

# Neighborhood Street Spirit with CRT on NYE

BY SEAN SULLIVAN

In his “The Little Book of Lykke,” author Meik Wiking shares what might be called a recipe for eudaimonia - an elusive Greek word that stands in for happiness and human flourishing. Wiking (his full name pronounced Mike Viking) is CEO of the Happiness Research Institute in Copenhagen.

His organization seeks to survey countries and communities the world over to discover what ingredients might be essential in the muddled stew that comprises human well-being. One common denominator throughout his research and findings is community.

In his book, Wiking recounts the story of a suburban street in western Australia, its neighbors virtual strangers to one another. Sound familiar? Yet after the residents along that cul-de-sac begin to coalesce, they begin to evolve from a commonplace fairway into a family. Weekly outdoor movie nights are adopted, as are community pizza parties, and regular meet-and-greets to plan, keep informed and in touch.



That story has certain parallels with Natick’s Cochituate Rail Trail. Well into its second year now, the CRT has become a causeway for community, an avenue for local residents to meander upon, meet, connect and catch up.

And Natick’s stretch of CRT last month hosted what’s becoming a tradition on the trail – its New Year’s Eve celebration, (CRT NYE). It was an event that summoned a special strain of that neighborhood street spirit – a vibe that even a resilient rain-fall couldn’t douse.



Yet walking the rail trail north that night from Fisher Street in ebbing and flowing precipitation seemed to offer little to boost the spirits of New Year’s Eve revelers. A couple walking a soggy dog happened by. A group of adults and kids passed, sloshing south back to shelter within warm and dry walls.

Generator-powered floodlights, the kind that illuminate nightly roadwork, lit up crossroads where the CRT and Fisher Street intersect. Pedestrians walking the trail were bathed in

a ghostly glow thrown off by its lamps.

But a few minutes’ walk farther north, the amber flicker of a wood fire could finally be seen through branches in the distance. It was one of nineteen contained conflagrations along a stretch of the CRT, all kindled toward a sense of community, to celebrate the new year that would arrive in a few hours.

**CRT ON NYE**  
*continued on page 2*

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## CRT ON NYE

*continued from page 1*

Coming closer, that fire revealed Natick resident George Eckert tending its flames. As the first fire pit on the south end of the CRT celebration, said Eckert, his was a “beacon of hope for people coming from Fisher Street.”

But with a shift of perspective, Eckert's was the last fire in a long line of New Year's Eve festivities that began about a mile earlier, crossing the CRT's Route 9 bridge from points beyond. The newly-built overpass was lined with a rainbow array of holiday lights, which glowed bright in the gloom even for passersby in cars beneath the bridge.

“It’s a really nice time getting people out in the community,” said Eckert.

From the Morse Institute Library to Boy and Girl Scout Troops, Family Promise Metrowest to Keep Natick Beautiful - each fire pit was hosted, sponsored by a local business or organization. CRT NYE was organized by Friends of Natick Trails (FoNT), an ad-



vocacy group launched in 2016 to support the rail trail. FoNT also promotes Natick's network of wooded trails.

Modern illumination offered contrast and color to the prehistoric pyrotechnics kindled in the burning bowls, holiday lights powered by battery or gas generators humming nearby.

Despite the weather, cyclists paid homage to the CRT's status as an avenue amenable to two-wheeled enthusiasts. Lit up with festive LED lights, some

bikes were a blur of bright color on the byway, and Landry's Bicycles of Natick hosted its own fire pit.

Sheltered beneath their pop-up tent, a Natick Boy Scout troop fueled the festivities with homemade donuts they offered free to folks travelling via foot or on two wheels. Just so, each fire pit station celebrated and shared the flavor of the organization hosting it.

Photo ops were also part of the plan along the path. An over-

sized picture frame was posted on the shoulder, large enough for a family to pose within.

As a Natick Cub Scout leader, Eckert has years of experience cultivating and tending to campfires. His scout troop draws from Natick's Lilja Elementary School. Living adjacent to the CRT, he had commuted to his fire spot by mountain bike with trailers in tow.

The cargo cars of his pedal-powered train contained fuel for the fire and other items essential to his task. Among these was a backpack garden sprayer, topped off with water as a tool to control the flames, extinguish them at night's end. His fire bowl hissed in response as he gave the metal a douse to demonstrate.

It seemed a handy way to entertain oneself between the revelers passing by in intervals. Some stopped to chat, others kept on their way toward home. Reliable rainfall that day left little risk the pits might spark fires in neighboring woods, and Eckert made the most of what Mother Nature had served up. He stacked logs in triangle bonfire configuration, flames climbing and sparks swirling,

energized by a breeze blowing  
off the lake.

“The rail trail had lots and lots of fires,” said 8-year-old Marina of Natick, who paused by the blaze with her father, their last stop of the evening. “The sparks were like fireflies.”

Eckert had his own familial company early in the evening, but they'd abandoned him soon after for more comfortable settings.

“My grandkids were here for a few minutes and started melting down,” he said, subtracting logs from his supply and adding them to his fire bowl. He’d attended Natick’s inaugural CRT NYE event in 2021, and last year was his first volunteering as a keeper of the flame.

Not long after 7:00 that evening, Eckert's was the only fire still burning. Its flames twisted high and crackled, in seeming defiance of the drizzle. He fed logs into the bowl as fast as they were consumed by the conflagration. Any leftover fuel, he said, would need to be transported by bike back to home base.

“Gotta burn it all up,” he said. “I’m not taking it home.”

[illegible]



# 2023 Natick Annual Town Election is March 28

Nomination papers are available for the Annual Town Election.

Natick voters will elect the following officials:

- Two members to the Select Board for 3 year terms
- Two members to the School Committee for 3 year terms
- One member to the Planning Board for a 5 year term
- One member to the Board of Assessors for a 3 year term
- One member to the Board of Health for a 3 year term
- Two members to the Recreation and Parks Commission for 3 year terms
- One member to the Natick Housing Authority for a 5 year term
- One member to the Natick Housing Authority for a 3 year term
- One member to the Morse Institute Library Trustees for a 2 year term
- Two Constables for 2 year terms
- 68 Town Meeting Members

Nomination papers for Town Meeting members are available. Nomination papers for new Town Meeting members are due by Tuesday, Feb. 7. Please check the town website at [www.natickma.gov](http://www.natickma.gov) for listings of available offices or call the Town Clerk's office for more information.


The Town Clerk's Office is open Mon-Wed: 8AM-5PM; TH: 8AM-7PM; and FR: 8AM-12:30PM. For more information please call (508) 647-6430 X4 or e-mail [townclerk@natickma.org](mailto:townclerk@natickma.org).

# "Differently Wired" SPARK Event Feb. 7


Differently Wired: SOS for Parents in the Trenches Tuesday, Feb. 7 at 7pm via Zoom -- For parents, caregivers, educators, and community members of all ages

Behind every child who is differently wired is likely one or more frustrated, isolated, perhaps even burnt out adult. In this practical and actionable talk, author and parenting activist Debbie Reber, MA, shares ten powerful "tilts," a.k.a. practical ideas to help parents shift their thinking and give their extraordinary children what they need to thrive.


ASL interpretation will be provided at this event. Register and learn more about this FREE online program and all our upcoming events at [www.SPARKKindness.org](http://www.SPARKKindness.org)



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# Larger-than-life painting dedicated to Spencer, official dog of the 126th Boston Marathon

*Cancer returned, owners hope dog can attend in April*

BY THERESA KNAPP

Spencer, the beloved official dog of the 126th Boston Marathon, now has a larger-than-life sized painting in his honor.

Spencer, who turned 13 in July, had been fighting cancer off and on in recent years and owner Richard Powers of Holliston says the cancer has returned and it is terminal.

“We learned in the fall that Spencer’s cancer had returned and we wanted to create something to immortalize him, and have something to inspire at the Marathon this year to mark the 10-year anniversary of the tragedy,” says Powers, referring to the marathon bombings of 2013.

Spencer, and his now 10-year-

old niece Penny, both Golden Retriever therapy dogs, rose to fame during the coronavirus pandemic when Powers was posting near-daily “pupdates” on his “Spencer & Penny” Facebook page @ Spencerpows and other local town pages. The pupdates continue today.

Spencer has been cheering on Boston Marathon runners at his post in Ashland since 2015. The rendering entitled “Celebrating Spencer” depicts the pup in the center of the frame wearing a Boston Marathon medallion around his neck and holding a pole in his mouth. On the left side of the pole is a flag with a heart on it and on the right side hangs a “We Are Boston Strong” flag.

The painting is 5 feet wide and 5.5 feet tall and hangs in Powers’ home though he plans to loan it out during the week of the marathon “to be displayed to continue to inspire and give hope to runners and attendees.”

Powers commissioned the painting from artist Tom Mosser Design based in Pittsburgh. It took about two months to complete and was unveiled in January at Boston’s Fairmont Copley Plaza where Spencer is the hotel’s “honorary canine ambassador.”

A video of the ceremony can be found on Holliston Cable Ac-

cess at <https://bit.ly/3ZSbysu> attend this year’s marathon in April, where he and Penny typi-

cally greet thousands of runners, but it would be a short visit.

“It is our hope he will be with us but, even if he is with us, he would not be able to attend in his traditional role, it would be too much for him,” says Powers. “But we would love to bring him for a quick moment so could feel the energy one more time.”

In the meantime, Powers reports his “angel on earth” has been “comfortable and relatively active.”

“Sadly, he’s terminal and there is nothing more we can do with any treatment. We are just managing his care and comfort. His days have been mostly good so far but we are monitoring him very closely as we know it can change very quickly.”

As for his owners, Powers says, “We are taking it day by day. Anyone who has lost a dog understands that he is not just a dog, he is a family member and they know the emotional roller coaster we are experiencing. Every day is a gift with him. He is an amazing dog and has beaten the odds so many times, and we are thankful for the extra time we have had.”

Powers thanks everyone who has supported Spencer over the years. They have raised more than \$4,000 for canine cancer research and he encourages others to donate to the cause at <https://bit.ly/2InCwzJ>.



Courtesy photo. Credit: [www.thehenrystudio.com](http://www.thehenrystudio.com)

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# Art On Display At Morse Library Through February

## Molly Dee, Main Level

In her work as a sculptor, Molly Dee researches and interacts with communities to share their stories through the exploration of the human form. Born and raised in Natick, she was a student at Joseph P. Keefe Technical High School, before attending Boston University's School of Visual Arts. There she completed her undergraduate degree with a Bachelors of Fine Art, a double major in Graphic Design and Sculpture. She is currently a visual arts teacher as well as an artist, represented by Fountain Street Gallery. Artist Statement: Famous artists from Manet, Titian, Matisse to Modigliani and Henry Moore have looked to the reclining figure as a source of inspiration. The figure at rest, a solitary form while also full of potential energy, is an endless muse for artists throughout the centuries. In my take on the typology I looked to create a form that is at once welcoming but also guarded. Instead of traditional legs the sculpture's form wraps up almost as if protecting itself. The high back mimics the forms of a sleek modern chair, but also separates the viewer from the center of the piece. Olympia is at once a colorful contemporary sculpture and also a piece at home

among ancient relics.

## Michael Murphy, Main Level Galleries (February only)

Michael Murphy grew up in Texas and attended art school at Texas Tech University, studying painting, drawing, and printmaking. Upon graduation Michael pursued a career in education. After a successful career as a teacher, assistant principal, principal, director, assistant superintendent and superintendent, Michael turned to working with schools across North and South America as a national leadership coach, trainer, planning facilitator, and consultant. Michael still consults with school districts and school leaders to this day, but he never lost his love of design and art in architecture, nature, and abstraction. After a move to Natick, and with the support of his family, he was able to expand his personal world to involve the production of paintings, drawings, and prints to showcase his elation, emotions and thinking. His paintings are influenced by the seasons, his personal joy, and his concerns about the world and how people treat each other. For Michael, this work is now about risk taking, exploration, movement, and mood. His journey is far from over. This

exhibit reflects themes of 'Mood and Movement.'

## Natick High School Student Art, Polk Virtual Gallery / Main Level

Natick High School art students' Fall 2023 projects are featured in the Polk Virtual Gallery on the Main Level. Projects include submissions from AP Art & Design, Honors Portfolio, Drawing I, Intro to Graphic Design, North Star Art, and Digital Photography. A complete list of artists is available at the Circulation Desk.

## Natick Artists Association Lebowitz Meeting Hall / Lower Level

Natick artists have been providing art to the community for years as a group of dedicated volunteers. We have formed an official volunteer organization, Natick Artists Associations, to bring even more art events and feature more local talent to our community. NAA is affiliated with the Natick Center Cultural Center and looks forward to engaging with them as art expands in Natick. This exhibit features member art with the theme: 'What I did during COVID.'

## Janis Leudke, Virtual Gallery / Main Level

For the past thirty years Janis worked as an interior designer, and is a self-trained artist, specializing in painting and collage. She studied at Mount Holyoke College and the Colorado Institute of Art. After school Janis spent 2 decades living in the Southwest, where both her design and art were greatly influenced by the expanse of the landscape, the ever-changing light, the colors of the earth, the overall texture of the natural environment,

and the Latin culture. Her work has been exhibited and installed in Southern California and throughout the Boston Metrowest area, Boston Children's Hospital, Bay-state Hospital of the Future, and the Boston Home. This exhibit features the art from her self-published book The Hearts That Fell Out of the Sky, which is about the Head Hearts who venture down to Earth from outer space on a special mission. Through their adventures they teach us a valuable lesson about living in our hearts.

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# Community Ties and a Commitment to Customer Service: Affordable Junk Removal

There are plenty of reasons to call a junk removal service. Maybe you're planning to move and need to clear out the basement and attic before your open house. Maybe you've spent way too much time at home lately and are feeling the need to declutter.

But figuring out who to call can be a pain. If you contact one of the big haulers, they route you to a phone center where they've never even heard of your town, plus their pricing seems vague and full of extra fees. No wonder you've let the stuff pile up—it's too much of a hassle to get rid of it!

## Business spotlight

Or you can call Affordable Junk Removal and let a local small business with deep community roots take care of everything.

Jay Schadler started his business in 2003. Back then, it was just him and a beat-up pickup truck taking small jobs and working nights and weekends when he could. As the years rolled on, his business grew, but his commitment to customer service never



wavered. Now he's got a staff of ten, along with ten trucks, servicing eastern and central Massachusetts and northern Rhode Island.

Affordable Junk Removal specializes in house and estate cleanouts. If your garage, attic, or office is overflowing with stuff, take back your space and let the pros do the heavy lifting.

Jay and his team have handled it all. They've dismantled above-ground pools, hauled away ancient hot tubs, taken down old fencing, and stripped away worn carpeting. They'll come for a single item, or they'll clean out an entire house. And they can take almost anything. They can't accept hazardous materials, brush, dirt, or concrete, but everything else is fair game for them to take away.

Not everything ends up in a landfill—not if Jay can help it. He first tries to either recycle or donate items. Only after he tries to repurpose items do they end up at the transfer station.

Working with Affordable Junk Removal is simple. First, you can load stuff yourself if you want by renting a 15-cubic-yard dumpster for a week and chucking up to a ton of your unwanted stuff. If you need to get rid of more weight, then Jay prorates that tonnage—you never pay for what you don't use.

If you don't want to be bothered with the dumpster, they've also got a driveway special where they'll take away a truckload of your unwanted things if you pile it up. Or if you don't want to lift a finger, then you can point at the items, and the team will fill up their truck and haul away your unwanted things. However you do it, you're left with more space and more peace of mind.

Jay and his team beat the big waste haulers on both price and customer service. When you call Affordable Junk Removal, you aren't connected to an anonymous call center. Your phone call goes right to Jay.

And speaking of pricing, Jay

is upfront about it. His website shows the truck sizes and prices, so you can save time knowing your costs before you call for an appointment. There aren't any hidden costs or surprise fees with Affordable Junk Removal.

Affordable Junk Removal is fully licensed and fully insured, and they'll treat your property with care and respect.

They also have a thriving commercial business, working with contractors and roofers to clear away debris and keep the job site clean. They can even handle commercial and residential emergencies with same-day service.

Jay and his family are deeply involved in the community. He and his wife, Christine, run the Corner Market restaurant in Holliston as well as Resellables, a thrift store in Bellingham. It's not uncommon for someone to reach Jay at the restaurant, order a sandwich, and then schedule a junk removal appointment. Yes, the local small business really can handle everything!

For more information, contact Jay Schadler at (774) 287-1133 or visit Affordable Junk Removal online at [www.takeawayjunk.com](http://www.takeawayjunk.com).

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# Bacon Library News

Here is what is happening at the Bacon Free Library in February:

## Library Hours

Monday through Friday, 9:30-5:30 with extended hours on Tuesday until 7:00pm  
Saturdays 9:30-1:30  
Curbside pickup is available during all open hours

Check our website for the most up-to-date information and to register for programs: <https://baconfreelibrary.org>

## Children's Programs

Mondays @ 10am -- Story Time: Join us for a high-energy story time! We'll mix things up with a combination of stories for listening and songs for singing & dancing.

Tuesdays @ 10am -- Alphabet Story Time. We'll start with stories and songs that feature our letter of the week. Then we'll do some simple crafts with the special letter.

Fridays @ 10am -- Baby Time: Join us for a cozy story time filled with lap bounces, rhymes, songs, and simple stories. Geared toward infants and young toddlers with their grownups.

Jammin with You -- 2 Wednesdays per month @ 10am: Feb 1st & 15th: Be prepared to laugh, dance, sing, and jam your way through 30 minutes of non-stop family fun! This performance is geared for kids ages 1 – 7, but fun for the whole family. With modern takes on children's classics and classic original tunes, you'll be

humming and bopping your way all the way home. Registration required.

Saturday, Feb 25th @ 11am -- Hands on Nature: winter hibernation: Find out how your favorite animals spend the winter. Bring a small stuffed animal and create a cozy hibernation den to take home. Registration required.

## All-ages Programs

Weds, Feb 22nd, 3:00-5:00pm -- drop-in crafternoon: "Not a Box". Bring a cardboard box and transform it into a robot, a racecar, or anything you can imagine, just like the rabbit in Not a Box by Antoinette Portis. Please bring your own box. We'll provide an assortment of craft supplies.

## Adult Programs

Saturday, Feb 11th @ 11am -- Seed Swap: Bring your favorite seeds to share. We will provide some of our own seeds as well. Don't forget to check out our Seed Library!

Weds, Feb 22nd @ 7pm on Zoom -- The Photography of Weegee: Learn about this photographer who captured some of the grittiest scenes of New York City in the middle of the 20th century. Registration required.

Weds, March 1st @ 7pm on Zoom -- Blackstone Valley Veggie Gardens will explain the benefits of hydroponics and answer your questions about this soil-less form of gardening. Registration required.

Adult Book & Film Clubs - registration required for all clubs  
History Book Club - second Thursday of the month @ 11am on Zoom

Feb 9th: All that she carried: the journey of Ashley's sack, a Black family keepsake by Tiya Miles

Environmental Book Club - third Tuesday of the month @ 7pm on Zoom

Feb 21st: Life between the tides by Adam Nicolson

Tuesday Night Book Club - fourth Tuesday of the month @ 6:30pm, both Zoom & in person  
Feb 24th: Hamnet by Maggie O'Farrell

Nonfiction Book Club - fourth Saturday of the month @ 10am, both Zoom & in person  
Feb 25th: I'm possible: a story of survival, a tuba, & a

small miracle of a big dream by Richard Antoine White

Cinephile Mondays -- last Monday of the month @ 4pm on Zoom; watch and discuss films. Check the BFL website for the film of the month and to register.

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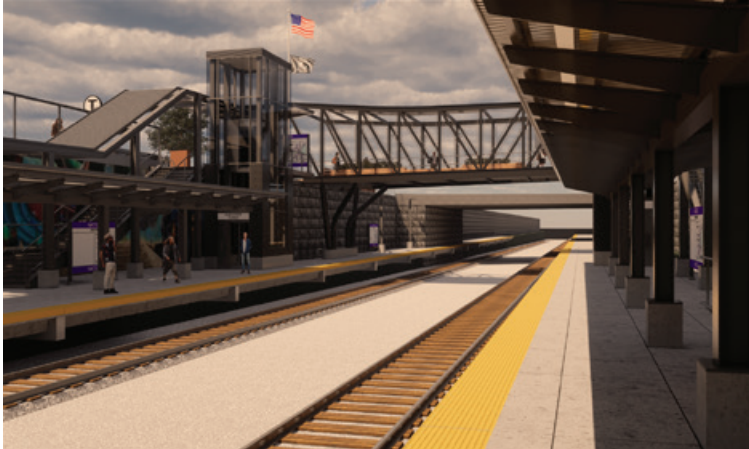
# Natick Center Station: Construction Advisory – Station Entrance Relocation

The MBTA is continuing to work on the Natick Center Commuter Rail Station, with the Station remaining open during construction.

The contractor is planning to start construction at the West End of the station starting in early 2023.

This work will include the installation of the West End ramps, stairways, elevators, and other construction activities. In order to perform the West End work safely and efficiently, the current entrances will be relocated to Washington Street.

These temporary entrances



will be used through the end of the year.

Please see the map with a view of the project area and suggested routes to the Inbound and Outbound platforms on

### Natick Center Station Accessibility Improvements – Temporary Station Entrance Relocation

The temporary entrance will be in effect from  
January 2023 through the end of the year.

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When complete, the new station will include 2 new elevators, 2 accessible ramps, 6 stairways, a new platform, a pedestrian bridge, and bicycle parking.

For more information on this project, including a video recording with more information on this station entrance relocation, and to sign up for email updates please visit: [www.MBTA.com/natickcenter](http://www.MBTA.com/natickcenter)

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Dr. Beigi completed his undergraduate studies in California and earned his doctorate from Tufts University, School of Dental Medicine . He completed his residency at the New England Medical Center. He is certified in Invisalign, implant dentistry, and oral sedation. He focuses on oral surgery, root canal treatment, and gum surgeries. Dr. Beigi, too, is an FBI-trained forensic dentist.

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Your Money, Your Independence

# Secure Act 2: Electric Boogaloo?



Glenn Brown

Sometimes it's best to not have a sequel.

Still, Congress delivered us one with "Secure Act 2.0" in December.

The original Secure Act was released three years ago. It began with 417-3 House vote in May 2019, advanced by the Senate cramming into the 2020 budget and concluded with Congress cheerleading the delay of Required Minimum Distributions (RMDs) by 18 months to age 72 and providing greater access to 401(k) for part-time employees.

Those are good things, but hidden in plain sight was the dismal plot - the death of 'stretch' IRA and creation of the 10-Year

Rule, which included liquidating inherited non-spousal (children) Roth IRAs.

See Congress had wanted to speed up tax revenues. What better way than forcing a 25 year old, regardless of financial situation, to liquidate mom or dad's inherited IRA or Roth IRA by age 35 instead of during their retirement years.

How does this help secure retirement for future generations? Or benefit hardworking Americans who sacrificed, saved, planned and proactively paid taxes years, in some cases, decades sooner than needed?

So, with this precedent, how does their latest Secure Act 2.0 look?

In a word: better.

Here are some early awards:

**Most Widespread Impact** - RMDs from retirement accounts increase to age 73 from 72 beginning January 1, 2023. It will increase to age 75 in 2033. That said, just because you can delay doesn't mean you avoid being required to take greater amounts later. In fact, it can accelerate and put some into higher tax brackets without planning.

**Most Significant Benefit** - Roth, Roth, and more Roth. These changes all appear to be good news for those seeking planning opportunities.

Creation of SEP Roth IRAs and SIMPLE Roth IRAs as well as employer contributions (aka 401(k) match) will be permitted to deposit matching and/or nonelective contributions to employees' designated Roth accounts. There is a caveat, the match would be included in the employee's income in the year of the contribution. Ditto for amounts deposited into SEP Roth IRAs and SIMPLE Roth IRAs. Still, great to have choice.

**Surprising 2024 Newcomer** - In 2024, "high wage earners" will be required to use Roth option for catch-up contributions to 401(k), 403(b), and 457(b) plans, but not for IRAs.

What's Congress's definition of a high wage earner here?

\$1,000,000?

\$400,000?

Nope, here it's \$145,000.

A caveat if you're self-employed individual (sole proprietors and partners) it is specific language of wages (which you don't earn), thus it appears can still make pre-tax catch-up contributions if income from self-employment is over \$145,000.

**Future Star** - After 15 years of a 529 plan being opened, unused assets can be rolled over to a Roth IRA for the beneficiary (child). Now, it is subject to annual Roth contribution limits

and an aggregate lifetime limit of \$35,000. Still, this is a great idea, as you can help a young adult grow a Roth IRA, while they use funds for other savings or pay off liabilities.

**Closing Credits** - Secure Act 2.0 has dozens for nuances and benefits for student loans, emergency savings in DC plans, automatic enrollment, annuity options, qualified charitable distributions, solo 401Ks, surviving spouse benefits and more. Best to consult your Certified Financial Planner to learn more.

The opinions voiced in this material are for general infor-

mation only and are not intended to provide specific advice or recommendations for any individual.

Glenn Brown is a Holliston resident and owner of PlanDynamic, LLC, [www.PlanDynamic.com](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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# Natick Children Eligible For Vaccine Clinic

The Ashland Board of Health is hosting a weekly childhood vaccine clinic. This regional clinic was created to provide vaccines required by the state for school aged children who are uninsured or underinsured. Our Public Health nurse is present at every clinic to provide the following vaccines for children and teens: DTap, HPV9v, HepB, IPV (Inactive Polio Virus), MCv4 (Meningococcal), MMR, Td (Tetanus and Diphtheria), Tdap (Tetanus, Diphtheria and Pertussis) and Varicella.

The clinic has vaccinated more than 237 children so far and is available to the following municipalities: Ashland,

Framingham, Hopkinton, Hudson, Maynard, Milford, Millis and Natick. Our Community Health Worker is also available during clinics to translate (for Portuguese speakers) if needed, and to connect clients with resources. Please call: 508-733-

3005 (for the Public Health Nurse) or 978-875-5384 (for Community Health Worker) if you would like your child to attend the next clinic.

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# Struggling With Acne?

BY LISA MASSIMIANO,  
LICENSED ESTHETICIAN AND  
CERTIFIED ACNE SPECIALIST

If you have been diagnosed with acne and haven't been satisfied with drug store products or the suggested treatment from your doctor, consider seeing an Acne Specialist.

## What is an Acne Specialist?

An Acne Specialist is a licensed skin care professional who is specially trained to treat acne using a combination of clinical treatments, home care protocols and regular follow-up during the process of clearing acne prone skin.

Most physicians don't have the time to spend educating patients on the root cause of their acne. They often prescribe oral antibiotics and strong topical retinoids that can leave skin dry, red and irritated. Patients get frustrated with these side effects and stop using the products.

## How an Acne Specialist Can Help You.

An Acne Specialist will assess your individual skin type, and the

type of acne you have, to develop a plan of action specifically for you. They will take the time to teach you about the root cause of acne and provide information on lifestyle, diet, medications, and ingredients in makeup and skin care products that exacerbate acne. They help you to get your skin clear and teach you how to keep your acne under control.

For people struggling with acne, it can be frustrating to try and communicate with their doctor on a timely basis. My clients tell me that the best part of working with an Acne Specialist is that we are there for them to answer their questions and provide support while they go through the process of getting their skin clear.

Questions about acne? Email Lisa Massimiano, owner Skin Smart Salon and Acne Clinic at [skinsmartsalon@aol.com](mailto:skinsmartsalon@aol.com) or call 508 881-1180. Visit the website [skinsmartsalon.com](http://skinsmartsalon.com) for information about Skin Smart's acne program and other services.

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# Need for Fuel Assistance on the Rise

BY DAVID DUNBAR

As the colder weather arrives, folks with low income – particularly seniors – are having trouble paying the oil, gas, and electric costs of heating their homes and apartments.

Sometimes, it comes down to a choice between heating and eating. There are government programs and local organizations that can help.

One of the most popular is the fuel assistance program offered by SMOC, the South Middlesex Opportunity Council, which is available in local communities including Bellingham, Hopedale, Medway, and Millis. Senior Centers in these and other area towns are intake sites where people can get help signing up. SMOC reports that in the fiscal year 2021, 195 clients were served in Bellingham at an average of about \$1,500 each; in Hopedale there were 68, Medway had 67, and Millis had 59.

Through SMOC's Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP), individuals and families who qualify from 37 communities across the MetroWest can receive assistance with a portion of their home heating bill paid directly to their heating vendor. The heating season runs from November through April.

To be eligible, annual household income cannot exceed 60% of the Massachusetts es-

timated state median income. For example, a household of one person would have a maximum income of \$42,411. For two people, \$55,461; for three people, \$68,511; for four people, \$81,561. Benefits, which increased in December, range from \$800 to \$2,200. More information is available about fuel assistance at [www.mass.gov.org](http://www.mass.gov.org)

"The Millis Council on Aging (like many COAs) is an intake site for SMOC," explains Patty Kayo, Millis COA Director. "We gather the necessary documentation for the application and send it to SMOC. We ensure that the proper paperwork is submitted so there are no unnecessary delays in procedure. So far this fiscal year, we assisted 73 residents with recertifications or new applications for assistance."

"Each town deals with different area agencies," says Carole Mullen, the director of the Hopedale Senior Center. "SMOC is the agency for Hopedale. We have very robust activity regarding fuel assistance applications and re-certifications. Yes, SMOC is about three months behind from clients' date of applications. However, we can expedite 'emergency' situations."

"SMOC is extremely backed up this year," confirms Kayo. "There is a long wait for approval. SMOC's website is a great source of information and

outlines their services clearly. I would suggest if someone needs help to go directly to their website, [www.smoc.org](http://www.smoc.org)."

Kim Cookson has been working at the Medway Senior Center for seven years and is seeing "greater demand now than ever before" for fuel assistance. She points out that all prices are way up for "heat, rent, groceries and more."

"My office is aware of the backup in cases," reports State Representative Mike Soter. "We have been receiving many calls and emails regarding fuel assistance applications that have been in the queue. We are doing everything that we can to expedite applications for everyone that reaches out to our office. Please do not hesitate to reach out to the office at Michael.soter@mahouse.gov, Curtis.boucher@mahouse.gov, or at (508) 657-4688. We would be more than happy to help in any way we can."

"So far this year," explains SMOC's Amanda Foster, Division Director of Financial Assistance Programs, "we have processed about 5,000 applications and found about 2,000 eligible." Last year, SMOC processed about 3,700 applications.

"The high prices of fuel are driving demand," says Foster, "and we're working our hardest to meet the demand." If your situation is an "emergency," then your application will be processed sooner. "Emergency" is defined by having less than 1/8 tank of oil, a "shut off notice," or an inoperable heating system according to Foster.

Across Massachusetts, SMOC reports serving 134,000 individuals and families in fiscal year 2022. Fifty-four percent were elderly (60 years of age or more).

Here are some other sources of fuel assistance:

- Good Neighbor Energy Fund by the Salvation Army. (508) 473-0786
- Financial Assistance by the Edith Stewart Chase Foundation. (508) 422-0109
- Supportive Services for Veteran Families. 800-482-2565
- Also check out local churches and Catholic Charities.
- You might also visit [www.findhelp.org](http://www.findhelp.org) to explore additional sources.

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# Sports

## MacDonnell Dealt With Adversity In Classy Fashion

### NHS Natick's Hockey Captain Leads By Example

By KEN HAMWEY  
STAFF SPORTS WRITER

Overcoming adversity or facing a difficult challenge is a valuable life lesson that can often be learned in an athletic setting.

Natick High's hockey captain — Brendan MacDonnell — is a dynamic example because his situation involved a serious injury that needed immediate attention.

A junior last year, the 6-foot, 160-pound forward was on the ice in the second period of the Redhawks' game against King Philip on Dec. 22, 2021. He checked a KP player with his left shoulder. The opposing skater went down and MacDonnell seemed okay. The contact was clean and nothing seemed out of the ordinary.

During the second intermission, however, MacDonnell told a teammate his stomach "felt horrible." He took a shift in the third period for 1½ minutes, returned to the bench, his complexion was pale and his vision went from blurred to dark to normal.

MacDonnell told assistant coach Pat Haswell what was occurring. "A whistle came, the coach signaled to a referee, I left the bench, took two steps and collapsed on the ice," MacDonnell said. "I passed out a second time and that's when an EMT rushed towards me. I was placed on a stretcher and taken by ambulance to Framingham Union Hospital."

When internal bleeding was evident, MacDonnell was transferred to Children's Hospital in Boston where he stayed for four days, including Christmas. "I was diagnosed with a lacerated spleen," he said. "For three days, I was monitored for bleeding and when it stopped, I was released."

What followed was a rest-and-recovery period that took 6½ weeks. No surgery was needed.

"I had pain for two weeks and felt weak but the pain subsided and I returned to school during the third week," MacDonnell said. "I worked out on a station-

ary bike the last two weeks of rehab. While I was recovering, I was able to get to the rink, see some games and watch the team practice."

Head coach Bill Lacouture, who was on the ice when MacDonnell was struggling to maintain consciousness, calls his senior captain "a warrior."

"Brendan is special," Lacouture said. "When he got hurt, he lost a lot of blood. But, he followed doctors' orders and let his body heal. He missed 11 games but supported his teammates by coming to the rink. He finished his junior year playing 12 games, getting a goal and five assists."

MacDonnell's first game back after the injury was on Feb. 5, 2022 against Framingham and he wasn't timid about contact. "I was ready to go and wasn't fearful at all," he said. Lacouture recalled how MacDonnell applied a quick check in the Framingham encounter. "He hit a player and it was obvious that Mac was back."

A terrific leader, the 17-year-old MacDonnell has lots of strengths and his coach is quick to list them. "Brendan is talented, has a high hockey IQ and his work ethic and speed are incredible," said Lacouture. "He's determined to win and as the team captain he's empowered others to lead. He not only leads on the ice, but also off it. He encouraged our players to continue their strength and conditional drills during the summer."

At Local Town Pages deadline, MacDonnell had 4 goals and 5 assists and Natick was 4-5 through its first 9 games.

Able to play wing or center, MacDonnell likes his role as a forward. "I like being on offense," he said. "It's fun to battle in the corners or behind the net. A center can even get involved on defense by helping clear the zone and it's also a position where play-making and passing are important."

A native of Natick, MacDonnell started playing organized hockey as a six-year-old and for nine years competed at the club



**Brendan MacDonnell relies on speed, a strong work ethic and a high hockey IQ when he's competing for Natick High.**

level for the Natick Comets.

Setting goals and objectives are important and MacDonnell started the season with some specifics.

"My team goals are to compile a plus-.500 record, win the Carey Division of the Bay State Conference, qualify for the tourney and go as deep as possible," he noted. "My personal goals are to stay healthy and be the best captain I can be. I believe my team goals are realistic because we've got talent, experience and depth."

A captain who leads by example, by being supportive and communicative, MacDonnell is appreciative of all his teammates, especially junior Jack Byrne, the assistant captain. "Jack is a fine leader, a strong defenseman and just a great teammate," MacDonnell noted. "And, I'm pleased to be playing for coach Lacouture. He's a terrific motivator, a good leader, he's supportive and helps us to succeed."

Now in his third varsity season, MacDonnell says the best game of his career was the Fram-

ingham clash last year. "I didn't get a goal or an assist but I was so determined to get back on the ice after the injury," he emphasized. "My passion for hockey was re-ignited. That game was on a Saturday afternoon against our archrival. The stands were packed and the atmosphere was amazing."

An honor-roll student, MacDonnell isn't sure where he'll go to college or whether he'll continue to play hockey. "I plan on majoring in business management and if I go to a Division 3 college, I may try out for the varsity team. I could also play at the club level," he said.

Calling his parents (Angi and Patrick) role models for their support and encouragement, MacDonnell relies on a competitive philosophy that focuses on hard work, determination and reaching one's potential. "Winning is fun and it's a by-product of a strong work ethic," he said.

Life lessons MacDonnell has learned from hockey include "overcoming adversity, how to

be a quality leader and how to achieve success through hard work."

Lacouture on occasion will reflect on his captain's positive demeanor and his mature outlook.

"It was scary when he got hurt last year," Lacouture said. "I'm thankful Brendan confided in coach Haswell and I'll never forget the quick attention that the fire department and athletic director Tim Collins provided, and the help he got from our trainer (Lindsay Twohig). And, Brendan's parents are outstanding people, always supporting our program and getting others involved."

Brendan MacDonnell isn't a poster child for overcoming challenges because he simply handled his situation courageously, adhered to his doctors' advice and bounced back quickly.

"The injury made me stronger," he said. "It helped me realize that I could get through a difficult trial."



# Local Firefighters Graduate from Firefighting Academy

24 Graduates Represent 17 Massachusetts Fire Departments

State Fire Marshal Peter J. Ostroskey and Massachusetts Firefighting Academy Director Jeffrey P. Winn announced the graduation of 24 firefighters from the 50-day Career Recruit Firefighting Training Program. “First responders are on the frontlines protecting their communities, and these newest firefighters are needed now more than ever,” said State Fire Marshal Ostroskey. “The rigorous professional training they’ve

received provides them with the physical, mental, and technical skills to perform their jobs effectively and safely.” The graduating firefighters of Class #307 will represent the fire departments of Boxborough, Chelsea, Douglas, Eastham, Hingham, Lawrence, Lowell, Lynnfield, Medford, Nantucket, Natick, North Attleboro, Northborough, Reading, Walpole, Watertown, and Winthrop.



## Fire Fighter Goo Assigned To Shift 3

Firefighter Vincent Goo graduated from the Mass Fire Academy last month. Goo spent the last 10 weeks learning the basics of firefighting laying the ground work for a long career of continued training. FF Goo will start his assignment with Shift 3 later this week.



### Basic Firefighter Skills

Students receive classroom training in all basic firefighter skills. They practice first under non-fire conditions and then during controlled fire conditions. To graduate, students must demonstrate proficiency in life safety, search and rescue, ladder operations, water supply, pump operation, and fire attack. Fire attack operations range from mailbox fires to multiple-floor

or multiple-room structural fires. Upon successful completion of the Recruit Program all students have met the national standards of National Fire Protection Association 1001 and are certified to the level of Firefighter I and II, and Hazardous Materials First Responder Operational Level by the Massachusetts Fire Training Council, which is accredited by the National Board on Fire Service Professional Qualifications.

Today’s firefighters do far more than fight fires. They train to respond to all types of hazards and emergencies. They are the first ones called to respond to chemical and environmental emergencies, ranging from the suspected presence of carbon monoxide to fentanyl overdoses or a gas leak. They may be called to rescue a child who has fallen through the ice or who has locked himself in a bathroom. They rescue people from stalled elevators and those who are trapped in vehicle crashes. They test and maintain their equipment including self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA), hydrants, hoses, power tools, and apparatus. At the Massachusetts Firefighting Academy, they learn all these skills and more, including the latest science of fire behavior and suppression tactics, from certified fire instructors. They also receive training in public fire education, hazardous material incident mitigation, flammable liquids, stress management, and self-rescue techniques. The intensive, 10-week program for municipal firefighters involves classroom instruction, physical fitness training, firefighter skills training, and live firefighting practice. The MFA provides recruit and in-service training for Massachusetts firefighters at campuses in Stow, Springfield, and Bridgewater. To date, about 14,000 firefighters have graduated in more than 450 classes.



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# New Firefighter Carson Honored As Top Recruit

Firefighter Hanna Carson graduated from the Mass Fire Academy's Springfield campus last month.

Carson was surprised with the Richard N. Bangs Outstanding Recruit Award. This award is given to the top recruit in each class. FF Carson will be going to work on Shift 1.



## OBITUARY

**Robert Stewart Bleakney**, of Duxbury, formerly of Paxton, MA, passed away on January 13, 2023. Born November 4, 1942; Robert was raised in Natick, MA.



Robert was an undergraduate and graduate of Northeastern University, and retired as Captain in the Air force Reserves.

Robert was a member of St. John's Episcopal church and the American Legion. He also served on the Board of Trustees of the Mountain Club on Loon, in Lincoln, NH, for over 15 years and on Summerset Place Condominium, in Duxbury MA, for several years.

He was a commercial banker for many years upon retiring in 1986 to start his own business. He was the perfect husband, father and brother ....very caring and always put his wife and children above everything, He loved helping other people and lived his life through his own children and their children.

Robert is survived by his wife of 52 years, Ann M. (Palen) Bleakney. Loving father to John Stewart Bleakney of Braintree, MA; Wife: Susan Bleakney, R. Scott Bleakney of Davenport, FL; Wife: Holli Bleakney, Karen M. (Bleakney) Renner of Kingston, MA; Husband: John Renner.

Son of the late Gladys (Henry) Bleakney and Stewart H Bleakney Cherished Grandfather to Jack Bleakney, Andrew Renner, Cole Bleakney, Ryan Bleakney, Charlie Renner, Mitchell Renner and Benjamin Bleakney. Brother to Ronald J. Bleakney of Hudson, MA, and Lynne A. Bleakney of Natick, MA.

Robert is also survived by many nieces and nephews

Per his request, there will be no visiting hours and burial will be at a later date, and a as Bob would say "Remember the dash -"

Memorial contributions may be made to Alzheimer's Crohn's and Colitis. Arrangements by the Shepherd Funeral Home, Kingston.

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# Senior Center News

Register by calling the center 508-647-6540 for **FREE** events and come by the center to register for events that have a cost, 117 East Central St, Natick, MA 01760

## Borrow Our Member Pass

Passes must be reserved in advance by calling between 9am-4pm on Monday-Thursday and 9am-2pm on Friday.

Tower Hill Botanic Gardens  
11 French Drive, Boylston  
Open year-round, 7 days a week, 10:00 am-5:00 pm

We have six available admissions per day. The pass may be reserved in person or by phone and can be picked up at the Center or emailed to you. Thank you to Whitney Place for sponsoring this program.

## Mindfulness Meditation- Zoom & In Person

Every Thursday with Sharon 2:00-2:40 pm. This meditation is audio only and participants are muted during the meditation portion. Everyone is welcome to join for some guided meditation, some quiet sitting and some reflection with Q & A and sharing.

## Mondays At A Museum- Movies

2:30-4:30pm, Free- In Person  
Feb 6- The Duke, 2020, R, 90 minutes, comedy. In 1961, Kempton Bunton, a 60 year old taxi driver, steals Goya's portrait of the Duke of Wellington from the National Gallery in London. Starring Helen Mirren, Jim Broadbent.

Feb 13-Woman in Gold, 2015, PG13, 110 minutes. Maria Altmann, an octogenarian Jewish refugee, takes on the Austrian government to recover artwork she believes rightfully belongs to her family. Starring Helen Mirren.

Feb 27- Peggy Guggenheim: Art Addict, 2015, NR, Documentary, 90 minutes. A portrait of a patron of the arts extraordinaire who transformed a modest fortune and impeccable taste into one of the premiere collections of twentieth century art.

## Beeyonder- Live From London's Royal Westminster- Zoom

Thursday, February 2, 11:00am-noon, free, registration

required.

Westminster is the area of London most associated with the British Royal family. You will receive the zoom link one week in advance.

## Meetup At Spellman Stamp Museum- In Person

Thursday, February 9, 10:30 am-noon, guided tour, \$5, plenty of parking on site.

Special exhibits include a celebration of Valentine's Day through stamps and in all the ways this holiday has been portrayed through the postal service and an exhibit of the Hindenburg disaster and the mail that got through anyway. Meet at Spellman Stamp Museum, 241 Wellesley St, Weston.

## Valentine's Music With Sandi Bedrosian Trio- In Person

Monday, February 13, 1:30-2:30 pm, free

Join Sandi Bedrosian, vocals and trio for a LIVE music program celebrating Valentine's Day with classic songs about love from the Great American Songbook-

Gershwin, Cole Porter, Duke Ellington as we dance- Cheek to Cheek, The Way You Look Tonight, Fly Me to Moon and more! [www.sandibedrosian.com](http://www.sandibedrosian.com). Thank you to Anthology of Natick for sponsoring this program!

## A Personal Conversation In Mrs. Washington's Bedchamber- In Person

Wednesday, February 15, 1:30-2:30pm, free, rsvp.

Spend time with Mrs. Washington in the year 1784, as she completes dressing for her day in this interactive and informative program. Mrs. Washington will share news of her family, and how the current events that her husband is so deeply involved in impacts her family and her developing nation. She will give narrative details on her clothing as well! [www.rehabassociates.com](http://www.rehabassociates.com).

## Culturally Curious- Secret Stories Part II- Behind The World's Most Iconic Paintings- Zoom

Tuesday, February 21, 1:30-2:30pm, free

From Starry Night to The Nighthawks, there are some images that are so ubiquitous in our culture that we have stopped looking at them closely. This program delves into these iconic works and shares the secret stories behind their creation and reception. Thanks to Whitney Place, Natick for sponsoring this program! Zoom LINK <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87075546444>

## Knock On Wood- Music With Howie Newman- In Person

Monday February 27, 1:30-2:30pm, free

Knock on Wood is a high-energy acoustic folk-rock duo, featuring singer-songwriter Howie Newman on guitar, lead vocals and harmonica. Howie is joined by a local fiddler. The duo performs Classic Rock covers and funny original songs. It's a very lively show with great musicianship, nice vocal harmonies and a little humor here and there. Made possible by a Grant from the MASS Cultural Council.

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# Senate Passes Bill Supporting Parents Running for Public Office

Legislation would recognize child care costs as a valid campaign expense

The Massachusetts State Senate passed legislation that would support parents running for public office by recognizing childcare as a valid campaign expense.

“Public service is a personal choice made more complicated and daunting for working parents, especially women, who face the added costs of childcare,” said Senate President Karen E. Spilka (D-Ashland). “While we’ve made great strides in diversifying our electoral representation in Massachusetts, there is much more we can do to make the decision to run for office easier for people with kids. I want to thank

Senator Jehlen for championing this issue and look forward to it advancing in the legislative process.”

“This bill would break down a major barrier to open elective office to people who have traditionally not had that opportunity,” said Senator Patricia D. Jehlen (D-Somerville), Senate Chair of the Joint Committee on Labor and Workforce Development. “Many of us currently in office would not be here today if we didn’t have trusted people taking care of our kids while we knocked doors for our first campaigns. Allowing campaign finances to be used for child care means that more people in our communities can participate than ever before and amplify the voices of those who have previously not been heard.”

Under the bill, a political candidate would be able to expend campaign funds for childcare costs, using money raised in support of a political campaign. The bill tasks the Director of the Office of Campaign and Political Finance with the creation of regulation to oversee the implementation of this change.

The bill now heads to the Massachusetts House of Representatives for consideration.

## Real Estate Corner

### Recent Home Sales

Date	Natick	Amount
01/13/2023	14 Walden Drive #5	\$370,000
01/12/2023	12 Pearl Street	\$655,000
01/06/2023	4 Whitcomb Street	\$1.63 mil
12/30/2022	56 Morency Street #102	\$361,000
12/29/2022	20 Wentworth Road	\$590,000
12/29/2022	5 Alden Street	\$620,000
12/28/2022	5 Parker Court #3	\$970,000
12/27/2022	11 Huntington Street	\$1.11 mil
12/23/2022	43 Farm Hill Road	\$1.60 mil
12/23/2022	46 Silver Hill Lane #12	\$288,000
12/22/2022	66 Glen Street	\$765,000
12/22/2022	19 E. Evergreen Road	\$1.39 mil
12/21/2022	11 Lodge Road	\$560,000
12/21/2022	7 Nelson Street	\$675,000
12/21/2022	84 Rockland Street	\$624,900
12/20/2022	44 Range Road	\$825,000
12/19/2022	19 Pamela Road	\$725,000
12/19/2022	27 Village Rock Lane #13	\$289,000
12/19/2022	28 Rockland Street	\$1.78 mil
12/19/2022	12 Sylvia Avenue	\$656,000



43 Farm Hill Road in Natick recently sold for \$1.60 million. Image credit: www.zillow.com

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



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J	J	P	J	D	F	B	H	T	E	W	L	O	E	Z	L	B	B	X	O
I	D	P	V	O	Z	G	W	A	C	N	O	A	I	S	B	X	G	C	Y
T	H	T	N	S	Z	A	R	G	C	H	I	X	J	H	J	C	R	R	D
B	O	E	N	E	C	T	N	E	C	L	R	M	J	C	Y	E	O	S	K
M	N	T	A	G	X	S	V	S	E	V	R	G	E	E	R	X	M	S	E
F	E	A	S	R	P	L	M	T	R	R	Y	D	D	B	X	Z	A	J	O
M	T	T	O	J	T	O	K	R	F	E	O	I	P	P	D	N	N	W	P
X	A	S	G	G	J	N	R	E	Z	X	Z	S	Q	K	S	C	C	U	W
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