

SPENCER NEW LEADER

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Free by request to residents of

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Friday, October 3, 2025

East Brookfield officials face calls to address soaring water bills

BY KEVIN FLANDERS
STAFF WRITER

EAST BROOKFIELD — Crushed by high water prices, residents are calling on selectmen to do more to address an expanding crisis.

Several residents told the New Leader they're struggling with sharply rising water costs in recent years. A public meeting was held on Sept. 17 to update residents on the town's water system, which is currently in the process of undergoing a major infrastructure improvement project.

Decades of deferred maintenance on water infrastructure led to a MassDEP administrative consent order (ACO) taking effect in 2019. The ACO described multiple violations and mandated compliance actions.

Also in 2019, the East Brookfield Water Department reported excessive levels of manganese found in the town's drinking water during 2018-19.

The town has since completed several upgrades to its water system as part of the multi-phase infrastructure project, but town water users are feeling the financial pinch. Residents and business owners urge town officials and local legislators to team up to find solutions.

"The selectman is a thankless job, and unfortunately, they should not have taken on such a large, involved water project because they don't have the resources or time needed to be invested in this project to do it in a responsible way," said resident Roseanne Longo. "We have a three-person Select Board, only one of which is on town water, and he has an extensive familiarity with projects such as this. One of the other two selectmen has been completely silent at all meetings, not offering suggestions or opinions, making us wonder if he is doing any work at all for the town. The current Chairman has been condescending and not open to ways or people who want to volunteer to help the situation."

Added Longo, "We rebuilt the infrastructure of the town to a large degree, which, when originally done, is put upon the entire town. This redo has been only placed on the 600 residents on the water system."

Residents said they have been devastated by the high prices, with no relief in sight. Many homeowners are considering moving away.

"We moved to East Brookfield ten years ago when the water was insanely cheap," said resident Andrew Tonna. "Around the start of COVID, water bills went from about \$40 per year to \$175 per quarter — then \$225, then \$275, now \$300."

The prices have forced many residents to make major sacrifices, with others scrambling to find ways to limit their water usage.

"Because of these prices, I now do not have a garden, my lawn is brown, my cars are dirty, and I even do my fam-

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The new Unified basketball team recently enjoyed its first practice at David Prouty High School. Spencer-East Brookfield Regional School District leaders congratulate everyone involved.

Courtesy

Wolverine Grill launches at LHS



Leicester High School culinary arts students join school leaders and local officials in celebrating the launch of The Wolverine Grill.

Courtesy

BY KEVIN FLANDERS
STAFF WRITER

LEICESTER — The culinary arts program at Leicester High School is serving up plenty of exciting developments this fall, highlighted by the recent

launch of The Wolverine Grill.

On Sept. 19, LHS held a ribbon cutting ceremony to celebrate the occasion. The program was attended by local legislators, Select Board members, the full School

Committee, and several other officials.

The ceremony began with Leicester Public Schools Superintendent Brett Kustigian joining LHS
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CTE representatives shine at Leicester Harvest Fair

BY KEVIN FLANDERS
STAFF WRITER

LEICESTER — On a near cloudless day at the 25th annual Harvest Fair, school department programs were shining especially brightly thanks to student and staff representatives.

The Leicester Public Schools Career Technical Education (CTE) department enjoyed a strong showing at the Sept. 20 event. Participants were thrilled to promote the district's five CTE programs: health assisting; early education and care; culinary; electrical; and building and property maintenance.

"A huge thank you to the staff who volunteered their time and energy to represent

our programs and support our students. Your efforts showcased the talent, creativity, and hard work happening in our shops every day," read a statement released by William May, the district's Career Technical Vocational Program Director.

Special thanks is given to the following participants who volunteered their time at the fair: Melissa Ledbetter (health assisting); James Burgess (electrical); Jeffrey Romano (building and property maintenance); Avianna Bongovio (early education and care); and Stephen Dahlgren and Chef Andy Aucoin (culinary).

Nina Ryan, Joe Richardson, and Jaylynn
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Courtesy

Leicester students and school leaders represent Career Technical Education programs at the Harvest Fair.

Apple Country Fair returns to Brookfield Oct. 11

BY KEVIN FLANDERS
STAFF WRITER

BROOKFIELD — A beloved fall tradition returns this month, with crafters and guests set to attend the 46th annual Apple Country Fair.

The event is set for Saturday, Oct. 11, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on the Brookfield Town Common.

Featuring more than 90 local crafters, artists, and growers, the event will draw thousands of guests from across the area.

The fair will also include live music, lawn games, baked goods, food trucks, raffles, and an apple pie contest. Proceeds will benefit the Brookfield Community Club, a charitable organization that makes grants to enrich community life.

"Fairgoers can browse and buy hand-knit sweaters and blankets, carved wooden bowls and décor, beaded jewelry, specialty soaps and lotions, hand-crafted toys, locally-produced honey, and more," read an event promotional statement.

The raffles will offer chances to win several prizes, including a community-stitched quilt; family passes to local museums and attractions; and gift certificates to local restaurants and stores.

"Over the years, the prizes have varied considerably. One thing that has remained constant is the generosity of local businesses to this cause," the statement read.

Entries for the apple pie contest will be accepted at the Brookfield fire station until 9:45 a.m. on the day of the fair. Judging categories include the following groups: children under the age of 12, ages 13-19, and adults ages 20 and older.

The Brookfield Community Club has organized the fair since 1979. Money raised at the event has generated grants for several community service projects, including the purchases of supplies for the town's annual luminary display on Christmas Eve; the printing of the town's monthly newsletter; programs and speakers for the Council on Aging; equipment for the Brookfield Fire Department and EMS; improvements to Brookfield Recreation's Lewis Field; and programs at Merrick Public Library.

The fair is held rain or shine. Volunteers are always needed to help with an array of tasks.

To learn more about the event and how you can get involved, visit www.applecountryfair.com.

For additional questions about the fair, or to inquire about volunteer opportunities, please send an email to applecountryfair@gmail.com.

QCC Foundation board welcomes five new members

WORCESTER — The Quinsigamond Community College Foundation has gained five new members on its board of directors. Elected in August and September 2025, the new directors are dedicated to advancing the college's mission of providing accessible, high-quality education and supporting student success through scholarships, programs and community partnerships.

"This isn't just about adding new names to our board; it's about strengthening the heart of the Quinsigamond Community College Foundation. With the new directors, our capacity to change lives grows," said Foundation President Jorgo Gushi.

These new members bring a wealth of experience across multiple industries and a shared commitment to advancing educational opportunities and community development.

"Having dedicated, community-oriented leaders on our Foundation board is essential. Their deep understanding of the college, our students and the broader community provides invaluable insight, helping guide informed decisions that create meaningful and lasting impact for our students," said QCC President Luis Pedraja, Ph.D.

The new 2025 Foundation directors include:

Alyssa Benefit, a digital marketing executive with more than 18 years of experience, who currently serves as

director of CRM at The Aspen Group. Her leadership spans healthcare, financial services, retail and technology sectors, with a proven track record at organizations including Bond Veterinary, Zeta Global, Monster Worldwide, and Staples Inc. A Suffolk University graduate and 2023 Visionary of the Year recipient from the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society of New England, she brings strategic vision and philanthropic leadership to the Foundation.

Jessica Favreau, vice president and commercial lending officer at Dean Bank, manages a commercial loan portfolio exceeding \$120 million. President of the QCC Alumni Association (QCC class of '02), Favreau also holds degrees from Worcester State College and New England College of Business. She serves on the boards of Girls on the Run, the Wachusett Area Chamber of Commerce and CASA's Champions for Children Committee, along with completing Leadership Worcester (Class of '24).

Jennifer Hernandez, CEO and director of strategic marketing at GEM Marketing Solutions, has dedicated over 15 years to empowering entrepreneurs, small businesses and nonprofit organizations. A QCC alumna who earned an Associate of Arts in Human Services in 2014, Hernandez has been recognized with the Worcester Business Journal's Outstanding Women in Business Award and the Worcester Chamber of

Commerce's Small Business of the Year Award in 2023. She currently chairs the City of Worcester's Status of Women board and mentors through EforAll, a nationwide support network for aspiring entrepreneurs.

Jacob Rucker, private equity analyst at Rucker Investments, brings expertise in financial analysis, market research and strategic investment decisions. A Northeastern University D'Amore-McKim School of Business graduate with a finance concentration, Rucker has experience at Goldman Sachs, Bain Capital and SCS Financial. In 2024, he co-founded Auxilium, an innovation accelerator in Worcester dedicated to supporting early-stage startups through workspace, mentorship and funding.

Jetari Veal, assistant vice president of community and business development at Workers Federal Credit Union, leads strategic initiatives to grow membership and community engagement. With over a decade in financial services and educational credentials, including a bachelor's degree from Mississippi Valley State University and an MBA from Grand Canyon University, Veal serves on advisory boards for the Center for Women & Enterprise, Worcester Historical Museum and LUK Inc.

Continuing QCC Foundation Board members include James M. Griffin, vice president; Linda Cavaioli, treasurer; Kola Akindele, Linda Cammuso, Jack

Cutone, Diane Giampa, Timothy Hally, Dr. Jean King, Dr. Linda S. Larrivee, Jared Madison, Esq., Dr. Mary Meade-Montaque and Matthew Wally.

The QCC Foundation continues to advance transformative projects that directly support student achievement and community impact. The Foundation's current priorities can be found at QCC.edu/thrive.

"Our mission is simple but profound: to open doors for students who carry big dreams but also big burdens. Many of our students are first-generation, working parents, or immigrants trying to balance school, work, and family. Too often, they quietly wonder if they belong. And through this Foundation, our answer to them is yes," Gushi added.

Arthritis Foundation's Jingle Bell Run® brings Worcester together to raise funds and awareness for research

WORCESTER — Jingle Bell Run returns to bring holiday cheer to Worcester on Dec. 7, with the goal of raising \$95,000 this year. This family-friendly, holiday-themed 5K run at Bay State Brewing Company encourages participants to dress in festive costumes and get moving to raise awareness and funds to conquer America's #1 cause of disability.

Taking place in more than 60 cities nationwide, the Arthritis Foundation's Jingle Bell Run benefits the nearly 60 million adults and hundreds of thousands of children in the U.S. who are living with arthritis every day. From funding cutting-edge research for new treatments, and ultimately a cure, to advocating for health care access, the Arthritis Foundation helps people with arthritis score everyday victories, one step at a time.

"Jingle Bell Run has found it home in Worcester over the last five years and we're looking forward to bringing extra holiday cheer to town this year," said Erica D'Agostino, Senior Executive Director. "Our honorees and volunteers are the ones who make Jingle Bell Run successful and memorable every year, and this year we're humbled to honor Dr. Minjin Fromm who is a

true arthritis champion and her commitment to her patients."

Dr. Fromm has a passion for improving the quality of life of patients who suffer from painful arthritic conditions in the spine and joints through injection-based treatment. She finds joy in connecting with patients to help understand their problems and offers the best treatment options to reduce their pain and return to an active lifestyle.

In addition to Dr. Fromm, the following people and partners will be honored.

Dr. Esra Meidan, Jingle Bell Run Medical Honoree, Boston Children's Hospital

Sarine, Jingle Bell Run Teen Honoree

Charlotte, Jingle Bell Run Youth Honoree

Jingle Bell Run is nationally sponsored

by Novartis and Zoetis. Local sponsors include Intex Solutions and Country Bank.

To learn more and register for Jingle Bell Run in Worcester, visit www.jbr.org/centralma.

About the Arthritis Foundation

The Arthritis Foundation is fighting for all people who live with arthritis. The Foundation's mission is to turn the obstacles arthritis causes into opportunities. The Arthritis Foundation champions life-changing solutions and medical advancements, and it also provides ways for people to connect, break down barriers in health care and join the fight for a cure — uniting hearts, minds and resources to change the future of arthritis. To join the fight to conquer arthritis, visit arthritis.org.

Attention North Brookfield Water Users:
WATER MAIN FLUSHING
October 1 – 31, 2025

The North Brookfield Water Department will be flushing water mains throughout town beginning Wednesday, October 1st through Friday, October 31st 2025.

The purpose of the flushing is to remove sediment buildup in the mains. The flushing may result in temporary discoloration of the water, caused by small particles dislodged during the flushing. This discoloration might stain your laundry, especially white materials.

Flushing is performed between the hours of 7:30AM and 3:30PM. We post our daily flushing schedule on the North Brookfield Happenings Community Facebook Page. If you would like additional information, please call the Water Department at (508) 867-0207.

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The Town of East Brookfield is seeking a highly organized and detail-oriented professional to fill the part-time position of Selectmen's Administrative Assistant. This role provides comprehensive administrative support to the Board of Selectmen, assisting in the day-to-day operations of the office and ensuring the smooth flow of town governance.

Compensation: This is a part-time, non-benefited position. Pay is commensurate with experience.

To Apply: Please submit a resume and cover letter to ebbos300@eastbrookfieldma.us by October 15, 2025. For a full job description or questions, please contact Chairman Andrew Lynch at alynch@eastbrookfieldma.us. The Town of East Brookfield is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

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From plant biology to patient care — LPN's journey of resilience and dedication

CHARLTON — For Emmanuel Nyah of Leicester, the path to becoming a Licensed Practical Nurse was not a straight line, but a challenging, transcontinental journey fueled by an unwavering commitment to his family and an unbreakable spirit. Now, a new LPN at Vibra Hospital in Rochdale, Nyah's story is a powerful testament to perseverance against formidable odds.

"I had one goal in my mind, which was to set myself up to take good care of my family," Nyah shared. "I faced obstacles I never envisioned or envisaged, but I always believed in my mantra: 'Every sea that has people on the other side of the shore is crossable, and when we get to the bridge, we will cross it.'"

Nyah's journey into healthcare began at the foundational level, working as a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) at Jewish Healthcare in Worcester and later at Brookside Rehabilitation in Webster. There, he built a solid base in bedside care, assisting with vitals, supporting patients with their activities of daily living (ADLs), and serving as a crucial link to the nursing team.

This hands-on experience cemented his desire to advance his skills. He enrolled in the Bay Path Practical Nursing Academy initially, where he was elected as the Student Representative, and then the Practical Nursing program at Assabet Valley Technical High School, where his natural leadership abilities shone further. His peers elected him Class President for the 2024-2025 academic year, a role in which he demonstrated exceptional teamwork and communication skills. Nyah's professional qualifications are extensive; he is certified in Health Care Provider/Basic Life Support CPR, Dementia Care, and Mental Health First Aid.

His transition into nursing is even more remarkable given his extensive academic background in a different scientific field. Nyah holds a Bachelor of Science in Microbiology from the University of Calabar in Nigeria and a Master of Science in Plant Biology



Emmanuel Nyah

from Tel Aviv University in Israel. This unique perspective gives him a deep-rooted appreciation for the complexities of biological systems, both in plants and now, in people.

Nyah credits his success to his profound faith and a robust support system.

"My inspiration and motivation come from within," he said. "I'm poised to show people like me—who come from my situation or environment—that anything is possible with the right attitude and mindset."

He expressed deep gratitude for those who stood by him, including God, the Burlingame family,

and especially his fiancée, Len.

"They never judged, never questioned, and always supported me," he remarked.

His daughter, Imaobong, remains his greatest inspiration.

"If I didn't have her, I would have given up when the storms raged," Nyah said, also expressing appreciation for Dr. Gretheline Bolandrina of Bay Path Practical Nursing Academy.

"You're a big part of it, and I'm grateful for your mentorship," he said.

Upon completing his certificate in June 2025, Nyah tackled the NCLEX-PN exam, passing on his first attempt—a signif-

icant achievement that speaks to his diligence and competence. He has now begun his career as an LPN at Vibra Hospital, where he works with a complex patient population, including individuals with tracheostomies, ventilators, G-tubes, and traumatic brain injuries.

Emmanuel Nyah's story is not just one of career changes but of profound personal growth and determination. It is a hopeful reminder that with faith, a strong support network, and an unyielding will to succeed, any obstacle can be overcome.

Knights of Columbus hosting family dinner

LEICESTER — The Leicester Knights of Columbus will hold a family dinner this month.

The event is set for Wednesday, Oct. 8, at 6 p.m. Menu options include a choice of roast pork or baked fish.

The cost of dinner is \$15 per person, which includes a salad, entrée, dessert, and coffee.

If you are interested in attending, call Don at 508-615-8434 to make reservations. You may also send an email to: ohno7g7@yahoo.com.

Please make your reservations by Monday, Oct. 6. The location is 91 Manville St.

Fundraiser to benefit injured police officers

LEICESTER — Area residents are invited to support injured Leicester Police Officers Stephen Kustigian and Eddie Santiago at a fundraiser.

Set for Saturday, Oct. 4, the event will take place from 4-10 p.m. at the Cherry Valley American Legion (167 Main St.).

The admission cost is \$20 per person. The event will include raffles; an auction; and a buffet.

The Leicester Police Association thanks the community for its ongoing support of the officers as they continue their recovery from an off-duty vehicle accident this past summer.

WEEKLY POLICE BLOTTER

The Spencer Police Department reported the following arrests during the week of Sept. 17-22:

Kenneth J. Chiapulis, age 54, of Spencer was arrested on Sept. 17 for Disorderly Conduct (subsequent offense) and Disturbing the Peace (subsequent offense).

Nicole M. Bruce, age 42, of Spencer was arrested on Sept. 19 in connection with a warrant.

The Leicester Police Department reported the following arrests from Sept. 18-24:

A summons in lieu of arrest was issued on Sept. 19 for Operating a Motor Vehicle after suspension of license.

A summons in lieu of arrest was issued on Sept. 20 for Unlicensed Operation of a Motor Vehicle and driving at a rate of speed exceeding the posted limit.

A summons in lieu of arrest was issued on Sept. 20 for Operating a Motor Vehicle after suspension of license and a Marked Lanes Violation.

Isaac K. Tua, age 38, of Southbridge was arrested on Sept. 21 for Operating a Motor Vehicle after suspension of license for Operating Under the Influence.

A summons in lieu of arrest was issued on Sept. 24 for operating an Uninsured Motor Vehicle and Operating a Motor Vehicle after suspension of registration.

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Improve your garden soil with fall leaves and landscape trimmings

Fall is a great time to improve your soil for next year's garden. Many of the resources needed are readily available and many are free at this time of the year.

Start by putting fall leaves to work in the garden. Use your mower with the bag attached to shred and collect fall leaves. Work them into the top eight to 12 inches of soil. They break down over winter, adding organic matter and nutrients to the soil before you begin planting in the spring.

Fall leaves are also a great resource for those of you minimizing soil disruption with no till, also known as no dig, soil care. Spread several inches of the leaves over the soil surface. The leaf mulch protects the soil in new and vacant gardens from erosion and compaction over the winter. They keep the soil a bit cooler in the spring so you may need to adjust your planting times.

Cover bare soil in perennial gardens and mixed borders with fall leaves. They are a great mulch, suppressing weeds, conserving moisture and improving the soil as they decompose. A layer of leaves insulates the soil, helping insects and other wildlife that overwinter underground. Plus, they are free.

Incorporating two to four inches of compost or other organic matter into the top eight to 12 inches of soil is another option. Organic matter



Melinda Myers

Hugelkultur gardening, or mound gardens, takes the lasagna gardening method one step further with a bottom layer of logs, branches and fall leaves that decompose, adding organic matter and nutrients to the soil.

adds nutrients but also improves drainage and aeration in heavy soil and increases water- and nutrient-holding capacity in fast draining soils.

Adding compost also builds the soil ecosystem. It increases the number and activity of beneficial soil organisms such as good bacteria, fungi, microorganisms and insects. Healthy soil grows healthier plants more resistant to pests and environmental stresses.

Another no till method

uses a five-inch layer of compost on top of non-shiny cardboard, covering the soil surface. The cardboard helps suppress the weeds and the compost provides the growing medium for seeds and transplants. The compost is replenished yearly, and the cardboard eventually breaks down, adding organic matter to the soil.

Convert landscape and garden trimmings, fall leaves and compost into a rich planting medium with lasagna gardening. This system employs

composting methodology to build soil in free-standing or contained raised beds.



GARDEN MOMENTS
MELINDA MYERS

Start your lasagna garden by measuring and marking the layout of your garden bed. Cut any

grass and weeds in this area very short and cover with moist newspaper or cardboard. This smothers any existing grass and weeds.

Next, add a two- to three-inch layer of peat moss or compost. Top this with four to eight inches of plant debris such as leaves, plant-based kitchen scraps, herbicide-free grass clippings, straw or similar materials. Sprinkle a bit of low nitrogen fertilizer over this layer. Cover with an inch of compost. Repeat the layers, just like mak-

ing lasagna, until your garden is 18 to 24 inches high.

Hugelkultur, or mound gardens take this one step further. The bottom layer is made of logs, branches and fall leaves. Do not include black walnut tree trimmings that are toxic to many plants or those of cedar and black locust that are very slow to decompose. The rotting logs and branches absorb water, making it available to the plants in the garden. As the tree trimmings decompose, they add organic matter and nutrients to the soil. Then top this with a lasagna garden.

The lasagna and Hugelkultur beds gradually settle but the benefits remain. Continue to build additional lasagna layers every few years on top of established beds as needed.

Select a method that best fits your gardening style. Investing time in building healthy soil reaps years of benefits.

Melinda Myers has written more than 20 gardening books, including the Midwest Gardener's Handbook, 2nd Edition and Small Space Gardening. She hosts The Great Courses "How to Grow Anything" streaming courses and the nationally syndicated Melinda's Garden Moment radio program. Myers is a columnist and contributing editor for Birds & Blooms magazine and her Web site is www.MelindaMyers.com.

FAIR

continued from page A1

Maher are also thanked for organizing their students for activities at the event. Additionally, Assistant Superintendent Rich Lind led the Home Depot Kids Kit Giveaway.

Building and property maintenance representatives sold out of their student-made birdhouses. Meanwhile, culinary students served pumpkin bisque and roasted corn salsa with chips, which were big hits among fair guests.

Early education and care members provided plenty of fun with face painting, fake tattoos, and games for kids. Electrical representatives demonstrated their skills with a workshop, while health assisting members engaged the community with an informative poster display, pro-

gram photos, and a prize wheel.

Members of the music team also got involved in the fun. Leicester music teacher Alexis Phillips helped run a bake sale and chorus performance.

"Thank you again for your time, enthusiasm, and commitment to showcasing the strength of our CTE programs," May added. "Events like these help build community support and pride in what we do—and that wouldn't be possible without your dedication."

The event also featured dozens of local crafters, vendors, performers, and exhibitors. Members of area organizations and agencies attended the fair as well, including first responders, library leaders, and representatives of other town departments.

"The Harvest Fair Committee works long and hard all year to put on a fun-filled, educational event. Their dedication

and focus to detail is obvious throughout the fair," said Select Board Chairman Doug Belanger, who attended the event in support of multiple community betterment causes.

Officials thank festival organizers and volunteers for their hard work in making the event a success each year. Local students also enjoyed the opportunity to volunteer, help crafters unload, and greet guests.

Financial support for the festival is provided by grants offered from the Massachusetts Cultural Council; the Leicester Arts Council; the Leicester Savings Bank Fund; Country Bank; and Cornerstone Bank.

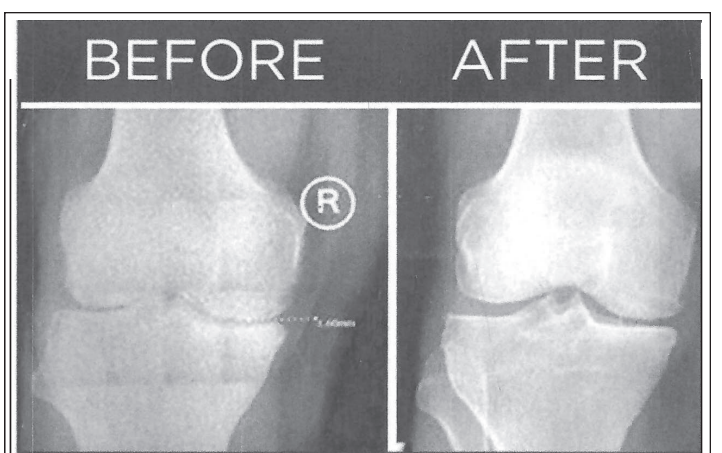
To learn more about the school district's Career Technical Education offerings, check out the Leicester Public Schools website.

Hydrant flushing begins this week

SPENCER — The Town of Spencer Water Department will be flushing fire hydrants throughout the eastern part of the distribution system starting Oct. 1 through Oct. 24.

Flushing removes sediment from the water mains to help maintain water quality. When the Water Department staff is in the immediate area, residents could experience loss of pressure and short periods of rusty water. We are sorry for any inconvenience this may cause. A daily list of the flushing locations will be posted on the Spencer town Web site, www.spencerma.gov, each day by 8 a.m. (click on Departments, then click Water Department, then click Hydrant Flushing 2025).

If you have any concerns, please feel free to contact the Spencer Water Department office at 508-885-7525.



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Public Hearing Notice

Town of Spencer – Hazard Mitigation Plan Presentation

The Town of Spencer in collaboration with the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission will hold a public hearing to review and discuss the Spencer Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP) on:

Date: Monday, October 6, 2025 **Time:** 6:00 PM

Location: McCourt Social Hall 157 Main Street Spencer, MA 01562

This meeting can also be accessed virtually being using the following link: <https://www.gotomeet.me/TownofSpencerMA/boardofselectmen>

This hearing will take place during the Board of Selectmen meeting. The purpose of the hearing is to: Provide a brief overview of the Hazard Mitigation Planning process; Discuss the updated Spencer Hazard Mitigation Plan; and Inform the public about the current public comment period for the Plan. Community members are encouraged to attend this hearing, learn about the plan, and provide feedback. For more information or to review the draft plan, please visit <https://www.spencerma.gov/home/news/hazard-mitigation-plan-public-comment>

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FRANK G. CHILINSKI
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BRENDAN BERUBE
 EDITOR

EDITORIAL

Small-town strength lies in public spaces

Walk through any of our towns, and you'll see a common thread: the green in the center, the library with its steady hum of visitors, the ballfields that glow under Friday night lights. These are not luxuries. They are the places that make a small town more than a collection of houses. They are our shared living rooms, playgrounds, and front porches.

Public spaces carry enormous weight in shaping the quality of local life. A thriving library means children have a safe, welcoming place after school, seniors have access to resources and connection, and families discover programs that otherwise would never fit into tight household budgets. A well-maintained town park gives kids room to run and parents a chance to gather. Even a small gazebo or pocket garden creates a point of pride that says: this is who we are.

Maintaining and improving these spaces isn't glamorous work. It doesn't make the headlines the way a tax debate does, and it doesn't usually come with ribbon-cuttings or big political wins. But it does require steady attention—mowing, fixing, investing, planning. It requires budgets that acknowledge that quality of life is not separate from public safety and schools, but part of the same equation.

In rural communities like ours, where neighbors already know one another and volunteerism is high, public spaces amplify that spirit. They give us a stage to meet, to play, to argue, and to celebrate. When we gather for concerts on the common, for Little League games, for story hours, or even for a town meeting in Memorial Hall, we remind ourselves that community is lived in the open, not behind closed doors.

As towns debate budgets in the coming months, we should keep these places in mind. They don't ask for much, but they return more than they cost. Strong schools teach our children, but strong public spaces teach us all how to live together. The benches, fields, shelves, and stages are what bind our small towns into communities that endure.

Investing in them is investing in ourselves.

Letter submission policy

Letters to the Editor must include the author's name, address, and a daytime phone number for purposes of verification in order to be considered for publication. Only the author's name and the town in which they reside will be published. Letters submitted without all of the required information will not be accepted.

It is the sole prerogative of the Editor to determine whether a submission satisfies our requirements and decency standards, and any submission may be rejected at any time for any reason he or she might deem appropriate.

VIEWPOINT

OPINION AND COMMENTARY FROM SPENCER, LEICESTER AND THE BROOKFIELDS

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Welcome to Hungary

To the Editor:

Many of us may recall Victor Orban, resident of Hungary, visiting Mar-a-Lago. Trump referenced that he had the perfect presidency, where everything worked in perfect unison. The legislature, courts and press, supported his every move, as it should be. Clearly, he uses this dictatorship as the model he wants to bring to us. There is never any dissent in the press. There is no significant opposition party, and, like our supreme court, Orban is both exempt from their laws and defines them to thwart any challenges. Does this sound familiar?

We are being conditioned to accept troops patrolling our streets. Do not be surprised when the administration announces that our elections can only be secure if troops pick up the ballots. Joseph Stalin said it best — "It is not important who votes or how they vote, only who counts the votes."

Right now, our nation, largely founded and conceived on freedom of religion and speech, is in mortal danger. This President, who was not even sworn in on a bible, because he would not allow the Chinese one he sells, has not in any way shape or form, adhered to that oath. The ethics of what he has done with presidential power, is like the worst movie you could conceive. While prior presidents endeavored to observe emoluments and refrain from using the presidency to profit, this one was already receiving the graft of unused rentals in his DC hotel, but has taken it to a new level, using Marine #1 to attend a dinner for his largest crypto investors, many of them foreign, and speaking from a presidential

podium. He brought his sons along on Airforce #1, to visit Arabia. Where he attended functions and got a "free" plane, while his sons negotiated hotels and golf courses. The billion dollars it will take to outfit that plane, for his use, was taken from our military nuclear upgrade budget.

His ICE storm troops, have successfully depleted the farm workers, and his tariffs destroyed enough markets and made farm equipment and supplies so costly, that likely 75 percent of small farmers will go bankrupt and their lands sold off to deep pockets, foreign and domestic. His speech at the UN should be embarrassing for all of us, including the standard lies. Ukraine is still at war; he settled no wars, but did bomb Iran and now , boats in international waters. What kind of dementia makes you think that warrants a peace prize?

How many of us have witnessed DJT speaking for free speech, while suppressing it, claiming to be for peace but doing exactly nothing to promote it, leveraging colleges and law firms to promote his white Christian nationalism, while not remotely acting Christian.

Erika Kirk has demonstrated true Christianity in forgiving her husband's killer. As she takes up Charlie's mission, I hope it includes continuing to press for Epstein transparency. His perversion is widely known fact and he has not won any case actually tried. Stand up for your country, or lose it.

KEN KIMBALL
 BROOKFIELD

Pray for healing

To the Editor:

For a young man, husband and father of two young children to be assassinated because of his beliefs and his speaking out is wrong. But for others to celebrate and be jubilant about his killing is just evil. The Left is showing itself for what it is.

Not everyone on the Left is celebrating, but those who are in power on the Left encourage and fuel this kind of violence. Whose side are you on?

Hatred is wrong. When we hate, in addition to the harm we do to others, we also poison ourselves, our souls, our very being.

Our country is so broken. There is much division, hatred, violence and ill will. Where will it end? God is the only one who is able to heal and bring peace. He alone is able to make things right. Unless we turn to God, things will continue to deteriorate. Whatever your political leanings, if you have a relationship with the Creator, please pray to him and ask for healing for our country.

"Prayer is not an old woman's idle amusement. Properly understood and applied, it is the most potent instrument of action." — Mohandas K. Ghandi.

NANCY J. NOWAK
 SPENCER

Cross eyed

To the Editor:

In your Sept. 12 edition, the letter titled "Eyes are the Window of the Soul" struck a nerve. The contributor obviously must have unkind eyes and be, as she herself described "Full of Darkness." Apparently, by looking in the President's eyes on television, she concludes the following: you will see darkness, hate and anger! She then goes on to determine he has no heart or soul, and is selfish and cold, a man who only cares about himself. Amazing!

I may be wrong, but I believe the President stated he and private donors are paying for the added ballroom, not the taxpayers. A nice, thoughtful lega-

cy to leave!

I find the letter from this contributor and the other regular contributors to be the ones with "Dark Eyes." Never anything positive, or suggestions to improve America and work together to improve our country. She and the other regular contributors continuously demonstrate the hate, anger and darkness towards our President that they claim to disapprove of.

I suggest looking in the mirror to see who it really is with the "Dark Eyes."

Respectfully,

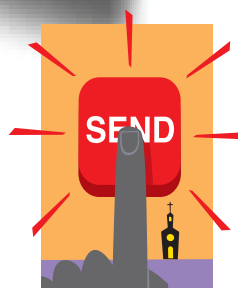
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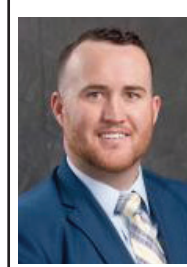
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Financial steps to prepare for Alzheimer's and dementia



FINANCIAL FOCUS

TREVOR NIELSEN

More than seven million Americans have Alzheimer's disease, according to a 2025 report from the Alzheimer's Association. The emotional toll of watching a loved one struggle with the memory loss, depression, anxiety, and cognitive decline is already overwhelming — but the financial burden can be significant too. Hopefully, this disease will never touch your family, but it's important to be financially prepared just in case. By planning to cover long-term care costs and creating a financial strategy for caregivers, you can help protect your family's financial well-being.

Expenses related to Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia can be extensive. Families often face ongoing medical treatment costs, medical equipment purchases, home safety modifications, prescription drugs and personal care supplies. Long-term care represents one of the largest health care costs not covered entirely by traditional Medicare, making advanced planning crucial.

Here are a few essential planning steps to consider:

Plan for care costs and identify insurance coverage. Start by understanding your family's health insurance options, including Medicare, supplemental policies, and veteran's benefits if applicable. Determine coverage for adult day care services, in-home care services, full-time residential care, and other long-term care options. Confirm whether you or your loved ones have long-term care policies or other insurance with long-term care riders.

In some states, Medicare offers Special Needs Plans (SNPs) for people living with dementia, including Alzheimer's. These plans specialize in care and coverage for beneficiaries with dementia, and only those diagnosed can enroll.

Identify assets and debts. Create a comprehensive picture of your family's financial position, including bank accounts, investments, property, and debts such as credit cards, mortgages, or lines of credit. You'll need this if you take over financial management for a loved one.

Ensure legal documents are in place. Work with an attorney to establish crucial documents like a durable power of attorney for finances and health care decisions. These documents should be created before someone is diagnosed or when they're just starting to show early signs of Alzheimer's, so they can understand what they're signing. Waiting until cognitive ability declines make the process more challenging and may require court procedures for conservatorship.

Consider a living trust. A living trust can hold financial assets and property while a successor trustee, like a trusted family member, manages money and makes investment decisions. While complex, these trusts can provide valuable protection for families dealing with a parent or older relative experiencing dementia.

Look for tax benefits. Caregivers who pay care costs out of pocket may qualify for tax credits and deductions. These benefits vary by state, so consult with a tax advisor about your eligibility.

Consider protective measures for early stages. If a loved one is showing signs of Alzheimer's or other dementia, you may want to set up auto-pay for bills, open joint checking accounts, freeze credit reports at major bureaus, consolidate or cancel credit cards, and monitor financial activities closely. This can help keep financial responsibilities flowing smoothly and prevent exploitation by scam artists.

A qualified financial advisor can help evaluate your family's overall situation and recommend appropriate strategies to prepare for potential dementia-related costs. They can work with your legal and tax professionals to help you put comprehensive protection in place.

While an Alzheimer's or dementia diagnosis will change everyone's life in your family, taking proactive financial steps can help ease the burden and provide greater confidence for the journey ahead. For more information, visit www.alz.org.

This article was written by Edward Jones for use by your local Edward Jones Financial Advisor. Please contact Trevor Nielsen, your local Edward Jones Advisor in Sturbridge at 508-347-1420 or trevor.nielsen@edwardjones.com.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Confusing Hippocratic with hypocritical

To the Editor:

Trump promised that his second term would be one of retribution. (Disintegration is perhaps a more accurate descriptor.) Of course, he is a man of many promises, but unfortunately, this appears to be one promise that he is intent to keep. Unlike his other promises, he apparently has a clearly planned strategy for achieving that goal.

1) Discredit any news unfavorable to him as fake news. Even better, eliminate the sources through firings, litigation, and threats of loss of license. Free speech is free if it favors our President/King.

2) Rewrite history (past and present), and redefine key words, including some in our Constitution.

3) Demonstrate how powerful our nation is becoming under his leadership – military parades, threats to our neighbors and allies abroad, and refusal to cooperate with the rest of the world in addressing the real threat of global warming.

4) Threaten prosecutors and judges who dare to try to hold him responsible for his many illegal and immoral acts.

5) Divide and conquer, using division and racist rhetoric to divide our nation, and to begin an apparent revival of the Civil War.

6) Develop a well-armed (but untrained, in terms of knowledge of the law) private army with loyalty to Trump rather than country. The deplorable and illegal actions of some members of ICE show complete disdain for the rule of law and the Constitutionally guaranteed rights of people, regardless of citizenship.

7) Purge our government of the “deep state.”

After that perhaps too lengthy introduction, I would like to focus on a few definitions (part of strategy #2), because there are clear divisions among us in how we define some words that we are hearing on an almost daily basis.

Deep state. I will start here, since I suspect that many of us, regardless of political persuasion, are beginning to get a glimpse of a deep state in this country. There is no doubt that there are some people who have political power to adversely impact the running of our government. These people are not the highly trained and dedicated individuals who chose their careers, not to get rich, but to genuinely serve their

country and world using their training and skills. Trump’s purges of government employees with skills and experiences that we so vitally need has enabled him to find replacements whose sole “redeeming” quality appears to be sycophantic loyalty to Trump rather than country. Recent recruits of his “private army” do not hesitate to apprehend people based on the color of their skin or the accent of their speech. These “law enforcement agents” appear to have little respect for the law, as they illegally round up hundreds of immigrant children to fly them to another country.

Woke. There have been attempts to ban books considered too woke or that promoted D.E.I., as we witnessed at the library of the U. S. Naval Academy. Apparently woke is not a flattering term for many in the MAGA crowd. This is a bit perplexing to me, since I interpret woke as being awake or sensitive to the suffering of others. This is a weakness? Is the willingness to treat others cruelly a sign of strength? I suppose it is in the eyes of a bully trying to hide his own weaknesses. Donald Trump tries to convey a false strength by claiming to be above the law and taking a harsh and judgmental stance against the most vulnerable in our society. He continues down a path that endangers our environment, our judicial system, our democracy, and the system of checks and balances carefully delineated in our Constitution that has helped our country progress on its long journey toward Abraham Lincoln’s “government of the people, by the people, and for the people”. Seeing heavily armed members of our armed forces “control” our city streets does not make me feel safer. It makes me fearful of the potential misuse of our military to support an autocrat like Trump, especially during the 2026 election.

DEI (Diversity, Equality, Inclusion). These are characteristics that can truly make a country great. A fascist dictatorship that ignores the needs or rights of the poor certainly is the antithesis of DEI. Adolph Hitler used a strategy of embracing racist attitudes and fostering division rather than inclusion. Trump studied Hitler’s speeches and has been using the same playbook. His choices to fill key positions in our government are clearly loyalists. Are some in his masked “private army” sycophants recently par-

done by Trump even if found guilty of violent acts during their attack on the Capitol?

MAGA (Make America Great Again). Perhaps that “G” should stand for gullible. Trump apparently believes his audience of supporters are gullible. By simply repeating the same lies over and over, he thinks that most will eventually believe them. Do you really believe those tariffs are going to lower your cost of living? Our image as a beacon for democracy has been severely soiled. Perhaps the Statue of Liberty should now be holding an M16 to warn immigrants from stepping on our shores. But what makes a country great? Is it the size of its GDP (gross domestic product)? In some ways our gross domestic product is truly gross, especially when we consider the mountains of unrecycled waste and the environmental damage that comes with that gross product. Again, Trump’s idea of greatness is anything but great. Does a great country exploit the poor and the environment to make a few extremely wealthy oligarchs even wealthier? These oligarchs, although materially rich, could benefit from another type of wealth that does not have a dollar sign attached. Gross National Happiness is a unique development philosophy (enshrined in the Constitution of Bhutan) that emphasizes the happiness and well-being of the population as more important than economic growth alone. On that scale, the U.S. does not rank so well. But perhaps that is just too woke!

In the field of medicine, you will hear the term “Hippocratic,” in reference to Hippocrates, a great man of learning from ancient times and a strong proponent of nourishing food as the best medicine. The Hippocratic Oath refers to his primary tenant of medicine, to do no harm. I mention this because I fear that many Republican officials appear to have confused the term Hippocratic with hypocritical.

While I am addressing definitions, I will clarify a term that I have used frequently in recent years. Sycophant – a person who acts obsequiously toward someone important in order to gain advantage. We still have dictionaries. I’ll let you decide if obsequious is an accurate descriptor for recent behavior we’ve witnessed during the reign of Trump.

David W. Brown
North Brookfield

Psychic driving!

In the late 1950s, patients walked into Montreal’s Allan Memorial Institute expecting treatment for anxiety, depression, or everyday struggles of the mind. What many of them encountered instead was the work of Dr. Ewen Cameron, a psychiatrist with an out-sized reputation and a dangerous obsession with “reprogramming” the human brain. Cameron believed he could break down a person’s mind and rebuild it from scratch. His methods were as crude as they were cruel.

POSITIVELY
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TOBY
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He called it “Psychic Driving.” Patients were put under heavy sedation, often for weeks at a time, and then forced to listen to negative phrases looped again and again through speakers or headphones. Sometimes the messages ran for 16 hours a day.

The results were devastating. Patients developed crippling fear, confusion, and dependency. Families reported that their loved ones came home like strangers—haunted not by their original illnesses, but by the relentless flood of negative suggestions that had hollowed them out.

One former patient described her experience years later. She recalled being placed in a hospital room, sedated, and wired to a tape recorder that played commands, accusations, or statements of worthlessness, repeated until they carved themselves into her mind like grooves in a record. “You are weak. You will never get better. You’re worthless!” Hour after hour, day after day, the messages ran until they became the background noise of her mind.

While most of us were never subjected to cruel experiments, many of us know what it’s like to live with words that cut deep. Some of those words didn’t come from strangers in a lab coat, but from the people closest to us.

The child who was told “you’ll never amount to anything” grows into an adult who whispers the same phrase to themselves before every job interview.

The athlete who was told, “you always choke under pressure,” starts to believe it, replaying the line before every big game until it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

The student who constantly hears “you’re not smart enough” can carry

that soundtrack into adulthood, replaying it in moments of stress until it feels like the truth.

I recall a history teacher in high school who would stand in front of the class and call us “a bunch of losers.” He didn’t just say it once—he said it often, as if repeating it might make it accurate. Thankfully, I’d been raised to believe otherwise.

For years, psychologists have documented what happens when people are repeatedly exposed to harsh or abusive words. Over time, those external voices get internalized, turning into the person’s own inner critic.

Researchers at UCLA found that repeated negative self-talk actually reshapes the brain. The brain begins to treat your own words like weapons. A single negative phrase repeated often

But here’s the good news—those stories aren’t permanent. Psychic driving can work both ways. As hard as it feels at the moment, you can interrupt them.

The next time you catch yourself repeating the same old phrases, flip the script. Tell yourself: “I’m a winner. I’m strong. I’m healthy. I am loved. I’m rising higher. I have what it takes.”

You won’t believe it at first; it will feel fake, as if you’re lying to yourself. But keep saying it—because the more you speak life over yourself, the more your mind and spirit will begin to believe it. You’ll feel empowered; you’ll see opportunities where you once only saw dead ends.

Repetition works both ways. If negative words can burrow deep and take root, then positive ones can heal, strengthen, and grow.

While we can’t all be star athletes or famous actors, every one of us carries strengths that no one else can duplicate. It may be your creativity, kindness, or ability to solve problems in ways others can’t.

When you begin to recognize and honor those gifts, you stop measuring yourself against someone else’s spotlight and start shining on your own. That’s when success becomes inevitable—not because you copied anyone else’s path, but because you walked on your own with confidence. I believe in you. Now it’s your turn to think the same.

Toby Moore is a columnist, the star of Emmy - Nominated A Separate Peace, and the CEO of Cubestream Inc.

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Community gets first look at DPHS renovations

BY KEVIN FLANDERS
STAFF WRITER

SPENCER — Community members got their first look at the new David Prouty High School during last week's open house.

Following a busy summer of construction as part of the ongoing DPHS addition-renovation project, the new academic facility and gymnasium were ready in time for the first day of school.

The building includes state-of-the-art classrooms, science labs, offices, dining areas, and study spaces, in addition to the new gymnasium and locker rooms.

On Sept. 23, a large attendance of families, local officials, and residents toured the school with district leaders.

"People were lined up before 5 p.m. and were waiting patiently to see the school. It was a steady stream of people from 5 p.m. all the way until 7 p.m.," said Spencer-East Brookfield Regional School District Superintendent Paul Haughey.

Nick Pimentel, a construction representative



Kevin Flanders

Much to the delight of DPHS alumni members, the logo from the old school was relocated to the new gym lobby.

for Colliers Engineering and Design (the project's OPM), told the New Leader about several unique aspects of the new facility that celebrate Prouty's past while preparing the next generation of Panthers.

One of the most impressive elements can be found in the gymnasium lobby, which features a Panther logo salvaged from the old gym court and inlaid

into the new flooring. Additionally, an orange-black color scheme throughout the gym and locker rooms augments the home-court feel.

"The first few weeks of school have been smooth, and we're enjoying the building. There's obvious pride among the students, faculty, and staff as they settle into the beautiful new facility," said DPHS Principal Mary

LaFreniere.

The new DPHS also features ample space for science labs and classrooms. Additionally, specialized spaces accommodate Prouty's four DESE-approved programs in Career Technical Education (CTE). These include early education and care; criminal justice; business and marketing; and environmental science and technology.

The criminal justice classroom is arranged to resemble a courtroom, including a mock judge's bench and jury box. Moreover, students are learning life skills in a classroom featuring a washer, dryer, and several kitchen appliances.

With the next phase of construction already underway on campus, students and staff are eager to see the completed project next year.

"It's a fantastic space, and we are especially excited to watch the final phases really gaining momentum as we think about next year and how incredible it will be to move into the final product next school year," LaFreniere added. "David Prouty has an epic sense of tradition and pride, and being part of this generation of students moving into the new Prouty and beginning to make their mark is an honor and a privilege."

Outside, the school's track and football field have seen a major renovation. DPHS athletes are looking forward to hosting the first games in the new facility's history.

Over the summer, construction crews also finished abatement and demolition work on the school's old academic wing. This will allow for further work on the site to take place.

Additionally, the parking lots and access lanes were fully paved in time for school.

During the open house, guests were thrilled to see the modern academic and athletic spaces that are preparing the next generation for success.

"The communities seemed pleased with the facility and all of its features, from the science lab, to the criminal justice classrooms, to the

size of the gymnasium," Haughey added. "The inlay of the old gym floor center court logo is a feature that most people were also impressed with when entering the facility through the gymnasium."

School officials also appreciated the opportunity to reconnect with several Prouty alumni members. For administrators like LaFreniere, who is in her first year at the helm of DPHS, the event provided a great chance to learn more about the school's proud history.

"I met so many people who were alumni, so many even wearing their vintage Prouty swag," LaFreniere said. "There were so many touching anecdotes about the various incarnations of David Prouty High School — back to the original school building, as well as the one they just razed — that were fitting for an event where the newest embodiment is in its last stages."

For Prouty alumni members, touring the building was an exciting way to keep history alive while looking forward to a promising new chapter.

"My wife and I were excited to tour the new David Prouty High School, and we were both very impressed with the work so far," said State Sen. Peter Durant, a Spencer resident and Prouty alum. "The impressive science classrooms, the beautiful gymnasium, and the creative and thoughtful use of space throughout the building will enhance the learning environment for students from Spencer-East Brookfield. I look forward to seeing the project completed."

Looking ahead to next summer, the final jobs will take place at the high school to allow the pre-K facility to open inside the building in 2026. Features will include a dedicated nurse's office, bright classroom spaces, and a dining service area — each with specialized designs and colors meant for younger learners.

SEBRSD officials thank project leaders with Jones Whitsett Architects, Inc. (architect for the project); Fontaine Bros., Inc. (general contractor); Colliers Engineering and Design; and the rest of the construction team for helping to keep the community informed throughout the process.

Students, families, and staff members are also thanked for their cooperation during the construction phases.

For further information about the project, visit www.sebrsd.org.

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Leicester Senior Center presents mystery dinner



Courtesy

A cast of local residents has worked hard to prepare for upcoming productions at the Leicester Senior Center.

BY KEVIN FLANDERS
STAFF WRITER

LEICESTER — Area residents are invited to enjoy a special two-day program this month, when the Senior Center presents “Mystery Dinner Theatre: Murder at the Malt Shop.”

The first show, which sold out in less than a week, is set for Oct. 18 at 5 p.m. Doors open at 4:15 p.m.

A matinee will take place on Sunday, Oct. 19, at noon. Doors open at 11:15 a.m.

“The Saturday evening production is a dinner event, and our Sunday matinee is a luncheon event,” said Senior Center Director Rachelle Cyr.

Several rehearsals have been held prior to the shows, and senior cast members can’t wait for the big weekend.

The cast includes Jan Parke as Hedda Fuller Eyre; Harry Kustigian as Sheriff

Colin Allcars; Greg Shambo as Jerry Atrick; Gail Kustigian as Norma Dreadful; Jane Todd as Doe Ramey; Marilyn Hyland as Ginger Vitus; David Parke as Doc Dusenburg and Squinty Peepers; Victor Kruczynski as Jim Shorts; Dianna Provencher as Dee Lighted; Bobbie Bisson as Bobbie Pinz; Evelyn Brezniak as Shirley Knott; Diane Bergin as Wynn Fairly; Sharon Nist as Holly Wood; Kurt Parliament as Russell Sprout; and Tom Kampe as Noah Count.

The show is directed by Meaghan Casey, who works for the town in several departments, including part-time work at the Senior Center where she produces its newsletter.

David Wood, the Senior Center’s Director of Programs, serves as the show’s executive producer. Cyr is serv-

ing as the associate producer.

“There has been much labor involved in staging by David Wood and his family, as well as by Meaghan Casey and her family,” Cyr added. “Our older adults who are in this production have also busied themselves shopping for the proper outfit.”

Senior Center officials described several positive impacts the show is having on the community. They hope to see many future shows entertain local guests.

“This production, the first at our Senior Center, goes far beyond offering weekend entertainment to our older adults,” Cyr said. “It is well known that

weekends, especially, can be a time of loneliness and isolation. By offering options to look forward to, it is our hope to lessen the impact as they look forward to something fun they can afford.”

In addition to providing senior cast members with a fun experience, the production has also been beneficial in several other ways.

“It helps our older adults to get out of their comfort zone to enjoy acting, elocution, memory, and speaking in front of an audience, as they get involved with each other to socialize, share, laugh, practice, and hopefully reduce stage fright,” Cyr added.

To learn more about the upcoming productions, contact the Senior Center or visit the town Web site.

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Leicester Democratic Town Committee delegates attend Mass State Democratic Convention



Courtesy

Leicester Democratic Town Committee Chair Elizabeth Zito; Rep. Ayanna Presley; LDTC Secretary Jean Dalbec, LDTC member John Higgins.

LEICESTER — The Massachusetts State Democratic Convention held on Sept. 13 in Springfield, focused on approving the Massachusetts Democratic platform for the next four years. Members of the LDTC who attended as delegates were: Chairperson Elizabeth Zito, Secretary Jean Dalbec, and committee member John Higgins.

Prior to voting to accept the 2025 Platform, delegates heard from MassDems Chair Steve Kerrigan; Sen. Ed Markey, Gov. Maura Healey and Lt. Gov. Kim Driscoll; Congressman Richie Neal; Secretary of State William Galvin; State Attorney Andrea Campbel State Auditor

Diana DiZoglio; State Treasurer Deb Goldberg; and a video presentation from Senator Elizabeth Warren. In addition to approving the 2025 Platform, attendees also had opportunities to learn about organizing, mobilizing and getting communities ready for next year’s mid-term elections by engaging voters.

The 2025 Platform is built around investing in and improving the quality of life for all of Massachusetts. Among the key areas of focus are: children and families; economic growth; climate and environment; racial justice, equal rights and opportunities; ethics and transparency; healthcare and human services; housing, immigration, labor and workforce; pub-

lic safety and criminal legal reform; reproductive health; transportation and infrastructure; veterans; voting and democracy; and empowering young residents.

As stated in the Platform Committee’s 2025 Massachusetts Democratic Party Platform this ambitious effort is “Consistent with the history of the Massachusetts Democratic Party, this Party Platform represents our continuing commitment to progress, to not being satisfied with the status quo, and to leaning forward. We are aiming high to take on the big challenges we face, make a meaningful difference in people’s lives and stand up for every single person.”

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see store for details

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LEGALS

Albert Siforo, owner of a 2015, Toyota Corolla Plate# 8BY227 Vin# 2T1BURHEXFC394638, has abandoned vehicle on 04/25/25 at Deer Pond Auto/ JR'S Towing LLC. Deer pond will seek ownership of vehicle after 21 days of first ad placement if vehicle is not reclaimed and all charges fully paid for.

September 19, 2025
September 26, 2025
October 3, 2025

**NOTICE TO BIDDERS
REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
FOR THE SALE OR REUSE
OF THE FORMER CHERRY STREET
FIRE STATION
11 CHERRY STREET, SPENCER
MA, 01562**

The Town of Spencer will be taking proposals for the sale or lease of the Former Cherry Street Fire Station located at 11 Cherry Street in Spencer until November 12, 2025. Interested parties must access the full Request for Proposal by visiting the Town's website at www.SpencerMA.gov/bids. Questions can be sent to Jeff Bridges, Town Administrator at JBridges@Spencerma.gov.
September 26, 2025
October 3, 2025

**NOTICE TO PLANNING SERVICES
PROVIDERS
REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS FOR
ZONING BYLAW
AND SUBDIVISION REGULATIONS
REVIEW AND UPDATE**

The Town of Spencer is seeking proposals for the review and update to the Town's Zoning Bylaws and Subdivision Regulations. Interested parties must access the full Request for Proposal by visiting the Town's website at www.SpencerMA.gov/bids. Questions can be sent to Vivian Poplowski, Town Planner at VPoplowski@SpencerMA.gov
October 3, 2025

**Commonwealth of Massachusetts
The Trial Court
Probate and Family Court
Worcester Probate
and Family Court
225 Main Street
Worcester, MA 01608
(508) 831-2200
Docket No. WO25P3202EA
CITATION ON PETITION FOR
FORMAL ADJUDICATION
Estate Of:
Linda M Bell
Also known as: Linda Bell,
Linda S Bell
Date of Death: 04/25/2024**

To all interested persons:
A Petition for **Formal Probate of Will with Appointment of Personal Representative** has been filed by **Donald E Carlson of Williamstown MA** requesting that the Court enter a formal Decree and Order and for such other relief as requested in the Petition. The Petitioner requests that:

Donald E Carlson of Williamstown MA be appointed as Personal Representative(s) of said estate to serve **Without Surety** on the bond in **unsupervised administration**

IMPORTANT NOTICE
You have the right to obtain a copy of the Petition from the Petitioner or at the Court. You have a right to object to this proceeding. To do so, you or your attorney must file a written appearance and objection at this Court before: **10:00 a.m. on the return day of 10/14/2025.**

This is NOT a hearing date, but a deadline by which you must file a written appearance and objection if you object to this proceeding. If you fail to file a timely written appearance and objection followed by an affidavit of objections within thirty (30) days of the return day, action may be taken without further notice to you.

**UNSUPERVISED ADMINISTRATION
UNDER THE MASSACHUSETTS
UNIFORM PROBATE CODE (MUPC)**
A Personal Representative appointed under the MUPC in an unsupervised administration is not required to file an inventory or annual accounts with the Court. Persons interested in the estate are entitled to notice regarding the administration directly from the Personal Representative and may petition the Court in any matter relating to the estate, including the distribution of assets and expenses of administration.

WITNESS, Hon. Leilah A. Keamy, First Justice of this Court.
Date: September 16, 2025
Stephanie Fattman,
Register of Probate
October 3, 2025

Commonwealth of Massachusetts The Trial Court Probate and Family Court Docket No. WO24P1931EA Worcester Probate and Family Court 225 Main Street, Worcester, MA 01608 (508) 831-2200 CITATION ON PETITION FOR ORDER OF COMPLETE SETTLEMENT Estate of: Jerry Lee Brown, Jerry Brown, Jerry L. Brown, Date of Death: 02/27/2023. A Petition for Order of Complete Settlement has been filed by Karen Brown of Climax Hamlet, NY requesting that the Court enter a formal Decree of Complete Settlement including the allowance of the final account, the allowance of proposed distribution, 1st and other such other relief as requested in the Petition. **IMPORTANT NOTICE** You have the right to obtain a copy of the Petition from the Petitioner or at the Court. You have a right to object to this proceeding. To do so, you or your attorney must file a written appearance and objection at this Court before: 10:00 a.m. on the return day of 10/21/2025. This is NOT a hearing date, but a deadline by which you must file a written appearance and objection if you object to this proceeding. If you fail to file a timely written appearance and objection followed by an affidavit of objections within thirty (30) days of the return day, action may be taken without further notice to you. **WITNESS, Hon. Leilah A Keamy, First Justice of this Court.**
Date: September 24, 2025, Stephanie K. Fattman, Register of Probate
October 3, 2025

**Commonwealth of Massachusetts
The Trial Court
Probate and Family Court
Worcester Probate
and Family Court
225 Main Street
Worcester, MA 01608
(508) 831-2200
Docket No. WO25P2512EA
CITATION ON PETITION FOR
FORMAL ADJUDICATION
Estate Of:
Marilyn A Valentino
Date of Death: 06/26/2025**

To all interested persons:
A Petition for **S/A- Formal Probate of Will with Appointment of Personal Representative** has been filed by **Deborah King of Jefferson MA** requesting that the Court enter a formal Decree and Order and for such other relief as requested in the Petition. The Petitioner requests that:

Deborah King of Jefferson MA be appointed as Personal Representative(s) of said estate to serve **Without Surety** on the bond in **unsupervised administration**

IMPORTANT NOTICE
You have the right to obtain a copy of the Petition from the Petitioner or at the Court. You have a right to object to this proceeding. To do so, you or your attorney must file a written appearance and objection at this Court before: **10:00 a.m. on the return day of 10/21/2025.**

This is NOT a hearing date, but a deadline by which you must file a written appearance and objection if you object to

this proceeding. If you fail to file a timely written appearance and objection followed by an affidavit of objections within thirty (30) days of the return day, action may be taken without further notice to you.

**UNSUPERVISED ADMINISTRATION
UNDER THE MASSACHUSETTS
UNIFORM PROBATE CODE (MUPC)**
A Personal Representative appointed under the MUPC in an unsupervised administration is not required to file an inventory or annual accounts with the Court. Persons interested in the estate are entitled to notice regarding the administration directly from the Personal Representative and may petition the Court in any matter relating to the estate, including the distribution of assets and expenses of administration.

WITNESS, Hon. Leilah A. Keamy, First Justice of this Court.
Date: September 23, 2025
Stephanie Fattman,
Register of Probate
October 3, 2025

**NOTICE OF TIER CLASSIFICATION
SPENCER SHELL MART FACILITY
94 MAIN STREET
SPENCER
MASSACHUSETTS 01562
RTN 2-51064**

A release of oil and/or hazardous materials has occurred at this location, which is a disposal site as defined by M.G.L. c. 21E, § 2 and the Massachusetts Contingency Plan, 310 CMR 40.0000. To evaluate the release, a Phase I Initial Site Investigation was performed pursuant to 310 CMR 40.0480. The site has been classified as Tier II pursuant to 310 CMR 40.0500. On or about September 22, 2025, OM Main St Spencer LLC filed a Tier II Classification Submittal with the Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP). To obtain more information on this disposal site, please contact Brian D. Moore, LSP, Carriage-House Consulting, Inc., 8 Pleasant Street, South Natick, MA 01760, (508) 315-3146.

The Tier Classification Submittal and the disposal site files can be viewed on the MassDEP website using Release Tracking Number (RTN) 2-51064 at <http://www.mass.gov/dep/>, or at MassDEP, Central Regional Office, 8 New Bond Street, Worcester, MA 01060 (508) 792-7650. Additional public involvement opportunities are available under 310 CMR 40.1403(9) and 310 CMR 40.1404.
October 3, 2025

**At the Zoning Board of Appeals meeting to be held on Tuesday October 14, 2025, in the McCourt Social Hall of Memorial Town Hall, 157 Main Street, Spencer, MA, a public hearing will be held on the following items starting at 7:00 p.m. or as soon thereafter as can be heard:
Notice of Public Hearing – Spencer Zoning Board of Appeals
Variance Permit Finding– Applicant/ Owner: Jeffrey & Laura Donahue:
Location: 53 Jolicoeur Ave, Spencer Assessor's Map U25-51. The applicant is seeking a Variance under Sections 5.2.6 (Detached Accessory Structure) of the Spencer Zoning Bylaw to build a 22' x 22' garage with 9' x 22' lean to within the front setback. The property is located in the Lake Residential (LR) Zoning District.**

September 26, 2025
October 2, 2025

**Commonwealth of Massachusetts
The Trial Court
Probate and Family Court
Worcester Probate and Family Court
225 Main Street
Worcester, MA 01608
Docket No. wO21p1228GD
NOTICE AND ORDER:
Petition for Resignation or Petition**

**for Removal
of Guardianship of a Minor**
In the interests of
**Melody Jayde-Arline Dolan
of Warren, MA
Minor**

NOTICE TO ALL INTERESTED PARTIES

1. Hearing Date/Time: A hearing on a Petition to Resign as Guardian of a Minor or Petition for Removal of Guardian of a Minor filed on 9/03/2025 by **Rachel M. Holden and Jeremy E. McHugh on September 9, 2025** will be held **10/15/2025 08:30 AM Guardianship of Minor Hearing** Located **Worcester Probate and Family Court**
2. Response to Petition: You may respond by filing a written response to the Petition or by appearing in person at the hearing. If you choose to file a written response, you need to: File the original with the Court; and Mail a copy to all interested parties at least five (5) business days before the hearing.
3. Counsel for the Minor: The minor (or an adult on behalf of the minor) has the right to request that counsel be appointed for the minor.
4. Counsel for Parents: If you are a parent of the minor child who is the subject of this proceeding you have a right to be represented by an attorney. If you want an attorney and cannot afford to pay for one and if you give proof that you are indigent, an attorney will be assigned to you. Your request for an attorney should be made immediately by filling out the Application of Appointment of Counsel form. Submit the application form in person or by mail at the court location where your case is going to be heard.
5. Presence of the Minor at Hearing: A minor over age 14 has the right to be present at any hearing, unless the Court finds that it is not in the minor's best interests.

ORDER TO PETITIONER(S)
IT IS ORDERED THAT copies of this Notice and the Petition for Appointment of Guardian of a Minor be served in hand on the minor, (if 14 or more years of age and not the petitioner), the guardian, the parents of the minor, and any other person if ordered by the Court, at least **fourteen (14)** days prior to the hearing date listed above. **Service must be made by the sheriff, constable, or other person approved by the Court.**

If service in hand cannot be accomplished on any interested party. **IT IS ORDERED** that copies of this Notice and the Petition for Appointment of Guardian of a Minor be served on the interested party by leaving at and mailing by regular first class mail to last and usual place of residence of the interested party at least **fourteen (14) days** prior to the date of hearing listed above.

If the identity of whereabouts of an interested party is **not known, IT IS FURTHER ORDERED** that copies of this Notice and Petition for Appointment of Guardian of a Minor be served on all interested persons at least **fourteen (14)** days prior to the hearing date by mailing first class mail and by publishing a copy of the Order and Notice once in **New Leader Warren** publication to be at least **Seven (7)** days prior to the hearing date.

If required, service on the United States Veteran Administration and the Department of Children and Families may be accomplished by regular first class mail at least **Seven (7)** days prior to the hearing.

THIS IS A LEGAL NOTICE: An important court proceeding that may affect your rights has been scheduled. If you do not understand this notice or other court papers, please contact an attorney for legal advice.
Date: September 9, 2025
Stephanie K. Fattman
Register of Probate
October 3, 2025

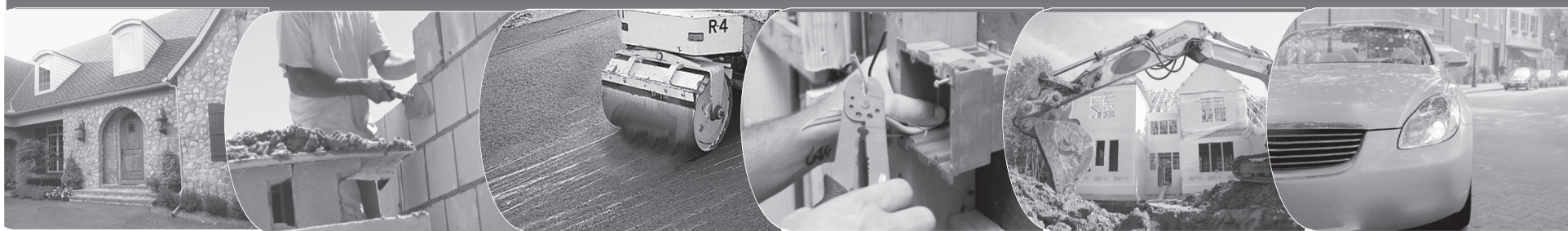
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Saturday 9:30 AM-11AM

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Chip - In Food Pantry
McKinstry Building
37 Main Street, Charlton, MA 01507
Distribution: 3rd Saturday 9 AM-12 Noon

St. Joseph's Church, Charlton
Tuesday 6:30-7:30 p.m.
Wednesday 9-11 a.m.
Everyone is welcome.

LEICESTER

Leicester Food Pantry
St. Joseph-St. Pius X Parish
759 Main Street, Leicester, MA 01524
Distribution: Tuesday 5 PM-7 PM

NORTH BROOKFIELD

St. Joseph's Food Pantry
Located in the church hall at 296 North
Main St. North Brookfield
Distribution is the 1st Thursday of the
month from 5:00-6:30PM
the 3rd Thursday of the month from 12
Noon-1:15PM
Any questions should be directed to the Rec-
tory office 508 867-6469.
St. Joseph's Food Pantry is a community
partner affiliated with the Worcester County
Food Bank.

OXFORD

Oxford Ecumenical Food Shelf
Oxford Community Center
4 Maple Road
Oxford, MA 01540
Distribution: Thursday 4:30 PM - 6:30 PM

ROCHDALE

The Lord's Cupboard Food Pantry
Greenville Baptist Church
674 Pleasant St.
Rochdale, MA
Distribution: Every Monday from 12:00 -
2:00 p.m. Open to everyone.

SOUTHBRIDGE

Saint Vincent de Paul Society Food Pantry,
Located in the St. Anne Church basement,
16 Church Street, Fiskdale, MA 01518
Stocked by donations
Contact: 508-347-6398

SPENCER- EAST BROOKFIELD - RESIDENTS ONLY

Mary Queen of the Rosary Food Pantry
60 Maple St, Spencer, MA 01562
Distribution: Thursday 10 AM-12 Noon

STURBRIDGE

Saint Vincent de Paul Society Food Pantry,
Located in the St. Anne Church basement,
16 Church Street, Fiskdale, MA 01518
Stocked by donations
Contact: 508-347-6398

WEBSTER

Webster-Dudley Food Share
4 Church St #2
Webster, MA 0570
Distribution: Tuesday and Thursday from
8:30 -11:00 am. Open to Webster and
Dudley residents.
Please call ahead: 508-943-9171

WEST BROOKFIELD

Sharing Cupboard Food Pantry
First Congregational Church
36 North Main Street,
W.Bookfield, MA 01585
Distribution: Wednesday 10 AM-11:30 AM
Thursday 7 PM- 8 PM



OBITUARY

Barbara J. Haddock



Barbara J. (Meier) Haddock passed away peacefully on September 19, 2025, surrounded by her family at Quaboag Rehabilitation and Skilled Nursing Center.

Barbara is survived by her husband of 69 years, Charles Haddock; her daughter, Lorraine Sawyer; and two sons, Dennis Haddock and Stewart Haddock and his wife, Patricia. Barbara also leaves behind five grandchildren, and 8 great-grandchildren. Her daughter, Cheryl Haddock, predeceased her.

Barbara graduated from Saint Vincent School of Nursing in Staten Island, NY in 1953. She began her nursing career at the New York State Rehabilitation Hospital in Haverstraw, NY. After her marriage and while she was raising her four children, she worked part-time at Nyack Hospital. The family moved up to Massachusetts in 1969, at which time she helped build and maintain the Long View Motel and Campground in Brimfield, while continuing her nursing career at Harrington Hospital in Southbridge. She worked for 27 years in ICU/CCU on the midnight shift until her retirement in 1996.

Barbara spent her life caring for people.

She was very active in her church, as a member of the Episcopal Women's Club, the Altar Guild, and the choir. She made clam chowder for the annual Red Door Fair, which people still ask for!

Barbara enjoyed traveling the world with her husband, skiing in Switzerland, and their Australia trip were among the highlights. She also enjoyed local trips with friends and family.

Holiday parties were always celebrated at the lake. The neighborhood progressive Christmas dinner party was an annual event for many years. Family always gathered for Christmas and Fourth of July to spend time with each other. These gatherings were always the best for Barbara; she loved having her family close.

There will be a Memorial Service on Monday, October 6, 2025, at 1:00PM in Christ Memorial Episcopal Church, 135 North Main Street, North Brookfield, MA. A Celebration of Life will be held at Bike House Brewery, 31 East Brookfield Road, North Brookfield, MA immediately following the service. Arrangements are being made with Varnum Funeral Home, West Brookfield.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be sent to Christ Memorial Episcopal Church, 135 North Main Street, North Brookfield, MA 01535.

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BILLS
continued from page A1

ily's laundry on the weekend at my mother's house in West Brookfield because she has a well. The prices are killing us," Tonna said.

Town businesses are also struggling with the high prices, with some businesses paying over \$5,000 per quarter. Meanwhile, some of the town's largest water users – East Brookfield Elementary School and the courthouse on Route 9, among others – rely on neighboring Spencer's water system. Therefore, they do not join other town water users in helping to defray the costs of system upgrades.

"Our Board of Selectmen has put

those of us on town water in an unsustainable position," said Joanne Antetomaso. "They have given this town a multi-million-dollar debt and are expecting 600 and some households to be able to pay that over the next 30 years. This has come at a time when our real estate taxes are also increasing due to the new high school being built in Spencer."

Residents also argue that they weren't fairly informed of the price hikes.

"I want to recognize that the town did a great job with the construction of the water pipe and main upgrades, the new water tower, and treatment facility," said Jenn Trigiano. "Where the town fell short is informing residents how the cost of this project was going to increase their water rates. During the meetings that this project was reviewed, there were discussions of rate increases, as the town's rates had not been increased in decades. During those meetings, they discussed what the flat rates would be, but did not provide residents with projections of what their bills would be with the new tiers and rates associated with them."

There are approximately 600 users relying on town water in East Brookfield, with another 400 using wells.

The total original cost of the water infrastructure improvement project was \$24,126,583. The town received

a loan principal forgiveness grant in the amount of \$5,453,289, which left a total debt of \$18,673,294 for the town's 600 water-metered homes and businesses to pay off. This excludes residents using wells.

"The most important issue is the massive debt. It is \$18 million-plus at this point, being spread only on the water users," said Mark Morin. "As bills have skyrocketed — mine was \$960 for a quarter for two people — people will indeed conserve. But also, some businesses will close or move, as will residents who have a water bill so high."

Residents recently expressed outrage over one selectman advising that water users keep prices down by shortening showers and doing laundry less frequently.

"Two out of the three selectmen have been completely incompetent and just plain mean," Tonna said. "It seems it is very easy for them because they set the water prices, but personally have wells so the outrageous water prices are not affecting them."

Even part-time residents like Lucy and Drew McDermaid, who only reside in town from mid-May to mid-October, haven't escaped the staggering prices.

"We shut down our property when we leave in October, which includes returning our meter for the water to the Water Department. They come out and shut our water off at the main," Lucy McDermaid shared with the New Leader. "The city knows that we are not using any water in the wintertime while we are gone, but we are still charged for water that we do not use."

Added McDermaid, "When we have questioned the selectmen in the past, we were told that we have a fire hydrant near our house, so that's what we are being charged for — even though we don't use any water."

The Select Board reportedly applied for a grant through MassDEP's Emerging Contaminants in Small or Disadvantaged Communities program. Selectmen did not respond to

the New Leader's multiple requests for comment on the situation.

State Sen. Peter Durant and Rep. Donald Berthiaume, who attended the Sept. 17 hearing, are searching for pathways capable of providing relief to impacted residents.

"Right now, we are working with the Governor's Office and our federal delegation to try to find some assistance for East Brookfield residents," Durant said.

The town's new water treatment and filtration facility is expected to begin operations in December. Residents told the New Leader the current crisis could have been avoided if system maintenance and upgrades had been made regularly over the years.

"This all happened because of mismanagement by many previous boards of selectmen," Morin said.

Some residents also highlighted the crisis as an example of the town's need to augment its leadership team.

"East Brookfield desperately needs a town administrator or manager," said resident Amber Kowalczyk. "I am aware that this is a position a lot of towns struggle to fill. However, I believe that the town needs to put it on an Annual Town Meeting warrant so it can be voted on."

WOLVERINE

continued from page A1

culinary students in singing "Happy Birthday" to Select Board Chair Doug Belanger, a longtime supporter of student programs and initiatives.

"The School Department is on a roll, and the relationship and friendship between Superintendent Kustigian and the Town Hall could not be stronger," Belanger said.

The event was also attended by State Representatives David LeBoeuf, Donald Berthiaume, and Paul Frost.

"Leicester High School is on the move, and what they have done in a short amount of time is amazing," LeBoeuf said.

Added Frost, "Our state needs vocational education, and Leicester is filling that void."

Located at the old Leicester High/Middle School on Winslow Avenue, The Wolverine Grill is a key component of the recently established culinary arts department at LHS. Students will gain real-world, hands-on experience by serving the public from a newly renovated commercial kitchen.

"I am honored to be part of these exciting times of growth within the Leicester Public Schools," said School Committee Chair Donna McCance. "The impact of our new CTE (Career Technical Education) school not only has a positive influence on our students' future, but it also benefits our school community, the town of Leicester, and other towns."

School officials remind area residents that The Wolverine Grill is not yet fully open to the public. A phased opening will take place over the next few weeks.

"This has been an incredible amount of work, and we want to get it right," said LHS Principal Ted Zawada. "We are starting with limited and reserved seating. We also have a strong partnership with the Senior Center, and they will be our first customers."

At the Sept. 19 ceremony, Berthiaume presented school officials with a citation from the Massachusetts State House. School leaders and residents alike are looking forward to seeing members of the public enjoy the new offerings. Superintendent Kustigian told the New Leader he is asked every day when the restaurant will open to the public.

"As Principal Zawada said, we are taking our time to make sure every 'I' is dotted and every 'T' is crossed before we put the menu online. Stay tuned," Kustigian said.

School leaders thank Chef Andy Aucoin for his leadership in teaching LHS culinary arts and quickly bringing the program to the next level.

Local residents are encouraged to check back later this fall for announcements on the grand public opening of The Wolverine Grill.

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Kamren loves spending time outside, especially swinging and playing active games with others. He also enjoys building with Legos and exploring activities that engage his senses, such as sand, water, and playdough. These experiences allow him to be creative and adventurous in his own way.

When it comes to food, Kamren's favorites include waffles, pasta, and ice cream—and he'll never turn down a Sprite!

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Cornerstone Bank helps tackle local hunger with \$3,000 donation to Community Harvest Project

WORCESTER — Cornerstone Bank, a community bank with locations throughout Central Massachusetts, has continued its commitment to fighting food insecurity with a \$3,000 donation to Community Harvest Project, a nonprofit farm that engages volunteers to grow fresh fruits and vegetables for hunger relief across Central and Eastern Massachusetts. The donation builds on the bank's \$3,000 gift in 2024 and \$2,000 gift in 2023, and is part of a broader relationship that includes regular volunteer efforts by Cornerstone Bank employees at Community Harvest Project's farms.

"Cornerstone Bank is proud to partner with Community Harvest Project," said Todd Tallman, CEO of Cornerstone Bank. "Food insecurity continues to impact thousands of our neighbors, and CHP's work ensures that families have access not only to food, but to fresh, healthy produce. We're honored to support their mission both financially and through the volunteer efforts of our team."

Community Harvest Project is the largest community farm in Central Massachusetts, with locations in Grafton and Harvard. In 2024 alone, the organization hosted more than 6,300 volunteers who grew and donated 188,501 pounds of fruits and vegetables to 26 partner agen-

cies serving more than 60,800 food-insecure individuals. With food insecurity rates in Worcester County still more than double pre-pandemic levels, CHP remains a vital source of fresh, healthy produce for families who might otherwise go without.

Cornerstone Bank employees have volunteered more than 300 hours at CHP farms since 2022, joining community members in planting, harvesting and packaging produce that directly benefits local families.

About Cornerstone Bank
Cornerstone Bank was formed in 2017, born of a long history of supporting the community, and providing a strong foundation to help people and businesses thrive. Serving Worcester County, Massachusetts, Cornerstone Bank's local presence and community-based banking model enables a unique ability to deliver outstanding service, with a personal touch. Cornerstone, which is a subsidiary of PeoplesBankCorp, MHC, operating independently under its own name and brand, provides the highest level of service and expertise for individuals, businesses, and community organizations with branch locations throughout Central Massachusetts. Cornerstone works to connect customers with oppor-



Courtesy

Cornerstone Bank employees and interns volunteered with Community Harvest Project.

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