the complexities of romantic relations. You will not be required to write or share your work. Registration required.

Friday, February 20

1 pm: Felted Leprechaun DIY workshop. All materials provided. Registration opens Feb. 2 until full. Must register in person with \$20 cash at the Holden Senior Center.

Saturday, February 21

10:30-11:30 am: Sensory Room Grand Opening at Richards Memorial Library. Thanks to a grant from the American Library Association, the library now has a Sensory Room, a

CALENDAR

continued on page 13

HOLDEN
Gale Free Library, 23 Highland St., Holden. 508.210.5569; galefreelibrary.org; 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
Holden Woman’s Club, HoldenWomansClubMA@gmail.com

PAXTON
Paxton Council on Aging, 17 West St., Paxton. 508.756.2833; paxtonma.gov; 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
Paxton Women’s Club, paxtonwomansclub.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
Rutland Historical Society, 232 Main St.; 508-886.4893; rutlandmahistoricalsociety.org

CALENDAR

continued from page 12

safe and calming space for patrons with disabilities, neurodivergent individuals, and all patrons. Come celebrate this accessibility initiative. From 10:30-11:30, explore sensory activities in the upstairs J/Y room with Kayla Paquette, founder of Behavioral Horizons; sign up to explore the Sensory Room in adult/child pairs or small groups. 11am: Listen to a reading of Kayla's book Sometimes It's Hard. All are welcome. Snow date 2/28.

10:30-11:30 am: Pooch Party with Maggie celebrates her birthday! Maggie and her person are a therapy team certified through the Alliance of Therapy Dogs. No registration required.

6-9 pm: 1950s Themed Sock Hop: Sponsored by the Rutland Events Committee. Find those poodle skirts and join the fun at the Rutland Sportsmans Club, 75 Pleasantdale Rd. Free babysitting at the Rutland Library by the Library's Teen

container. Decoupage layers paper or fabric on surfaces and seals them with varnish. \$8 fee covers all materials. Call the Paxton Senior Center to RSVP by Feb. 20.

3:30-5:30 pm: Dungeons and Dragons One-Shot. Join the party for a second-level adventure. Ideal for new and experienced players. Come with your own first-level character or choose from a pre-made sheet. Registration opens Feb. 17. Grades 6+

Wednesday, February 25

12 pm: Tastings Lunch Series: come and enjoy a luncheon catered by area food businesses to be held the last Wednesday of the month. \$3 fee. RSVP to the Paxton Senior Center by Feb. 20.

1:30 pm: Artificial Intelligence presentation by Henry Quinlan who will explain what defines AI, demonstrate its capabilities and the ways it can impact our lives. Register at the Holden Senior Center.

6-7:30 pm: Art Club at Gale Free Library. Bring your own supplies or

Free Library. Learn about the world of owls and their prey. Practice owl calls and dissect a real owl pellet. There are no live owls at this program. Registration opens Feb. 19. Ages 5+

Friday, February 27

10-11am: Read, Build, Play with / Community Connections at Paxton's Richards Memorial Library. STEM-based activities for young children and their caregivers. Thank you to Wachusett Community Connections for providing this program.

12:30-2 pm: Fruit Tree Pruning Winter Workshop Free. 30-40-minute presentation at Fellowship Hall, UU Church, 140 Shore Dr., Worcester followed by hands-on demonstration, Colony Mill Retirement Complex, 123 Holden St. Visit worcesterconservation.org for more info and to register. Please only register if you plan to attend because space is limited.

Sunday, March 1

10 am-3 pm: 33rd Annual Model Railroad Show & Sale sponsored by the Greater Worcester Model Train Show at the Auburn Elks Club, 754 Southbridge St. For more information, go to wmmr.org

Wednesday, March 4

10 am: Schoolhouse Café at Paxton Senior Center. Come and enjoy this monthly drop-in gathering for conversations over coffee and pastries (or a hot breakfast!) with old and new friends. The first Wednesday of the month, following the Council on Aging Board meeting.

Saturday, March 7

10 am: Spotted Lantern Fly & The Tree of Heaven with Joe Johnson. Sponsored by the Paxton Garden Club. The Spotted Lanternfly (SLF) has been confirmed in Worcester and Spencer. This invasive bug damages

Monday, February 23:
Holden Special Town Meeting
Check-in begins at 6 pm, meeting starts at 7 pm in the auditorium of Wachusett Regional High School. Before you attend, be informed about the two articles on the warrant, one of which is the MBTA Communities Act vote. Go the town website for the warrant or go here <https://www.holdenma.gov/home/news/special-town-meeting-223> to follow the link to the document.

a wide range of plants by feeding on their sap, which can lead to wilting and dieback. Local invasives expert, Joe Johnson will lead us in an SLF discussion and the Tree of Heaven and their devilish combination. At the Paxton Senior Center Community Room. Free and open to the public.

Monday, March 9

1 pm: Attorney Elizabeth Newton leads a compelling legal talk (subject to be determined). Register at the Holden Senior Center.

Tuesday, March 10

6 pm: Community Listening Session hosted by the Holden Board of Health in the conference room at the Public Safety Complex, 1370 Main St., to gather input on how to use opioid settlement funds that Massachusetts communities are receiving. No need to pre-register, free and open to the public.

6 pm: Spring business meeting of the Paxton Garden Club. Discuss the nominations for the Executive Board Election at the annual meeting, plan the June Plant Sale funds, receive updates from subcommittees, and more. Refreshments and door prizes will be available. Open to the public but only members can vote and enter in for the door prizes. Zoom details are on the website. At the Paxton Senior Center, Community Room and Zoom.

Wednesday, March 11

11 am: History of the Hoosac Tunnel at Paxton Senior Center. Details will

follow in next month's Calendar.

1:30 pm: Phrenology: Quackery or the Science of the Mind? will be the topic led by Tom Kelleher, OSV historian. Does the size and shape of your head determine who you are? Join the discussion to find out. Register at the Holden Senior Center.

Saturday, March 14

11 am: Community Listening Session hosted by the Town of Holden in the conference room at the Public Safety Complex, 1370 Main St., to gather input on how to use opioid settlement funds that Massachusetts communities are receiving. No need to pre-register, free and open to the public.

2-4 pm: DIY Decoupage Workshop: Ikea Water Pitchers with Sincerely Michele. Sponsored by the Paxton Garden Club. Learn the art of decoupage with Sincerely Michele to decoupage an Ikea Sockerart water pitcher. All supplies will be included. This class is limited to 12 attendees. To be held at the Paxton Senior Center. \$15 for club members. \$20 for non-members. Advanced signup and payment are due by March 1. Sign up through their website or <https://forms.gle/d2q7Q6xACAnJYR1M6>

Sunday, March 15

1 pm: Rutland Lions Club Senior Dinner: annual roast beef dinner prepared by and served by the Rutland Lions Club at the Rutland Congregational Church. RSVP at the Rutland Senior Center or call them by March 9. Snow date Sunday, March 22.

Like the Red Sox's Truck Day that heralds Spring, everyone is anticipating the warmer weather (even though it might not feel like it – yet). Signs are displayed on our three towns' electronic boards for spring baseball and soccer registration. Visit your town's recreation pages online to see what might be available for you and your family to enjoy.

Advisory Board. Tickets (\$10) can be purchased through the Events Committee's page on the town website: <https://www.rutlandma.gov/842/Sock-Hop---February-21-2026>.

Monday, February 23

10 am: Mindfulness Meditation with Marie Clemente. \$5 cash payable to the instructor. Register at Holden Senior Center.

10 am-12 pm: Blood pressure glucose clinic. Keep track of your numbers for your health. Drop-ins welcome. At the Holden Senior Center.

10 am-12 pm: SNAP Pre-screening program. Miriam Nyante of the Regional Board of Health will discuss the process of getting food stamps and screen to check your eligibility for the program. At the Holden Senior Center.

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

6 pm: Holden Special Town Meeting. Doors open at 6, and the meeting starts at 7. Auditorium, Wachusett Regional High School.

Tuesday, February 24

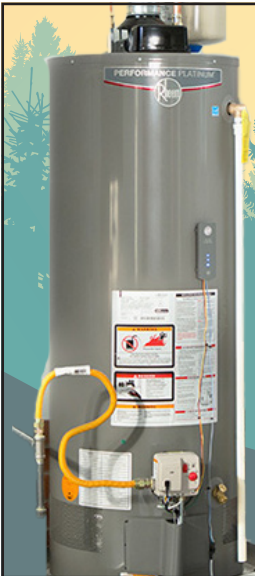
10 am: Decoupage Class where Michelle Arbour will demonstrate how to create your own floral piece and

use their watercolor paints, paper, brushes, pastels and more. No specific project, each month will have a quote, book, or image for inspiration. Patrons of all abilities are welcome. Registration required.

Thursday, February 26

11:30 am: February Birthdays celebrated at Rutland Senior Center. If your birthday is in February, stop by the Center to enjoy a slice of birthday cake.

4:20 pm: Owls and Their Prey presented by Hands on Nature at Gale



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Real Estate Transfers

Dec. 15, 2025 - JAN. 14, 2026

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 February issue publishes transfers from December 15 to January 14. This information is gathered from the Worcester Registry of Deeds' website. Compiled by Karin Warzybok.

HOLDEN

- 1355 Main St. 12/15:** Grantor 9 Acres of Holden, LLC. to Grantee 2020 Investments, LLC. \$625,000.
- 18 Edgewood Dr. 12/15:** Grantor Itidal Alrahhah to Grantees Itidal Alrahhah and Samer Alkhameesi. \$100.
- 11 Phillips Rd. 12/15:** Grantor Clare M. Nelson to Grantees Clare M. Nelson Tr and Clare M. Nelson 2025 Revocable Trust. \$1.
- 75 Nelson St. 12/15:** Grantors David J. Silva Tr, Asima Silva Tr, and Silva Family Trust to Grantee Kattan Dean. \$785,000.
- 1818 Main St. 12/15:** Grantor Janice Johnson Braley to Grantees Janice Johnson Braley Tr and Janice Johnson Braley 2025 Revocable Living Trust. \$100.
- 1 Birch Hill Dr. 12/15:** Grantor Darlene Donaldson to Grantees Keri L. Taylor Tr, Kathleen M. Donaldson Tr, and Darlene M. Donaldson 2025 Irrevocable Trust. \$1.
- 9 Short St. 12/16:** Grantor Catherine N. Kapurch to Grantees Hunter Rich and

Sarah Rich. \$455,000.

- 100 Avery Heights Dr. 12/16:** Grantors Domenico P. Lombardi and Alice W. Lombardi to Grantees Marc B. Happes and Miriam T. Stoll. \$741,800.
- 34 Union St. 12/16:** Grantors Clealand B. Blair Sr., Est and Clealand B. Blair Jr. to Grantees Clealand B. Blair Jr. Tr, Nancy J. Blair Tr, Steven White Tr, and Clealand B. Blair Revocable Trust. \$0.
- 34 Union St. 12/16:** Grantors Nancy J. Blair, William J. Blair, Clealand B. Blair Jr, Nancy J. Blair Tr, Steven White Tr, Clealand B. Blair Revocable Trust to Grantee Blair Enterprises Inc. \$100.
- 34 Union St. 12/16:** Grantor Blair Enterprises Inc. to Grantees Timothy Rodis and Catherine Kapurch. \$806,811.
- 527 Salisbury St. 12/17:** Grantor LRE, LLC to Grantees Anthony Boateng, Philomena Boateng, Evelyn Bawuah, and Rhoda Boateng. \$800,000.
- 126 Jennifer Dr. 12/17:** Grantors Gary Hreschuk and Meghan Hreschuk to Grantees Gary Hreschuk Tr, Meghan Hreschuk Tr, and Hreschuk Revocable Trust. \$100.
- 1325 Main St. 12/17:** Grantor Marcia Raymond to Grantees Marcia A. Raymond 2025 Revocable Trust and Marcia A. Raymond Tr. \$100.
- 43 Jordan Rd. 12/17:** Grantors Nag-eswara Rao Punnani, Shilpa Basava, and Rao Punnani to Grantees Nag-eswara Rao Punnani Tr, Shilpa Basava Tr, and Punnani Family Revocable Trust. \$100.

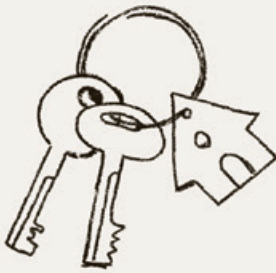
- 216 Reservoir St. 12/17:** Grantors Laura Meola Tr, Kathleen Hackett Tr, William J. Carr Living Trust, and William Carr Living Trust to Grantee Nancy Harrington. \$365,000.
- 35 Chapin Rd. 12/17:** Grantors Erickson Family Trust and Roger D. Eaton Tr to Grantee Christopher John Lewis. \$506,000.
- 176 Bailey Rd. 12/17:** Grantors Gerald R. Donahue Jr. Tr, Brendan L. Donahue Tr, and Donahue Living Trust to Grantees Gerald R. Donahue Jr. Tr, Brendan L. Donahue Tr, Survivors Trust, Donahue Living Trust, and Family Trust. \$1.
- 11 Old Broad St. 12/18:** Grantors Dennis M. Nelson, Dennis M. Nelson Tr, and Tammi M. Novia Supplemental Needs Trust to Grantees Dennis M. Nelson Tr and Dennis M. Nelson Revocable Trust. \$1.
- 300 Malden Rd. 12/18:** Grantors Marcos Ariel Avila and Keila Y. Gomar to Grantees Michael J. Dunlavey, Shaina DiGiacomo Dunlavey, and Shaina DiGiacomo. \$595,000.
- 160 Shrewsbury St. 12/18:** Grantors Jeffrey P. Greenberg, Paul A. Fraser, Kevin P. Fraser, Mark A. Fraser, Roy Fraser III, Terry Fraser, Scott Fraser, Pamela Fraser, Tara Meyer, and Pamela Sayarath, Kelly Montonari, and Kelley Montonari to Grantee LTA Capital Holdings LLC. \$665,000.
- 751 Mason Rd. 12/18:** Grantors Jeffrey D. Merlin, Christine M. Merlin, and Jeffrey D. Merlin to Grantees Michael Katherine Shannon and Mark Fratto. \$582,000.
- 2 Westview St. 12/18:** Grantor Zachariah James Pingeton Lindgren to Grantees Zachariah James Pingeton Lindgren and Jessica Lynn Lindgren. \$100.
- 590 Reservoir St. 12/19:** Grantor Shaw Development Inc. to Grantee Phoenix Properties LLC. \$100.
- 22 Wentworth Dr. 12/19:** Grantors Jeremy C. Bernard, Jeremy Bernard, Breana L. Bernard, and Breana Hatch to Grantees Jeremy C. Bernard Tr, Breana L. Bernard Tr, and Bernard Family 2025 Revocable Trust. \$100.
- 56 Longmeadow Ave. 12/22:** Grantors Robert D. Sbrogna and Lois E. Sbrogna to Grantees Robert D. Sbrogna, Lois E. Sbrogna, Michael T. Sbrogna, Jeffrey R. Sbrogna, and Kimberley Sbrogna Michalowski. \$100.
- 97 Bailey Rd. 12/22:** Grantors Kristine Quirk, Kristine J. Olsen, and Glenn Quirk to Grantee Kristine J. Olsen. \$100.
- 97 Bailey Rd. 12/22:** Grantor Kristine J. Olsen to Grantees Kristine J. Olsen 2025 Family Trust and Kristine J. Olsen Tr. \$100.
- 17 Cimmaron Ln. 12/22:** Grantors

- Timothy E. Downing and Patricia A. Downing to Grantees Timothy E. Downing Tr, Patricia A. Downing Tr, and Downing Living Trust. \$10.
- 60 Duxbury Dr. 12/22:** Grantor AR Homes LLC to Grantee Cameron Lamarche. \$620,000.
- Mayo Dr. Off, Virginia Hill Rd., Main St., Virginia Hill (no street numbers) 12/22:** Grantors Ann J. Harrington and Anne J. Harrington to Grantees Susan M. Dinola and Mary Ann McGrain. \$100.
- 3 Oakridge Rd. 12/23:** Grantor Amy R. Varga to Grantees William W. George and Kathleen G. George. \$385,000.
- 788 Main St. 12/23:** Grantor Holden 788 LLC to Grantee EAA Realty LLC. \$3,900,000.
- 80 Glenwood St. 12/26:** Grantors Larry D. Wilson Sr, Larry Drew Wilson, Wendy Wilson, and Wendy Marie Wilson to Grantees Wendy M. Wilson, Larry D. Wilson Family Trust, Larry Drew Wilson Tr, and Wendy Marie Wilson Tr. \$1.
- Mayo Dr. Off, Virginia Hill Rd. (no street number) 12/30:** Grantors Susan M. Dinola and Mary Ann McGrain to Grantees Susan M. Dinola Tr, Susan M. Dinola Trust, Mary Ann McGrain Tr, and Mary Ann McGrain Revocable Trust. \$100.
- 23 Crestview Dr. 12/30:** Grantors Raymond E. Dodge Jr. and Marlene J. Dodge to Grantees Raymond E. Dodge Jr. Tr, Marlene J. Dodge Tr and Raymond E. Dodge Jr. and Marlene J. Dodge Family Trust. \$100.
- 9 Holmes Dr. 12/30:** Grantor OA Homes LLC to Grantees Eric H. Darlington and Allison P. Learned-Darlington. \$959,200.
- 78 Wilde Willow Dr. 1/02:** Grantors Thomas R. Landry and Soudabeh Tahmassebpour to Grantee Soudabeh Tahmassebpour. \$100.
- 158 Fireside Ln. 1/05:** Grantor Maureen B. Lambert to Grantee Dawn P. Nugent. \$100.
- 33 Meadow Wood Dr. 1/05:** Grantors Michael Biancamano and Evelyn J. Biancamano to Grantees Donna B. Shaw and Mark A. Shaw Sr. \$420,900.
- 57 Winfield Rd. 1/05:** Grantor Becky Lynn Dibiasio to Grantees Becky Dibiasio, Tr and Becky Dibiasio Living Trust. \$100.
- 92 Autumn Circle 1/06:** Grantor Anastasia Germanos to Grantees Anastasia Germanos Tr and Germanos Legacy Wealth Trust. \$1.
- 32 Woodhaven Rd. 1/06:** Grantors Martha J. McAuliffe, Maureen E. Dumais, Daniel Dumais, and Daniel M. Dumais to Grantees Maureen E. Dumais and Daniel Dumais. \$100.
- 10 Sumac Cir. 1/07:** Grantor Mark A.

- Meola to Grantee 10 Sumac LLC. \$809,000.
- 269 Wachusett St. 1/07:** Grantors Taylor W. Ross, Brianne S. Ross, and B. S. Ross to Grantees Taylor W. Ross Tr, Brianne S. Ross Tr and Ross Living Trust. \$10.
- 745 Wachusett St. 1/12:** Grantor Dennis R. Frazier to Grantees Frazier Realty Trust-2024 and Dennis R. Frazier Tr. \$1.
- 206 Wachusett St. 1/13:** Grantors Scott I. Morrison and Paula J. Morrison to Grantees Benjamin Starek and Kelsey Brenner. \$720,000.
- 120 Moscow Rd. 1/13:** Grantors Peter A. Daoust and Jessica L. Daoust to Grantees Peter Daoust Tr, Jessica Daoust Tr, and Daoust Family Trust. \$100.
- 1818 Main St. 1/14:** Grantor Joanne Altieri to Grantees Joanne Altieri 2025 Living Revocable Trust, and Joanne Altieri Tr. \$100.

PAXTON

- 17 Crestwood Rd. 12/19:** Grantor Christopher N. Gray to Grantees Christopher N. Gray and Tina Gray. \$100.
- 7 Wildwood Dr. 12/23:** Grantor Whitney J. Brown to Grantees Whitney J. Brown Tr, Betsy J. Cruz Tr, and Three Little Chickens Trust. \$10.
- 46 West St. 12/24:** Grantors Naa Kwarley Brown, Naa Kwarley Quartey, and Celestina Nonon to Grantee Naa Kwarley Brown. \$100.
- 5 Woodland Dr. 12/24:** Grantors Andrew G. Milionis, Michael E. Milionis, Stephen E. Milionis, Stephen A. Milionis, Keefe J. Milionis, Nicholas P. Milionis, and Deirdre A. Mitchell to Grantee Friends Property Management LLC. \$340,000.
- 612 Pleasant St. 12/26:** Grantors Chuan Qiu and Hui Wang to Grantee Chuan Qiu. \$100.
- 612 Pleasant St. 12/26:** Grantors Chuan Qiu and Hui Wang to Grantees Chuan Qiu Tr, Wang Family Revocable Living Trust, and Hui Wang Tr. \$1.
- 48 Davis Hill Rd. 12/30:** Grantors Carrie A. Wood and Edward A. Nobrega to Grantees Carrie A. Wood Tr, Edward A. Nobrega Tr, Carrie A. Wood, Trust-2024 and Edward A. Nobrega Trust-2024. \$10.
- 470 Marshall St. 1/05:** Grantor John Denton Holbrook, Casey Marin Bogan, and Casey M. Bogan to Grantee John Denton Holbrook. \$1.
- 177 Grove St. 1/07:** Grantors Brendan M. Smith, Brendan Smith, and Laura Smith to Grantee Laura Smith. \$10.
- 32 West St. 1/09:** Grantors Wilfred F. Desrosiers Family Trust, Wilfred F. Desrosiers Jr. Tr, David L. Desrosiers Tr, and Robert B. Desrosiers Tr to Grantees David J. Dufresne Tr and Green



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Sip n' Sprout Welcomes Little Ones and Their Caregivers

By KARIN WARZYBOK

For several years, Holden resident Jessica Shaw dreamt of creating a fun, safe place for babies, toddlers, and pre-K kids to engage in free play while their caregivers take a breath, relax, and connect. She imagined a place to grow a community for parents and caregivers of small children.

Shaw, a single mom and now first-time small-business owner, remembers the days when she would have loved to get out of the house with her young son, grab a coffee, and enjoy a conversation with other adults, while her son had the opportunity to play with other children. But no



Jessica Shaw, Sip n' Sprout owner, with Hailey Finneran.

such space existed.

Now, her dream has finally come to fruition. "I built Sip

n' Sprout to be a place where kids are free to explore, and parents don't have to apologize for their child acting like a child," Shaw explained.

After months of planning, long hours, and lots of sweat equity, Sip n' Sprout, a new, creative, play space in the heart of Holden on Main Street, is open for business. Designed for tots aged six months to five years old and their caregivers, the new cafe is dedicated to serving local families.

The facility is bright, sunny, and airy with tiny tables and chairs for little ones to play and color. Age-appropriate books, toys, and plushies abound. There is even a "spinnny chair," which is a tool

for sensory regulation. The space is designed for low stimulation. The focus is on the children and how they learn, play, and regulate.

Sip n' Sprout was thoughtfully planned with hygge in mind. "I want the room to feel warm and welcoming. For families to be happy and at ease the moment they walk through the door," Shaw said. She wants to ensure that each little visitor's experience is enjoyable with the opportunity to freely express themselves through play and crafts.

In addition to the creative spaces for children, there is a cozy nook for grownups to sit and connect with other adults. Eventually the cafe will sell reasonably priced hot tea

or coffee and freshly baked goods. For now, visitors are welcome to bring their own drinks and snacks.

Sip n' Sprout is open Tuesday through Friday. The rate for a play session is \$15 for an infant 0-6 months alone. \$20 for one child, age 6 months to 5 years. Additional siblings are \$10. Infants 0-5 months are free with a sibling. Play sessions are capped at 10 children and last 90 minutes. Sessions start at 9:00 am, 11:00 am, and 1:00 pm. Caregivers must remain on site throughout the session.

More information can be found at hello@sipnsprout.org *

REAL ESTATE

continued from page 14

Machine Realty Trust. \$225,000.

416 Pleasant St. 1/12: Grantors Allison Lee White, Kelli A. White, Janine E. Hartwell, and Robin D. White to Grantee Madison Cole. \$309,900.

10 Burtenmar 1/14: Grantor Richard G. Bedard to Grantees Richard G. Bedard Jr. Tr and Bedard Family 2025 Irrevocable Trust. \$1.

RUTLAND

29 Forest Hill Dr. 12/16: Grantor Wingspan Properties LLC to Grantees Charles L. Newton III and Lauren Webb. \$824,200.

27 Cheryl Ann Dr. 12/17: Grantor Elaine M. Marsh to Grantees Elaine M. Marsh Tr. and Elaine M. Marsh Revocable Trust. \$100.

10 Beechwood Dr. 12/18: Grantors Adam P. Schumacher and Walter J. Schumacher Est to Grantees Daniel Hehir and Laura Koblich Hehir. \$428,000.

188 Turkey Hill Rd. 12/19: Grantors Barry J. Pandiani and Nancy C. Pandiani to Grantees Laura L. Czaja and Daniel L. Czaja. \$100.

Brintnal Dr. 12/19: Grantor Gordon Warren to Grantees Paul A. Cammuso and Katherine A. Cammuso. \$100.

176 Maple Ave. 12/19: Grantor Seven Hills Community Services Inc. to Grantees George Dilling and Henry Dilling. \$183,000.

101 Brintnal Dr. 12/19: Grantors Gordon Warren, Dorothy E. Tsotsis, Gordon F. Warren, and Shirley J. Warren Est. to David Cronin. \$575,000.

26 Michael Dr. 12/23: Grantors Mark

Roy and Crystal Roy to Grantee Crystal Roy. \$1.

81 Brintal Dr. 12/24: Grantors Paul A. Cammuso and Katherine Cammuso to Grantees Paul A. Cammuso and Katherine Cammuso. \$100.

25 Pleasantdale Rd. 12/29: Grantor Bruce E. Berndt to Grantees Bruce E. Berndt Tr and Berndt Revocable Living Tr. \$100.

55 Pommogussett Rd. 12/30: Grantors Charles A. Wilkinson and Sarah Wilkinson to Grantees Ryan Pichierri and Jeffrey Pichierri. \$486,500.

3 Quail Run Dr. 12/30: Grantor C. B. Blair Development Corp to Grantees Robert Michael Wrona and Emilia Wrona. \$729,554.

25 Soucy Dr. 1/02: Grantors James M. Moynihan and Winifred A. Moynihan

to Grantees James M. Moynihan Tr, Winifred A. Moynihan Tr, and Moynihan Family Realty Trust. \$100.

6 Fidelity Dr. 1/05: Grantor Harmony Place LLC to Grantees Christopher R. Atwood and Lisa M. Atwood. \$512,000.

271 Glenwood Rd. 1/06: Grantor MA Elbag Building Contractors Inc. to Grantees Chingman Amy Birbasins and Joseph Victor Virbasius. \$740,000.

175A Glenwood Rd. 1/07: Grantors Christopher Nathan and Adrianna Nathan to Grantees Prince Antwi and Priscilla Antwi. \$740,000.

12 Tanglewood Cir. 1/08: Grantors Helen M. Anderson Tr and Helen M. Anderson 2023 Revocable Trust to Grantees Karin L. Fletcher and Holly

A. Haines. \$100.

73 Britnal Dr. 1/08: Grantors Jeffrey A. Bartek and Daymian R. Bartek to Grantees Ted Biba and Sabrina Biba Dossantos. \$552,000.

84 Pleasantdale Rd. 1/09: Grantors Lois H. Brown Family Trust, Laurel A. Nolet Tr, and Nancy L. Holzner Tr to

Grantee Lois Haines Brown Daughters LLC. \$100.

7 Prescott St. 1/13: Grantor Christine A. David, Christine A. Blondin, and A. Jeffrey David to Grantees Christopher Landry and Renee Landry. \$476,000.

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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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Celebrating Over a Century of Service, the Holden Woman's Club Looks Ahead

BY KITTY BRADSHAW-WHITE

For more than 110 years, the Holden Woman's Club has been a vibrant force for good in our community. Founded in 1915, this nonprofit organization continues to bring people together through service, scholarship, civic engagement, cultural enrichment, and genuine friendship. Members share a simple but powerful goal: to strengthen Holden by working side by side - and to have fun while doing it. New members are always welcome to join in the camaraderie, social events, and meaningful service projects that define the club's spirit.

That spirit has translated into real impact. Since last May alone, the club has donated more than \$11,000 back into the community, including \$7,500 in scholarships and \$3,500 to local organizations including Holden EMS, local veterans and the Gale Free Library. Members also participate in outreach

efforts and enjoy monthly programs, one of which, a historical play, is offered free to the entire community.

Each year, after hosting two major fundraisers, the club looks forward to two of its most cherished traditions: celebrating local excellence through scholarships and a special community recognition. The club has awarded scholarships continuously since 1967 and has honored a Person of the Year since 1982.

This spring, the club is pleased to share details about its 2026 scholarship opportunities and its annual Person of the Year Award.

The club will award three scholarships this year to graduating high school seniors from the Class of 2026 who reside in Holden and plan to continue their education at an accredited institution. Two general scholarships of \$2,500 will be awarded, along with the specially funded Carroll/Halliwell Scholarship, also \$2,500, designated for a

Holden student pursuing a major in a foreign language.

Applications are available at the guidance office at Wachusett Regional High School and other area schools, the reference desk at the Gale Free Library, and by emailing saraholloway7@gmail.com. The deadline for submission is Monday, March 30, 2026.

In other exciting news, the club is now accepting nominations for its annual Person of the Year Award. Nominees may be of any age or gender and must be Holden residents. Past honorees have included volunteers, educators, town employees, business owners, and others who have made a meaningful and lasting contribution to the quality of life in Holden.



**Above: \$1,000 was donated to Captain Ethan Naiman, Holden EMS Coordinator Ambulance Fund training.
Inset: The Holden Woman's Club donated \$1,000 to the Holden Veteran Service agents for distribution to Holden veterans before the holidays.**

To nominate someone, please send a written description of the nominee's accomplishments and community impact to HoldenWomansClubMA@gmail.com by April 8. Be sure to include your name and contact information.

The recipient will be notified in May and honored at the club's annual meeting and

luncheon. In keeping with the club's mission of giving back, a donation will also be made to a nonprofit organization chosen by the honoree.

New members are always welcome to join the Holden's Woman's Club. For more information on membership opportunities, follow the club on Facebook at HoldenWomansClub. *



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