

# localtownpages Hopedale

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## Our Town Publishing Changes Hands, Celebrates Relocation

Tri-County Regional Chamber Facilitates Milford Ribbon-Cutting Event

By JUDITH DORATO O'GARA

On Friday, January 23rd, Jen and Marty Schofield, new owners of Our Town Publishing, celebrated a grand opening and ribbon-cutting ceremony at their new location at 9 Industrial Road, Ste. 107, Milford, Mass. The full-service printing company provides a range of marketing services for all clients, from consumer to business, as well as publishes community newspapers reaching 28 Massachusetts towns. The reception drew many local professionals, along with Rep. Brian W.



Front row at ribbon-cutting, from left, Laura O'Callaghan, President & CEO of Tri-County Regional Chamber, Our Town Publishing new owners Jen and Marty Schofield, and Mass. Rep. Brian W. Murray of the 10th Worcester District.

**CELEBRATION**

*continued on page 2*

## Hopedale officials investigating \$300k fiscal discrepancy

One employee placed on non-disciplinary administrative leave

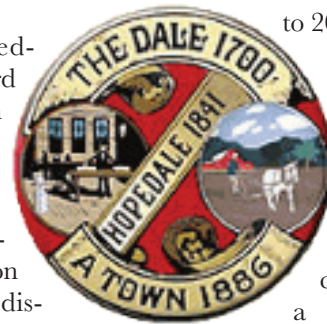
By THERESA KNAPP

The Hopedale Select Board conducted an emergency meeting on Feb. 11 to provide an "emergency update on the financial discrepancies related to fiscal year 2019 through 2025 and our next steps."

The discrepancy is a \$300,000 deficit in the town's police private detail revolving


account that dates back to 2019.

More than 60 residents attended the virtual meeting, where Town Administrator Mitch Ruscitti delivered a seven-minute prepared statement outlining the findings of an ongoing financial review.



**FISCAL**

*continued on page 3*



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Our Town Publishing's celebration afforded local professionals an opportunity to make connections with area businesses.

**CELEBRATION**

*continued from page 1*

Murray of the 10th Worcester District and Laura O'Callaghan, President & CEO of the Tri-County Regional Chamber of Commerce, who was "thrilled" to help facilitate the ribbon-cutting event.

Our Town President & CEO Jen Schofield expressed her gratitude to all who attended for their support.

"As both the owner and publisher of 16 area newspapers and a full-service print shop, Marty and I are incredibly proud of the work we do—and even more proud of the relationships that have built this business brick by brick," Schofield added, "This event is more than just showcasing our print shop, newspapers, products and services; it's about building lasting connections. Printing has always been a collaborative craft, and today is a perfect opportunity to share ideas and build new partnerships in a community we are so fortunate to be part of."

"It was wonderful to see such a strong turnout from the newspaper's clients and supporters," said O'Callaghan. "The energy in the room and the enthusiasm for networking really spoke to the respect and support Jennifer and Marty have already earned as the new owners. And of course,



nothing makes it official quite like oversized red scissors and a bright red ribbon!"

"I'm pleased to have Our Town Publishing in Milford and very impressed with the number of local community newspapers (it) publishes," said Rep. Murray, who recognized Our Town Publishing with an official citation from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts at the celebration. Murray continued, "Today, it is so difficult to try to get current



(L to R) Nicole and Charles Tashjian, former owners of Our Town Publishing, chat with attorney Laurie Fowles.

local information, and the papers that Our Town puts together does just a great job of getting that information out to residents in the community. I was also very pleased to learn of the extent of full-service printing services Our Town offers to businesses and residents in the community. It's very important for folks who have printing needs to know they'll be done locally, professionally and cost-effectively."

Rep. Murray also gave a nod to the Tri-County Chamber for helping to bring exposure and attention to local businesses such as Our Town Publishing.

Tri-County Regional Chamber's O'Callaghan extended her well wishes "to former owner Nicole and her husband, Charles, on their retirement - hopefully they are enjoying their free time

somewhere sunny and warm."

The Tashjians said they could not be happier to entrust the company they built to Jennifer and Marty.

"With Jennifer's 26 years in the industry and Marty's technical experience, we know our employees, and the continuation of what has been established, will have a long life for the years ahead," said Nicole Tashjian.

For more information on Our Town Publishing's full-service printing, publishing and graphic design services, visit [www.our-townpublishing.com](http://www.our-townpublishing.com).

To learn more about Local Town Pages' community newspapers, visit [www.localtownpages.com](http://www.localtownpages.com).

For more information on the Tri-County Regional Chamber, visit [tricontycounty.org](http://tricontycounty.org).



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**FISCAL**

*continued from page 1*

“This matter began following Fall Town Meeting 2025, just a few short months ago, when the town voted to appropriate \$300,000 of excess levy capacity into the Stabilization Fund. During reconciliation of that transfer with the Department of Revenue, a discrepancy was identified indicating that reported available revenue did not align with the amount necessary to support that deposit. I immediately reran the calculations from this office, and within this office, and confirmed that the appropriation map itself was, in fact, accurate. That indicated that the issue was not with the vote itself but potentially within revenue tracking or account reconciliation.

“At that point, I initiated a structured internal review of revenue collections and account balances while simultaneously continuing year-end closeout and tax-rate setting in coordination with the Department of Revenue. During that process, additional discrepancies were identified that required deeper review beyond routine reporting and beyond the routine close-out process.”

Ruscitti continued, “As the review expanded, and in conjunction with Marcum (the third party accounting firm assisting with closeout), we identified a material deficit within the police private detail revolving account. Although officers were compensated through regular payroll, and services continued uninterrupted, the revolving account had accumulated a significant negative balance over multiple

fiscal years. This year alone, that negative balance exceeded \$300,000, meaning that private detail payments were made without corresponding full cost recovery reflected in that account.

“At this point, I want to be crystal clear that this issue does not reflect on the Hopedale Police Department or individual officers as invoicing and payment processing for private details are administrative functions and do not live with the Hopedale Police Department.”

During public comment, a resident asked if \$300,000 was a firm number.

Ruscitti said, “At this time, I’m comfortable sharing a \$300,000 discrepancy. I will say that the discrepancy in uncollected real estate taxes in FY25 appears to be substantial. Just as a side note, there is a number of uncollected real estate taxes that often falls into a usual margin. Folks that are struggling economically, or that maybe were foreclosed on, or other issues or hardships – there is a small number each year of uncollected real estate taxes for those reasons. This year is about ‘6x’ [six times] of what is usually uncollected, which raised flags upon learning of that. So, that is where we are, I don’t feel comfortable sharing the other numbers yet until we have a conclusive.”

Another resident asked if a situation raised to town officials in November regarding uncashed personal checks was related to this deficit, Ruscitti said it was not. “This is not related to that issue in any way, shape, or form. And town staff did not handle the checks that we’re talking about at Thanksgiving, that was a third-party vendor.”



www.townhallstreams.com

*“While there is no evidence at this time of fraud or theft, if the investigation warrants referral to outside authorities, appropriate action will be taken in accordance with law.”*

*-Mitch Ruscitti, Town Administrator, regarding \$300,000 fiscal discrepancy*

Ruscitti said that Marcum is conducting a comprehensive forensic review, and he has brought in Milford Chief Financial Officer Zach Taylor to provide independent oversight. Town officials continue to work closely with the Department of Revenue.

Ruscitti said the discrepancies were not identified through prior audits or standard financial reporting procedures and

were only discovered through enhanced reconciliation efforts conducted during the tax rate certification process. He expects many of the funds are recoverable through reconciliation and procedural corrections.

In addition, one person has been placed on leave.

“In consultation with counsel, and to protect the town’s fiduciary interest, I placed an involved employee on non-disciplinary administrative leave pending an ongoing investigation,” Ruscitti said.

“While there is no evidence at this time of fraud or theft, if the investigation warrants referral to outside authorities, appropriate action will be taken in accordance with law,” he said.

Town officials stressed that municipal operations remain stable. Tax bills have been issued on schedule, payroll obligations are being met, and no cuts to town services are planned at this time.

Select Board Chair Scott Savage said the board will continue providing updates as more information becomes available, adding “This process is about identifying root causes and coming up with resolutions to fix it.”

Select Board member Glenda Hazard would like a written report from Marcum regarding their findings.

Ruscitti concluded by saying, “My responsibility as Town

*“At this point, I want to be crystal clear that this issue does not reflect on the Hopedale Police Department or individual officers as invoicing and payment processing for private details are administrative functions and do not live with the Hopedale Police Department.”*

*-Mitch Ruscitti, Town Administrator*

Administrator is to identify risk, confront it directly, and implement structural corrections. That responsibility is not taken lightly, it is being exercised fully. The meeting tonight was held to be fully transparent to the board because eventually this will come in front of Town Meeting. I will continue to provide updates as the review progresses, both to the public and to the Select Board.”

To watch the meeting, visit [https://townhallstreams.com/stream.php?location\\_id=56&id=72791](https://townhallstreams.com/stream.php?location_id=56&id=72791)

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# Bright Beginnings sees record growth, innovation

First year school could not open registration to non-residents

While some school districts across the state are grappling with shifting demographics, the Bright Beginnings Center (BBC) in Hopedale is experiencing a significant "growth spurt." As the 2026-2027 registration season got underway for the town's preschool in January, the early childhood center is reporting record interest, fueled by a unique blend of innovative early learning and expanded support for working families.

The demand for high-quality early education in Hopedale has never been clearer. Since online registration opened for residents on Jan. 20, administrators have noted a steady climb in enrollment numbers. This surge is attributed to the school's reputation for "whole-child" development and its ability to serve as a seamless bridge into the Hopedale Public School system. While the program has seen its registration fill steadily within weeks of opening for the last few years, the 2026-2027 school year was the first year the school was not

able to open any spots to non-residents of Hopedale.

"We are seeing a wonderful influx of new families," said BBC Principal Kristen Poisson. "It's a testament to the community's trust in our play-based curriculum and our commitment to making every child's first school experience a joyful one."

Beyond the curriculum and program design, the heartbeat of the school remains its dedicated faculty. The Bright Beginnings Center prides itself on a roster of highly qualified educators who specialize in early childhood development. Each lead teacher holds a professional license from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, with many possessing Master's degrees in Special Education or Early Childhood Instruction. This level of expertise ensures that the school's "play-based" philosophy is backed by rigorous developmental science, allowing staff to provide tailored interventions and advanced enrichment in real-time.

A new draw of the school's growth is the innovative For-



Pre-K students Peyton Dolliver, Lorelei Fay, and Amelia Gould work on learning activities in their classroom. Courtesy photo

est Friends program. As one of the first public school districts in Massachusetts to adopt a nature-based model, BBC has turned the nearby Hopedale Parklands into the school's own outdoor classroom. Students in the Forest Friends program spend the majority of their day outdoors, regardless of the season. The curriculum integrates all DESE curriculum standards but specifically focuses on STEM in nature. Students enjoy activities such as measuring snowfall, observing local wildlife like the Parklands' swans, and studying ecosystems.

Nature-based early learning programs have been proven to encourage curiosity and risk-taking in a safe, supervised environment. Poisson says that Forest Friends was the first class to fill during this year's registration period.

"It seems there are a lot of aspects of the program that appeal to parents," she shared. "Now that we are a few years into it and it's been successful, we are seeing more demand."

Over the years, the Bright

Beginnings Center has also continued to recognize the growing needs of working parents, significantly expanding its Extended Day programming. Having begun almost 10 years ago, the school's before and after school program has now grown into a robust wrap-around service that provides care as early as 7:00 AM and as late as 5:00 PM for families who need care beyond standard school day hours. The program is staffed by school personnel who integrate enriching activities such as yoga, music, and exploratory science play into the extended school day hours. This expansion has allowed more families to choose BBC, knowing their children are in a consistent, educational environment from drop-off to pick-up.

In addition to flexible drop off and pick up hours, the school has worked with the school district's Food Services department in recent years to bring free school lunch and snack to all students at BBC. Families are able to order lunches from a variety of choices. While the school building on Park

Street does not include a kitchen, cold lunch options are delivered daily to BBC from the Junior Senior High School cafeteria.

"This is my eighth school year at BBC," said Poisson, "and I'm really proud of how the school has continued to improve and grow and how the community has responded."

No discussion of the school's growth would be complete without mentioning its most popular staff member: Sunny, the school's certified facility dog. A gentle presence in the classrooms and hallways, Sunny serves as a vital bridge for students navigating the social and emotional challenges of early childhood. Whether providing a calming influence for a child experiencing morning drop-off jitters or acting as a happy presence in the classroom during circle time or centers, Sunny's impact on the school climate is profound. By integrating a facility dog into the daily routine, the Bright Beginnings Center reinforces its commitment to emotional regulation and mental well-being, proving that sometimes the best way to help a child thrive is with a wagging tail and a friendly pair of ears.

With registration full for the 2026-2027 school year, those who may have missed the window are still encouraged to join the school's waitlist. As the "gateway to Kindergarten" for Hopedale's youngest residents, the Bright Beginnings Center continues to evolve, proving that with a little bit of fresh air and a lot of community support, the foundation for lifelong learning is stronger than ever.

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# Because sometimes you need to cut loose, Footloose!

Get ready to cut loose and kick off your Sunday shoes - Hopedale Jr./Sr. High School Drama Department is bringing the electrifying spirit of Footloose the Musical to the stage. Packed with high-energy dance numbers, unforgettable hits, and a heartfelt story about standing up for what you believe in, this production promises an evening of pure entertainment. Join these talented performers Friday, March 13, at 7 p.m., and Sat., March 14, at 1 p.m. and 7 p.m. as they bring this beloved story to life.

By attending, you're not only treating yourself to a fantastic night out; you're also supporting arts education and celebrating the hard work of local students, directors, and crew members. There will be raffle baskets, Stars for the Stars, and concession options available at each show.

Don't let life pass you by, come on down to Hopedale Jr./Sr.



Josalyn Moyer plays the character of Ariel Moore and Turo Rigdon plays Ren McCormack. Photo credit: Rachael Jackson



Devon Thomson plays the character of Reverend Shaw Moore and Turo Rigdon plays Ren McCormack. Photo credit: Rachael Jackson



Several 'Footloose the Musical' cast members practicing the choreography in preparation of the March 13-14 shows. Photo credit: Rachael Jackson

High School auditorium March 13th and 14th and celebrate youth, freedom, and the power of community. Tickets will be available on-line in advance ([hopedale.booktix.com](http://hopedale.booktix.com)) or at the door before the shows.

# Hopedale 100 years ago: chickens, outhouse fire, milk wagons

## A series that looks at Hopedale in 1926

By DAN MALLOY  
SPECIAL CONTRIBUTOR

In 1926, Hopedale had a population of 2988, with the people living in 568 houses. There were 50 cows, 24 horses, and 995 chickens in town.

The fire department reported on all of their calls. A large number were for grass and brush fires, and also more chimney fires than I'd expect would happen now. There was just one out-house fire. Unfortunately, it doesn't explain the circumstances. Someone smoking while sitting in there, perhaps.

Among many other items, the sealer of weights and measures reported that he had inspected six milk wagons, two junk wagons, and 23 peddlers; licenses.

The school doctor found 258 pupils to be in good condition, but he also came across 162 cases of diseased or enlarged tonsils 41 with defective teeth, 20 with nits, and six with wax in ears. Seems like they might have been over-diagnosing tonsils in those years and removing too many. Nits, on the other hand, had to go.

Dan Malloy is the founder of [www.hope1842.com](http://www.hope1842.com), a website devoted to the history of Hopedale.



Central Fire Station, circa 1926. Photo source: Dan Malloy, [www.hope1842.com](http://www.hope1842.com)

# '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](http://www.hope1842.com), will present *Historic Hopedale Homes*, exploring the architectural and social history of the

town through its most significant residences.

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

Source: Bancroft Memorial Library

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# Family-run Affordable Junk Removal takes the stress out of cleanups

By CHRISTIE VOGT  
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Whether it's one old fridge in the garage or an entire home of unwanted goods, the team at Affordable Junk Removal offers a cost-efficient, stress-free approach to waste management. "You don't lift a finger," says owner Jason Schadler, who started the company along with his wife Christine in 2005.

The business offers same-day service for both residential and commercial clients across eastern and central Massachusetts and northern Rhode Island. In addition to junk removal, the company rents 15-yard dumpsters.

As a family-owned and operated company, Schadler says Affordable Junk Removal has lower overhead costs and is more accessible than national competitors. "I answer my phone 24 hours a day," he says. "I was on vacation in Italy and Portugal, and I was still answering my phone on the beach. When you call us, you get me — not an automated machine!"

Schadler says the company has an environmentally friendly approach to disposal in which it recycles items when possible and properly disposes of non-recyclables. "We have four kids and sustainability is extremely important to us."

During the business's early days, Schadler provided junk removal on nights and weekends when he wasn't busy working at a machine shop. Eventually, the business grew into a full-time endeavor, and the Schadlers invested back into the company with new equipment and techniques. "When I first started, for example, we didn't have any tarps. I'm driving around and things are flying out of my truck," Schadler laughs. "I'm like, 'Oh my god, I need a tarp.'"

Schadler says his wife Christine "was equally as involved" in getting the business off the ground. "She handled the back-end while I did the heavy lifting, all while she was working at EMC," he says. "Fast forward 21 years, and we both work full



Christine and Jason Schadler, shown here with their children, started Affordable Junk Removal in 2005.

time managing the company as well as other endeavors. Business is doing great; it has grown tremendously to a fleet of trucks and dumpsters, and we've also been able to buy a pizza place in Holliston, The Corner Market."

In addition to delivering an in-demand service to the community, Schadler is appreciative that Affordable Junk Removal has helped provide a work-life balance that suits his family. "It allows me to be able to do what I like doing and spend time with my kids," he says. "I'm home to see my babies play softball and

do all that stuff. We are also able to give back to the communities we serve."

As for Hopedale in particular, Schadler says they are proud to have many repeat customers and friends in the area. The Schadlers live in nearby Milford and have coached and sponsored many youth sports activities in both Hopedale and Milford.

One of the best parts of his job, Schadler says, is meeting

and getting to know new people and developing relationships with returning customers. "We are really grateful for the repeat business and the chance to form connections with residents across the MetroWest area," he says.

To receive a free junk removal estimate, call 774-287-1133 or visit [affordablejunkremoval.com](http://affordablejunkremoval.com).

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# Homebuying in 2026: Smart Moves To Plan Your Purchase.



Glenn Brown, CFP

March marks the start of the spring homebuying season. Sellers who waited out the slower winter months are listing homes, and some buyers wait until summer to align closings with the school year.

With mortgage rates slightly lower than 2025 peaks, timing and strategy remain critical. The Fed's latest dot plot signals gradual easing in 2026 and 2027, which could create refinancing opportunities. However, waiting for rates to drop carries trade-offs, as falling rates often coincide with rising home prices.

Before scrolling Zillow, open houses, and finding a real estate agent, let's discuss things you need to prepare.

### Define your priorities

Start by listing what matters most in a home, then prioritize #1-25, as not everything can be #1 or 1A. Consider location, bedrooms, outdoor space, remote work offices and play areas. Decide between move-in ready versus fixer-upper, quiet streets versus active neighborhoods, and public versus private schools. Don't let innovative listing pho-

tos sway your lifestyle goals and long-term needs.

### Understand the local market

Research pricing trends in your desired neighborhoods. Check school ratings, public safety, property taxes, and local infrastructure plans. Also, if you don't want to live on a busy road, know the existing commercial and industrial zones.

### Get pre-approved for a mortgage

Pre-approval signals to sellers that you're serious and can afford the property. Don't confuse pre-approval with ability to pay, as an underwriter is viewing your financial situation today - not what you have planned.

### Explore mortgage options

Mortgage type matters more than ever in 2026:

**Conventional Loans** - Not backed by the government, these are offered by banks or private lenders. Down payments are 5-20% with required credit scores higher than 620, best rates for scores 780+. Benefits include competitive rates and flexible terms, however, there are limits on the amount borrowed.

**FHA Loans** - Government-backed Federal Housing Administration loans are designed to help first-time homebuyers or those with lower credit scores qualify for a mortgage. Down payments are as low as 3.5% for credit scores of 580 or higher. Keep in mind, Private Mortgage Insurance (PMI) is required, which increases overall costs.

**Jumbo Loans** - A type of mortgage that exceeds the conforming loan limits set by the

Federal Housing Finance Agency (FHFA). Down payments are often 20%+ with higher credit scores, incomes, and investment assets.

**Adjustable-rate mortgages (ARMs):** Lower initial rates for five, seven or 10 years, then adjust with market conditions. Good if you plan to refinance or move within that time frame.

**Tip for 2026 buyers:** Consider an ARM with the intention of refinancing in two to five years if rates drop. Locking a lower rate now with a plan to refinance later could save thousands, but ensure your budget can handle potential adjustments.

### Plan for full costs

Beyond the down payment, budget for closing costs such as escrow, prepaid interest and other fees. These can add \$5,000-\$15,000. Some costs can be rolled into the mortgage, but get a detailed lender breakdown to avoid surprises.

Factor in future refinancing if you plan to take advantage of rate drops. This can positively affect monthly affordability and long-term planning.

### Align homebuying with your financial plan

The real peace of mind comes after moving in. Planning ahead helps ensure your new home supports your financial goals.

- Adjust your monthly budget for mortgage, insurance and taxes
- Plan short-term renovations or upgrades
- Build contingencies for unexpected expenses or family changes

With a clear plan, you can confidently buy a home that aligns with both lifestyle and long-term financial independence.

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 PlanDy-

namic, LLC, [www.PlanDynamic.com](http://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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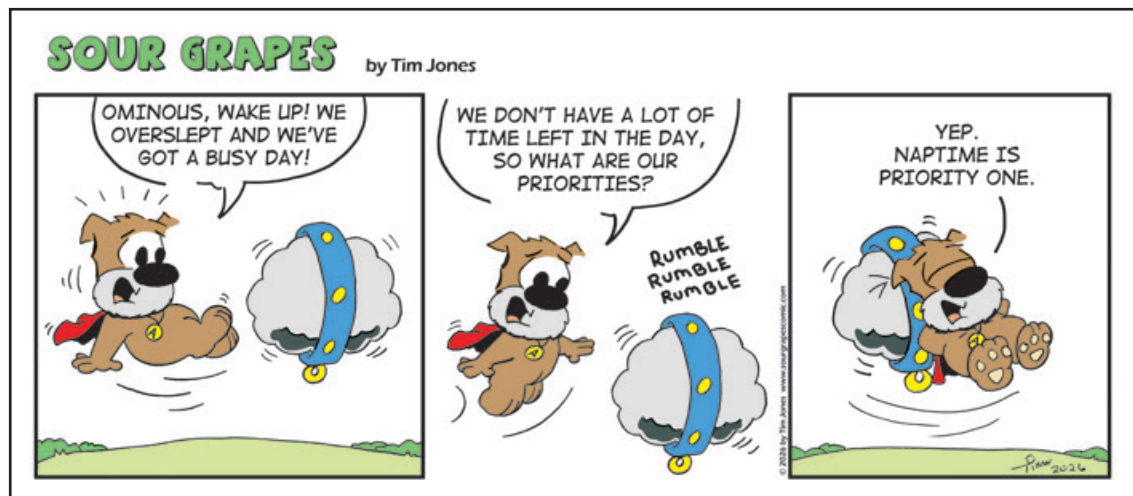
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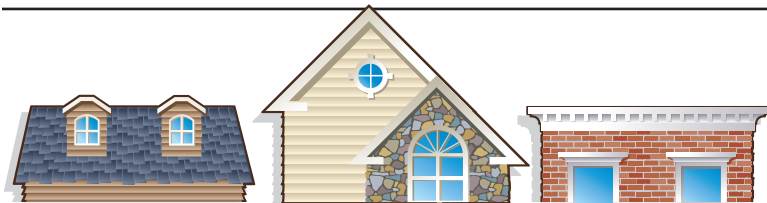
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# SPRING HO

## How Much Home Can I Afford?

By the third quarter of 2025, the tide seemingly began to turn in regard to a housing market that had been marked by limited inventory since the onset of the

off, as the median existing home price in the United States was \$435,300 in June 2025, which marked a 2 percent increase from the previous year. Price reductions also became more common compared to 2024, signaling a cooldown in some segments.

Although affordability concerns still persist, many people may finally be ready to enter the home-buying arena. When doing so, it's essential prospective home buyers recognize how much they can comfortably spend on a home. Most experts suggest buyers combine lender affordability guidelines with an assessment of one's personal budget. These factors can help individuals determine a reliable budget when shopping for homes.



COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. According to market indicators from Redfin, the National Association of REALTORS® and Homes for Heroes, by the summer of 2025 things began to shift in regard to inventory (9.4 percent increase year-over-year). Prices also began to level

- Debt-to-income ratio: Lenders use various parameters to identify a borrower's creditworthiness. That includes figuring out a person's debt-

to-income ratio (DTI). Wells Fargo says DTI can be calculated by adding up all of a person's monthly debt payments and dividing them by gross monthly income. That number is multiplied by 100 to get a percentage. The lower the DTI, the less risky one is to lenders.

- The 28/36 rule: Part of the DTI equation may include the 28/36 rule utilized by many mortgage lenders. This is a standard guideline that can help one see if it's possible to afford a home loan. The 28 percent is allotted housing costs. The monthly housing expenses (principal, interest, taxes, homeowners insurance, private mortgage association fees) should be no more than 28 percent of one's gross monthly income. One's total monthly debt

payments, including housing, car, loans, student loans, and credit cards, should be no more than 36 percent of the gross monthly income. So if a prospective home buyer earns \$10,000 per month, or \$120,000 per year, the housing costs should not exceed \$2,800. Total debt payments, including housing, should not exceed \$3,600 per month.

- Personal budget considerations: Lenders may allow borrowers to borrow a certain amount of money, and buyers then go out and spend that much on a home. But to avoid living paycheck to paycheck and having all of one's money go toward a home, it is best to account for personal spending habits and savings goals. It's important to have an emergency funds account to pay for unexpected things like home repairs, or to account for instances when income may decline. Ongoing costs to manage the home also merit consideration, as do utilities and future renovations.
- Income-to-home price ratio: Some people abide by another general guideline to

shop for a home that costs no more than three to five times their annual household income. That means with an annual income of \$100,000, one should aim for a home priced between \$300,000 and \$500,000. The specific range will also depend on a person's existing debt.

- Interest rates and other factors: The interest rate on home mortgages as well as down payment also must be considered. Resources like Bankrate and Zillow provide home affordability calculators that will factor in interest rates, terms of a loan, down payment, and property taxes. Buying a home when interest rates are high means spending more over the life of the loan. Also, how much one puts toward a down payment has a big impact. Aiming for 20 percent means avoiding paying for private mortgage insurance (PMI).

There is no fail-safe way to determine how much home you can afford. Many factors are in play and are exclusive to buyers in the market for a new home.



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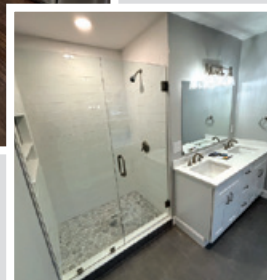
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**Did you know?**

The market research experts at Business Research Insights report that the three-season sunroom market size is projected to nearly double between 2025 and 2035. BRI reports that 65 percent of homeowners prefer cost-effective sunrooms when seeking to extend their living space. The popularity of sunrooms can be traced to a number of variables, including year-round access to a home's surrounding landscape. That access might be hindered if the only spaces to experience nature is a patio, deck or another traditional type of outdoor living space. But sunrooms, particularly those equipped with heating and cooling, can bring homeowners in touch with nature during times of year when they might otherwise be compelled to steer clear of their outdoor living spaces due to less welcoming weather.

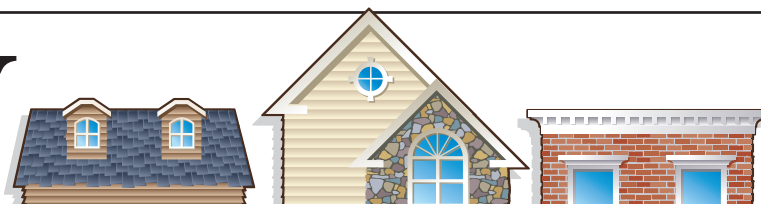


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# HOME REVIEW



## Planning for the Future with Flexible Living

By TRACY LAROSA

The way we think about housing is changing—and flexibility is at the heart of it. Today’s buyers are no longer focused on the biggest home possible. Instead, they’re thinking ahead: how they want to live now, and how their needs may evolve over the next 10, 20, or even 30 years.

### Less space, but better

One of the most noticeable shifts is a desire for less space, but better space. Many homeowners are intentionally downsizing or choosing homes with smaller footprints that are easier to maintain. One-level living is especially popular, offering convenience, accessibility, and long-term comfort without the need for stairs. Ranch-style homes, first-floor primary suites, and layouts with minimal level changes are in high

demand—and for good reason. They support aging in place while remaining functional for all stages of life.

Equally important is the rise of multi-purpose rooms. Homes no longer need a formal dining room that’s used twice a year or a dedicated guest room that sits empty most of the time.

Instead, buyers are looking for rooms that can adapt:

- A guest bedroom that doubles as a home office
- A dining area that functions as a workspace or homework zone
- A den or bonus room that can serve as a playroom for young children now and a media room for teens later

This flexibility allows homeowners to make the most of every square foot, adjusting how

they use their space as their lifestyle changes.

### ADUs

Another major trend shaping future-focused housing is the growing interest in Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs). An ADU offers incredible versatility. For many families, it’s a smart way to plan across generations. An ADU can house young adult children just starting out, potentially provide rental income to offset rising homeownership costs, and/or serve as a comfortable space for aging parents who want independence while remaining close to family.

Over time, the roles can reverse. Adult children may transition into the main home while older parents downsize into the ADU, maintaining proximity without sacrificing privacy. This kind of multigenerational



Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) offer incredible versatility – for many families, it’s a smart way to plan across generations.

living is becoming increasingly common, especially as Massachusetts ranks in the top 10% of the most expensive states in the country. With the cost of living continuing to rise, families are rethinking traditional housing models and embracing solutions that offer financial flexibility and long-term stability.

Ultimately, these housing

trends reflect a smarter approach to homeownership—one that prioritizes adaptability, efficiency, and thoughtful planning. Flexible layouts, multi-purpose rooms, one-level living, and ADUs aren’t just trends; they’re practical tools for building a home that works for you now, and well into the future.

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# Bancroft Memorial Library

50 Hopedale Street, Hopedale MA 01747  
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 kbethel-penny@cwmar.org  
 www.bancroftmemoriallibrary.org

*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](http://www.bancroftmemoriallibrary.org)*

## Library News

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

The group will be discussing *The Frozen River* by Ariel Lawhon.

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

Community Conversations will meet to discuss “Increasing Local Engagement.” This meeting can be attended via Zoom; email kbethel-penny@cwmar.org to request the link.

### Get help with Jenna – Tuesday, March 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.

### Drop in Cribbage – Fridays 3/6, 3/13, 3/20 & 3/27 at 1:30pm

Join us in the Program Room where we offer a relaxed, come-when-you-can atmosphere to enjoy friendly games with players of all levels.

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

We are hosting the next Blackstone Valley Public Libraries

Cribbage Tournament! Registration is mandatory, please call (508) 634-2209 for assistance or check the Event Calendar at [www.bancroftmemoriallibrary.org](http://www.bancroftmemoriallibrary.org).

### Maker Monday – Monday, March 23rd at 6:00pm

This month the adult crafting workshop is 3D Book Art, where pages of books are carefully folded to create words, shapes, or patterns without cutting the pages. Registration is required.

### News from the Friends of the Hopedale Library:

#### Make It So: The Science of Star Trek – Monday, March 9th at 6:30pm

In 1964, a science fiction show premiered that would boldly go where no show had gone before, not only inspired by the science of the day but encouraging generations of scientists to make their own discoveries. Join us as Geek Girl (Sarah Hodge-Wetherbe) talks about the real science that influenced the many versions of Star Trek, and the scientific breakthroughs that Star Trek helped to later inspire. Registration is required.

#### Cybersecurity and Scams – Wednesday, March 25th at 5:00pm

In today’s digital world, scams and cyber threats are everywhere - from phishing emails to fake websites and malicious apps. Staying vigilant can protect your personal information, finances, and devices. Join us for a presentation from Hopedale Technologies with practical tips on how to stay safe online and avoid scams. Registration is required.

#### Free Seed Library!

Stop by and 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.

#### Accepting Books Donations – March 18th 5:30-7:30pm and

#### March 21st 10am-12pm

The Friends of the Hopedale Library would love your like-new books for our Ongoing Book Sale. Children’s books of any age are welcome. Due to space constraints, we ask that adult fiction and non-fiction be PUBLISHED within the past 10 years. Unfortunately, we cannot accept old books, textbooks, or cookbooks. We depend on books in saleable condition to raise money to support our programming.

#### Ongoing Book Sale

Did you know that you can shop our Ongoing Book Sale anytime the library is open? We offer a selection of adult and children’s titles, and even puzzles! You can find the sale area downstairs just outside the Program room. All monies raised go back to the Bancroft Memorial Library to pay for children's and adult programs, museum passes, and other expenses not covered by the library budget.

#### 125th Anniversary Glass Suncatcher Fundraiser

Celebrate Bancroft Memorial Library’s 125th Anniversary by purchasing a commemorative glass ornament featuring the Library. These handcrafted ornaments by Becker Glass are available in blue and clear for \$15. To purchase, simply stop by the Library. Cash and checks will be accepted. Any checks should be made out to 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:

#### Seuss-tastic Celebration! – Saturday, March 7th from 11:00am - 1:00pm

Let's celebrate Dr. Seuss! Drop in for some silly fun and games and win some prizes!

#### Tummy Time Play – Tuesdays 3/3, 3/10 & 3/17, 3/24 & 3/31 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!

#### Toddler Tunes – Thursdays 3/5, 3/12, 3/19 & 3/26 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, March 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.

#### Sunny the Reading Dog and Mrs. Poisson – Monday, March 16th 3:30-4:30pm

Visit with Sunny the Reading dog and Mrs. Poisson from BBC, the human he has claimed! Drop in for a story and read a story to Sunny too. All ages are welcome!

#### Movie Matinee – Saturday, March 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, March 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.

#### 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](http://www.wowbrary.org) to discover the Library’s newest books, movies and music. Our webpage is [www.bancroftmemoriallibrary.org](http://www.bancroftmemoriallibrary.org)

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 or [sue@sodellconsult.com](mailto:sue@sodellconsult.com)

## Mota named to Worcester State University Dean’s List for Fall 2025

Micaela Mota of Hopedale has been named to Worcester State University’s Dean’s List for Fall 2025.

Honors are awarded to matriculated undergraduate students who have earned a 3.5 GPA or higher. Full-time students

must have earned a minimum of 12 credits and part-time students must have earned a minimum of 6 credits.

# 12th Annual Easter Egg Hunt to take place on March 29

The 12th Annual Easter Egg Hunt will take place on Sun., March 29, on the Hopedale Community House Lawn, rain or shine. The event will run from 12:30 p.m. to 2 p.m. with ‘hunting’ to begin at 1:15 p.m. Participants should bring their own basket.

Activities include egg hunting, music, games, contests, prizes, bubbles, face painting, balloon

sculptures, refreshments, and pictures with the Easter Bunny. Entertainment will be provided by DJ Mike/The Bubble Music Man.

If you are interested in help, email [tchambers@hopedale-communityhouse.org](mailto:tchambers@hopedale-communityhouse.org) or [djmikerutkowski@gmail.com](mailto:djmikerutkowski@gmail.com). Follow the QR code for more information.



# Friends of the Hopedale Library present two engaging programs in March

The Friends of the Hopedale Library are bringing two timely and thought-provoking programs to the community this March, blending science fiction with real-world science and offering practical guidance for navigating today’s digital world.

On Mon., March 9, at 6:30 p.m., GeekGal Sarah Hodge-Wetherbe will present *The Science of Star Trek*, an engaging look at the real science behind one of television’s most iconic franchises. When *Star Trek* first premiered in 1964, it boldly went where no show had gone before. Inspired by the scientific advancements of its time, the

series not only imagined futuristic technologies but also sparked curiosity and innovation among generations of scientists. Fans of science fiction and science fact alike will enjoy this fascinating discussion of how imagination and innovation continue to shape one another.

Later in the month, on Wed., March 25, at 5 p.m., the Friends will host a program focused on a very real and pressing concern: online safety. In today’s increasingly digital world, scams and cyber threats are everywhere—from phishing emails and fake websites to malicious apps designed to steal personal infor-

mation. Representatives from Hopedale Technologies will offer a practical and informative presentation on how to recognize and avoid common online scams. Attendees will learn strategies to protect their personal information, finances, and devices, along with simple steps they can take to stay safe online.

Registration is required for both programs. For more information on dates, times, and registration, contact the Bancroft Memorial Library at (508) 634-2209 or register online on the Event Calendar at [www.bancroftmemoriallibrary.org](http://www.bancroftmemoriallibrary.org).

# Expanding Junior-Senior High School innovative opportunities

Hopedale’s Junior-Senior High School’s Career Center is working hard to provide hands-on, real-world learning experiences that prepare students for both college and career. Our programs have expanded significantly in recent years, offering students a wide range of opportunities to develop skills, explore career paths, and engage in meaningful, authentic learning.

Here are some recent examples of these real-world learning opportunities:

Last semester, 16 students completed off-campus internships. Our 11th- and 12th-grade students are working across a wide range of industries, includ-

ing the Milford District Court House, Milford Regional Medical Center, Milford Regional Sports Rehab, Tri-County Regional Chamber of Commerce, Memorial Elementary School, Bright Beginnings Center, and Bancroft Memorial Library. Also three HJSHS students completed internships at Children’s Hospital and Milford Regional Hospital last summer. These are highly competitive internships and we are proud to say our students were selected for these opportunities.

In addition, 23 students are pursuing capstone projects. Capstone students have chosen to design an independent proj-

ect or complete a Leadership or DECA project. Current project examples include a HOSA project on brain development, HJSHS Media Relations, Video Game Design, and Tri-M Leadership.

Students completing Internal Internships and Capstone projects have recently selected an Industry Expert to mentor and guide them throughout the rest of the school year along with their current Faculty Mentor. Our partnership with the One8 Foundation has played a key role in helping us match students with professionals in their chosen fields.

*Submitted by Hopedale Public Schools*

# Still no bids for former Hopedale Town Hall

For the second time in several months, no one has stepped forward to redevelop the former Hopedale Town Hall at 78 Hopedale Street.

Town officials confirmed that the latest Request for Proposals (RFP), which invited developers to suggest reuse plans and identify tax incentives that might make the project feasible, drew no formal bids by the February due date.

“We did receive additional builder feedback that indicates the building is beyond repair,” said Town Administrator Mitch Ruscitti. “Even with enormous incentives, there is statistically no way to make the numbers work.”

An earlier RFP issued last summer generated a few inquiries but failed to produce any bids. Feedback at that time suggested the building’s deteriorated condition and steep renovation costs, estimated at approximately \$20 million, would present significant barriers.

The Romanesque style building was erected in 1886 at the request of William Draper, Sr., and was dedicated to his memory in 1887. It has long been a centerpiece of downtown Hopedale; but now, after decades of use and years of deferred repairs, its future remains uncertain.

*“We did receive additional builder feedback that indicates the building is beyond repair. Even with enormous incentives, there is statistically no way to make the numbers work.”*

*-Mitch Ruscitti, Town Administrator*



**Former Hopedale Town Hall, February 2026.**  
Photo credit: Theresa Knapp

# Nomination papers now available for town seats

***Hopedale’s annual town election will take place on Tues., May 12***

Nomination papers are now available at the Town Clerk’s Office, 54 Hopedale St, Suite 10.

Candidates seeking to fill an elected seat must collect at least 25 signatures to be placed on the ballot.

Completed nomination papers must be returned to the Town Clerk’s Office no later than Tues., March 24, at 5 p.m.

For more information about the annual town election, visit [www.hopedale-ma.gov](http://www.hopedale-ma.gov) or call 508-634-2203 x215.

*Source: Facebook @HopedaleTownAdministrator*

# Living Healthy

## The Blurry Truth: Understanding and Addressing the Rise of Refractive Errors

By: ROGER M. KALDAWY, M.D.  
MILFORD FRANKLIN EYE CENTER

Have you noticed more people wearing glasses these days? It's not just a feeling. Refractive errors, those eye conditions that blur our vision, are becoming increasingly common, particularly nearsightedness (myopia). This article explores what these errors are, why they're on the rise, and what we can do about it.

### What are Refractive Errors?

Our eyes are intricate organs, acting like sophisticated cameras. Light enters, is bent (refracted) by the cornea and lens, and ideally focuses perfectly on the retina, the light-sensitive tissue at the back of the eye. This focused image is then sent to the brain, allowing us to see clearly.

Refractive errors occur when the eye's shape prevents light from focusing correctly on the retina, resulting in blurry vision. Common types include:

- **Myopia (Nearsightedness):** Close objects are clear, but distant objects are blurry. This happens when the eye is too long, or the cornea is too curved, causing light to focus in front of the retina.
- **Hyperopia (Farsightedness):** Distant objects are clear, but close objects are blurry. This occurs when the eye is too short, or the cornea isn't curved enough, causing light to focus behind the retina.
- **Astigmatism:** Vision is blurry or distorted at all distances. This happens when the cornea or lens is irregularly shaped, preventing proper light focus.
- **Presbyopia:** This age-related condition makes focusing on close objects difficult. As we age, the lens loses flexibility, hindering its ability to change shape and focus up close. This is why many over 40 need reading glasses.

### Why the Rise?

The increasing prevalence of refractive errors, especially myopia, is a global concern. While the exact causes are still being researched, several factors are believed to contribute:

- **The Screen Time Surge:** Our modern lives involve significant screen time – smartphones, tablets, computers, and televisions. This constant close-up focus strains the eyes and may contribute to myopia development and progression.
- **The Great Outdoors:** Studies suggest that spending time outdoors, especially in childhood, has a protective effect against myopia. The wider range of distances the eyes focus on outdoors, along with increased natural light exposure, may be beneficial.
- **The Genetic Factor:** Genetics play a significant role. If your parents or siblings have myopia, you're more likely to develop it.



doctors may recommend treatments like atropine eye drops, multifocal contact lenses, or orthokeratology.

- **Surgery:** Refractive surgery like LASIK or PRK may be an option for some, but consult with an eye doctor to discuss risks and benefits.

### The Future of Vision Care:

Researchers are actively exploring new prevention and treatment methods, investigating the roles of genetics, environment, and lifestyle. New technologies, such as advanced lens designs and drug therapies, are also being developed.

The increasing prevalence of refractive errors is a significant public health issue. By understanding the causes and taking proactive steps, we can protect our vision. Remember, regular eye exams are essential. If you have any concerns, consult an eye care professional.

### Milford-Franklin Eye Center: Your Partner in Eye Health

### What Can We Do?

While we can't entirely eliminate the risk, we can take steps to minimize the impact and potentially slow myopia progression:

- **Limit Screen Time:** Encourage children and adults to take regular breaks. A helpful tool is the 20-20-20 rule: Every 20 minutes of screen time, take a 20-second break to look at something 20 feet away. This allows the eye muscles to relax and refocus, reducing strain.
- **Embrace the Outdoors:** Aim for at least 1-2 hours of daily outdoor activity, especially for children.
- **Maintain a Healthy Lifestyle:** A balanced diet and regular physical activity are crucial.
- **Regular Eye Exams:** Comprehensive eye exams are essential, especially for children. Early detection and treatment are key.
- **Corrective Lenses:** Glasses or contacts are the most common and effective correction.
- **Myopia Control:** For children with progressive myopia,

At Milford-Franklin Eye Center, our dedicated team of ophthalmologists and optometrists, supported by highly trained staff, are available to treat various eye problems, including refractive errors. We offer a dedicated optical shop with a children's boutique, providing quality glasses and contacts. We also provide world-class cataract surgery and advanced treatments, including procedures that can eliminate the need for glasses in select cases. All surgeries are performed in our accredited surgical facility. Our in-house optical shop crafts glasses while you wait, and new patients receive a complimentary pair of select frames. We offer after-hours, same-day emergency appointments and Saturday availability. With over four decades of dedicated service, Milford-Franklin Eye Center is committed to delivering advanced eye care close to home.

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# Musicians Wanted, concert band seeks new members

The Southeastern MA Community Concert Band is in its 50th year and performs about a dozen concerts a year in the local area. They are a non-audition group and welcome musicians of all abilities (brass, woodwinds, percussion).

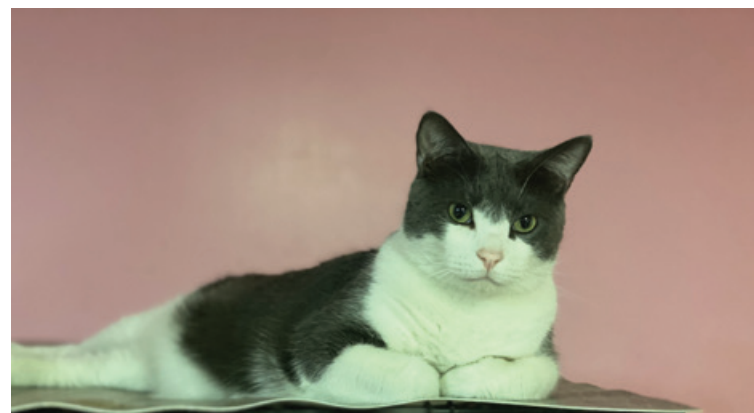
The band currently has 45 members of all ages and rehearses weekly at the Medway Community Church.

Whether you are currently playing, or even if it's been years, you are encouraged to dust off that instrument and join the fun and active group.

For more information, contact the personnel manager at [music@smccb.com](mailto:music@smccb.com) about joining or coming to watch a rehearsal. You can find more information at [smccb.com](http://smccb.com).



# Pet of the Month: Meet Miles



Miles has been waiting patiently since August for you to walk through the door and take him home. While he waits, he's been making the most of his time at the Milford Humane Society, playing with all the toys and finding all the highest spots with best views.

Miles was surrendered from a home with too many cats. He has made it pretty clear that he is

not ready to share his home with another pet. But just take one look at his handsome face and you know that he's the only pet you need.

For more information about Miles, or any of the other cats in our care, visit the Milford Humane Society at <https://www.milfordhumane.org>.

# Behind the Scenes on School Snow Day Calls

## Superintendent Crebase shares how she decides to cancel school

BY GABRIELLA RINEHART  
STUDENT WRITER

All kids know the feeling of sitting in front of the TV, on a snowy day, looking for your school to scroll by at the bottom of the screen on your local news station, or waiting to get that magical call letting you know school was canceled. If you are like me, you may have wondered, how are these snow days called?

As a senior at Hopedale High School, I had the privilege to interview the school's superintendent, Mrs. Crebase, to learn

about her decision process. She explained there are several aspects to her decision, by using different weather tracking systems to monitor the storm starting a week in advance and the impact on Hopedale and neighboring towns.

Another important factor includes ensuring roads, parking lots, sidewalks (even the school's emergency exits) are clear. Mrs. Crebase even has a text thread with 12 surrounding superintendents providing information on their towns. This process was much more complex than I thought it would be.

When students successfully manifest a snow day, the Superintendent uses a program called Thrill Share to provide the good news. This program sends out a text, email and voicemail (in the student's home language) and informs the local news. She aims to send out the alert after 6 a.m., but if the decision is made earlier, she will inform the news stations so any early risers can see it.

So maybe it is worth getting up early to watch the town scroll by on the TV.

# Nominations 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 March 31. The nomination form can be found at <https://bit.ly/Suzan-Ciaramicoli-Award>.

For more information, contact Kelly Grant at [kgrant@hopedale-ma.gov](mailto:kgrant@hopedale-ma.gov).

# Free magic show for families of first responders, veterans, active military on March 15

On March 15 at noon, Thanks To Yanks is hosting a free children's magic show for families of first responders, and veterans, and active military members. The event will feature magician Tommy James. Space is limited and reservations are required.

The event will take place at the Italian Vets Milford with a pizza lunch to follow. For tickets and more information, contact [info@thankstoyanks.org](mailto:info@thankstoyanks.org).



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# MARCH 2026 HOPEDALE SENIOR CENTER ACTIVITIES

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
<p>2</p> <p>9:00 am Free Panera</p> <p>9:00 am Bridge</p> <p>10:00 am Low Impact Exercise</p> <p>12:30 pm Mah Jongg</p> <p>12:30 pm BINGO</p>	<p>3</p> <p>12:30 pm Mah-Jongg</p> <p>12:30 pm Bridge</p> <p>3:30 pm Dance</p>	<p>4</p> <p>10:00 am Low Impact Exercise</p> <p>11:00 am Meditation</p> <p>12:30 pm Literature</p> <p>12:30pm Cribbage</p>	<p>5</p> <p>10:00 am Watercolor Class</p> <p>1:00 pm Tai Chi</p>	<p>6</p> <p>10:00 am Low Impact Exercise</p> <p>Senior Center closes at 12:00 pm</p>
<p>9</p> <p>9:00 am Free Panera</p> <p>9:00 am Bridge</p> <p>10:00 am Low Impact Exercise</p> <p>12:30 pm Mah Jongg</p> <p>12:30 pm BINGO</p>	<p>10</p> <p>12:30 pm Mah-Jongg</p> <p>12:30 pm Bridge</p> <p>3:30 pm Dance</p>	<p>11</p> <p>10:00 am Low Impact Exercise</p> <p>11:00 am Meditation</p> <p>12:30 pm Literature</p> <p>12:30pm Cribbage</p>	<p>12</p> <p>10:00 am Watercolor Class</p> <p>1:00 pm Tai Chi</p>	<p>13</p> <p>10:00 am Low Impact Exercise</p> <p>Senior Center closes at 12:00 pm</p>
<p>16</p> <p>2</p> <p>9:00 am Free Panera</p> <p>9:00 am Bridge</p> <p>10:00 am Low Impact Exercise</p> <p>12:30 pm Mah Jongg</p> <p>12:30 pm BINGO</p>	<p>17</p> <p>12:30 pm Mah-Jongg</p> <p>12:30 pm Bridge</p> <p>3:30 pm Dance</p>	<p>18</p> <p>9:30 am Nurse Clinic</p> <p>10:00 am Low Impact Exercise</p> <p>11:00 am Meditation</p> <p>12:00 pm St. Pat's Lunch and Party</p> <p>12:30 pm Literature</p> <p>12:30pm Cribbage</p>	<p>19</p> <p>10:00 am Watercolor Class</p> <p>1:00 pm Tai Chi</p>	<p>20</p> <p>10:00 am Low Impact Exercise</p> <p>Senior Center closes at 12:00 pm</p>
<p>23</p> <p>9:00 am Free Panera</p> <p>9:00 am Bridge</p> <p>10:00 am Low Impact Exercise</p> <p>12:30m Mah Jongg</p> <p>12:30 pm BINGO</p>	<p>24</p> <p>12:30 pm Mah-Jongg</p> <p>12:30 pm Bridge</p> <p>3:30 pm Dance</p>	<p>25</p> <p>10:00 am Low Impact Exercise</p> <p>11:00 am Meditation</p> <p>12:30 pm Literature</p> <p>12:30pm Cribbage</p>	<p>26</p> <p>10:00 am Watercolor Class</p> <p>1:00 pm Tai Chi</p> <p>1:00 pm Dr. Arne Spine and Posture Presentation</p>	<p>27</p> <p>10:00 am Low Impact Exercise</p> <p>Senior Center closes at 12:00 pm</p>
<p>30</p> <p>9:00 am Free Panera</p> <p>9:00 am Bridge</p> <p>10:00 am Low Impact Exercise</p> <p>12:30 pm Mah Jongg</p> <p>12:00 pm Pizza Lunch</p> <p>12:30 pm BINGO</p>	<p>31</p> <p>12:30 pm Mah-Jongg</p> <p>12:30 pm Bridge</p> <p>3:30 pm Dance</p>	 <p>St. Patrick's Day</p>		

# Sports

## Running at a high pace

By CHRISTOPHER TREMBLAY  
STAFF SPORTS WRITER

For such a small school, and one that does not have the facilities that some of the larger schools have, Hopedale Jr.-Sr. High School continues to develop quality teams. Currently, the boys indoor track team is once again putting together a successful season and looking for its runners to perform well at the CMAC Championships.

Many Blue Raider athletes do not have access to the proper training facilities that other schools have, while some don't even have a home field advantage as they do not having a league sanctioned field to play on. The track team doesn't have a track to train on, so they prepare by running in the streets of Hopedale or in the school hallways.

"Sometimes you have to work for everything," boys track coach Joe Drugan said. "That type of adversity makes you better when you sacrifice. All in all, Hopedale sports are spectacular and it's a challenge as a coach that I am willing to accept to work on the details to make them better."

With his athletes prevailing continually, the Coach looks to championships, noting that everything they do revolves around them. In the past, the Blue Raiders found themselves in the Dual Valley Conference (DVC) with six schools; nowadays they have been moved to one of many Central Massachusetts Athletic Conferences (CMAC), where the number of teams involved has now doubled.

Hopedale will head to the CMAC Championship meet in early February at the New Balance Center in Boston to compete against 12 other teams where they will see exactly what they are made of.

"The goal coming into the season is always to have the kids work on their personal bests and go from there, and they have been doing that on a weekly basis," the Hopedale coach said. "If we can get in the CMAC Championship



(team and/or individuals), we will move into the State Tournament and possibly further. We have some kids who should be able to accomplish that, but we're taking it week by week and day by day."

Senior Captain Ari Levin will lead the Blue Raiders into the New Balance Center. The senior is currently ranked second in the state, a mere half inch short of the top shot-put thrower. Levins is currently throwing around 63-feet and, following his graduation, he will take his athletic skill to West Point Academy.

"Ari is one of the leaders of the team," Drugan said. "He has a great deal of respect as a captain as well as having the knowledge that he brings to the sport."

In addition to Levine throwing the shot put, his younger brother Eli, only an 8th grader, has been following in his older brother's footsteps. The younger Levine has already tossed the shot put an impressive 42-feet and, according to the coach, that is 10-15 feet above where most 8th graders are. Drugan also noted that the youngster will occasionally take part in some sprinting events for the

team. Junior Ben Stone, along with freshman Quinn Cook, have both been running pretty much neck-to-neck in the mile throughout the season. Stone has the better time with a 4:31 mile. Other athletes running in distance events for Hopedale are Captains Connor Fitzgibbons and Matt Stone, along with Sam Dalphe, Cederic Arthur, Charlie Keys and Jack Murphy. The group can primarily take on any distance event that is asked of them by their coach.

"They'll run the mile, 2-mile, 800, 1000 and both

the 4x4 and 4x8 relays," Drugan said. "They're times are all within seconds of one another as they typically run together as a group."

In moving from the DVC to the CMAC, Drugan didn't see any change in his team.

"We're a good team and will compete in every single meet," he said. "We're competitive and we have some young 7th and 8th graders working their way up. They haven't reached their plateau yet, but they will be key for us down the road."

As the team gets ready for the 12 team CMAC Championship, Drugan is not worried

about the extra teams as he knows what his team is capable of. He firmly believes that his athletes will compete as they normally do, at a high rate.

While the Patriots were preparing for Super Bowl 60, the Hopedale boys were leaving their competition in the dust as the Blue Raiders captured the CMAC Indoor Track and Field Championship pretty handily. Hopedale finished with 91.5 points and its nearest competitor, Whitinsville Christian, had 63.5 points giving the Blue Raiders a 28-point cushion.

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# Real Estate Corner

## Recent Home Sales

Date	Hopedale	Amount
01/30/2026	6 Mellen St.	\$655,000
01/28/2026	270 S Main St.	\$640,000

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



The 3-bed, 3-bath, 2,644-square-foot house at 6 Mellen Street in Hopedale recently sold for \$655,000. Image credit: www.zillow.com

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