Wachusett FREE PRESS

Vol. 2 No. 3 | *Free to Every Home and Business in Holden, Paxton & Rutland Monthly* | November 12, 2026



Photo courtesy of Cork + Compass Photography

The 1920's roared into Paxton to celebrate the library's 100th

See page 6

A hidden threat beneath Massachusetts homes

The growing crisis of crumbling foundations



Photo shows Rutland resident Jason's house foundation and its visible cracking caused by pyrrhotite. *Photo submitted*

This is Part 1 of a multipart series

By Riley Frankian

For many homeowners, a house represents decades of hard work, financial security and the promise of a comfortable retirement. But beneath some Massachusetts homes, a naturally occurring mineral is slowly jeopardizing that investment, leaving families facing repair bills that can reach hundreds of thousands of dollars.

FOUNDATIONS

continued on page 2



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continued from page 1

The culprit is pyrrhotite, an iron sulfide mineral found in some of the stone used to produce concrete. When exposed to water and oxygen, the mineral undergoes a chemical reaction that produces expanding compounds inside the concrete. Over time, the resulting pressure causes the concrete to crack, weaken and deteriorate.

The damage can remain hidden for years before becoming visible. By the time homeowners discover the problem, their foundations may be severely compromised, leaving them with few options beyond an expensive and disruptive replacement.

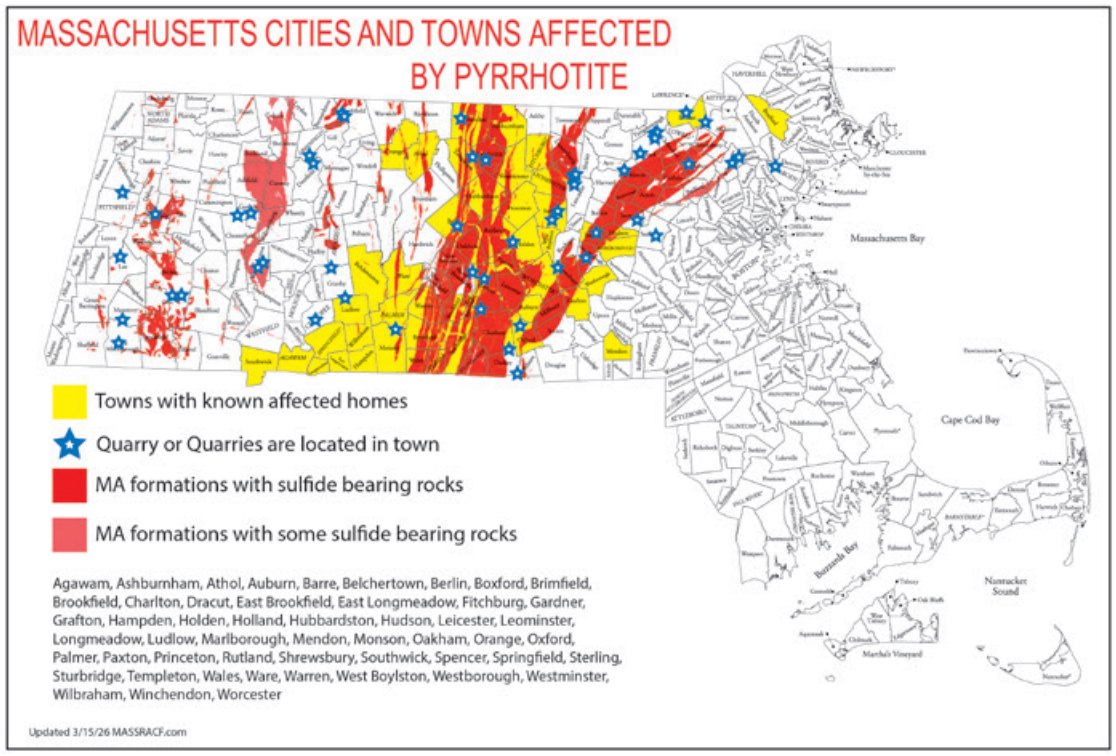
Homeowner advocates and Massachusetts officials are increasingly concerned about the scope of the problem. A March 2026 report from the state's Crumbling Concrete Stakeholder Working Group estimates that between 1,000 and 10,000 homes in Massachusetts could be affected. The Massachusetts Residents Against Crumbling Foundations organization has named reports of suspected or confirmed cases in at least 52 municipalities across six counties. Holden, Rutland and Paxton are among the affected towns.

The actual number of towns impacted is still unknown.

For homeowners who discover their foundations contain pyrrhotite, the consequences can extend far beyond cracked basement walls. Families have depleted savings, borrowed against their homes and retirement accounts, postponed retirement and redirected money intended for their children's education to pay for repairs.

Pyrrhotite-related deterioration is particularly difficult to detect early on due to how gradual the process is.

According to the Massachusetts Division of Professional Licensure, the damage can take approximately 15 to 20 years to appear. Other research indicates that deterioration may take between 10 and 30 years to become visible, depending on the circumstances.



Early warning signs can include cracking patterns, brown stains resembling rust and a white powdery substance around cracks.

However, visible cracking alone cannot establish whether pyrrhotite is responsible. Other conditions can also cause concrete foundations to deteriorate, making professional evaluation and appropriate testing important.

Once pyrrhotite-related deterioration advances, the damage is irreversible. In some cases, replacing the foundation is the only permanent solution.

However, that process is far more complicated than pouring new concrete.

Contractors must support and lift the house, remove the existing foundation, excavate as necessary, and construct a replacement foundation before lowering the structure back into place. Depending on the property, the work can also affect landscaping, walkways, fences, utilities and other features surrounding the home.

The state's working group estimates that foundation replacement typically costs between $100,000 and $250,000.

FOUNDATIONS

continued on page 3

Wachusett FREE PRESS

Published Monthly
Mailed FREE to the Communities of Holden, Paxton & Rutland households & businesses

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9 Industrial Road, Suite 107
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15 days prior to publication date.

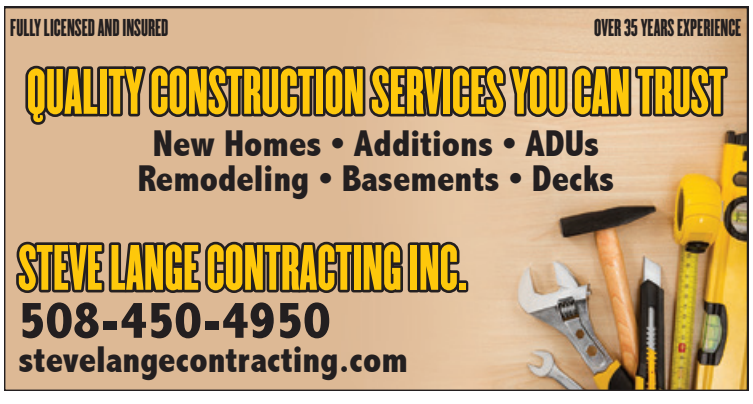
Ad Artwork Deadline
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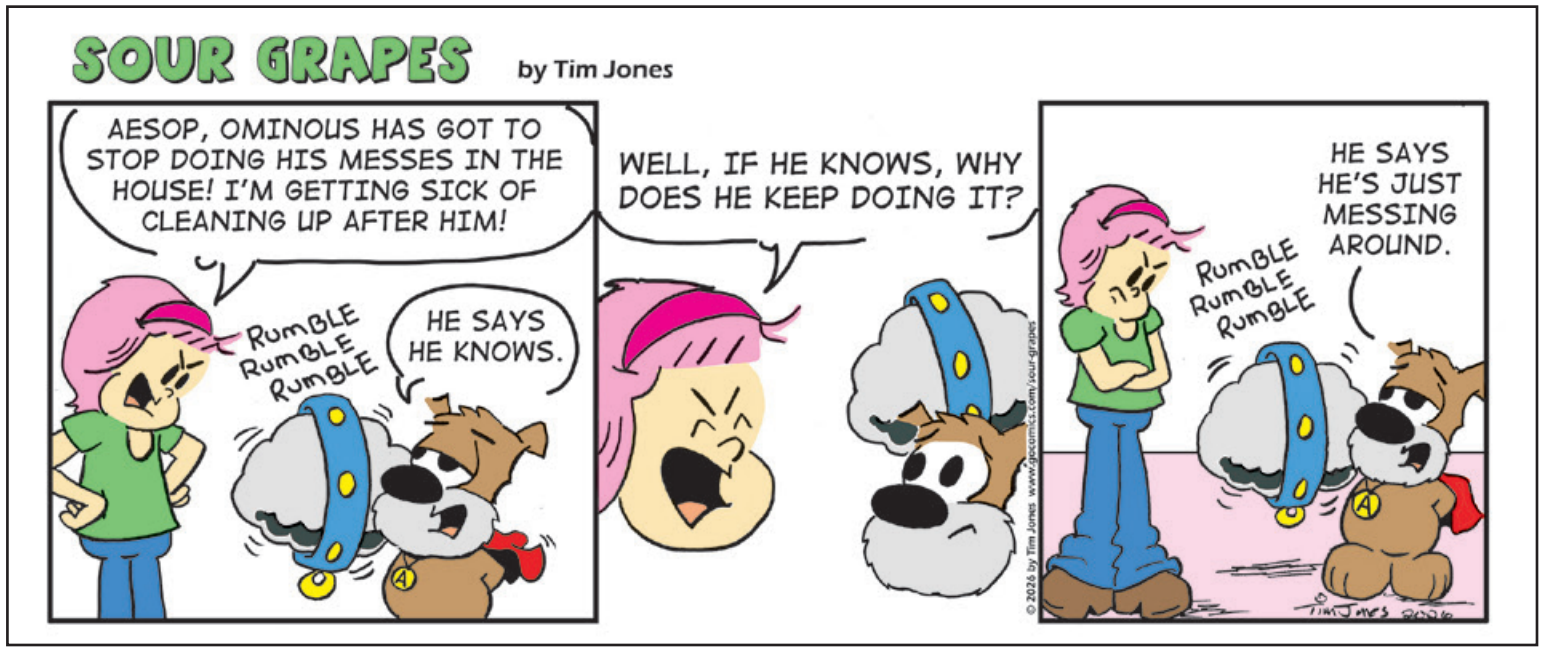
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FOUNDATIONS

continued from page 2

Karen Riani, a Holden homeowner who has become involved in advocacy through Massachusetts Residents Against Crumbling Foundations, understands the consequences firsthand.

When the foundation of Riani's home was replaced, her family had to leave the house for four months while the work was completed. The project also required the removal of their stone walkway, part of their backyard and a substantial portion of their fence.

Those additional disruptions brought further expenses. Her family's homeowner's insurance did not cover the foundation damage or the resulting financial burden.

"There is no state advocacy for this; it's all on the homeowners," Riani said.

For Jason, a Rutland homeowner who testified in support of state legislation addressing crumbling foundations, the process took more than two years from discovery to completion.

In a testimony given in a June 2022 hearing for the Committee on Financial Services, Jason, who asked that his last name not be used, described the consequences as extending across generations.

"This is a generational loss," he said, explaining that his family had redirected money reserved for his daughter's college education to help replace their failing foundation. He also expects the expense to delay his retirement.

His insurance claim was denied, leaving the family responsible for the costs.

The financial consequences can be particularly devastating for older homeowners who planned to use their home equity to fund retirement or future long-term care.

"Homes that should provide stability have instead become financial anchors," he said. "This is no longer just a housing issue."

This crisis first gained attention when contaminated aggregate from a quarry in Connecticut was used in concrete for residential foundations.

Researchers eventually linked the deterioration to pyrrhotite in the stone supplied by the quarry. By 2017, Connecticut had received hundreds of reports of failing foundations; later investigations found thousands of potentially affected homes.

Connecticut later established a program to help eligible homeowners pay for foundation replacement.

Massachusetts initially faced concerns about homes built with concrete containing aggregate originating in Connecticut. However, researchers have since found other sources of pyrrhotite-bearing aggregate associated with the deteriorating foundations being found in Massachusetts.

The overarching concern is that multiple sources of reactive aggregate may have contributed to the damage, making the problem more complicated than tracing every affected home to a single quarry.

Until all quarries in the surrounding area are able to test for this reactive aggregate, there is no way of knowing how many homes and properties have been affected.

The state has taken steps toward prevention. Legislation enacted in 2023 established requirements for testing aggregate for sulfur compounds, while in more recent years, there have been additional measures to improve oversight, increase homeowner protection and public awareness.

However, identifying the source of defective concrete and preventing future cases does not resolve the financial burden already facing homeowners.

One of the central challenges is that conventional homeowner's insurance generally excludes this type of foundation deterioration.

Insurers typically distinguish between sudden, accidental damage and deterioration arising from a material defect. Because pyrrhotite-related damage develops gradually through a chemical reaction within the concrete, affected homeowners cannot rely on their policies to cover replacement.

That leaves families responsible for costs that can exceed their savings and available borrowing capacity.

The state's stakeholder working group concluded that private insurance and lending markets alone cannot adequately address the crisis. Its March 2026 report identifies several broader consequences,

FOUNDATIONS

continued on page 5





Discover magic this season at Night Lights Fantastical Forest







Clockwise from above: Rainbow Tunnel, 2024. *Photo by Troy B. Thompson Photography*; **Night lights from above, 2025.** *Photo by Tammi White Photography*; *Photo by Mala Lam.*

New England Botanic Garden at Tower Hill (NEBG) in Boylston will create a world of wonder this winter season with Night Lights: Fantastical Forest. This nationally acclaimed seasonal experience transforms the gardens into glowing landscapes where nature, fantasy and imagination intertwine. Night Lights returns Nov. 21 through Jan. 3, 2027, with a display of half a million lights and festive experiences.

"Night Lights is uniquely magical, with awe-inspiring displays that celebrate the wonders of the natural world and inspire connection," said NEBG CEO Grace Elton. "Over the years, many people have made Night Lights a family tradition, and we couldn't be more grateful. Each year we aim to make the experience bigger, brighter, and more memorable."

Fantastical Forest is a walk-through experience that spans nine distinct formal gardens, two subtropical conservatories, and the Garden's Visitors Center. Light displays immerse visitors in the wonder and whimsy of the forest—luminous mushrooms, suspended florals, illuminated vines, and more. Designed in-house by the Garden's staff, Night Lights changes each year, so there is always something new to discover.

For the second year, Night Lights kicks off on Nov. 21 with a celebration of Diwali, the 'Festival of Lights,' hosted in partnership with the India Society of Worcester. Visitors can enjoy an evening of Indian cultural programs and delicious food, shop local vendors, and more. Limited tickets are available.

On Wednesday, Dec. 9, Las Posadas is celebrated, hosted in partnership with Casita Cultura Latina. Enjoy various cultural activities as you take in the lights and celebrate an evening of tradition and community.

Popular holiday activities return including s'mores and cider doughnuts, and seasonal drinks to keep you warm. Holiday shopping in the Garden Shop, a model train display, and cozy fire pits make the experience even more memorable.

Visitors are encouraged to purchase tickets to secure their preferred date as 70,000 people attended last year's event. For details on ticket discounts and specials and to book online, go to nebg.org/nightlights or call the Night Lights Hotline at 508-869-6745. Individuals with a Massachusetts-issued EBT, WIC, or ConnectorCare card can reserve up to six tickets at 50 percent off non-member prices. Free onsite parking is available every evening.

NEBG is a nonprofit organization located at 11 French Drive, Boylston, MA. Learn more at nebg.org. ✶





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Let a financial advisor help plan for life's curveballs



Tim Howard

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No matter what stage of your life you're in — caring for children, working toward retirement or planning your legacy — unforeseen events like a job loss, a major illness or even a stock market drop could derail what you're working so hard to achieve financially.

With your future at stake, you may want to get guidance from a financial professional who can develop a personalized financial strategy to help you navigate life's curveballs.

Here are specific ways a financial advisor can help.

- ***Create a customized long-term strategy.*** This is the first step to weather unforeseen events. You may have several long-term investing goals — your retirement, your child's education or perhaps a dream vacation. A financial advisor can help you build a strategy specific to your goals and risk tolerance. This will include prioritizing those goals, building a path toward each and pivoting your strategy as markets shift and needs change.

- ***Set realistic expectations.*** Successful investing requires discipline and patience — most individual investors make their money over time, not overnight. Start by setting realistic timelines to reach each of your goals. And don't be surprised if you need to make trade-offs, like working an extra year to help fund your retirement dream home. It's realistic to expect you'll hit some bumps in the road. Perhaps the markets will drop and the value of your portfolio may follow. (It's also realistic to expect they will rebound, as they have historically. Of course, past performance of the markets is no guarantee of what will happen in the future.) A financial advisor can help you keep your emotions in check no matter what comes your way and stay focused on the long term, knowing you have a customized strategy in place.

- ***Diversify your investments.*** The foundation for your portfolio is your asset allocation, or how you divide your assets among stocks, bonds, cash and other investments. Different investments behave differently in various market conditions, so maintaining a good mix can help better weather market fluctuations than putting "all your eggs in one basket." Finding the right diversification mix, and keeping it balanced despite what the market does, can get complicated, but it's almost second nature for a good financial advisor. All investments do carry risk, and asset allocation doesn't ensure a profit or protect against loss in a declining market.

- ***Keep a long-term outlook.*** It's easy to become distracted by the latest headline, expert prediction or market swing. However, if these events don't change your long-term outlook, there probably isn't a reason to make changes to your strategy. In fact, these declines often present good opportunities if you're a long-term investor, so use them to your advantage — your financial advisor can show you how.

- ***Keep your emergency savings well-funded.*** This is your "rainy day" fund, and an unexpected event may constitute a rainy day. For most people, maintaining three to six months of total expenses in emergency savings is appropriate. The specific amount depends on factors like your risk of unexpected expenses or temporary loss of income, and how much you value being confident that you can weather financial emergencies. A financial advisor can help you determine what your emergency savings should look like.

Unexpected events are part of life. You can't predict them, but you can prepare for them. No matter what is going on around you, having a professional by your side can help set you up to navigate them confidently.

If you've been meaning to take a closer look at your financial picture, now is a great time to start. A conversation today can help you make more informed decisions for tomorrow.

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FOUNDATIONS

continued from page 3

including falling property values, mortgage difficulties, reduced municipal tax revenue and the loss of usable housing.

The report also recommends examining several potential approaches, including a dedicated assistance fund, specialized financing, consumer protections and stronger testing and disclosure requirements.

Since then, state lawmakers have considered measures addressing both prevention and financial relief.

In April 2026, a proposal filed by Senator Peter Durant and Representative Brian Ashe as Senate docket 3865, bill S.3091 aimed to create safeguards for those who end up having to deal with this problem.

The bill proposes a Crumbling Concrete Assistance Fund administered by the Community Economic Development Assistance Corporation. The fund would provide financial assistance for those replacing foundations damaged by pyrite or pyrrhotite, help limit negative economic effects on municipalities, and allow eligible homeowners who already paid for replacement to seek reimbursement.

A separate amendment introduced during the fiscal 2026 budget process also proposed a $20 million Crumbling Concrete Assistance Fund. That proposal illustrates efforts to secure funding, but an amendment's introduction does not itself establish that the money has been appropriated or made available to homeowners.

However, for Riani and other advocates, the central concern is that the legislative process is taking too long. In the interim, affected families have been



Photo shows Rutland resident Jason's house foundation and its visible cracking caused by pyrrhotite. *Photo submitted*

FOUNDATIONS

continued on page 7

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The 1920's roared into Paxton to celebrate Richard Memorial Library's 100th birthday

Photos courtesy of Cork + Compass Photography



















On behalf of the Paxton Garden Club (PMAGC), Friends of Richards Memorial Library (FRML), Richards Memorial Library (RML) staff and trustees, thank you to all who came out to support the library's 100th anniversary gala celebration and flower show! To quote Sandy Hautanen, FRML president, "It was truly amazing to see all the swanky gents and ritzy ladies dolled up in their Roaring 20s' glad rags."

Congratulations to the "Roaring Blooms" Books & Blooms Flower Show People's Choice Award: PMAGC designers Dave Mangus and Beth Vietze for their piece "Of Mums, Mosses, and Microbes," based on the book Microbe Hunters by Paul de Kruif, written in 1926.

> "It was truly amazing to see all those swanky gents and ritzy ladies dolled up in their Roaring '20s glad rags."
>
> *– Sandy Hautanen, president, Friends of Richards Memorial Library*

Lastly, we want to take this moment and offer a "Tip of the Hat" to the following businesses, organizations, and individuals for their support in making the event such an overwhelming success: Our premier sponsors, Fidelity Bank and Country Bank; Mr. Jared Bloch and the Wachusett Regional High School Honors Jazz Combo; Charcuterie Woo; Cork + Compass Photography; Dolan Landscaping; Dolce Vita Catering; Senator Peter Durant; Carolyn Erskine; Representative Kimberly Ferguson; Friends of Richards Memorial Library; First Congregational Church of Paxton; Miles Funeral Home; ParkPrint; Paxton MA Garden Club; Paxton Select Board; Paxton Fire Dept.; Paxton Police Dept.; Richards Memorial Library staff; Richards Memorial Library trustees; St. Columba Catholic Church; Stefanie Dragon with Snapdragon Pop; Wildrose Baking Co.; Melanie Carl; Kathy Sargent; "Larry the Librarian" Spongberg' Select Board Members Jeff Wentzell and Julia Pingitore; Dale and Lorna Smith with the Worcester County Model A Club

Thank you again to everyone for helping Richards Memorial Library Celebrate 100 Years of Literacy, History, and Community in Paxton!

The Gala & Flower Show Committee: Vicky Biancolo, Kristina Biro, & Kristin Steinmetz, RML Staff; Sandy Hautanen, president, FRML; Joanna MacGugan, & Karen Putney, RML Trustees; Robin Tasca, PMAGC ✷

FOUNDATIONS

continued from page 5

forced to pay for repairs themselves.

Jason urged lawmakers to act, warning that the consequences will continue as more foundations deteriorate.

He also emphasized that the issue is not confined to the communities where damage has already been found.

"Even if your home isn't affected today, that doesn't mean this issue doesn't affect your community, a nearby community or someone you know," he said. "Someone you know will be affected,"

The uncertainty surrounding the total number of affected homes makes public awareness particularly important.

A house can appear structurally sound even if its concrete contains pyrrhotite. Because deterioration can take years to appear, the absence of visible cracking does not necessarily establish that a foundation is unaffected.

Homeowners who suspect a problem should document visible damage and seek guidance from qualified professionals. Depending on the circumstances, determining whether pyrrhotite is responsible may require concrete core sampling and laboratory analysis.

The Massachusetts Residents Against Crumbling Foundations organization provides information about the issue, legislative efforts, and resources for affected homeowners through its website.

The state working group has also called for improved consumer education, clearer disclosures, and additional measures to prevent more unsuspecting people of being affected by this problem.

Ultimately, finding out the full extent of the problem will require continued research, testing and reporting. The number of affected properties could increase as more homes are evaluated and previously hidden deterioration becomes visible.

The question confronting Massachusetts is whether a coordinated response can provide meaningful relief before more families are forced to make impossible financial decisions.

As Jason said in his testimony, "Homeowners deserve support, and a path forward. No one should have to navigate something this devastating alone."

If you have experienced crumbling foundations in your home and would like to share your story with Riley Frankian, please email him at rileyfrankian@yahoo.com ✶



Leadership at its best

By Donna Hunt





Above: TAB members and the "Little Library" that they built between Naquag Elementary and Central Tree Middle schools.
Photo submitted; **Right: Sara Mitchell (left), Kerry Remington (center), and Olivia Strand. Mitchell and Stand are co-presidents of TAB.**
Photo by Donna Hunt.

Members of the Teen Advisory Board (TAB) at the Rutland Public Library were so absorbed in coordinating their Halloween Party for kids on October 31 that it was hard to pull them away from their work.

The party, in collaboration with the Friends of the Library, is one event of many that this dedicated group of teens helps to run. Younger kids were having fun trick or treating for books and candy, having their faces painted, and creating crafts.

The current Library Director Tricia Lowe was joined by Kerry Remington, the former director, who helped to establish TAB pre-Covid. Remington remembers Kaitlyn Mitchell and Allison Deskins who were the "driving force" behind starting TAB, which has now grown into a group of 18 loyal members.

When the group began, members met biweekly at the library for pizza, chocolate milk and games. Today it welcomes kids from Rutland, Holden and Sterling. Remington explained that what started as a community service program has evolved into an opportunity to create young leaders.

Sara Mitchell and Olivia Strand are the current co-presidents of TAB.

Mitchell, a senior at Wachusett Regional High School and a member of the National Honor Society, has been a part of TAB since the sixth grade. She loves the annual Halloween party and describes it as "always super fun."

She also loves helping at Rutland's popular, long-running Festival of Trees. Last year, TAB members distributed hot chocolate and S'mores and added face painting for kids to that holiday event.

Mitchell is especially proud of TAB's 'Little Library,' which was started as a school project called 'save the world.' Mitchell said she felt that the decline in literacy by younger children was a concern, so she and Strand built a 'Little Library' between Naquag Elementary and Central Tree Middle schools. Kids and their families can take or add books whenever they want.

Strand, a junior at Wachusett

LEADERSHIP
continued on page 11

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Sports

Rylee Gamache: From high school to college soccer



Rylee Gamache. *Photo submitted.*

By Christopher Tremblay,
Staff Sports Writer

When she was growing up, Rylee Gamache, a senior at Wachusett Regional, tried a couple of sports, but nothing really struck her fancy. Soccer, on the other hand, was something she could get behind, and she found that she really loved taking part in it. She was around the age of four when her mother introduced her to the sport - and the rest is history.

"My mom thought that soccer was a fun sport, so she pushed me into it," Gamache said. "I found that I loved the sport and once I hit the third grade, I joined the FC Stars [a club soccer team] out of Lancaster."

With soccer running through her veins, Gamache found herself playing the sport year-round. She noted that when she is on the field, she finds herself in a zone where everything seems to stop.

"It's a great environment where I get to meet a lot of new people. I never thought that I'd become what I have," she said. "Early on I realized that I had something special when my club coach asked me to move up to the higher team. It was then that I knew that if I put in the effort and tried harder that I could be successful."

When the season ended, Gamache pushed herself by training alone, getting in the extra ball work, and doing fitness and conditioning work to be ready for the next season.

As high school got closer, Gamache spoke with one of her FC Stars teammates, who was already at Wachusett Regional High School, about the soccer team and what she would need to do to make the team.

"Coming into a new school I was already nervous," she said. "High school soccer is very different and at the tryouts I didn't set my hopes too high. I just wanted to go out and play my game and if the coach thought that I was good, then I'd be lucky enough to make the varsity team."

As a freshman Gamache made the varsity squad and although she only started a handful of games, she did find her way onto the field every game that year. While Gamache eventually found herself confident in her play, her first varsity game was very stressful.

"I was very nervous and wasn't even playing my normal position. I had to learn rather quickly and it was nerve racking," Gamache said. "About ten minutes into my first game I had settled in and was doing what I needed to do."

Gamache found herself playing attack midfield that game instead of her normal center back position. As an attack midfielder she found herself all over the field, whereas as a center back, she could see the entire field and provide the goalie with defense in front of her. Having been a center back her entire career, she felt more comfortable and in control in that position.

As she enters her senior campaign, Gamache's goal is to create an environment where the team grows together as one, while giving the younger girls guidance. She understands there is a lot to learn at the varsity level and the younger players need to become comfortable.

For her own game, Gamache is looking to perform as well as she can in her final season with the Mountaineers.

"I want to go out and provide the communication that the other girls need on the field to help them stay organized," Gamache said, "while I continue to defend hard throughout the game, giving our team the best chance to win."

Wachusett, as a team, has continued to improve during Gamache's tenure. Two years ago, the Mountaineers went 11-4-3, which earned them an 18 seed in the Division 1 State Tournament where they lost to Newton North 3-2 in the Round of 32. Last year the team posted a similar record, going 11-3-4 with a 20 seed in the tournament, where they were eliminated in the Round of 32 by Franklin, 3-2 in overtime.

This year the senior center back would love nothing more than to secure at least a couple of wins in the tournament.

"I think that this team has a lot of potential and if we continue to work as a unit, we will have the opportunity to go far," she said. "This team has the ability to create so many chances while putting up a fight against the top teams."

Once she graduates, Gamache's soccer career will continue. The center back will head to Southern New Hampshire University to play Division 2 soccer with the Penmen.

Last fall SNHU attended some of Wachusett's games and reached out to Gamache to see if she had an interest in attending the school. The then-junior was in contact with other schools, but she went to New Hampshire to check out the school on an overnight visit with a few of the girls on the team. She found that SNHU checked all her boxes: academics, location and soccer.

"SNHU just seemed to fit with me; it was so much better than I expected," Gamache said. "The school was just the right distance away, but not too far from home, the soccer team is a competitive program, but you need to earn your right to start. I am excited and feel that I can compete while learning a lot as a player."

If she wants to become a starter on a Division 2 college team, Gamache knows that she will have to work hard. She realizes that level of soccer is very different than what she is currently playing.

While collegiate soccer is something that she will take on in the future, she still has the rest of this year with her Wachusett teammates. This team is looking to take their game into the Division 1 State Tournament and excise the last two years' losses as they venture deep into the playoffs. ✶

This Place, These People

A life wide open

By Pam Reidy

Shaylin Daunais is afraid of heights. She has also jumped out of an airplane.

Spend an hour with her, and those two facts begin to make perfect sense. At 24, she has already learned something that some of us spend decades figuring out: being frightened does not mean you have to stand still.

"I do things even if I'm scared," she told me.

I first met Shaylin at Paxton Animal Hospital, where my cat is a patient. Her welcoming manner immediately caught my attention. When you bring a beloved animal into a veterinary office, you bring your worries along, too. Shaylin understands that before you say a word. She wants to know your animal's name, personality, and what will make the visit easier. She also wants you to know that someone cares.

"These are their babies," she tells newer staff members, "and we have to see it that way always."

Six years ago, while finishing high school, Shaylin began working at the Paxton practice with no experience in the veterinary field. Today, she is a lead technician and helps manage the practice. What began as a part-time job has become work she describes as her "heart job" and "soul job."

A 2020 Wachusett Regional High School graduate who grew up in Rutland, she had planned to attend Michigan State University to study veterinary medicine. Then COVID disrupted those plans. With the experience she had hoped for replaced by online learning, she withdrew and continued building her skills at the hospital.

Her route changed. Her interest in animals kept growing. "I speak for the animals," she said. "They don't have a voice."

That responsibility follows her home where she lives with her beloved dogs, Bear and Wrangler Jeans. She loves cats as well, there were two older cats she took in and cared for until both reached 18, and she once helped kittens from a cat colony receive veterinary care and find their forever homes.

Her work also means understanding the people holding the leashes. Fear for a beloved animal can surface as frustration or anger, and Shaylin tries to hear the worry beneath their words.

"I've had people come into the clinic and absolutely curse me up and down," she said. "And I have them walking out hugging me." Her approach always begins with a simple reminder: "I'm here to help you."

Outside work, Shaylin's enthusiasm takes her outdoors. She camps, kayaks, fishes, and snowboards. She has bungee jumped from a bridge in Oregon and gone skydiving in Massachusetts. Ask what else she would like to try, and the possibilities include driving a race car and operating a crane.



Shaylin Daunais. *Photo submitted.*

She is fascinated by how things work. That curiosity also shapes her future. She plans to return to school, hopes to work with large exotic animals, and dreams of contributing to research that advances their care.

"I would love to be a part of medicine, some type of research that's a step forward," she said. "That is genuinely all I want."

Her characteristic optimism has grown through life's challenges. From a young age, she was determined to create a life

DAUNAIS

continued on page 11





Letters to the Editor

To the Editor:

I applaud the Paxton Select Board for temporarily pausing discussion of the Police Department Audit Committee to consider the services of the Massachusetts Police Accreditation Commission (MPAC).

MPAC traces back to 1996 when then-Governor William Weld established it as a state agency in Executive Order 392. In 1997, more than 160 departments participated in the certification and accreditation process. Today, 254 Massachusetts law enforcement agencies are accredited, certified, or in the pre-assessment, or self-assessment stages. This includes larger departments such as Framingham, smaller departments such as Oxford, and very small police departments such as Phillipston and Aquinnah.

As referenced on the MPAC website (https://masspolice-accred.net), benefits of the program include promoting public confidence and enhanced agency reputation. It provides 274 accreditation standards by which a department can judge its own performance, correct deficiencies before they become problems, and commit their policies and procedures to writing. The departments review areas such as agency jurisdiction, department organization and administration, performance evaluations, community involvement, victim/witness assistance and many more.

My experience with MPAC took place while serving as an investigator, investigations coordinator, and assistant district attorney in John Conte's office. When investigating or prosecuting criminal cases, it was easy to see the difference between officers familiar with MPAC standards and those without such knowledge. The former officers had well-written reports, knowledge of search and seizure, and their testimonial demeanor was professional. Their departments were quick to respond to information requests, case and evidence review meetings, and pre-trial preparation.

I cannot endorse the proposed Paxton Police Audit Committee. That group would consist of six appointed members: three current or recently employed police officers who live in town, one member of the general public, one member of the Select Board, and one member of the finance committee. That organizational arrangement is likely to encounter and perhaps fall victim to conflict situations that will prevent the Paxton Police Department from achieving greater success.

I encourage the Select Board to thoroughly research the MPAC option and endorse it over the audit committee.

Dave Johnson
Paxton

To the Editor:

The Paxton Woman's Club Scholarship Toll Road Committee would like to thank all the kind, contributing drivers who helped us on Saturday, October 17, at the Paxton Common. Your donations will enable us to again give a scholarship to a graduating Paxton high school student who wishes to continue their education in a college or a skilled career program.

We also wish to thank the Paxton Lions Club for the use of their wooden safety signs to protect all toll collectors.

A special thanks goes to the one dozen Paxton Woman's Club members who participated as toll collectors or donation counters.

Thank you again to all,
Paxton Toll Road Scholarship Committee
Co-chairs Lia Carroll and Robin Carroll

We want to hear from you!

Email us about concerns with things happening around town at Martha@WachusettFreePress.com

LEADERSHIP

continued from page 8

Regional High School, is also a member of the National Honor Society, and she, too, joined TAB when she was in the sixth grade.

Strand describes TAB as "their own thing." While the library supports them, TAB creates their own events, including summer events that are open to all the kids from the community.

TAB is also involved with fundraising. Currently, they are organizing a community giving program where all proceeds will go to the Rutland Fire and Police departments.

The River of Rocks that welcomes patrons at the library's front entrance is another project coordinated by TAB. Whether the rocks were painted at the library or brought home, painted there, and returned, TAB members then displayed these beautiful pieces of art for all the community to see. It creates a colorful feeling of happiness.

When Mitchell graduates in the spring of 2027, she is confident that "Olivia will do a great job" leading TAB. Mitchell hopes to attend Purdue University and become an aviator upon college graduation. She also hopes to continue volunteer work.

Strand has one more year at Wachusett and is confident about leading TAB. She also has college in her future where she hopes to possibly pursue a business degree and minor in art. She also wants to be part of something that includes leadership in her future plans.

Even though Remington retired from the library this past summer, she continues to join TAB at its events. Her love and support of those involved with the organization is obvious: "I am so proud of these kids," Remington exclaimed.

Lowe, the current director, said, "I don't know what we are going to do without them when they graduate."

There is no doubt that kids who come forward to join this amazing group will benefit from the love and dedication shown by these adult leaders. When they begin their own chapter leading TAB, they will learn by the example of strong and caring mentors. ✷

DAUNAIS

continued from page 10

filled with purpose, possibility, and joy. She treasures the people who offered her welcome, shelter, and a place in their families. She remembers the friends who spent six hours helping retrieve her broken Jeep from the woods. What stays with her is how many people show up.

For all her love of adventure, Shaylin's idea of a good life is simple: animals, loved ones, and meaningful work. We in the Wachusett area are blessed that her vision includes welcoming us and our beloved animals to Paxton Animal Hospital with warmth and capable care.

There is still so much Shaylin hopes to learn, experience, and contribute. "You might as well live it all the way out," she said, "and see what it's got."

I have no doubt she will.

Pam Reidy is a writer, educator, and interfaith minister whose work has long centered on people, community, and the stories that shape our lives. In This Place, These People, Pam turns her attention to the people who make the Wachusett community what it is, sharing stories of their lives, values, hopes, and connections, and reminding us that every ordinary life has a story worth telling. If you have someone you think should be featured in This Place, These People, please send your ideas to the Editor, Martha Akstin, at martha@localtownpages.com ✷





NEWSbitz

By Martha Akstin

REGION

From the Holden Municipal Light Department Facebook page:



"Today we honored **State Representative Kim Ferguson** for her years of dedicated service and support of municipal light plants!

The **Holden**, **Paxton**, **and Princeton Municipal Light Departments** were proud to come together to recognize Representative Ferguson and thank her for her continued advocacy, leadership, and commitment to public power and the communities we serve.

We are truly grateful for all she has done to support municipal utilities throughout her years in office.

Thank you, Representative Ferguson, for your dedication and partnership! We wish you all the best in your next chapter!"

HOLDEN

Read all about it! That is, news about Holden from the desk of Town Manager **Peter Lukes** who posted his inaugural Newsletter in October. Available online at the town's website holdenma.gov, articles include news about **Holden Police Department** officers, the use of body cameras by the officers, Town Hall renovations, proposals on how Holden could manage its opioid settlement funds, and other interesting reads. One sad statistic was reported in the article on the opioid settlement funds: between 2016 and 2023, 19 Holden residents died of an opioid-related overdose. That article also reminds readers about the Naloxone Box in the lobby of the **Holden Fire Department** that is available 24/7. We look forward to reading the November issue.

Jessica McGowan of Holden recently celebrated the opening of **Mystic Mermaid Collective**, the area's newest boutique at 1207 Main St., Holden. Joining the ribbon cutting, which was coordinated by the **Wachusett Area Chamber of Commerce**, were: (L-R) Jen Stanovich, Jessica Johnson, Zachary Silverman, Wachusett Area Chamber; Ann Gaudreau, representing Sen. Peter Durant; Jessica McGowan, Chris Faulker and Peter Lukes, Town of Holden; Johnna Carlson and Jeff Prunier, Wachusett Area Chamber. The boutique features apparel, gifts, home decor, sweet treats, and collectibles.



PAXTON

Bay Path Regional Vocational Technical High School students and faculty continue to work on the building at 10 West St. as they convert it into a community center. To be named **The Robert Mortell Community Center** in honor of the police chief who was murdered in the line of duty on February 1, 1994. Paxton Town Administrator **Robert Birkbeck** explains that the renovations are not costing the town anything as the project is part of the school's teaching project. At a recent Select Board meeting, Birkbeck reported that at times, 50-60 students are busy at the building, working on electrical, cabinetry, plumbing, and exterior work including the roof that needed attention. When might there be a ribbon cutting? It is too early to pencil that on a calendar, said Birkbeck, as students and faculty are assigned to other projects or responsibilities during the school year and then return when they can fit it into their schedule. Stay tuned.

Interested in genealogy? Take at look at the new American Ancestors database at **Richards Memorial Library**. Based in Boston, American Ancestors is a national nonprofit center for family history, heritage and culture that has been setting the gold standard for family history research since its founding in 1845. It includes one of the world's largest online collections of free family history resources, scholarship, educational programming and events. This resource requires a library card to use it. And if you don't have a card, why don't you have a card?







Students from Bay Path Regional Vocational Technical High School work on transforming the property at 10 West St. in Paxton into The Robert Mortell Community Center. *Photos by Martha Akstin*

Richards Memorial Library **Centennial Coloring Adventure Books** are available for purchase at the library. Visit town landmarks in the pages of this commemorative coloring book that celebrates the library's 100th birthday. Proceeds support library programs.

WFP welcomes media coverage to the Wachusett area, we mean, how can competition be a bad thing? But we have to insist the news and information that other media conveys be, well, accurate. At the least. For instance, we've been reading **Paxton Patch online**. And not to give them too much attention, but could they please make sure that the **Richards Memorial Library** they write about is the one located in Paxton – and not the Richards Memorial Library located at 118 Washington Street in North Attleborough? From lip gloss charms to STEAM card days to mystery/thriller book clubs - all the 10 events listed are happening more than an hour away. Or, in its Nov. 3 post, it lauds **Moore State Park** as a top quiet hike - but then warns that the park is currently closed under a state advisory for storm damage "so Paxton residents should watch for reopening updates before planning a visit or recommending it to out-of-town hikers." Uhhmm, guys? The park reopened in late June after **DCR** worked to

NEWSBITZ
continued on page 17

Tragedy becomes opportunity: Ten West Market returns

By Donna Hunt

After owning a business in a 500-square-foot space in Paxton for five years, Darlene Walsh and her two sons Matthew and Justin Cooper moved to a 2,000 square foot building where the former Howes had stood on Route 122A in Jefferson.

Opening their new store on November 16, 2024, they were there for just over one year, when on December 30, 2025, tragedy struck. After a trip to their store that morning, they took a ride to Walmart, and then they got the call: a major fire had destroyed the business.

"Everything was so good." said Walsh. "We were making so much money."

While she fought with feelings of depression and throwing in the towel after the fire, Walsh realized, "What else am I going to do?" She had been a small business owner for years and wasn't going to give up now.

"At first it was all about the numbers and the insurance money and figuring out if it was going to even work out," remembered Walsh.

"We wouldn't be here if it wasn't for Edward Flynn," said Walsh. Flynn owned the building and took a substantial amount of money out of pocket to rebuild Ten West Market. "He is a really good friend," said Walsh.

Matthew said that before the fire, they were thinking of buying the building from Flynn. Now that the business has been rebuilt, they are still considering this as a future opportunity.

Lilac Hedge Farm created the GoFundMe page that also helped Ten West survive. Walsh explained, "I had two full-time employees that I had to keep paying and because of Lilac Hedge, we were able to do that. We were also able to keep paying all of the bills that a small business has."

In the time that it took to rebuild what will be their legacy, Walsh and her sons had the time to look at their finances, to think about what worked and what did not work for their business. As a result, they will make changes to the store as it reopens. "I have been doing this for a long time now and I know what the people want. We will have the classics prepared and hot to go," said Walsh.

Ten West Market will reopen on November 16, exactly two years from its original date.

They will offer a variety of hot meals every night for their customers to take home. Cold sandwiches will be available as will their 'Townie Toasts.' Named after one of seven area towns, these Toasts will be served on sourdough or gluten-free sourdough – so choose whichever 'town' you like. They will also offer a full bakery and jams from the Spencer Trappists.

While standing in the renovated store, Walsh received a call from Pasta Land. Ten West will carry homemade pasta out of Leominster and also pan pizzas, Sicilian style.

"We really want to focus on food," Walsh said with a smile.

Ten West also has creative ideas for the future. The current greenhouse will be taken down to make room for a flea market. They also plan to offer cooking classes "because our new kitchen is so big and beautiful."

Walsh said that even though this experience has been rough at times, "Everything happens for a reason. Every single small business in the community has been supportive."

Sometimes when life is unfair, it is important to realize that there are good people who are willing to help other good people. That is an inspiration that has played a major role in Ten West Market coming back, better than ever. ✷







Darlene Walsh (center) with her sons Matthew Cooper (right) and Justin Copper.
Photos by Donna Hunt.





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

Through November

Fifth annual mini-art show at Richards Memorial Library: Registration and canvases are available at the circulation desk. All ages are welcome to decorate up to two mini canvases and return them by Dec. 11 to have them displayed as part of RML's art show in January and February.

Thurs. Nov. 5 - Wed. Dec. 2

Turkey Dance Scavenger Hunt at Richards Memorial Library. Look for turkeys hiding in the J/Y room to solve a turkey riddle and earn a small prize.

Friday, November 13

4:20-5:20 pm: Traditional cornhusk doll art workshop for ages 10+ at the Gale Free Library. Registration opened 11/6. Join a Tomaquag Museum Indigenous educator for this DIY workshop. Cornhusk dolls are a traditional toy made from the husk of the flint corn grown by the Native people in Massachusetts. In this workshop, you will be guided step by step in the process using contemporary materials. Participants must be able to tie knots or have a caregiver assist them in doing so. RSVP required.

Friday, Nov. 13 & Sat. Nov. 14

10:30 am-1:30 pm: Friends Book sale and donation days at the Richards Memorial Library. Donate books and shop for books all on the same day! Proceeds benefit library programs. The Friends accept donations only during scheduled dates and times: gently used books, DVDs, CDs, and video games. They do not accept textbooks, magazines, encyclopedias, VHS tapes, or bootleg CDS/DVDs. Please do not leave books when the library is closed.

Saturday, November 14

9 am-2 pm: Friends of the Rutland COA Annual Craft Fair. Free entry to this popular event that features more than 25 crafters. Breakfast and lunch items are available for purchase at the café, bake sale, free raffle ticket at entry with more available to purchase. Volunteers are needed to set up, break down, and work during the craft fair. Sign-up sheets are in the center's lobby or email friendsofcoarut@gmail.com.

9 am-3 pm: The 17th Annual Wachusett Boster Club Craft Fair at Wachusett Regional High School gymnasium. Start your holiday shopping when you visit more than 100 crafters/vendors offering unique handmade items. Enjoy a bite or quick snack in the food court that is run by student teams and clubs. Proceeds support school athletic and booster programs. Admission: Adults $3; seniors and students $2. Free shuttle bus from the parking lot to the gymnasium's doors.

10:30 am- 12 pm: Good bugs, bad bugs lecture at Richards Memorial Library hosted by the Paxton Garden Club. Not all insects are bad for the garden. In fact, we rely on many to rid us of unwanted invaders. This presentation describes some of the common beneficial and pest insects that gardeners encounter. We will look at their habits and life cycles and discuss how their presence affects the success of our garden. Free and open to the public.

1 pm: How to avoid probate at the Holden Senior Center. Liz Newton from Mirick Law will discuss how to keep your estate out of the probate court. Learn about trusts, beneficiary designations, and joint ownership and how they can spare your loved ones needless time, expense, and stress. RSVP at the office or call the center.

Tuesday, November 17

1 pm: Health plans that impact seniors at the Paxton Senior Center. Staff from Blue Cross Blue Shield offer a seminar on Medicare Supplemental Plans that include dental and prescription coverage. Call the Senior Center to RSVP.

6:30-7:30 pm: The Cooking Club at the Gale Free Library: One pan meal, casserole, covered hot dish...whatever you call it—is the perfect dish for the cooler months. Good comfort food to share with family and friends. Join us and share yours. Bring your recipe along with the dish. Registration required.

Wednesday, November 18

1 pm: Drawbridge Puppet Theatre performs Pinocchio at the Holden Senior Center. Perhaps the most famous marionette story of all time, this tale follows the adventures of a wooden marionette who magically comes to life and must learn valuable lessons before becoming a real boy. RSVP at the office or call the center.

4:20-5 pm: Beeswax candles craft at the Gale Free Library. Ages 6+. Registration opened 11/10. Create a beautiful centerpiece or gift made out of all-natural beeswax sheets. RSVP required to ensure enough materials are available.

Thursday, November 19

11:30 am: Do you celebrate a November birthday? Stop by the Rutland Senior Center and enjoy a slice of cake to celebrate you!

12:30 pm: Laughter, the best medicine: at the Paxton Senior Center. Join comedian and motivation speaker Jerry Caruso, the Lynn MA native who broke into the world of comedy by performing at Nick's Comedy Stop in Boston. RSVP by Nov. 16.

2 pm: Dementia information session at the Holden Senior Center. Learn how to better understand memory loss, support neighbors affected by dementia, and help foster an inclusive, compassionate community where everyone stays connected and valued. RSVP at the office or call the center.

6 pm: Special Town Meeting in Rutland at Glenwood Elementary School. Voters will consider transferring $8,500 from an existing town budget line to keep selected streetlights on through June 30, 2027. This funding would not restore service to all streetlights. See Newsbitz this month on page 12 for more details.

Thurs., Nov. 19-Tues., Dec.15

Letters to Santa: Place your letter to Santa in the special outdoor mailbox at Richards Memorial Library by December 15. Include a self-addressed stamped envelope and you will receive a reply.

Friday, November 20

10-11 am: Books and Blankies with Community Connections at Richards Memorial Library. For babies birth to 24 months and their caregivers.

1 pm: Felted Ornaments at the Holden Senior Center. Make an ornament to take home. All materials will be provided. $20 per person, payable in cash at sign up. No refunds will be issued after November 13.

Sunday, November 22

12-3 pm: Thanksgiving Farmers' Market & Bake Sale hosted by the Hubbardston Historical Society. Rain, snow or shine. Great food and more for the holidays from local farmers. At the Williamsville Chapel, 4 Burnshirt Rd., Hubbardston. Contact them on their website hubbardstonhistorical.org or email hubbhistory1767@gmail.com.

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Monday, November 23

10 am: Annual Holiday Dinner registrations open at the Holden Senior Center. The dinner will be held Wednesday, Dec. 16 at noon at Val's Restaurant. $10 per person due at sign-up. You can sign up for 2 people.

1 pm: "My Life in Photography: 1965-2020" by Ron Rosenstock at the Holden Senior Center. Ron's photos are in multiple museums, and he has also published six books of his photographs. RSVP at the office or call the center.

Tuesday, November 24

11:30 am: Annual Holiday Meal at the Rutland Senior Center: Turkey, gravy, cornbread stuffing, winter squash, pumpkin mousse, dinner roll. Suggested donation $3 payable at registration. RSVP by 11/19 at the center or call them.

11:45 am: Annual Thanksgiving

CALENDAR

continued on page 15

FREELANCE WRITERS NEEDED!

Do you have a talent for engaging writing that informs and inspires? We are looking for a local interested in telling stories important to the area. If so, Our Town Publishing wants you to join our team of dedicated journalists.

If interested, please submit writing samples to martha@wachusettfreepress.com

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@cwmars.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
Rutland Food Pantry, 290 Main Street, Rutland. 774-696-3008.

REGIONAL

Wachusett Area Chamber of Commerce, 1174 Main St., Holden, 508-829-9220, info@wachusettareachamber.org
Wachusett Food Pantry, 50 Worcester Rd., Sterling. 978-563-1064. Wachusettfoodpantry.org

CALENDAR

continued from page 14

Luncheon and music show at the Paxton Senior Center. Lunch will be followed by vocalist Denis Cormier at 12:30. RSVP by Nov. 17.

Thursday, November 26



Saturday, Nov. 28-Dec. 23

5th annual indoor plant sale. Help support the Paxton Garden Club by shopping at its annual house-plant sale. Tons of indoor plants will be ready for gift giving, most in the $5 range. All proceeds support their mission to give back to the community. Special thanks to Carlos at the Paxton Marketplace, 707 Pleasant St. for allowing them to use his retail space.

Tuesday, December 1

7-8 pm: Create a beautiful holiday centerpiece at Richards Memorial Library with Tina Bemis of Bemis Farms Nursery. There is no registration or cost to attend, but space is limited to the first 20 people, so arrive early!

Dec. 1 through February

Floral Art in Winter, the Paxton Council on Aging's art show, will be on display Monday through Friday when the building is open. Inspired by the Worcester Art Museum's annual exhibition Flora in Winter, Paxton's show will feature local artists' bright paintings and photographs to help visitors make it through the snow, ice, and cold of the season. Free and open to the public to enjoy.

Wednesday, December 2

10 am: This months' Schoolhouse Café at the Paxton Senior Center is a special treat, sponsored by the Council on Aging Board of Directors. RSVP required: call the center.

Thursday, December 3

6:30-7 pm: Roaring '20s Book Club at Richards Memorial Library wraps up its journey through the 1920s with its final book of the series – Babbitt by Sinclair Lewis. In 2027, the club will move to novels of the 1930s featuring authors such as William Faulkner, Agatha Christie, and Langston Hughes. Join them for one book or all of them. For adults only.

6:45 pm Christmas Centerpiece with Robin Van Liew at the Holden Senior Center. Sponsored by Holden Garden Club. Bring a container or choose one from Robin's collection to create a winning centerpiece that will last for weeks. All materials and decorations are provided. Cost: $25. Refreshments will be provided. All are welcome.

Monday, December 7

7 pm: Turning "Goodbye" into "Good Use" to be held in the training room at the Paxton Public Safety Complex, 576 Pleasant St. What Actually Happens at the Wachusett Watershed Regional Recycling Center? Join this interactive presentation and Q&A with Norma Chanis, Executive Director of Wachusett Watershed Regional Recycling Center (Wachusett Earthday). The presentation will cover an overview of recycling basics, the history of Wachusett Earthday and its purpose. Learn how to utilize this community asset and discover opportunities to volunteer. Sponsored by the Paxton Garden Club and the Paxton Board of Health. Special thanks to the Paxton Fire and Police Departments for use of room and to WPAX for livestreaming the event. Free and open to the public

Tuesday, December 8

2:30 pm: Veterans and American Legion Meeting at the Holden Senior Center on the second Tuesday of the month. Questions? Contact Doug Harvey, Commander of Post 42 at harvey1234@charter.net or call 508.450.9965.

Wednesday, December 9

6-8 pm: The Paxton Woman's Club is going to Bemis Farm in Spencer to make a beautiful holiday centerpiece. $40 for PWC members; $45 for non-PWC members. To learn more about the club, its mission and meetings or to RSVP to this event, visit its website at paxtonwomansclub.com.

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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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Real Estate Transfers

September 15, 2026 - October 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 November issue publishes transfers from September 15 to October 14. This information was gathered from the Worcester Registry of Deeds' website.

HOLDEN

1818 Main St. 9/16: Grantor Diane A. Westerman to Grantee John J. Silveira. $330,000.

21 Cranbrook Dr. 9/16: Grantors Scott M. Yonker and William J. Condon to Grantees Scott Weaver and Barbara Tillotson. $975,000.

113 Stoneleigh Rd. 9/16: Grantors Edwin H. Gledhill and John W. Gledhill to Grantees Sean Furuness and Shelly Furuness. $426,000.

396 Quinapoxet St. 9/16: Grantor Nancy E. Lukason to Grantee Nancy E. Lukason Tr. $100.

70 Sherwood Hill Dr. 9/17: Grantors Stephen J. McAndrew and Tina J. McAndrew to Grantees Payal Birr and Michael Birr. $540,000

15 Canterbury Ln. 9/17: Grantors Thomas L. Rosenfeld and Marjorie E. Rosenfeld to Grantees Thomas L. Rosenfeld Tr, Marjorie E. Rosenfeld Tr, and Marjorie Rosenfeld Trust. $100.

176 Parker Ave. 9/17: Grantors Michael A. Roberts, Lauren Elizabeth Shultz, Lauren E. Roberts, and Lauren E. Shultz Roberts to Grantees Lauren E. Roberts Tr and Lauren E. Roberts Revocable Trust. $100.

124 Bull Run 9/17: Grantors Matthew B. Merrill and Jennifer Marie Lehto to Grantees Matthew B. Merrill Tr, Jennifer M. Lehto Tr, and Jennifer M. Lehto Revocable Trust. $1.

1202 Wachusett St. 9/17: Grantor VB Flips LLC to Grantees Brian Kestenbaum and Ivy Pacheco. $380,000.

69 Holden St. 9/18: Grantor Evan K. Johnson to Grantees Evan K. Johnson Tr and Evan K. Johnson 2026 Revocable Trust. $100.

55 Apple Tree Ln. 9/18: Grantors Martin Bates and Lisa Margaret Bates to Grantees Martin Bates Tr, Lisa Bates Tr, and Bates Family 2026 Trust. $100.

25 Walnut Ter. 9/18: Grantors Sara J. Malooly and Timothy D. Malooly to Grantee Timothy D. Malooly. $10.

90 Joel Scott Dr. 9/18: Grantors Elie C. Sleiman, Nibal Elkobersi, and Nibal El Kobersi to Grantees Yiyuan Yuan Tr and Robert Circle Yuan Trust. $736,800.

218 Reservoir St. 9/21: Grantors Steven J. Tr and Margaret M. Rendano Trust to Grantee Maria Quercio. $355,000.

571 Salisbury St. 9/21: Grantor Kara L. Queeney to Grantee Kara L. Queeney Tr. $100.

37 Brattle St. 9/21: Grantor Sharon A. Lowder to Grantee Sharon A. Lowder Tr. $100.

9 Avery Heights Dr. 9/21: Grantors Nancy E. Gregory Est and Anastasia K. Gregory to Grantees Anastasia K. Gregory, Paul E. Gregory, and David Gregory. $0.

10 Birch Ave. 9/21: Grantors Jose A. Romero, Jose Romero, and Alejandra Ramos Andrade to Grantees Jourdon Cyr and Stephen St. Jean. $459,900.

903 Oakwood St. Ext. 9/22: Grantor Nancy B. Cahalen to Grantees Nancy B. Cahalen Tr and Nancy B. Cahalen Revocable Trust. $1.

277 Fisher Rd. 9/23: Grantor Xenos Custom Builders LLC to Grantee Kathleen Carrigan. $1,525,500.

90 Fisher Rd. and 11 Conrad Cir. 9/24: Grantor Danielle K. McAuliffe to Grantees Danielle K. McAuliffe Tr and Danielle K. McAuliffe 2026 Revocable Trust. $100.

41-43 Maple St. 9/24: Grantors Christi Leigh Zinkus Tr, Christi L. Lucia Tr, 41-43 Maple Street Realty Trust, and Christi Zinkus Tr to Grantees Christi Leigh Zinkus and Michael Stephen Zinkus. $1.

204 Union St. 9/25: Grantors Robert Tupper and Kristin Lemoine-Tupper to Grantees Morgan John Conwell and Erica McIntosh Conwell. $100.

604 Quinapoxet St. 9/25: Grantors Tidman Family Trust, Edward Charles Tidman III Tr, Stephen B. Wade Tr, Roberta S. Tidman Tr, and Charles Tidman III Tr to Grantees Panagiotis Savvidis and Anthea Oikonomou-Savvidis. $465,000.

198 Meadow Wood Dr. 9/25: Grantors Joseph J. Dolak and Elizabeth Dolak Blom to Grantee Lina M. Carmona. $1,000,000.

216 Reservoir St. 9/25: Grantor Martina Salek to Grantee Martina Salek Tr. $100.

14 Slipper Hill Ln. 9/28: Grantors Anthony J. DiLoreto and Michele M. DiLoreto to Grantees Anthony J. DiLoreto Tr, Michele M. DiLoreto Tr, and Anthony J. DiLoreto & Michele M. DiLoreto Family 2026 Trust. $100.

51 Laurelwood Rd. 9/28: Grantors Chelsey A. Frederick, Robert B. Frederick, and Chelsey A. Ryan to Grantee Amanda Thole. $593,000.

36 Stoneleigh Rd. 9/29: Grantors Craig S. Jacobsen, Lori J. Occhialini-Jacobsen Est to Grantees David R. Duquette Tr, Testamentary Trust, and Craig S. Jacobsen Supplemental Need Trust. $0.

7 Hultin Cir. 9/29: Grantors Kwabena Owusuansah and Nana F. Owusuansah to Grantee Nana F. Owusuansah. $100.

7 Hultin Cir. 9/29: Grantor Nana F. Owusuansah to Grantees Nana Frimpomaa Owusu Ansah Tr and Nana Frimpomass Owusu Ansah 2026 Family Trust. $100.

151 Sterling Rd. 9/29: Grantors Joseph M. Jourdain and Jennifer S. Jourdain to Grantees Brian Caccavale and Laura Caccavale. $649,500.

59 Arizona Ave. 9/29: Grantor Kathleen A. Foley to Grantees Kathleen A. Foley Tr and Kathleen A. Foley Family 2026 Trust. $100.

38 Juniper Ln. 9/29: Grantor 53 Saint Germain Street LLC to Grantee Jason Frantz. $631,000.

37 Preservation Ln 9/30: Grantors Brian P. McGurl, Brian McGurl, Cynthia A. McGurl, and Cynthia McGurl to Grantees Brian McGurl Tr, Cynthia McGurl Tr, and McGurl Legacy Wealth Trust. $1.

85 Bailey Rd. 9/30: Grantors Simon M. Turner Tr, Douglas M. Turner & Beryl E. Turner Revocable Trust-2014 to Grantee Mark Schores. $675,000.

No number Malden St. 10/01: Grantor Joseph M. Silk, Jodi Ann Silk, and Jodi A. Silk to Grantees Joseph M. Silk Tr, Jodi Ann Silk Tr, and Joseph M. Silk Trust. $100.

434 Malden St. 10/01: Grantors Jodi Ann Silk, Jodi A. Silk, and Joseph M. Silk to Grantees Joseph M. Silk Tr, Jodi Ann Silk Tr, and Jodi Ann Silk Trust. $100.

10 Thorny Lea Rd. 10/01: Grantors Michael C. Kozminski and Lynn M. Kozminski to Grantees Michael C. Kozminski Tr, Lynn M. Kozminski Tr, and Kozminski 2026 Revocable Trust. $100.

2 Explorers Way 10/01: Grantors Steven G. Donnini and Denise J. Donnini to Grantee Gina M. Ganias. $100.

144 Bailey Rd. 10/01: Grantors Jessica L. Isaac, Daniel Kim, and David Isasac to Grantees Callie Kmon and Jeffrey Kmon. $449,000.

25 Manning St. 10/02: Grantors Cynthia A. Goodhile Tr and Cynthia A. Goodhile Family Trust to Grantees Caitlin Martinez and Nicholas Martinez. $650,000.

51 Wilde Willow Dr. 10/07: Grantors Kent E. Dyment and Jeanine M. Dyment to Grantees Kent E. Dyment Tr, Jeanine M. Dyment Tr, and Dyment Family 2026 Revocable Trust. $100.

172 Holden St. 10/07: Grantors Brian J. Armstrong, Samantha A. Armstrong, Brian Armstrong, and Samantha Cooper to Grantees Brian J. Armstrong Tr, Samantha A. Armstrong Tr, and 2026 You Have Our Trust. $100.

Bryant Rd. Off 10/08: Grantors Ann M. Urbanovitch, Paul Frederick Urbanovitch Est, Ludvic Urbanovitch Est, and Ludvic P. Urbanovitch Est to Grantee Timothy P. Mazeika. $11,500.

5 Windsor Cir 10/09: Grantor Philip J. Puris to Grantees Philip J. Puris Tr and Philip J. Puris Revocable Trust. $100.

75 Flagler Dr. 10/09: Grantors Jeffrey S. Bruce and Michaela C. Bruce to Grantee Whiteacre Properties LLC. $430,000.

188 Princeton St. 10/13: Grantor Raquel Norris to Grantee Ethan T. King. $440,000.

50 Jackson St. 10/14: Grantors Spakauskas Family Irrevocable Trust, Cheryl Spakauskas Tr, and Cheryl A. Spakauskas Tr to Grantees Brandon Lee and Pricilla Lee. $550,000.

694 Main St. 10/14: Grantors Eva M. Roeder Tr, Christa M. Lee Tr, Elizabeth A. Leroux Trust, David L. Bennett Tr, and Raymond A. Leroux Trust to Grantee Covina LLC. $10.

628 Main St. 10/14: Grantors Eva M. Roeder Tr, Christa M. Lee Tr, Elizabeth A. Leroux Trust, David L. Bennett Tr, and Raymond A. Leroux Trust to Grantee Fortunes Rocks LLC. $10.

PAXTON

33 Keep Ave. 9/15: Grantors Jeffrey M. Tasca, Roberley E. Haman, and Roberley H. Tasca to Grantees Jeffrey M. Tasca Tr, Roberley H. Tasca Tr, and Tasca Family Trust. $100.

11 Highland St. 9/21: Grantor Janet K. Huehls to Grantees Janet Huehls Tr, and Janet Huehls Family 2026 Trust. $100.

2 Nanigian Rd. 9/21: Grantors Brian V. Sheary and Monique E. Sheary to Grantees Brain V. Sheary Tr, Monique E. Sheary Tr, and Sheary Family Trust. $100.

No number Marshall St. 9/22: Grantors David N. Garvey and Lynn M. Garvey to Grantees David N. Garvey Jr. Tr, Lynne Garvey Tr, and Garvey Family Trust. $100.

32 Brigham Rd. 9/25: Grantors Christo-

REAL ESTATE
continued on page 17





REAL ESTATE

continued from page 16

pher J. Chianese, Susan P. Chianese to Grantees Drew Stratton, Sara Stratton, and Peter Stratton. $700,000.

620 Pleasant St. 9/28: Grantor Village Capital & Investment LLC to Grantee USA Veterans Affairs. $10.

36 Village Rd. 9/28: Grantors Shirley A. Sprague, Shirley Sprague to Grantees Shirley A. Sprague Tr and Shirley A. Sprague Realty Trust-2026. $100.

No number South St. 9/30: Grantor Russell Jordan Huard to Grantees Richard Lee Huard and Roni Scott Huard. $100.

320 Marshall St. 9/30: Grantors Nabih Ibrahim Younis, Ibrahim Awad Younis Est, and Ibrahim Younis Est to Grantees Mason A. Miller and Emily Miller. $615,000.

5 Woodland Dr. 10/02: Grantor Friends Property Management LLC to Grantees Glenn G. McNamara and Lisa A. McNamara. $590,000.

RUTLAND

57 Sassawanna Rd. 9/15: Grantors Sonja Rossi and Sonja M. Rossi to Grantees Bruce E. Bennett, Tracey Marie Bennett, and Kimberly Elizabeth Bennett. $510,000.

No number Glenwood Rd. 9/18: Grantor Leroy C. Clark to Grantee J&K Ventures LLC. $80,000.

64 Central Tree Rd. 9/21: Grantors Stephen Baker and Coralis Baker to Grantees Zachary Merly and Emily Hogan. $700,000.

2 Highland Park Rd. 9/21: Grantors Debra A. Tambollio and Michael A. Shimkus to Grantees Abraham Frescas and Yaritza Gonzalez. $392,000.

92 Ridge Rd. 9/22: Grantors James W. Lamothe, Tanya M. Lamothe, and James Lamothe to Grantee Willett Construction Inc. $157,000.

9 Brintnal Dr. 9/25: Grantor Stoney Brook Estates LLC to Grantees Aaron Schlesinger and Michelle Schlesinger. $830,688.

11 Summer Hill Dr. 9/28: Grantor Robert G. Hendrickson Jr to Grantees Robert Hendrickson Tr, Elizabeth Hendrickson Tr, and Hendrickson Family 2026 Trust. $100.

67 Maple Ave. 9/28: Grantors Joseph J. Cutler and Joseph Cutler to Grantees Joseph H. Cutler Tr and 2026 Cutler Family Trust. $100.

35 Brunelle Dr. 9/28: Grantors Jaimie M. Allard, April P. Allard, and April Allard to Grantees Immanuel Patterson and Hoeuy Patterson. $650,000.

15 Fernwood Dr. 9/30: Grantors Mark W. Salvatore, Mark Salvatore, Carmen J. Salvatore, and Carmen Salvatore to Grantees Mark Wayne Salvatore Tr, Carmen Jessica Salvatore Tr, and Joint Revocable Trust of Mark Wayne Salvatore & Carmen Jessi. $1.

9 Milne Rd. 9/30: Grantors Dale L. Benander and Alexis J. Benander to Grantees Dale L. Benander Tr, Alexis J. Benander Tr, and Selah Revocable Trust. $100.

7 Helen Ave. 9/30: Grantor Brian P. Brown to Grantee Herbert F. Seymour III. $55,060.

19 Brooke Haven Dr. 9/30: Grantors Matthew S. Hunt, Emily E. Oakes, Christine Marie Hunt Est, and Christine A. Hunt Est to Grantees Matthew S. Hunt and Emily E. Oakes. $1.

2 Kosta Ln. 9/30: Grantor Phoenix Properties LLC to Jacqueline Catino. $300,000.

4 Vanessa Ln. 10/01: Grantors Darrell Kerr and Paula M. Kerr to Grantees Darrell R. Kerr Tr, Paula M. Kerr Tr, and Darrell R. Kerr & Paula M. Kerr 2026 Revocable Trust. $100.

2 Lizzy Ln. 10/01: Grantor Rayanne Toomey to Grantees Michael St. Martin and Justine St. Martin. $665,000.

176 Maple Ave. 10/02: Grantor James Thomas Tirrell IV to Grantees Alex Merloni and Maggie Grace Allen. $169,900.

3 Simon Davis Dr. 10/06: Grantors Stephen Anthony Cobb and Haillee L. Cobb to Grantee Haillee L. Cobb. $1.

2 Horizon Rd. 10/07: Grantors Vasilios Alexandros Voyiatzis and Maria Katherine Voyiatzis to Grantee Ahsan Aadil Nizam Shaikh. $750,000.

62 Crawford Rd. 10/08: Grantors Patricia E. Martin Est and Patricia A. Martin to Grantee Patricia A. Martin. $0.

8 Beechwood Dr. 10/09: Grantors Robert J. Lacey, David J. Lacey, and Susan G. Lacey Est to Grantee Lisa Marks. $405,000.

12 Hope Way, 10/09: Grantor Lisa M. Murphy to Grantee Julia Margaret Seavey. $259,900.

36 Laurelwood Rd. 10/14: Grantors John J. Lunt and Jennifer L. Lunt to Grantees John J. Lunt Tr, Jennifer L. Lunt Tr, and Lunt Family Revocable Trust. $10. ✷

Interested in advertising in our Real Estate Section? Contact Kate Carr at 508-304-3019 or by email at Katecarr@wachusettfreepress.com

NEWSBITZ

continued from page 12

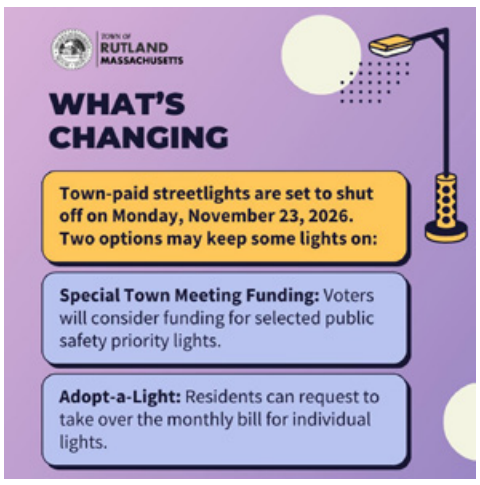
remove damaged trees from that May 19 severe straight-line wind storm. So maybe fact check before you print. Just a thought. Not to be snarky, but snark, snark.

RUTLAND

Lights out: Following the **Spring 2026 Town Meeting**, Rutland adopted a reduced-service budget. Its streetlight funding covered roughly three months of service, not a full year. Well, three months are up this month. Town-paid streetlights are scheduled to be shut off Monday, November 23.

Rutland will hold a **Special Town Meeting** on **Thursday, November 19**, at 6 p.m. at Glenwood Elementary School. Voters will consider transferring $8,500 from an existing town budget line to keep selected public safety priority streetlights on through June 30, 2027. This funding would not restore service to all streetlights.

If the article does not pass, all town-paid streetlights, including priority lights, are scheduled to turn off November 23. Only lights whose billing has transferred to adopters would remain on.



However, you can request to **adopt a streetlight** ahead of the planned shutoff. November 20 is the deadline to request a street light adoption. Later requests may involve a reconnection fee. A light's monthly bill will cost approximately $13 per month per light. **National Grid** will confirm the exact cost. Residents and businesses can request adoption, and neighbors can share the cost with one account holder responsible for the bill.

Town Meeting funding or individual adoptions could keep some lights on. Lights without continued town funding or a completed adoption are scheduled to be turned off November 23. To find out more, go to rutlandma.gov/877/Streetlights-Adopt-a-Light

License renewal time: In early October, the **Select Board** office began reaching out to current licensees (auto dealer, common victualler, entertainment, and liquor) to begin the renewal process for 2027. Necessary documentation and payment must be received no later than Friday, November 20, in order to receive license renewal for January 1, 2027. The documents for each of the four license renewals can be found at rutlandma.gov/807/2027-License-Renewals ✷

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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

Battleship Cove

By Steve Urbanovitch

This day trip took us to Battleship Cove located at 5 Water St., Fall River, MA. It is the home of the ships the USS Massachusetts, the USS Joseph P. Kennedy Jr. and the submarine USS Lionfish. Entry to this floating museum allows you to do self-guided tours to explore these impressive ships that served our country. Parking for this museum is next door at the DCR Fall River Heritage State Park. This park provides sweeping views of the harbor and historic naval ships. It is worth mentioning that the Fall River Carousel, a restored early 20th century hand-carved carousel, calls Fall River Heritage State Park home. There is also a small café, so you can enjoy a picnic along the harbor. Hours: October 19-December 7, 7 days a week, 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Admission: Adults: $10, Children 4-12: $8, Children 3 and under: Free. ✷

Richards Memorial Library receives grant to replace invasives

Keep Massachusetts Beautiful Awarded a $500 Plant Something Bee-eautiful Grant to Paxton's Richards Memorial Library that will be used to help replace invasive burning bushes with native, pollinator-friendly shrubs that benefit pollinators, birds, and other wildlife.

Keep Massachusetts Beautiful's Plant Something Bee-eautiful program provides $10,000 in annual grants to support the planting of pollinator-friendly public gardens, with financial support from Edrington, a Scottish purveyor of premium spirits.

"This is an important step in converting our library yard to a teaching space for all ages to learn about pollinators, plants, and wildlife-friendly spaces," said Kristin Steinmetz, RML's youth services librarian. "Richards Memorial Library has been working hard to expand our pollinator-friendly areas over the last 5-plus years. Transforming the burning bush area into a native, pollinator-friendly space will add a vital piece to our efforts to recreate our yard into a learning space for youth and all ages."

Students between the ages of 5-18 chose which native shrubs to replace the burning bushes. As part of the library's "Plant a Seed, Read!" Summer 2026 Reading Program, participants received a sunflower seed each time they earned a ticket for reading a book and used it to vote between Arrowwood Viburnum and Black Chokeberry. Both shrubs bloom in early spring, are beloved by pollinators, turn vivid colors in the fall, and produce berries that feed birds and other wildlife.

And the winner? The youth chose the Black Chokeberry by a margin of two to one, said Steinmetz.

The $500 project budget covers $300 to remove the four large burning bushes and $200 to purchase four native shrubs in one-gallon pots from a local nursery. The burning bush were removed on Wednesday, Nov. 4 and will be replaced by the new chokeberries. A community ceremony will be held in the spring of 2027 where participants will celebrate the new plantings and make stenciled pollinator t-shirts and learn about pollinators and native plants.



The process, from the Richard's Memorial Facebook page.

The planting site faces the Town Common, so the project will be visible and educational for many residents beyond the young voters and event participants.

Bees and other pollinators are in serious decline around the world. Pollinators, including 20,000 species of wild bees, contribute to the growth of fruit, vegetables, and flowering plants. Plants that depend on pollination make up 35 percent of global crop production volume.

Richards Memorial Library has spent more than five years expanding its pollinator-friendly spaces. In that time, it has ended pesticide spraying in some outdoor areas, planted a butterfly and pollinator garden, started an active Youth Garden Club, and begun an ecological monitoring program in its gardens. Converting the burning bush area adds a vital piece to the library's goal of turning its yard into a teaching and learning space for youth and all ages.

"Our Plant Something Bee-eautiful program beautifies public spaces while also restoring natural habitats for pollinators," said Neil Rhein, founder and executive director of Keep Massachusetts Beautiful. "Bees and other pollinators are an essential link in our food chain, and this program provides funding to help protect and restore essential habitats. We're pleased to support the Richards Memorial Library in this joint effort."

Keep Massachusetts Beautiful is taking action to make Massachusetts a cleaner, greener, litter-free place to live, work, and play. Learn more at keepmassbeautiful.org. ✷



PHOTO FINISH







1. Front porch sittin': There is no better place to learn about Rutland's past than the Rutland Historical Society at 232 Main St. (next to the Fire Station). With a museum full of historical exhibits and plenty of smiling faces to guide the way, stop by on Thursdays from 10 a.m.-noon. It's a wonderful place to not only learn but also relax on the front porch and think about how times have changed.

2. In October, Susan Scott, Director of Gale Free Library, accepted a donation from Kitty Bradshaw of the Holden Woman's Club for the Friends of Gale Free Library. The Woman's Club has given several generous gifts to the Library to support literacy, children's programs, and collection enhancement. The Friends of Gale Free Library provides invaluable services, resources, and programs for the community, including museum passes, online databases, art exhibits and workshops, adult programming, and the Children's Summer Reading Program. If you are interested in learning more about the Friends or becoming a member, please reach out to the library at 508-210-5569.

3. Helen Urbanovitch, whose husband Steve contributes to the monthly Day Trippin' feature, is a talented photographer in her own right. She shared this photograph of the rising moon reflected in a pond that she took on a recent evening walk. Thanks for sharing, Helen.

Do you have a photo you would like to share? We need your involvement! If you are a member of the Scouts, a sports league, a community organization such as the Lions or a woman's club, and have a photo that you think the Wachusett community should know about, please email the photo and a brief description to Martha@local-townpages.com. Also include your name, address, and contact information (not for publication) should we have any questions. ✷

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