

FinCom Discusses Financial Aspects of School Regionalization



Dr. Casavant addresses the FinCom
Photo copyright Town of Winchendon

by Inanna Arthen

At their meeting on Tuesday, September 9, the Finance Committee held an “exploratory discussion” on the financial pros, cons and possibilities of school regionalization. Speaking as a knowledgeable expert on the topic was Winchendon resident and Superintendent of Narragansett Regional School District Dr. Chris Casavant.

FinCom Chair Tom Kane introduced the agenda item with, “people might be wondering a little bit about why is this a town Finance

Committee agenda item? So I just thought I’d put together a little preface to put some context for the discussion.”

The town’s financial challenges were not resolved in last spring’s override, Mr. Kane pointed out. “Factors that are contributing to the growth of the town’s expenses at a much faster rate than the revenue are not going away,” he went on. “Rising costs of health insurance, employee retirement contributions and the impact that the scarcity of qualified candidates has

on employee salaries will continue to outpace the growth of revenues from property taxes and state aid. There’s a need for the town to explore different approaches to how we fund the services and programs that contribute to the quality of life for our citizens. School regionalization is a question that gets raised periodically, but it hasn’t been explored in a very comprehensive way. Last spring, the School Committee expressed their interest in inviting representatives from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education [DESE] to learn more about the process of exploring regionalization and the educational possibilities that could be a product of regionalization. With other school districts, the Finance Committee are recognizing that the educational programming and opportunities should be the paramount goal of any effort to regionalize. The school district is particularly interested in the financial opportunities that may be possible if regionalization became a reality.”

Mr. Kane emphasized that Dr. Casavant was not appearing as a representative of Narragansett Regional School District. He had been invited to speak to the FinCom and the public “because he has unique experiences as having

been an administrator in Gardner, a standalone school district, and a superintendent of Narragansett Regional School District, and he’s a lifelong resident of Winchendon.” Mr. Kane also stated that the FinCom was not, just by having this discussion, initiating any process toward regionalization.

“This discussion has been, I think, brewing for a bit,” Dr. Casavant began. In almost every case, he said, regionalization comes up for discussion when “times are bad...and it’s too late to do anything about it.” The process takes a long time, but there are a lot of variations from district to district. “I was really just here to hopefully answer any questions that you may have about the experiences,” he said. Mr. Kane said, “What we’re really interested in is to develop an understanding of what the differences are, particularly in terms of finance, between the way that a regional school district is run as opposed to a standalone school district like Winchendon... What would be some of the differences that you might see in where the funding comes from.”

Dr. Casavant explained that “Chapter 70 drives all of educational funding.” There is a formula

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Winchendon Cultural Council Brings Art, Music and Life to Toy Town

by Inanna Arthen

Many residents have seen the Massachusetts Cultural Council logo tucked into corners of posters and social media posts for town events, or seen the words “sponsored by the Winchendon Cultural Council” added to the end of event descriptions. But how many folks in town know what that really means, and how much funding supports local arts and culture events throughout the year?

Formed in 1990 through the merger of two previously separate agencies—Massachusetts Council on the Arts and Humanities and Massachusetts Arts Lottery Council—the Mass Cultural Council is funded by appropriations from the state Legislature and

the National Endowment for the Arts. While it makes direct grants to individuals and organizations, the Mass Cultural Council also allocates funds every year to Local Cultural Councils. There are 329 local and regional councils in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts serving all 351 cities and towns. Each local council is made up of volunteers appointed by the municipality’s “chief elected official”—in Winchendon, that means the Board of Selectmen.

The *Courier* sat down with Dani Cutler, Chair of the Winchendon Cultural Council, to learn more about what the WCC does, especially in these tumultuous and uncertain days for arts programs and funding.

Asked about the basics—how does the WCC work?—Ms. Cutler said, “We meet once a month. It’s the third Wednesday of every month over in Town Hall. Right now we’re getting into our busy season, because the Cultural Council grant applications just opened on September 2, and it goes until October 16. So fall is our busy time, because we’re promoting that.”

“But we meet, and what we do is we work on things like outreach, because you can have up to 15 members on the Cultural Council, and so far, we have seven, which is not bad. We always want more. So we would love to hit that 15, but we get together, and in the fall, after the applications are closed, we meet in November, and we have a big

voting meeting, because we have to go through all of the grant applications for the town and decide how we’re going to divvy up the money that were allotted, which is not an easy task. Last fall was my first year going through the whole voting process. We were allotted this year \$13,000 which is a big number for our lovely little town, but last year we had the same amount, and we received applications that went over \$30,000. So you see that you really have to cut down how you’re going to divvy up that money.

“But that is the basis of what the Cultural Council does supporting those kinds of events in Winchendon, such as Taste

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of Winchendon, Founders Day, Winchendon Winds, the Winchendon Music Festival. So events like that, but also projects. So there's a street pole banner project that the CAC is putting together. We awarded money for that. The other one was the mural project. We have to check up on these things too and make sure that they're moving forward with their projects. So it really covers anything that's going to bring more vitality and culture to the area."

The WCC follows the same fiscal year as the town and state, starting on July 1 and ending on June 30. The current grant cycle is for FY2026. For FY2025, Ms. Cutler said, they received 25 applications. Some grant-seekers apply to multiple local councils, and a few apply to all 329. "That's where the local priorities come in," Ms. Cutler explained. "Our Winchendon local priorities are the event or project has to be in Winchendon. So if it's not in Winchendon, it's automatically cut. We have so little money compared to what the ask is for everybody, that we really have to focus on [local], because that's what you want, right? You want people to come to our town, and go to events in our town, and watch our town grow and flourish."

Some local councils will fund groups from other communities, especially if they don't get as many local applications as they have allocated funds for. Every local council sets its own priorities, and these are clearly outlined on the local council's individual page on the MCC website. Winchendon Cultural Council's page is at massculturalcouncil.org/local-council/winchendon/

Applicants do not have to be non-profits to qualify for grants through the Mass Cultural Council or local councils. "Anybody can apply," Ms. Cutler said. "You could apply, I could apply, a business could apply, a nonprofit could apply, individuals. It just has to follow the criteria of being some sort of

cultural event happening that you want to have in a town."

Asked what prospective applicants need to know about the process, Ms. Cutler said, "First off, go to massculturalcouncil.org, because you need to create an account. Everything's done online. You can't mail in an application. You definitely need an email address so that you can receive and send paperwork electronically. You need to decide where you're going to apply. Because, just because you can apply to 300 plus cultural councils, you really don't want to take the time to do that. It's really best to center on the area you're in and then pare it down that way. Then you need to read the priorities of those towns. There's a list on the website of every town to find your local Cultural Council, because although the state priorities are set, the local priorities can be different. So like I said, for Winchendon, we have a priority that the event has to be in Winchendon.

"Another thing is reimbursement versus automatic payout. So some councils decide, when they award you the money, they're just sending you a check. We don't do that. We operate on a reimbursement. So you need to check those kinds of things to see where it would be best to apply. So that's the process there.

"I highly recommend—because I went through it too when I joined the Cultural Council, because I had no clue what was happening—they offer a lot of videos on how to apply, the application process, how it all works and what you need to do. It's a very easy application. They make it so that anybody can apply very easily. And they really break it down nicely, where you know what you want, what money you need, and you break it down versus who you're paying, where the payouts are going. So you get to break down the whole budget. And so we get to see the whole budget, marketing supplies, paying people, whatever."

The WCC will provide funding for ticketed events, but there may be stipulations about setting aside a

certain number of affordable tickets to make the event more inclusive.

For reimbursement, Ms. Cutler said, the applicant needs to send the WCC proof that the event happened, examples of marketing and promotion, photos, and so on, plus receipts for money expended. A firm requirement is including the Mass Cultural Council logo on all promotional materials and noting, in all text listings and promotion, that the event is sponsored through the Cultural Council. After the documentation is reviewed, the reimbursement is usually made in six to eight weeks. "You have to make sure that you can still have your event knowing that you're getting the money later versus up front," Ms. Cutler emphasized. "So it's a very important thing, and not every town is like that."

Asked what a Winchendon resident who wanted to join the WCC needs to know (there currently being eight open seats), Ms. Cutler said, "Number one, I would absolutely love it. We've really been working on outreach a lot this past year, because we want people to know that culture and bringing our community together with these events and projects, everybody benefits. Even if you don't go to many events, you benefit, because it's not just the events, it's the projects—helping to make our town look lovelier, and having art and culture. Joining is very easy. You do have to be approved by the Board of Selectmen, so you basically email your Letter of Interest to myself or to the town, and then they just get you on the schedule, and you go to BOS meeting, and they ask, 'Why do you want to join?' You explain, and I have never heard of anybody not being approved for the Cultural Council. We want people who are as passionate about arts and entertainment and bringing culture to our town as we are."

As part of this outreach, the WCC is doing something new this year: a Meet and Greet gathering at the Winchendon Community HUB (5 Summer Drive) on Wednesday, September 17, from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. "We discovered that we are able to

host these kinds of things ourselves, as the Cultural Council," Ms. Cutler said.

The first hour, she explained, will be "a celebration of our previous grantees that we've awarded grants to. So basically, just saying, yay, you know we love you. Thank you for bringing your culture and your art and your events to our town. We're also going to discuss the application process." There will be sample applications, a short presentation, some refreshments, and a friendly informal approach where attendees can meet the Council members and ask any questions they may have. The second hour will be free bowling, as part of the event. All attendees are welcome to participate.

"We really want to make sure we're known in the community, and just let people know that this is what we're doing," Ms. Cutler said. "This is what we want to do, and we want to do more of and we want others to be involved, whether they're hosting an event, want to bring an event into Winchendon. You don't have to be a Winchendon resident to apply in Winchendon, anybody can. The goal is to bring anybody in that could get people in to see our town."

Along with the WCC page on the main Mass Cultural Council website, the Winchendon Cultural Council is on Facebook at www.facebook.com/winchendoncc, on Instagram at www.instagram.com/winchendoncc, and on the new town website at www.town-ofwinchendon.com/344/Cultural-Council. They can be emailed at winchendoncc@gmail.com. The Winchendon Cultural Council meets on the third Wednesday of each month at 5:00 p.m., at Winchendon Town Hall, 109 Front Street. All meetings are open to the public.

To see a complete list of the FY2025 grant recipients and the amounts they were awarded, go to <https://massculturalcouncil.org/local-council/winchendon/> and scroll down to "FY25 Funding List."



WCC funded Animal Adventures at Beals Memorial Library, which moved to the Clark Field House due to wet weather
Photo courtesy of Dani Cutler



Christmas Concert at Beals Memorial Library, funded by the WCC
Photo courtesy of Dani Cutler

Winchendon News

Fire Chief Smith Presents Update on Fire Station Project to BOS in Two Meetings



Chief Smith addresses the BOS
Photo copyright Town of Winchendon

by Inanna Arthen

At their meeting on Monday, September 8, Winchendon Fire Chief Tom Smith came before the Board of Selectmen to propose moving forward with the fire station redesign project that was approved by voters at both Town Meeting and a ballot vote in 2022-2023 and has languished since then.

Chief Smith recapped, "We went to Town Meeting [in fall, 2019] and it was exceptionally blown out of the water at that meeting [39 percent in favor, 61 percent opposed]...they felt the information about the project wasn't out to the public. So we went back. Also we were told that the project needed to be scaled down. So we've worked with, I've been to numerous Town Managers now, as we've been working through this project, each one having different things here and there they wanted to see or not see. I've met with different boards. We did pare that down to basically almost half of the size. We cut a lot of things out of the initial plan and then we did get to the point where we couldn't continually cut any more out of it to have it effective."

Chief Smith said he didn't see any point in bringing forward a building that wouldn't serve the town's needs, "it's foolish." The plan should be sufficient for 50 or 60

years going forward.

"We ended up bringing it back to Town Meeting and to the ballot for the design plans. We spent over \$700,000 on the project at this point, and that's all we had to spend. We did get what we needed to do done within that however, then some other projects and different things here in town came up and it was tabled. I don't believe that it should be tabled any longer. Out of the fact that one, the need hasn't gone away. If anything, it's just gotten worse. Construction inflation every year is running between three and six percent annually, which on a project of this nature's adding just in a single year, between \$600 thousand to a million dollars a year on the project."

Chief Smith went on, "I feel that in order for the taxpayers to not feel that their money's been wasted, I think it needs to be brought to them to decide on the project...I feel that it's only right that the taxpayers have their say, whether it's yes or no, in whichever direction they feel that is the direction that they'll vote, and that's certainly well within their rights on that. But I feel that we need to start getting the information out to them on the project, on the costs of the project. I've sat down with some people and we'd be looking to do, not only every other week

Zoom meetings to get the info out to them, some open houses at the fire station, meeting with the various boards and committees."

Chief Smith said that they're sitting on a shovel-ready project that keeps being put off, because there are always other things coming up, and that won't change. Voters deserve to have a say in the money they've already spent. The construction would be a debt exclusion package for borrowing, spread out over a 30-year term.

Right now, the department is spending money on constant repairs. "We've got leaks in walls. We've got cracks in the apparatus bays. There's quite a list, and that certainly would be something that would be gone over in the informational sessions. But we're wasting money throwing it as a band aid on a lot of these things, because they're not solving the problem. You got mold in the bathrooms—well, we paint over it. That's not solving the problem. That's just masking the problem," Chief Smith said.

Chief Smith said that he knows the financial climate is not good and the cost of a new station is a big ask. "A fire station, however, is an important piece in the community where it's not something that we want to just let drop down to where you don't have the ability to provide the services that we do have," he said. Also, if voters approved this project only to see it sit on the shelf, why would they approve future projects?

Board member Audrey LaBrie asked Chief Smith what his impressions were of Town Manager Bill McKinney's point of view, based on their conversations. (Mr. McKinney was not able to attend the BOS meeting.)

"He acknowledges that the project needs to go forward to the voters. He does also explain that there are other potential projects in the town," Chief Smith said. He added that he believed that this project should be presented to the community as a standalone, not as one of several projects, so that people could ask questions and absorb information without a lot of other topics before them at the same time—not be "buried by budgets and committee reports". He added,

"I think it's a little more palatable for people to come and ask the questions, if they are concerned and they want to have their voice heard, that's when you know that would be their opportunity for that."

Board member Tiffany Newton said they had discussed the fire station at the last Capital Planning Committee meeting, and the CPC was concerned about overwhelming residents when other things were coming up as well. She asked if there was an estimated figure for the total cost.

Chief Smith said, "The most recent estimate cost that we had was done this past February. There has been fluctuation, but the amount was \$14.4 million and that was, it should be noted, half of what the size was back in 2019 when the cost also was \$14 million for double the size. Unfortunately, it's a lot, but like I said before, it's a large project."

Board Chair Andrew Beauvais said, "I think first and foremost, the information I feel needs to be presented to the community as clear and transparently as possible. It's not up to just us to decide whether a project like this moves forward. I think we need the feedback from the community, and I know that there are folks in the town that would support this endeavor, as they did the first time around, and there are those that wouldn't." Chief Smith said that he felt this was a good time to bring the project forward, and if there was a fall Town Meeting, to spend the next two or three months getting information out to voters.

Board member Erika Eitland said "I feel at this juncture, if we have spent \$700,000 on design fees, we need to see renderings. We need to see plans. We need to visualize this. Because saying we're going to get a new station that from the firm who's designing this for us, at a minimum, should provide that first."

Chief Smith said, "What we're reaching at now is we don't want to get those renderings and have that out yet, because if it's not going to be supported to go forward as a project, and we have to redo anything along the way..."

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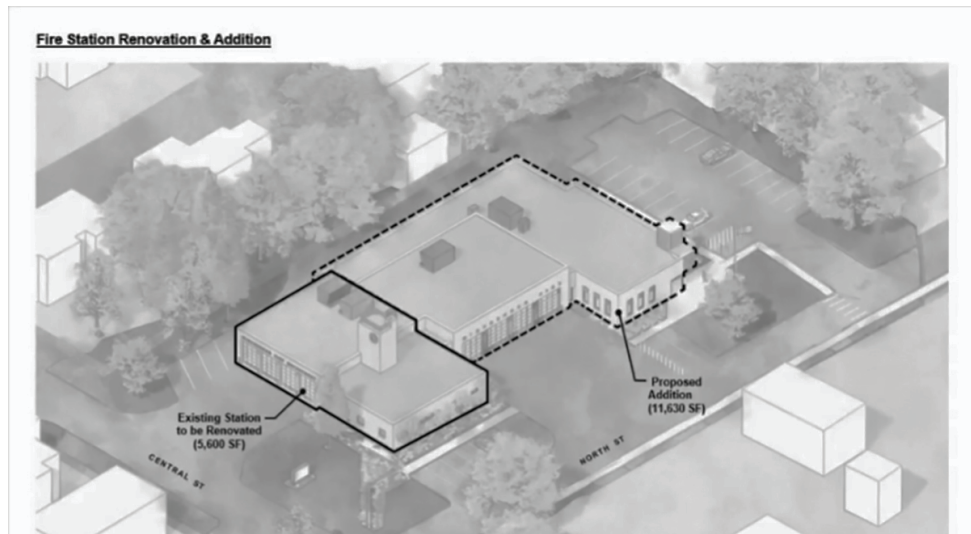
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Ms. Eitland said that people needed a tangible idea of what the request actually means, and a history—how it started, what was cut out, what it will look like now. “Next, when you come in front of the Board, let’s just have that slide presentation. Let us have those visuals ready, because without that, people are, all they’re hearing is a price tag. We do not know what we are getting. And I think it’s one of these things where that firm, it’s in their best interest, even if we don’t give up any more money, for them to say, here’s all of these resources. Let us create this.”

Chief Smith and Ms. Eitland discussed the topic of visuals and schematic plans further. Chief Smith wanted an assurance that the time invested in preparing the visuals wouldn’t be wasted because the project ended up delayed and the information in them outdated, so everything would have to be done over again. Ms. Eitland felt strongly that people needed to see clearly how the project has evolved and how it has been cut down from the original concept. \$14 million was a lot of money to ask voters for.

Ms. LaBrie said, “I recall all the iterations that those plans have gone through. And you’ve done a fantastic job, slide shows, presentations, everything that you just mentioned, the public information sessions. So to member Eitland’s comment, I think a lot of that information already exists, and it would be a question of bringing it forward again, with the intent that this is going to be brought before the voters of the town.” The real job of the Board now was to ensure that the issue gets before voters.

Mr. Beauvais said, “We have to move this forward, and we have to start getting that information out to the residents, there’s no point in kicking the can down the road any longer, and bring it to a vote. I don’t believe we have a fall [Town] Meeting planned, so this would be something that would be potentially looked at in the spring. I’ve had discussions with the Town Manager about the timing of this, and he seems to think that in the spring months, it would make more sense.”

Chief Smith said, “I feel that a three month time period would be a good time frame. This is a good time

frame with the various fairs and that coming up. We have thousands of people coming to Fall Festival, a lot of citizens do come there. We have 1400 kids at the fire station on Halloween, to also talk to parents as they come and get information to them. Then it’s still warm enough to do an open house where you could have people at the fire station actually not be shivering, and they can look at the outside as well as looking at the inside. We’ve looked at scheduling, and just done various social media posts with different things, which can be done, obviously, any time of year. So I think three months is a good time frame.”

After more discussion about the kinds of information it would be most important to convey to voters, including people new to town who didn’t know anything about the project’s history, the Board agreed to hold an extra meeting on Monday, September 15 to discuss the fire station project further.

Presentation

At the special meeting of the Board of Selectmen on Monday, September 15, Chief Smith appeared before the Board with a slide presentation and detailed explanation of the fire station remodeling project, as the Board had requested at their regular meeting on September 8.

Chief Smith began by explaining that the current building, which fronts on Central Street, is 5,600 square feet. That will remain in place, but no longer be the main entrance. “We did feel that renovating and keeping the current building that was there, along with the addition, was something that was economically sound for the town. They’ve put money into this building. So anything that we could use, as far as redoing this building, we felt was a savings to the project,” Chief Smith said.

The new addition would extend east from the back of the current building and add 11,630 square feet to the station. It will have four new bays and a new public front entrance facing North Street. (Currently this area is occupied by parking lots and a lawn.)

“The proposed addition would include additional truck storage, so that we wouldn’t have to take apparatus out of service in the winter,” Chief Smith said. “Everything would be kept inside. It also has



bunking areas and the administration area. It also has a training room, which would double as a department training room and community training room for our CPR classes, our fire extinguisher classes, any of our other classes that we would do, also as the community room. It also would serve as an Emergency Operations Center. In the event that something happened down at dispatch, we’d be able to dispatch from there. We also would be able to, in a major event here in town, like an ongoing, lengthy storm, even festivals, you would have your operation center opened up there with the capabilities to roll out the dispatch consoles.”

The new addition would also have “hot, warm and cold zones” for decontaminating gear and equipment as they return from calls. Apparatus would have diesel exhaust capture systems. “None of the structural turnout gear should be going into the bunk rooms. It shouldn’t be going into any of the meeting rooms, the training rooms. They shouldn’t be going into the public spaces. So we would be keeping all that in the section that was renovated from the old station,” Chief Smith explained. Even exhaust residue builds up invisibly on surfaces and is carcinogenic.

The electric sign will stay where it is. Both sides of the building on Central and North Streets will have signs reading “Winchendon Fire” above the bays.

The building exterior will have a wood cladding product which allows insulation underneath it (the current brick facing has no insulation) and will not have to be repainted. “It’s much more durable and rot resistant,” Chief Smith said. “It starts off as a natural brown, and over two-three years, it turns into a silver, which will blend better into the neighborhood...there’s a couple different manufacturers. We would obviously look at the price point, and warranties were anywhere from 25 to 60 year warranties on the material.”

For the building structure, Chief Smith said, “We’d be doing the existing concrete block. We’d be going over that with the addition of a steel frame and additional concrete footings on the new addition portion, with the steel beams and all that to allow for the weight of the roof, and also putting the mechanicals up on the roof, as far as the HBC systems,

or any of those systems that would go on a roof.”

The new addition will have six identical single-occupancy bunk rooms. This allows for an extra room or two on top of what crew on shift need, for the use of interns and other incidental workers at the station. The current station has one bunk room with multiple beds. “Most, if not all of the fire stations being built now are being built with the individual bunk rooms,” Chief Smith said. “It allows for better rest. As far as the firefighters go when they are resting, it allows for if they want to come back from a serious call, and they may want to decompress differently, on their own, they go into their own space. Outside the bunk rooms would be lockers where the full time shifts would need to be assigned a locker. They could have their stuff there. We wanted to put that outside so that if they had a late call and multiple calls throughout the evening, like we usually do throughout the night, the incoming crew could still come get this stuff out of their locker, prepare for their shift, and we could still function without interfering with the outgoing shift.”

After going into some detail about the organization of the spaces in the new addition, Chief Smith talked about how much the project had been scaled down from its original proposal in 2019. That plan was for a 24,000 square foot addition, more than double the current proposal. When voters rejected the plans, the project was drastically reduced. But at the same time, construction costs have risen steadily. In 2022, when voters approved funding the designs for the 11,630 square feet, the estimated cost of construction was \$8.24 million. It has now gone up to \$14.4 million, in just three years.

“To continually push it down the road, the costs are going up dramatically, probably approximately 3 to 6 percent each year,” Chief Smith said. “So depending on the project, you’re looking at it going up to potentially \$15.9 million in ‘26 and then \$17.5 million in ‘27. I don’t think it’s wise to keep pushing it off, because the cost is not going down, and the need isn’t going away. So when you equate the two, it definitely is something that will project out to continuing to increase, as far

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as finances go.”

Board member Melissa Blanchard asked if anyone had considered getting Monty Tech students to work on building the addition, reducing the cost. Chief Smith said they had talked about it, and when he worked in Templeton, Monty Tech students worked on some renovations of their fire station. “They do excellent work,” he said. “The problem being that it takes a long, long time.” It’s also hard for them to commit to a project this large. Adding a new bathroom or remodeling a room is more practical for them to help with.

Responding to another question, Chief Smith said the costs for the new addition are for construction only. The costs of filling the new spaces with furniture, equipment and so on was not included. “We are using as much as we can from the old station to bring into the new section. There is a possibility of potentially applying with Robinson Broadhurst down the road. They don’t like to take part in the actual construction of this project, but they may look to potentially assist with, ‘the icing on the cake’ kind of thing.”

“The next slide I have is one that people always want to know about, the tax impact on a project of this size,” Chief Smith said. “The thought would be that it goes

out on a 30 year bond. That would be something that would be discussed, whether it’s here, with the Treasurer or the Town Manager. The proposed impact currently, right now, is the tax rate is \$11.75, it would be an impact of going up 39 cents per \$1000 [of valuation]. So the average single family home value in Winchendon is \$340,000, almost \$341,000, so the estimated increase on the tax bill would be \$132.98 for the year, annually.” He added, “Again, that changes. If your house is a lesser assessed value, then the impact would be down. If you have an assessed value of \$250,000 the impact would be approximately \$97.50. If you have a million dollar home here in town, it’d be \$390 for the year, annually.”

He went on to talk about things that would affect these estimates, such as the new tax rates, which are set in December, interest rates, and the possibility of getting grants or loans that the town could look into.

Board Chair Andrew Beauvais said, “Divide that out by twelve months, it’s not a huge ask. Now, for some, it may be, and I don’t want to downplay that, but overall, for what you’re getting, I think \$133 is a reasonable ask.” (It would be \$11.08 per month.)

The timeline for the project to be completed depended on how fast it was approved by voters and then put out to bid. Construction from start to move-in was estimated at 16-17 months, Chief Smith said.

going to go in terms of those type of things like busing, that is where the biggest difference is. Obviously, Winchendon, it’s one town, one district, whatever the costs are, are yours and yours alone to bear... Where it gets different for regionals is how many towns are part of the regional, and what agreement and how they proportion out the percentage of cost to run the district.”

Mr. Kane said that in Winchendon, the School Committee approves a budget, then they work with the Town Manager to refine it, and finally Town Meeting votes to approve the budget. How would steps two and three work with a school committee made up of representatives from different towns?

Dr. Casavant replied, “The biggest difference is that the education department is a department. Here in Winchendon, the district is a department [of the town]. A regional is not a department. We are a standalone entity. And by that, I mean... someone used to always refer to it as, we’re our own bank. We do our own payroll. We do our own warrants. We don’t rely on either town to do those type of things. I don’t report to the town managers at all. They are a vital part in our conversations. Obviously, I report to the school committee, but the district is on level footing when it comes to the budget process.”

He explained that the school committee works out a budget and decides on a final certified number

“I think getting behind the project itself is important for a couple of major aspects,” Chief Smith said. “One is the health and well-being of the firefighters. We’ve had an officer retire, a deputy with cancer, job-related. We’ve had another current full time member that was out on job-related cancer issues. We’re expecting firefighters to go forward and perform their day-to-day activities, which they did sign up for. I’m not going to be one of those that sit there and say, they chose the job they did.

“But I also don’t think that choosing the job at the expense of not doing all we can to protect them is an adequate thing for a town. I think that once you get to the point where you’re willing to do a job to protect the community, I think that it’s correct to protect them as much as we protect the community.

“I think as far as the size of the project, I think that putting forward a building that gives them that space that they can retreat to after a call is important. I think that doing it in a way so that there is no relevance whether we have male or female firefighters, or whether we have firefighters of any gender, any ethnic race, anything—we really don’t care, as long as you can do the job. We’ve been very upfront with that. Whenever we hire, we don’t discriminate either way. However, we then expect them to come and all stay in the same room.

the same way a standalone district does. But then the school budget goes to the Town Meeting in each of the member towns. “It goes to vote, and so if both towns vote yes or ‘aye’ to that budget, fantastic. If one of those towns vote no, then one would think that the budget would would fail, and it did in that particular town, but in a regional... it doesn’t end there. If the school community does not decide to lower that number to the desired number, it doesn’t. It’s not forced to.”

He went on, “As you can imagine, that gets a bit contentious at times, because the School Committee has a lot of power in a regional, and in that case they do not need to necessarily take the number that the town or towns are presented. And what happens after that, you go before a joint Town Meeting. So if it just fails and you just can’t gain consensus, then both towns would enter into one meeting. The School Committee runs that meeting, in a sense, it’s just like any other Town Meeting, but it’s a special Town Meeting.”

Ultimately, he said, the school committee does not have to change the number to a lower total based on what the towns want, if the towns can’t come to a consensus at all. The biggest complications come if a budget is still not certified by July 1, the start of the fiscal year.

“In regionals around us, it’s not completely unusual for it to go to a town wide meeting,” Dr. Casavant

“It’s great, maybe when you’re growing up in your family and you’re related, and you haven’t wanted to have a campout and sing Kumbaya, but when you’re expected to be working in a job that also has you in a situation that you may not feel comfortable in, then I think that’s wrong. So I think that having the individual rooms like that does help with that and solve that. I think that improving the well-being of the firefighters so that they can better serve the community, because ultimately, they are public servants. So they are here to to serve the citizens of Winchendon, but I think that when you’ve got a project like this that can give back to them a little bit to help them better serve the public, I think that’s something that should be completed.”

Mr. Beauvais agreed and said that he felt there should be a fall Special Town Meeting to present this to voters. Town Manager Bill McKinney verified that there was money in the budget for a fall Town Meeting. The question didn’t have to be decided on the spot—the Board could vote on a motion at their next regular meeting on September 22.

Board member Audrey LaBrie asked Chief Smith to put together a timeline of public information sessions for the project so that everyone could coordinate their plans to participate and get the information on this vote out to the public.

said. “But a couple years ago we got to the point where it went past July 1. And what happens at that point is that until a decision can be made, you go into what’s called a one-twelfth. If we were in one-twelfth they would take one 12th of what our FY25 budget was, and those are the monies that we would receive until a decision is made. And by we, I mean both towns as well. So you’re all in at that point. Nobody, nobody wants to go to a one-twelfth for all the reasons that I’m sure you’re thinking about. Municipalities, their bills are just as high in July as they are, say in whatever month. School districts, not so much. We don’t have salary at that point. So it can be problematic. So you try not to get to that obviously, because it can create some, bad will.”

The process applies for regions with more than two towns, Dr. Casavant said, but there may not be a danger of stand-offs. “Just using a district of three, as long as two towns vote yes, one town can vote no, and it’s a done deal. So that one town still then has to comply.”

Asked if he saw any benefit to the economy of scale in combining districts, Dr. Casavant said, “There are a lot of different variations to what we call regions, and there’s a lot of different ways to do that.” The basic idea is that smaller towns can provide the same educational

REGIONALIZE

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with many different factors that the state uses, but it’s based on a per-pupil amount calculated on student enrollment in the district. Winchendon gets around \$16,000 per pupil, while Narragansett gets around \$15,000 per pupil from the state, Dr. Casavant roughly estimated. The remainder of the district budget comes from the town or towns. The state sets a required minimum amount that the towns must provide. “In our case, though, we have two towns that feed into Narragansett, Phillipston and Templeton,” Dr. Casavant said. “So how that works is that they, just like every other city and town, they have a required local contribution. In general across the state, it’s about the average, most districts pay a little over 10 to 15 percent overall over the required minimum.”

Towns in a regional district have a regional agreement which is approved by the Department of Education. In general, each town’s share is based on the number of students from that town enrolled in the district. This proportion affects everything in the budget—for example, busing. “In my district, it’s 85-15 so if you think about that for a minute, one town has 85 percent of the students,” Dr. Casavant said. “The other town has 15 percent, so when we start talking about proportion and how budgeting is

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benefits to their students as richer towns can. To put small towns on an equal footing, they need to combine resources. A town like Phillipston probably couldn't support its own full K-12 district. "That's why so many districts are trying to figure out regionalization, these very, very small towns, because they're not able to offer the the programming that students need," he said.

The composition of the regional school committee is worked out through the regional agreement, Dr. Casavant said. Initially, Narragansett's agreement was worked out in the mid-1950s, and they decided to have an eight-person committee: three from Phillipston and five from Templeton. The agreement was reworked in 1977 and again in 2004, but the numbers stayed the same.

The DESE website section on regionalization estimates the process to take from three to five years, Dr. Casavant said, but can take much longer. "There's a lot of the towns where they're still trying to figure out what configuration they'd like to be. They've been working on it for a very, very long time. They use the three to five years, you have to do the exploratory and then you have to, if that all works out, then you get into doing educational planning, which the Department of Ed is involved with, to make sure that everything is going to be okay and everything is going to be appropriate."

It might be a different time frame for Winchendon to join a region that is already formed and running. There are also alternatives to creating a region. Towns can form a superintendency with a union school committee. One example would be the Ralph C. Mahar regional district in Orange which serves New Salem, Orange, Wendell, and Petersham. It is run by a single central office, but each elementary school has its own school committee, and then they all feed into the regional district. "I don't know if that's 'easier'," Dr. Casavant said, but it's a variation on K-12 regionalization.

Mr. Kane said that he recalled small districts being pressured to regionalize in the early 2000s. Shirley, Ayer and Lunenburg went through a several year process, with Shirley and Ayer regionalizing

but Lunenburg opting out. Dr. Casavant said he was an assistant principal in Lunenburg at that time, and brought up another regionalizing alternative. "Shirley was tuitioning their students in to the [Lunenburg] high school. So that isn't school choice, whatever agreement that they had...It's not regionalization, but they tuition in. [The regionalization of Shirley and Ayer], in terms of revenue, was quite a loss to Lunenburg, quite frankly. And I think that probably was problematic."

Mr. Kane said that Winchendon pays about \$1.7 million for busing, and the state takes some responsibility for transportation for regional districts. He asked how that works for Narragansett.

Narragansett has about the same baseline cost for busing, Dr. Casavant said. The promise the state makes is that regional transportation is covered for regionalized districts, but it's "revenue dependent." So the available amount goes up and down year to year. Districts base their reimbursement rate on the prior year's expenses. "So what happens is that, you look at, based on the FY25 rate expenses we look at, that was 80 percent last year. So we take that \$1.7 million and give or take it's \$604,000 that we are reimbursed. So then whatever's left, we distribute to the member towns, 85-15," he said. "When you're a regional whatever the percentage is, and they generally let us know that right around budget time, as they're finishing up the state budget, they're going to let us know what that percentage is for regional transportation. That does not count for special education transportation off the bat, let me just say that. But the other part, though, is it's not dollar for dollar, so we still have the same requirement in terms of busing. You know, if you're busing kids within a mile and a half of the school, you're not getting reimbursed for those students." If students within that limit take the bus because they need to, "they are in essence riding free." But "regional transportation is a godsend, quite frankly," he said.

The regionalized district can have reserve funds, and reimbursements for services such as Medicaid, speech and language and so on go directly to the school district rather than to the town, as they do in a standalone district. The school

district tracks and manages all of that funding. The school district also has its own independent bond rating and can borrow money, with permission from the towns. For purposes of borrowing, the school district is an independent fiscal entity. This can be used for smaller capital improvements, not millions and millions of dollars.

Dr. Casavant didn't know if there was data on "average savings" for a town that becomes regionalized. The question led him into discussing the issues involved in leaving a regional system to become a standalone district again, which are daunting. A major complication for such districts is that by regionalizing, they become part of long-term financial commitments, such as OPEC (benefits for retiring contracted employees), or borrowing costs for major building repairs such as a new roof that take years to complete. All the districts involved in the region—the one leaving and those remaining—would have to develop new educational plans. Leaving a regionalized district is as complicated and lengthy a process as forming or joining one, if not more.

Dr. Casavant said that it probably takes three to five years just to work through all the massive renegotiations that would have to happen if two towns regionalized, starting with the question of mutual benefit for both towns. Busing would need to be re-contracted. All union contracts starting with teachers would need to be renegotiated. A district would need a dedicated planning committee just to start looking at the questions of, "is this even feasible" and "is it worth it?"

Whether more teachers and staff would be needed, or less, depends on the plan. "If two towns are going to say, hey, let's regionalize. And you keep your elementary schools the same, because the elementaries are in each town, and they're going to somehow create a Middle High School, you'd have to figure out, sure, there'd have to be some decisions made. It all depends on your makeup of the high school. Maybe you have one district that's much smaller than the other district, and it's going to work out just fine...that's whether the building is big enough. There's so much that goes into it."

Dr. Casavant suggested that before the big regionalization step,

there might be ways that neighboring districts (for example, Gardner, Winchendon, Narragansett and Ashburnham-Westminster) could share resources more effectively—say, combining bands in the music programs, or sharing a speech and language pathologist. Each district may be transporting special education students to the same program for out-of-district placements, each one in its own van at \$40K a year—could those trips be merged? "Let's figure that kind of stuff out, And it's not as simple as that, obviously, but the low hanging fruit, just without even talking about regionalization," he said.

Mr. Kane said that economies of scale could be very helpful. For example, with a larger district some special education programs that now require expensive out-of-district placement could be developed "in house." Dr. Casavant agreed, but with reservations. Negotiating health insurance rates would be easier with a larger group, but towns could also benefit by forming an insurance pool to negotiate without going all out with regionalizing. "I think that regionalization is hard," he said, "and I think that's why way back they built buildings [in every town], in 1950 before they figured out that these two small towns should be a region. That's what happened where I'm working and it's hard to do that now, for a lot of reasons, but I think some of the answers, the same benefits, are there, if you think outside the box. Or just think about, how can we do one thing, do it well, and then figure out if we can add another district to do it [with us], whatever that may be."

Mr. Kane said, "I think I'd like to see the town get serious about learning the process that you've referenced out of Department of Education. And please begin asking those questions. Begin the process of looking at the various aspects to it, because you can only make a good decision if you've really researched it and gathered a lot of information so that people can make decisions or make up their minds with it, support a proposal or not support a proposal based on knowledge of what's in that proposal."

The DESE section about district regionalization is at: www.doe.mass.edu/finance/regional/default.html.

Close Call for K-9 Blitz

On Tuesday, September 16, 2025, during a training exercise, K-9 Blitz suffered a life-threatening medical emergency. Thankfully, the training group and Officer Wironen quickly recognized that K-9 Blitz was in medical distress and immediately transported him to Wachusett Animal Hospital in Westminster. Dr. Bethany Rappleyea and her amazing team were awaiting his arrival and were able to stabilize K-9 Blitz, saving his life.

Once K-9 Blitz was stable enough to travel, he was transported to Westford Veterinary Emergency & Referral Center, where he stayed overnight and into the following day. While at Westford Veterinary Emergency & Referral Center, K-9 Blitz continued to receive extraordinary medical care and underwent further tests and observation by Dr. Emily Finn, Dr. Rachel Duffany, and their team. He was cleared to return home on Wednesday and is expected to make a full recovery.

We are extremely thankful to both facilities and their teams for their efforts in ensuring K-9 Blitz's recovery from this emergency.

Officer Wironen and K-9 Blitz continue to train so they can serve the community to the best of their abilities. Medical training, medical treatment, as well as narcotics and patrol training, are all funded by donations. K-9 Blitz and, previously, K-9 Clyde, have been fully supported through donations. Anyone wishing to help with medical costs, K-9 care, or training can drop donations off at the Winchendon Police Department or mail them to:

The Winchendon Police Department K-9 Fund
80 Central Street
Winchendon, MA 01475



Community Connector

Welcome to The Community Connector! In this pull-out section of the printed *Winchendon Courier*, you'll find a complete calendar of local events, a page of events and activities by category, and where to find more details about the organizations and groups that help make Winchendon a great place to live. The Community Connector is funded by a grant from the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT).



Winchendon Community Park 86 Ingleside Dr



Friday October 3

Saturday October 11

MOVIE NIGHT

Movie Night at the Park
Friday, October 3rd
Gates Open: 7:00 PM
Movie Starts: At 7:30 PM
Winchendon Community Park
88 Ingleside Rd, Winchendon

Bring a blanket, snacks, and your whole crew for a family-friendly movie night under the stars!

AUTUMN SUNSET SOCIAL

October 11th, 6PM-10PM

WINCHENDON COMMUNITY PARK

86 INGLESIDE RD.

Saturday October 18

HAUNTED FAIR AT WINCHENDON COMMUNITY PARK
SATURDAY, OCTOBER 18TH | 4:00 PM - 10:00 PM
FREE ADMISSION

Join us for a spooktacular night of family fun as Haunted Happenings returns bigger and better than ever! Bring your costumes, your friends, and your fall spirit for a night packed with magic, music, and memories.

- Trunk or Treat with the YMCA Live DJ & Halloween Activities
- Haunted Trails after dark (enter if you dare!)
- Unicorn Rides from Hyridge Farm, Food Trucks & Local Vendors
- Hayrides from Mudduck Farm
- Petting Zoo by Animal Craze

Brought to you by Winchendon Parks & Rec

Need a Ride?

Book a ride with the Community Connector app, or call 978-297-3155. All rides are FREE! Please book your ride at least one week in advance.

The HUB

5 Summer Dr

Winchendon Parks & Rec Dares You to Scare Winchendon!

Think you've got what it takes to give Winchendon a fright? We're challenging businesses, organizations, and brave individuals to join our Scare Team and haunt the trails at the Haunted Fair on October 18!

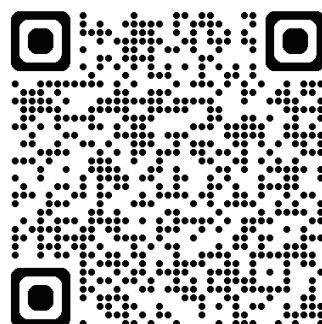
Bring your best costumes, props, and spooky ideas.

Challenge your friends, rival businesses, or fellow community groups to outdo YOUR scares.

Claim your spot on the trail and show us who can make Haunted Happenings the spookiest night of the year! Email scunningham@winchendon-ma.gov for more information.

Sign up now: www.eventeny.com/events/volunteer/application/?id=11444 or scan the QR code below!

Dare accepted? Let's see who can deliver the screams!



Sunday October 19

THE HUB
Winchendon, MA

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH TAKEJAZZ, THE HUB PRESENTS:

TOY TOWN Swing

AT THE HUB
Avenue of the Arts

INAGURAL EVENT!
AUG 17 5:00 PM - 9:00 PM
3rd SUNDAY OF EVERY MONTH

ONE MUSIC, MANY TRADITIONS
TakeJazz is a duo that performs jazz standards and original compositions for audiences who love American Classics. Steve and Anna's combination of rare and vocal keyboard versatility allows for jazz classics and popular music styles, be it jazz, pop, funk or R&B to come alive!

9:00 COVER & LESSON CHARGE

- DANCE CLASS 5-5:30
- NO PARTNER NEEDED
- NO EXPERIENCE NEEDED
- DROP IN'S WELCOME
- FREESTYLE, LEARN & HAVE FUN!
- FOOD, DRINKS, WINE & BEER FOR SALE
- 100% PROCEEDS BENEFIT CHC

MORE INFO & SIGN UP HERE

Thursday October 23

BINGO

At the Bowling Alley

5 Summer Drive, Winchendon

4TH THURSDAY OF THE MONTH

7:00 PM - 9:00 PM

Beer & Wine For Purchase





OCTOBER

WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 1

Integrity Medicare

10:30 a.m.- 2:00 p.m. Appointment required. At Old Murdock Senior Center, 52 Murdock Ave, Winchendon.

Teen Cooking Class

3:00-5:00 p.m. At The HUB, 5 Summer Dr, Winchendon.

Teen GSA Meeting at the Beals

3:30-4:30 p.m. A safe space for teens to meet, exchange information, receive support, socialize, build a community, and talk about issues and concerns related to sexual orientation and gender identity and expression. At Beals Memorial Library, 50 Pleasant St, Winchendon..

Adult GSA Meeting at the Beals

6:30-7:30 p.m. A safe space for LGBTQIA+ adults to meet, exchange information, receive support, socialize, build a community, and talk about issues and concerns related to sexual orientation and gender identity and expression. At Beals Memorial Library, 50 Pleasant St, Winchendon..

THURSDAY OCTOBER 2

Bill O'Connor Life Care: Brain Games

10:30 a.m. At the Old Murdock Senior Center, 52 Murdock Ave., Winchendon. 978-297-3155.

Fitchburg Art Museum and Farmers Market Trip

2:00-5:00 p.m. Free admission to the Art Museum! Sponsored by Old Murdock Senior Center. Home pick up available upon request or meet at the Senior Center (52 Murdock Ave, Winchendon) at 1:30 to get a ride. RIDES MUST BE SCHEDULED TO CONFIRM YOUR SEAT ON THE BUS. You can sign up online at www.townofwinchendon.com/council-aging or call the Senior Center at 978-297-3155.

Our Neighbor’s Kitchen Dinner

5:15 p.m. at Immaculate Heart of Mary Church. Served in the Parish Hall. This week the menu is Italian dinner by Sue Cheries. Free-will donation \$2 per person, \$5 per family; no one turned away. 52 Spruce Street, Winchendon.

FRIDAY OCTOBER 3

Winchendon Music Festival - Chris Moyse, singer-songwriter & Floyds Row (folk/newgrass)

7:00 p.m. Chris Moyse, singer-songwriter: <https://chrismoysemusic.com>
Folk collective, Floyds Row, explores the connections among early, classical, folk, newgrass, and world genres—works arranged and/or composed by Hailey Fuqua (soprano), Asako Takeuchi (violin), Jacques Lee Wood (violoncello & banjo), Andrew Arceci (bass & mandolin), George Lykogiannis (accordion & piano), and Mike Williams (percussion). At The Flower Shop, 172 Central St. Winchendon.

Movie Night at the Park - *Inside Out 2*

7:00 p.m. Join us for a fun-filled evening under the stars! Screening tonight: Inside Out 2. Gates open at 7:00 p.m., movie starts at 7:30 p.m. Free to all! Bring your blankets, snacks, and your whole crew for a family-friendly movie night you won’t forget! Sponsored by Winchendon Parks & Recreation. At Winchendon Community Park, 86 Ingleside Dr.

SATURDAY OCTOBER 4

Cornerstone Church “Called to Act” Men’s Conference

8:30 a.m.- 3:30 p.m. Come and join the men of Cornerstone Church for a one-day conference for men that will challenge and equip you to lead with Strength, Purpose and Faith. Lunch will be provided a free-will offering will be taken to help cover costs. At Cornerstone Church, 122 Gardner Rd, Winchendon.

Winchendon Music Festival - Worcester Jazz Orchestra (jazz)

2:00 p.m. Ever popular, the big band plays works by Glenn Miller (1904-c.1944), Buddy Rich (1917-1987), and others. At UU Church of Winchendon, 126 Central St.

October Jam with Midlife Crisis

7:00-11:00 p.m. Raffles, 50/50 drawing and more! \$15 per person, \$25 per couple. All proceeds benefit the Winchendon Lions Club. At Winchendon American Legion Post #193, 295 School St.

SUNDAY OCTOBER 5

Organ Concert with Guest Artist Peter Sykes

4:00 p.m. at UU Church of Winchendon. Internationally renowned pipe organist Peter Sykes will perform a concert of classical music on the church's 1868 E.& G.G. Hook pipe organ. Selections include works by Bach, Mendelssohn, Vierne and Price. Free admission; Mr. Sykes appears courtesy of a grant from the Winchendon Cultural Council. Refreshments sold. 126 Central Street.

TUESDAY OCTOBER 7

Ukulele Class with Julie

10-00-11:00 a.m. At the Old Murdock Senior Center, 52 Murdock Ave, Winchendon.

Teen Dungeons & Dragons

3:30-5:00 p.m. This is for kids in grades 8-12. Membership is limited, contact the library to sign up. At Beals Memorial Library, 50 Pleasant St, Winchendon.

WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 8

SHINE Appointments

10:30 a.m.- 2:00 p.m. Appointment required. At Old Murdock Senior Center, 52 Murdock Ave, Winchendon.

Lunch and Art Gallery Tour at the Park

12:00-2:30 p.m. Van departs from the Senior Center for the Park Theatre in Jaffrey at 11:30 a.m. and returns at 3:30 p.m. Enjoy lunch in Jaffrey along with a virtual art gallery tour in the theatre auditorium. This month's gallery tour: “The Girl with the Pearl Earring.” For more information, contact the Senior Center. Sponsored by the Old Murdock Senior Center, 52 Murdock Ave., Winchendon. 978-297-3155.

THURSDAY OCTOBER 9

Denis Cormier Concert

10:45 a.m.- 12:15 p.m. At the Old Murdock Senior Center, 52 Murdock Ave., Winchendon. 978-297-3155.

Beals Book Club 3:00-4:00 p.m.

Contact the library for the title being discussed. Books available at the circulation desk. At Beals Memorial Library, 50 Pleasant St, Winchendon.

Our Neighbor’s Kitchen Dinner

5:30 p.m. at UU Church of Winchendon. Dinner will be served in the Parish Hall; take-out available after indoor diners are served. This week's menu is spaghetti with hearty meat sauce. Free-will donation \$2 per person, \$5 per family; no one turned away. 126 Central Street.

FRIDAY OCTOBER 10

Corey McLane at the Snowbound Club

8:00-11:00 p.m. Come listen to this talented artist at the Snowbound Club! No cover charge and cash bar available. Hope to see you there. At the Snowbound Club, 130 Baldwinville Rd, Winchendon.

SATURDAY OCTOBER 11

Fall Fest 2025

10:00 a.m.- 5:00 p.m. On Central Street from CVS to Cumberland Farms—Live bands, bounce house, face painting, food trucks, local artists’ performances, kids’ activities, local restaurants. Over 150 vendors! Goes on rain or shine.

Autumn Sunset Social

6:00-10:00 p.m. Savor the Flavors of Fall! Celebrate the beauty of autumn with Sunset Socials in an evening filled with festive food, cozy drinks, and seasonal fun! Join us for a magical fall evening under the sunset sky. To Register & For More Information see www.sunsetsocialsma.com/event/autumn-sunset-social-5/register. Sponsored by Winchendon Community Park and Winchendon Parks & Recreation. Questions? contact info@farmingislife.org or richypena@yahoo.com. At Winchendon Community Park, 86 Ingleside Dr.

TUESDAY OCTOBER 14

Vet to Vet Cafe

10:00-11:00 a.m. Are you a Veteran looking to connect with fellow vets and share experiences from your time in service? Join us for coffee, refreshments, and meaningful discussions with others who have served. Open to all Veterans in the local community. 2nd Tuesday of each month. At Broadview Assisted Living, 547 Central St, Winchendon.

Ukelele Group

10:30-11:30 a.m. At the Old Murdock Senior Center, 52 Murdock Ave., Winchendon. 978-297-3155.

WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 15

Integrity Medicare

10:30 a.m.- 2:00 p.m. Appointment required. At Old Murdock Senior Center, 52 Murdock Ave, Winchendon.

Teen Cooking Class

3:00-5:00 p.m. At The HUB, 5 Summer Dr, Winchendon.

Thriller & Mystery Book Club

6:30-7:30 p.m. Contact the library for the title being discussed. Books available at the circulation desk. At Beals Memorial Library, 50 Pleasant St, Winchendon.

Jr. Adventurer Club

3:00-4:00 p.m. A tabletop roleplaying adventure club for kids! This is for kids in grades 4-6. Membership is limited, contact the library to sign up. At Beals Memorial Library, 50 Pleasant St, Winchendon.

THURSDAY OCTOBER 16

Red Cross Emergency Preparedness

10:00 a.m. At the Old Murdock Senior Center, 52 Murdock Ave., Winchendon. 978-297-3155.

Movie Night at the Beals

6:00-9:30 p.m. Screening this month: *28 Days Later*. At Beals Memorial Library, 50 Pleasant St, Winchendon.

SATURDAY OCTOBER 18

Sensory Friendly Browsing Hour at the Beals

9:00-10:00 a.m. Part of the Beals Library's Autism Inclusion initiative, this is a quiet time for people on the spectrum and their families to explore the library. At Beals Memorial Library, 50 Pleasant St, Winchendon.

Haunted Happenings at Winchendon Community Park

4:00-10:00 p.m. Join us for a spooktacular night of family fun as Haunted Happenings returns—bigger and better than ever! Costumes, candy, creepy fun... we've got it all! Trunk or Treat with the YMCA
Live DJ & Halloween Games
Haunted Trails after dark (enter if you dare!)
Unicorn Rides by Hyridge Farm
Food Trucks & Local Vendors
Hayrides from Murdock Farm
Petting Zoo by Animal Craze
Costumes encouraged. Fun guaranteed.
Tag your boo crew and we'll see you there!
Sponsored by Winchendon Parks and Recreation. At Winchendon Community Park, 86 Ingleside Dr.

SUNDAY OCTOBER 19

Toy Town Swing at The HUB

5:00-9:00 p.m. No partner needed! \$10 per person includes lesson. Dance class 5:00-5:30, no experience needed. Drop-ins welcome. Food, drink, wine and beer for sale. Live music by Steve and Anna of TakeJazz. 100% of proceeds go to benefit the Winchendon CAC. 3rd Sunday of every month. For info and to register, go to <https://www.the-hub.org/event-details/toy-town-swing-the-hub-2025-08-17-17-00>. Presented by The HUB and TakeJazz. At The HUB, 5 Summer Dr, Winchendon.

TUESDAY OCTOBER 21

Growing Places Mobile Market

10:30-11:30 a.m. At the Old Murdock Senior Center, 52 Murdock Ave., Winchendon. 978-297-3155.

Teen Dungeons & Dragons

3:30-5:00 p.m. This is for kids in grades 8-12. Membership is limited, contact the library to sign up. At Beals Memorial Library, 50 Pleasant St, Winchendon.

WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 22

Classic Movie Night at the Beals

3:00-5:30 p.m. Screening this month: *The Exorcist*. At Beals Memorial Library, 50 Pleasant St, Winchendon.

THURSDAY OCTOBER 23

Our Neighbor’s Kitchen Dinner

5:30 p.m. at UU Church of Winchendon. Dinner will be served in the Parish Hall; take-out available after indoor diners are served. This week's menu is TBA. Free-will donation \$2 per person, \$5 per family; no one turned away. 126 Central Street.

Bingo at the HUB

7:00 p.m. Join the Winchendon Parks and Recreation for Bingo at the HUB!

FALL 2025



SATURDAY OCTOBER 25

Winchendon Volunteer Continental Breakfast

10:30-11:30 a.m. Are you new to Winchendon or just want to learn more about volunteer opportunities in our town? Come and join us for a relaxed way to meet the various teams in town, ask questions and enjoy a delicious breakfast. We would love to have you at the table! At Winchendon CAC, 5 Summer Dr.

Teen Night at the HUB

5:00-9:00 p.m. At the Winchendon Community HUB, 5 Summer Dr.

Funny for Food Comedy Fundraiser

7:00 p.m. A comedy night to benefit Winchendon CAC at The Hub! Cash bar, raffles, 50/50 drawing, auctions. Comedy is rated “PG”. Bring Your Own Snacks. All proceeds help to feed our community! \$20 per person, get tickets at <https://www.funny4funds.com/events/funny-for-food-a-comedy-fundraiser-to-benefit-winchendon-cac-at-the-hub/1645>. At Winchendon American Legion Post #193, 295 School St.

Halloween Costume Party!

7:00-11:55 p.m. Music by Mike Martin & MLC (Mid Life Crisis!) \$20 per person. Bring a non-perishable food item to get \$5 off entry! Costume prizes too! At the Snowbound Club, 130 Baldwinville Rd, Winchendon.

MONDAY OCTOBER 27

Music with Bob Jordan

11:00 a.m.- 12:00 p.m. At the Old Murdock Senior Center, 52 Murdock Ave., Winchendon. 978-297-3155.

Walking Beside You: Caregiver Support Group

6:00-7:00 p.m. We invite all parents, grandparents, and caregivers raising individuals who are neurodivergent, on the autism spectrum, or have other special needs. We aim to create a safe space to come together, support each other, and share the joys and challenges of raising individuals with unique needs. For more information visit the library or see bealslibrary.org. At Beals Memorial Library, 50 Pleasant St, Winchendon.

TUESDAY OCTOBER 28

Senior Rockers at Sippin' Serendipity

9:00-10:00 a.m. Rock painting with Susan. At Sippin' Serendipity, 206 Central St, Winchendon.

Ukelele Group

10:30-11:30 a.m. At the Old Murdock Senior Center, 52 Murdock Ave., Winchendon. 978-297-3155.

WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 29

Integrity Medicare

10:30 a.m.- 2:00 p.m. Appointment required. At Old Murdock Senior Center, 52 Murdock Ave, Winchendon.

Taste of Home Lunch

11:00 a.m. Enjoy a homecooked lunch made by volunteers! At the Old Murdock Senior Center, 52 Murdock Ave., Winchendon. 978-297-3155.

Teen Cooking Class

3:00-5:00 p.m. At The HUB, 5 Summer Dr, Winchendon.

THURSDAY OCTOBER 30

Our Neighbor's Kitchen Dinner

5:30 p.m. at UU Church of Winchendon. Dinner will be served in the Parish Hall; take-out available after indoor diners are served. This week's menu TBA. Free-will donation \$2 per person, \$5 per family; no one turned away. 126 Central Street.

FRIDAY OCTOBER 31

Winchendon Trick or Treat

Time TBA.

RECURRING WEEKLY EVENTS

SUNDAYS

Bowling

12:00-5:00 p.m. \$25 for a lane per hour for up to 5 people. “Sober Sundays.” At The HUB (Winchendon CAC), 5 Summer Dr.

MONDAYS

Pickleball - Open Courts

9:00 a.m.- 1:00 p.m. At the Old Murdock Senior Center, 52 Murdock Ave., Winchendon. 978-297-3155.

Chair Yoga with Paula

10:00 a.m. \$5 suggested donation per class. This class is suitable for all abilities. At the Old Murdock Senior Center, 52 Murdock Ave., Winchendon. 978-297-3155.

Congregate Lunch

11:00 a.m. \$3 suggested donation. Call the day before to reserve a lunch. At the Old Murdock Senior Center, 52 Murdock Ave., Winchendon. 978-297-3155.

Friends' Book and Used Media Sale

1:00-3:00 p.m. The Friends of the Library Book Sale is back! Browse a wide selection of used books, DVDs, puzzles, music and more. At Beals Memorial Library, 50 Pleasant St., Winchendon.

AA Meeting

7:30 p.m. Open meeting, all are welcome. UU Church of Winchendon, 126 Central Street.

Lego Club for Kids at the Beals

4:00-5:00 p.m. Join us for fun-filled afternoons building Lego creations straight from your imagination! For for information, contact the library at 978-297-0300. At Beals Memorial Library, 50 Pleasant St., Winchendon.

TUESDAYS

Strength Training with Mary Lee

8:30-9:15 a.m. Get fit with these fun exercise classes that are customized for all abilities. \$5 suggested donation. Sign up online at www.townofwinchendon.com/council-aging or call the Senior Center. Rides available upon request. At the Old Murdock Senior Center, 52 Murdock Ave., Winchendon. 978-297-3155.

Line Dancing with Mary Lee

9:15-10:15 a.m. At the Old Murdock Senior Center, 52 Murdock Ave., Winchendon. 978-297-3155.

Pickleball - Open Courts

9:00 a.m.- 1:00 p.m. At the Old Murdock Senior Center, 52 Murdock Ave., Winchendon. 978-297-3155.

Family Friendly Story Hour at the Chapel

10:00-11:00 a.m. For preschool age children. Parents must stay with their children for the story time. At the Chapel Downtown, 286 Central St, Winchendon.

Yoga at the Beals Memorial Library

10:30 a.m. All skill levels welcomed! Mats and Blocks are available, if needed. These FREE classes are open for adults and teens. For more info, contact 978-297-0300, bealsmemoriallibrary@gmail.com or visit www.bealslibrary.org. At Beals Memorial Library, 50 Pleasant St., Winchendon.

WEDNESDAYS

Pickleball - Open Courts

9:00 a.m.- 12:00 p.m. At the Old Murdock Senior Center, 52 Murdock Ave., Winchendon. 978-297-3155.

Chair Yoga with Paula

10:00 a.m. \$5 suggested donation per class. This class is suitable for all abilities. At the Old Murdock Senior Center, 52 Murdock Ave., Winchendon. 978-297-3155.

Ukulele Group

5:00-9:00 p.m. At the Old Murdock Senior Center, 52 Murdock Ave, Winchendon.

Food Pantry

10:30 a.m.- 2:00 p.m. Appointment required. At Winchendon CAC, 5 Summer Dr.

Congregate Lunch

11:00 a.m. \$3 suggested donation. Call the day before to reserve a lunch. At the Old Murdock Senior Center, 52 Murdock Ave., Winchendon. 978-297-3155.

Bingo!

12:30 p.m. At the Old Murdock Senior Center, 52 Murdock Ave., Winchendon. 978-297-3155.

Meet-Up With the Kiwanis

6:30 p.m. 2ND AND 4TH WEDNESDAYS EACH MONTH. All are welcome! Come join in community projects, make new friends, make your community better, have some fun! Younger folks welcome. For more information, call Caitte Kelly, 978-413-9930. Hosted by Kiwanis of Winchendon MA. At the Clark Memorial YMCA Community Room, 155 Central St., Winchendon.

THURSDAYS

Pickleball - Open Courts

9:00 a.m.- 12:00 p.m. At the Old Murdock Senior Center, 52 Murdock Ave., Winchendon. 978-297-3155.

Congregate Lunch

11:00 a.m. \$3 suggested donation. Call the day before to reserve a lunch. At the Old Murdock Senior Center, 52 Murdock Ave., Winchendon. 978-297-3155.

Food Pantry

10:30 a.m.- 2:00 p.m. Appointment required. At Winchendon CAC, 5 Summer Dr.

CFCE Preschool Playgroup at the Beals

1:00-2:00 p.m. Join us for an afternoon of free play, a craft, story time and music & movement. This program is in partnership with the Winchendon CFCE. Contact the library at 978-297-0300 for more information. At Beals Memorial Library, 50 Pleasant St., Winchendon.

Friends' Book and Used Media Sale

5:00-7:00 p.m. The Friends of the Library Book Sale is back! Browse a wide selection of used books, DVDs, puzzles, music and more. At Beals Memorial Library, 50 Pleasant St., Winchendon.

FRIDAYS

Pickleball - Open Courts

9:30 a.m.- 12:00 p.m. At the Old Murdock Senior Center, 52 Murdock Ave., Winchendon. 978-297-3155.

Story Time at the Beals

10:00 a.m. Join us for a fun half hour of stories with Ms. Kristin and Ms. Melissa. This program is in partnership with the Winchendon Community Playgroups & CFCE. Contact the library at 978-297-0300 for more information. At Beals Memorial Library, 50 Pleasant St., Winchendon.

Lunch and Free Bowling for Seniors

10:30 a.m.- 12:30 p.m. Please call 978-297-3155 at least 24 hours in advance to reserve a lunch. Bowling is free for all seniors 55+. At the Winchendon Community HUB, 5 Summer Dr, Winchendon.

Food Pantry

10:30 a.m.- 2:00 p.m. Appointment required. At Winchendon CAC, 5 Summer Dr.

Friends' Book and Used Media Sale

12:00-2::00 p.m. The Friends of the Library Book Sale is back! Browse a wide selection of used books, DVDs, puzzles, music and more. At Beals Memorial Library, 50 Pleasant St., Winchendon.

Bowling at the HUB

5:00-9:00 p.m. \$25 Lane/Hour/Up to 5 People, and shoes included! Sunshine cafe selling snack and beverages. Beer and wine for sale. 100% proceeds go to fundraise for the CAC programs and services. At The HUB (Winchendon CAC), 5 Summer Dr.

SATURDAYS

Toy Town Trolley

9:00 a.m.- 2:30 p.m. Circles around town and up to Rindge Rte 202 shopping areas and back. Sponsored by the Old Murdock Senior Center, 52 Murdock Ave., Winchendon, call 978-297-3155 for more info.

Shopping Transportation for Seniors

9:00 a.m. Leaves from the Old Murdock Senior Center, 52 Murdock Ave., Winchendon. Must reserve your ride one week in advance. Call 978-297-3155.

Winchendon Farmers Market

10:00 a.m.- 1:00 p.m. At G.A.R. Park, Murdock Ave & Grove St., Winchendon. Rain or shine! Moves inside Old Murdock Senior Center next to park if it's rainy.

Food Pantry

10:30 a.m.- 2:00 p.m. Appointment required. At Winchendon CAC, 5 Summer Dr.

Bowling at the HUB

5:00-9:00 p.m. \$25 Lane/Hour/Up to 5 People, and shoes included! Sunshine cafe selling snack and beverages Beer and wine for sale. 100% proceeds go to fundraise for the CAC programs and services. At The HUB (Winchendon CAC), 5 Summer Dr.

North Central Collective Greenhouse

5:30-7:00 p.m. Join us for a meal, message and worship. NCC is a collective of likeminded churches who purpose to establish a Gospel presence that leads to Gospel proclamation in our region. At The Chapel Downtown, 286 Central St, Winchendon.

For Kids

Lego Club for Kids at the Beals

Mondays, 4:00-5:00 p.m. Join us for fun-filled afternoons building Lego creations straight from your imagination! For for information, contact the library at 978-297-0300. At Beals Memorial Library, 50 Pleasant St., Winchendon.

Family Friendly Story Hour at the Chapel

Tuesdays, 10:00-11:00 a.m. For preschool age children. Parents must stay with their children for the story time. At the Chapel Downtown, 286 Central St, Winchendon.

CFCE Preschool Playgroup at the Beals

Thursdays, 1:00-2:00 p.m. Join us for an afternoon of free play, a craft, story time and music & movement. This program is in partnership with the Winchendon CFCE. Contact the library at 978-297-0300 for more information. At Beals Memorial Library, 50 Pleasant St., Winchendon.

Story Time at the Beals

Fridays, 10:00 a.m. Join us for a fun half hour of stories with Ms. Kristin and Ms. Melissa. This program is in partnership with the Winchendon Community Playgroups & CFCE. Contact the library at 978-297-0300 for more information. At Beals Memorial Library, 50 Pleasant St., Winchendon.

Excursions

Fitchburg Art Museum and Farmers Market Trip

October 2, 2:00-5:00 p.m. Free admission to the Art Museum! Sponsored by Old Murdock Senior Center. Home pick up available upon request or meet at the Senior Center (52 Murdock Ave, Winchendon) at 1:30 to get a ride. RIDES MUST BE SCHEDULED TO CONFIRM YOUR SEAT ON THE BUS. You can sign up online at www.townofwinchendon.com/council-aging or call the Senior Center at 978-297-3155.

Lunch and Art Gallery Tour at the Park

October 8, 12:00-2:30 p.m. Van departs from the Senior Center for the Park Theatre in Jaffrey at 11:30 a.m. and returns at 3:30 p.m. Enjoy lunch in Jaffrey along with a virtual art gallery tour in the theatre auditorium. For more information, contact the Senior Center. Sponsored by the Old Murdock Senior Center, 52 Murdock Ave., Winchendon. 978-297-3155.

Recreation

Pickleball - Open Courts

Mon-Fri, 9:00 a.m.- 1:00 p.m. At the Old Murdock Senior Center, 52 Murdock Ave., Winchendon. 978-297-3155.

Bowling

Sun, 12:00-5:00 p.m. \$25 for a lane per hour for up to 5 people. “Sober Sundays.” At The HUB (Winchendon CAC), 5 Summer Dr.

Bowling at the HUB

Fri-Sat, 5:00-9:00 p.m. \$25 Lane/Hour/Up to 5 People, and shoes included! Sunshine cafe selling snack and beverages Beer and wine for sale. 100% proceeds go to fundraise for the CAC programs and services. At The HUB (Winchendon CAC), 5 Summer Dr.

Bingo!

Wed, 12:30 p.m. At the Old Murdock Senior Center, 52 Murdock Ave., Winchendon. 978-297-3155.

Toy Town Swing at The HUB

October 19, 5:00-9:00 p.m. No partner needed! \$10 per person includes lesson. Dance class 5:00-5:30, no experience needed. Drop-ins welcome. Food, drink, wine and beer for sale. Live music by Steve and Anna of TakeJazz. 100% of proceeds go to benefit the Winchendon CAC. 3rd Sunday of every month. For info and to register, go to <https://www.the-hub.org/event-details/toy-town-swing-the-hub-2025-08-17-17-00>. Presented by The HUB and TakeJazz. At The HUB, 5 Summer Dr, Winchendon.

Bingo at the HUB

October 23, 7:00 p.m. Join Winchendon Parks and Recreation for Bingo at the HUB!

For Teens

Teen Cooking Class

October 1, 15 & 29, 3:00-5:00 p.m. At The HUB, 5 Summer Dr, Winchendon.

Teen GSA Meeting at the Beals

October 1, 3:30-4:30 p.m. A safe space for teens to meet, exchange information, receive support, socialize, build a community, and talk about issues and concerns related to sexual orientation and gender identity and expression. At Beals Memorial Library, 50 Pleasant St, Winchendon..

Teen Night at the HUB

October 25, 5:00-9:00 p.m. At the Winchendon Community HUB, 5 Summer Dr.

Teen Dungeons & Dragons

October 7 & 21, 3:30-5:00 p.m. This is for kids in grades 8-12. Membership is limited, contact the library to sign up. At Beals Memorial Library, 50 Pleasant St, Winchendon.

Beals Memorial Library 50 Pleasant St, Winchendon 978-297-0300 bealslibrary.org	Winchendon American Legion Post #193 295 School St., Winchendon 978-297-0754
Old Murdock Senior Center 52 Murdock Ave, Winchendon 978-297-3155 facebook.com/oldmurdock	G.A.R. Park Grove St and Murdock Ave, Winchendon Winchendon Community Park 86 Ingleside Dr, Winchendon Winchendon Parks & Rec, 978-297-5410 facebook.com/Winchparksandrec
The HUB / Winchendon CAC 5 Summer Dr, Winchendon 978-287-1667 www.the-hub.org facebook.com/winchendoncac	Murdock Middle High School 3 Memorial Dr, Winchendon 978-297-1256 www.winchendonk12.org
UU Church of Winchendon 126 Central St, Winchendon 978-297-0554 uucw.ncmuuc.org	Clark Memorial YMCA 155 Central St 978-297-9622 www.theclarkymca.org
Immaculate Heart of Mary Church 52 Spruce St, Winchendon 978-297-0280 www.heartofmary.net	

Check out the full online town directory at winchendoncourier.net/directory.htm and the online community calendar at winchendoncourier.net/index.html#connector

Town Events

Fall Fest 2025

October 11, 10:00 a.m.- 10:00 a.m.- 5:00 p.m. On Central Street from CVS to Cumberland Farms—Live bands, bounce house, face painting, food trucks, local artists' performances, kids' activities, local restaurants. Over 150 vendors! Goes on rain or shine.

Food and Meals

Our Neighbor’s Kitchen Dinner

October 2, 5:15 p.m. at Immaculate Heart of Mary Church. Served in the Parish Hall. This week the menu is Italian dinner by Sue Cheries. Free-will donation \$2 per person, \$5 per family; no one turned away. 52 Spruce Street, Winchendon.

Vet to Vet Cafe

October 14, 10:00-11:00 a.m. Are you a Veteran looking to connect with fellow vets and share experiences from your time in service? Join us for coffee, refreshments, and meaningful discussions with others who have served. Open to all Veterans in the local community. 2nd Tuesday of each month. At Broadview Assisted Living, 547 Central St, Winchendon.

Our Neighbor’s Kitchen Dinner

October 9, 23 & 30, 5:30 p.m. at UU Church of Winchendon. Dinner will be served in the Parish Hall; take-out available after indoor diners are served. Free-will donation \$2 per person, \$5 per family; no one turned away. 126 Central Street.

Taste of Home Lunch

October 25, 11:00 a.m. Share in a home-style lunch cooked in the Old Murdock kitchen, and celebrate July birthdays! At Old Murdock Senior Center, 52 Murdock Ave., Winchendon..

Congregate Lunch

Mon-Thur, 11:00 a.m. \$3 suggested donation. Call the day before to reserve a lunch. At the Old Murdock Senior Center, 52 Murdock Ave., Winchendon. 978-297-3155.

Lunch and Free Bowling for Seniors

Fridays, 10:30 a.m.- 12:30 p.m. Please call 978-297-3155 at least 24 hours in advance to reserve a lunch. Bowling is free for all seniors 55+. At the Winchendon Community HUB, 5 Summer Dr, Winchendon.

Winchendon Farmers Market

Saturdays, 10:00 a.m.- 1:00 p.m. At G.A.R. Park, Murdock Ave & Grove St., Winchendon. Rain or shine! Moves inside Old Murdock Senior Center next to park if it's rainy.

Growing Places Mobile Market

October 21, 10:30-11:30 a.m. Fresh local produce. SNAP and HIP accepted. at Old Murdock Senior Center, 52 Murdock Ave, Winchendon.

Entertainment

Movie Night at the Park - *Inside Out 2*

October 3, 7:00 p.m. Join us for a fun-filled evening under the stars! Screening tonight: Inside Out 2. Gates open at 7:00 p.m., movie starts at 7:30 p.m. Free to all! Bring your blankets, snacks, and your whole crew for a family-friendly movie night you won't forget! Sponsored by Winchendon Parks & Recreation. At Winchendon Community Park, 86 Ingleside Dr.

Winchendon Music Festival - Chris Moyse, singer-songwriter & Floyds Row (folk/newgrass)

October 3, 7:00 p.m. Chris Moyse, singer-songwriter: <https://chrismoysemusic.com> Folk collective, Floyds Row, explores the connections among early, classical, folk, newgrass, and world genres—works arranged and/or composed by Hailey Fuqua (soprano), Asako Takeuchi (violin), Jacques Lee Wood (violoncello & banjo), Andrew Arceci (bass & mandolin), George Lykogiannis (accordion & piano), and Mike Williams (percussion). At The Flower Shop, 172 Central St. Winchendon.

Winchendon Music Festival - Worcester Jazz Orchestra (jazz)

October 4, 2:00 p.m. Ever popular, the big band plays works by Glenn Miller (1904-c.1944), Buddy Rich (1917-1987), and others. At UU Church of Winchendon, 126 Central St.

Organ Concert with Guest Artist Peter Sykes

October 5, 4:00 p.m. at UU Church of Winchendon. Internationally renowned pipe organist Peter Sykes will perform a concert of classical music on the church's 1868 E.& C.G. Hook pipe organ. Selections include works by Bach, Mendelssohn, Vierne and Price. Free admission; Mr. Sykes appears courtesy of a grant from the Winchendon Cultural Council. Refreshments sold. 126 Central Street.

Denis Cormier Concert

October 9, 10:45 a.m. At Old Murdock Senior Center, 52 Murdock Ave, Winchendon.

Corey McLane at the Snowbound Club

October 10, 7:00-10:00 p.m. 8:00-11:00 p.m. Come listen to this talented artist at the Snowbound Club! No cover charge and cash bar available. Hope to see you there. At the Snowbound Club, 130 Baldwinville Rd, Winchendon.

Autumn Sunset Social

October 11, 6:00-10:00 p.m. Savor the Flavors of Fall! Celebrate the beauty of autumn with Sunset Socials in an evening filled with festive food, cozy drinks, and seasonal fun! Enjoy a fusion of the season's best farm flavors - Savor pumpkin-inspired treats & fall beverages - Indulge in delicious festive foods - Enter the costume contest and show off your fall flair - Gather your friends, wear your best autumn attire, and join us for a magical fall evening under the sunset sky. To Register & For More Information see <https://www.sunsetsocialsma.com/event/autumn-sunset-social-5/register>. Sponsored by Winchendon Community Park and Winchendon Parks & Recreation. Questions? contact info@farmingislife.org or richypena@yahoo.com. At Winchendon Community Park, 86 Ingleside Dr.

Movie Night at the Beals

October 16, 6:00-9:30 p.m. Screening this month: *28 Days Later*. At Beals Memorial Library, 50 Pleasant St, Winchendon.

Haunted Happenings at Winchendon Community Park

October 18, 4:00-10:00 p.m. Join us for a spooktacular night of family fun as Haunted Happenings returns—bigger and better than ever! Costumes, candy, creepy fun... we've got it all! Trunk or Treat with the YMCA
Live DJ & Halloween Games
Haunted Trails after dark (enter if you dare!)
Unicorn Rides by Hyridge Farm
Food Trucks & Local Vendors
Hayrides from Murdock Farm
Petting Zoo by Animal Craze
Costumes encouraged. Fun guaranteed.
Tag your boo crew and we'll see you there!
Sponsored by Winchendon Parks and Recreation. At Winchendon Community Park, 86 Ingleside Dr.

Classic Movie Night at the Beals

October 22, 3:00-5:30 p.m. Screening this month: *The Exorcist*. At Beals Memorial Library, 50 Pleasant St, Winchendon.

Funny for Food Comedy Fundraiser

October 25, 7:00 p.m. A comedy night to benefit Winchendon CAC at The Hub! Cash bar, raffles, 50/50 drawing, auctions. Comedy is rated “PG”. Bring Your Own Snacks. All proceeds help to feed our community! \$20 per person, get tickets at <https://www.funny4funds.com/events/funny-for-food-a-comedy-fundraiser-to-benefit-winchendon-cac-at-the-hub/1645>. At Winchendon American Legion Post #193, 295 School St.

Winchendon News

GALA Has “Grand” 25th Anniversary Celebration at Old Murdock

The Gardner Area League of Artists’ 25th Anniversary “bash” at the beautiful historic Old Murdock building was grand. Deb Giordano, president of GALA, stated, “We thank the town for allowing us to host our event in this building that showcases its beautiful wood architecture. It was delightful to be in this building in celebrating the arts and music and supporting the community at 52 Murdock Ave. I hope to see other organizations sponsor events in this beautiful space in Winchendon.”

The second floor gallery room was filled with affordable art. The art gallery will still be open displaying original art until October 30. Residents can come and visit the gallery during Senior Center open hours or by appointment.

The bash, which ran from 12:00 noon until 3:00 p.m., featured live music, a kids’ hands-on art activity table, artists’ trunk sales, an ice-cream buffet table, raffles – there was something for everyone.

A warm thank you to all the following businesses for supporting GALA to continue our mission promoting artists and the arts in Gardner and surrounding communities. Our generous donors and supporters included Red Apple Farm, Murdock Dairy Farm, Theatre at the Mount, Gardner Ale House, Fitchburg Art Museum, Sippin Serendipity Coffee Cafe,

Smith Country Cheese, Creative Connections, Dominoe’s Pizza, Walmart, Surroundings Gallery Custom Framing and more.

We thank the musicians from “Sounds Bites” for providing a pleasing lineup of musicians: Brian Dickens, Franco O’Malley and Kate and Ashley.

Thank you to all who were able to join us in celebration. Our art show in the gallery will stay up till October 30. If you are interested in purchasing a piece of art, call 978-407-1419 and we can arrange to meet. If anyone would like to have a solo art show in the gallery, contact us. If you are interested in becoming a GALA member, visit our website, www.GalaGardner.org, to sign up. You may also sign up for our monthly e-newsletter and receive our emails of upcoming shows, events, and a variety of art classes for all ages. Follow us on Facebook (www.facebook.com/GalaGardner) where we publish our events. Contact GALA at info@galagardner.org

GALA was organized to promote the arts as an essential component of a healthy community. We believe that artistic expression is a community’s greatest legacy for future generations. GALA will increase awareness and appreciation of the arts by way of exhibits, instruction, musical programs, and poetry.



Photos courtesy of Deb Giordano

Regional News and Events

All Aboard: Comerford debuts videos focused on benefits of restarting Northern Tier Passenger Rail

(Route Two, Massachusetts)—Senator Jo Comerford (D-Northampton) has debuted All Aboard, a series of five videos featuring local officials and advocates from western and north central Massachusetts discussing the multiple benefits of restarting Northern Tier Passenger Rail.

Northern Tier Passenger Rail would connect North Adams with Greenfield, Athol, Fitchburg, and Boston along the Route 2 Corridor. In November 2024, MassDOT completed and released a Northern Tier Passenger Rail feasibility study, required under legislation that Comerford filed and passed into law in partnership with Representative Natalie Blais.



- All Aboard features commentary from the following:
- Ben Heckscher, Co-Founder, Trains in the Valley
 - Linda Dunlavy, Executive Director, Franklin Regional Council of Governments

- Shaun Suhoski, Town Manager, Athol
- Jessye Deane, Executive Director, Franklin County Chamber of Commerce & Regional Tourism Bureau
- Andrew Fitch, City Council Member, North Adams

Comerford released All Aboard to continue building momentum for Northern Tier Passenger Rail and to support MassDOT’s application to the Federal Railroad Administration’s Corridor Identification and Development (Corridor ID) Program, which is the next necessary positive advance for Northern Tier Passenger Rail.

The All Aboard videos can be found at https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLsZi3-6az3qaHZ3_z0Fso28deWJknm3xw. Each video focuses on a different aspect of why restarting the Northern Tier Passenger Rail would benefit local communities in western and north central Massachusetts, as well as the Commonwealth overall. Lily Frank, a public policy fellow from UMass Amherst working in Comerford’s office, developed and filmed the series, which takes place on train platforms and rail yards in the region.

“There is a strong, shared understanding that restarting Northern Tier Passenger Rail service will strengthen our municipal and regional economies, increase viable transportation access and relieve traffic burdens along Route 2 and other west/east routes for the region, arrest debilitating population decline, and help protect our environment,” noted Comerford.

Second Chance Animal Services Rescues 26 Golden Retrievers from Neglect Case

EAST BROOKFIELD, MA, September 23, 2025—Last month, Second Chance Animal Services took in 26 Golden Retrievers, including three mother dogs and their 23 puppies, rescued from a breeder now facing animal cruelty charges for neglect. The dogs were discovered living in deplorable conditions before being brought to safety.

It’s believed that the mother dogs had never even been outside before their rescue. Everyday experiences most pets take for granted, such as walking on grass, climbing stairs, or exploring new spaces, were completely foreign to them. They arrived timid, fearful, and in need of patient, compassionate care. “The moms came to us with very limited interactions and life experiences, but little by little they are learning what it means to feel safe and loved,” said Second Chance’s Chief Development Officer Lindsay Doray. “We gave these precious families time away from the spotlight to heal and ensure they were healthy before sharing their story, and it is heartwarming to see the progress they are making.”

The puppies, just under two weeks old at the time of rescue, were placed in foster homes with the mother dogs, where they have been receiving around-the-clock care. After weeks of nurturing, the puppies are

now thriving and expected to be ready for adoption beginning September 27 at 10am. Some will be attending puppy yoga at Timberyard Brewing on Saturday as well to help raise funds for their medical care.

The rescue of these Golden Retrievers is expected to cost more than \$15,000, covering long-term foster care, food, supplies, and medical treatment, including spay and neuter for all. According to CEO and founder Sheryl Blancato, this is just one example of the many rescues Second Chance undertakes every day. “Far more stories of pets rescued come through our doors than can ever be shared publicly, but each one receives the same dedication and care,” noted Blancato. The nonprofit is asking the community for help covering these expenses so they can continue to respond to animals in crisis. Donations can be made at <https://GiveButter.com/GoldenRescue>

For those interested in adopting one of the goldens, Second Chance expects Saturday to be a very busy day. Prospective adopters are strongly encouraged to fill out an adoption survey in advance at www.secondchanceanimals.org/adopt and to be patient with staff and volunteers. All adoptions will be handled on a first-come, first-served basis.

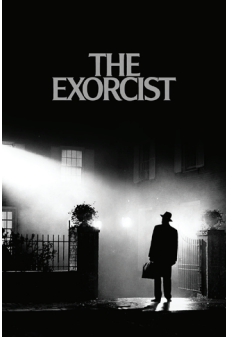
Beals Memorial Library Hosts Two Scary Movie Nights in October!

Thur, October 16
6:30 p.m.



**FREE
ADMISSION!**
**50 Pleasant St,
Winchendon**
**Shown in 2nd
floor auditorium.**
**Call 978-297-0300
for more info**

Wed, October 22
3:00 p.m.



Serial: A “Killer” Immersive Haunted House Experience Like No Other

This Halloween, fear gets personal.

Step inside the Murdock Whitney Mansion where history’s darkest minds come alive. From Jeffrey Dahmer’s kitchen to John Wayne Gacy’s clown lair, from Dexter’s kill room to Nurse Ratched’s ward—you’ll walk through the twisted corridors of real and fictional serial killers, brought to life in excruciating detail.

This year, we’re trading jump scares for something far more disturbing: psychological horror. Flickering lights. Rotting smells. Unnerving silences. Unhinged whispers in the dark.

You won’t just scream—you’ll squirm. Can you survive the mind of a killer?

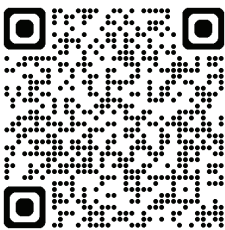
Fearless risk-takers can seek their thrills on Thursday, October 23, Friday, October 24, or Saturday, October 25, 7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. each night.

Now through September 30, tickets are \$20 in advance, \$30 at the door. Starting October 1, tickets will be \$25 in advance, \$30 at the door. Purchase your tickets online at <https://bit.ly/whcc-tix> or scan the QR code.

- Warning:**
- No children under 14.
 - Intense psychological themes, disturbing imagery, and smells.
 - May be too *real* for some guests.

At the Winchendon History and Cultural Center, 151 Front St, Winchendon, MA 01475

Proceeds support the preservation of three historic properties maintained by the WHCC. This volunteer-run event helps keep Winchendon’s past alive—even if that past is filled with shadows.



DPW Will be Tidying Up Cemeteries

(September 11, 2025) — The Department of Public Works (DPW) will begin removing any decorations, objects, or plantings that extend beyond the permitted space around cemetery monuments. Families and loved ones are encouraged to collect any items they wish to keep within the next month.

After this period, the DPW will temporarily place removed items outside the cemetery for an additional month to allow for retrieval. Any items not collected by the end of that time will be respectfully discarded.

This policy is necessary to ensure the safety of cemetery staff and visitors, maintain accessibility, and preserve the dignity of the grounds. We appreciate the community’s cooperation in helping to keep the cemetery a safe and respectful place for all.

A copy of the Towns Cemetery Rules and Regulations can be found on the Town website.

Regional News and Events

Gardening

Add a Fall Display to Your Garden, Front Steps or Balcony



An autumn display of mums, straw bales, pumpkin and ornamental squash dress up this landscape.

Photo courtesy of MelindaMyers.com

by Melinda Myers

Cooler temperatures signal a change of seasons and an opportunity to add some fall décor to the landscape. Garden centers are filled with fall favorites like pumpkins, ornamental squash, pansies, mums, asters and more. Don't stop there, look for new ways to add a bit of fall to your front steps, balcony and garden beds.

Set the stage with small or large straw bales. They make nice backdrops and stands for potted plants, pumpkins, decorative squash and more. Once fall has passed, use them for winter mulch in garden beds and insulation for hardy plants overwintering in containers outdoors. Or save them for next summer to use as garden mulch or convert them into a straw bale garden.

Use corn stalks and broom corn to frame an entryway or add vertical interest in the garden. Secure them to a nearby post, tree trunk or sink a stake in the garden to use as a support.

Set pumpkins and large ornamental squash in the garden among perennials or to cover fading summer annuals. Place a few small pumpkins or gourds in containers or hanging baskets that are getting a bit thin on top. You'll enjoy the added color and fall décor they provide.

Look for other ways to include pumpkins in your fall landscape. Remove the top, scoop out the inside, add some drainage holes and use it for a planter. Fill the pumpkin with a potting mix and plant or set a potted plant inside. Trailing pansies like cool wave pansies, small mums and asters, ornamental cabbage, or other fall favorites work well. When the plants fade and winter arrives, you'll have a biodegradable pot ready for the compost pile.

Stack a few pumpkins or squash, one on top of the other, for added vertical interest. Or stack and fill baskets, pots and colanders and fill each layer with pumpkins and gourds. Add a few fall leaves or American bittersweet to the display.

Carve an opening in the side of your pumpkin and scoop out the insides. Create a fall or Halloween display or gnome house. Use faux moss, figurines and your imagination.

Welcome family and guests with a basket or container of dried plant material collected from your landscape. Scour your landscape for trees and shrubs with colorful berries. Collect a few flowering stems of ornamental grasses, dried flowers, and seedpods. Include some interesting twists to the arrangement with corkscrew willow, Harry Lauder's Walking stick or grape vines. Anything that looks good in the garden will add to your arrangement's beauty.

Wire the stems together and secure onto a wire basket. Or secure your arrangement in pots and baskets that drain. Use chicken wire at the bottom and criss crossed wires over the top of the container to form a secure base for the arrangement. Add a few rocks in the bottom, if needed, for a counterweight. Avoid windy locations that may topple or destroy your creation.

Once your display is in place, relax and enjoy a cup of hot cider or cocoa. Then start planning for your winter garden display.

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

Financial Focus®

Financial tips for first-time college student

Sending your child to college is an exciting milestone filled with new experiences, friendships and opportunities for them to grow. For many families, it's also the first time your student will be managing their own money independently.

The good news is that helping your child develop smart money habits doesn't have to be overwhelming. With a few simple strategies, you can guide them to take control of their finances and avoid common pitfalls that trip up many college students.

Start with a budget. Creating a budget might sound boring, but it's instrumental in helping your student take control of their finances. Many people use the 50/30/20 rule, which calls for putting 50% of income toward needs, 30% toward wants and 20% toward savings and other financial goals. So, if your child has \$1,000 per month from financial aid, work or family support, they'd spend \$500 on essentials like textbooks and food, \$300 on fun activities and \$200 on savings or paying down debt.

Encourage them to track their spending and subtract anything they pay out from their total monthly funds. This helps them know exactly how much money they have at any given time. There are plenty of free apps to help monitor expenses, or they can simply use a notebook to write down what they spend each day.

Guide them toward smart credit habits. That first credit card in college can be both exciting and scary for parents. The key is helping students understand how to use credit wisely by paying off their balance on time every month. This helps build a positive credit history that will help them qualify for better rates on car loans, apartments and eventually a home mortgage.

Make sure your student understands that credit cards aren't free money. It takes discipline to charge only what they can afford to pay off completely when the bill arrives. Otherwise, late fees and interest charges can be substantial.

Pay attention to everyday expenses. College life doesn't have to break the bank. Remind your child to take advantage of student discounts available at restaurants, clothing and grocery stores and entertainment venues.

Help them set spending limits for discretionary categories like entertainment, dining out and personal expenses. Here's where that budget can help set clear limits to prevent overspending. It's easier to say no to that expensive coffee or designer clothing when they know it would put them over their weekly limit.

Think about the future. While it might seem early to worry about life after college, making smart financial moves now can benefit them later. If your student has loans, consider encouraging them to make small payments while they're still in school, even though they're not required to do so. This reduces the amount of interest that builds up over time. Encourage an emergency fund, even if they can only save \$25 per week. Having money set aside can give them flexibility after graduation, whether they want to move to a new city for a job, take time to travel, purchase a used car or pursue graduate school.

Teaching your child to manage money in college isn't just about helping them survive until graduation. The habits they develop now will shape their financial future for decades to come. By guiding them to start with a simple budget, use credit responsibly and make thoughtful spending choices, you're helping set the stage for success in college and beyond.



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Winchendon News

Great Weather and Classic Cars Add Up to Another Successful Event at Winchendon Community Park

by Inanna Arthen

Vintage car owners, vendors and residents who enjoy classic rock were blessed with perfect weather on Saturday, August 23 as they gathered at the Winchendon Community Park from 3:00 to 8:00 p.m. for the Parks & Recreation event “Classic Cruise Night.”

Although the cars stood still rather than “cruisin’” like the teens in *American Graffiti*, they were arranged on the game field by the amphitheater with no barriers, allowing visitors to get up close and examine the immense hard work, love and personal investment their owners put into keeping them maintained and in mint condition. Many of the cars had their hoods wide open to display their pristine and well-tuned engines—some of them nearly 100 years old. All of them were still running and some sported current state inspection stickers.

Cars ranged from several 1930s models, complete with running boards, to long sleek sedans from the 1960s. The owner of a glossy, showroom-quality ivory-colored 1965 Plymouth Fury coupe told the *Courier* that it had been his grandfather’s car—and it was still on the road.

Ivan Cormier from Gardner told WinchendonTV, “This is a 1941 Willys coupe. I actually bought this car about a year ago out in Ontario Canada, and had it shipped to Massachusetts. What caught my attention was that it was a composite body on this car with a race car frame. So it’s all tube construction with an old hemi engine in it with a dual quad, they call it...a Willys coupe was always my favorite car. I’ve liked that since I was a teenager...I just never thought I’d own one.” Mr. Cormier just bought a second Willys coupe. “I bought another Willys coupe that’s coming out of Canada. Wasn’t part of the plan. I had no intentions on buying it. It’s a car that I’ve been looking at probably close to a year, and it just came available, and I just bought it. So now I’m just waiting for it to be shipped to my house.”



Ivan Cormier’s 1941 Willys coupe. The Willys cars, made until 1942, were stylish and affordable. Some models were called “Americars”
Photo by Inanna Arthen



Something Elliot Ness might have driven—a 1932 Ford sedan
Photo by Inanna Arthen

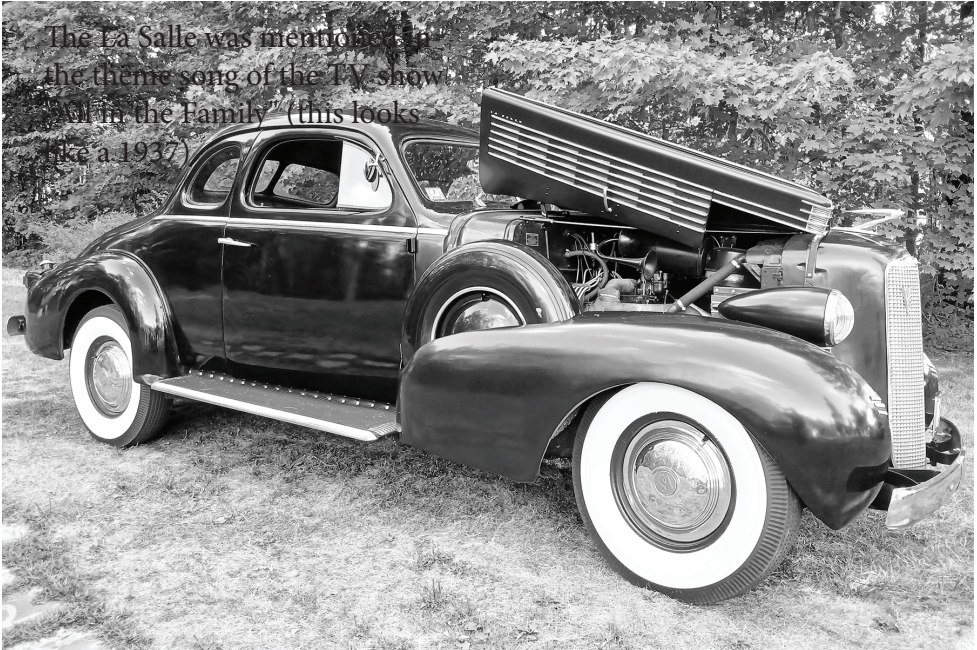
He added, “I also have a 1937 Ford coupe. I have two 1940 Ford coupes. I have a ‘55 Ford panel truck. I have a ‘39 Ford coupe, and I have a ‘55 Chevy Bel Air...it’s one of those things that you don’t buy these because you need them. You buy them because you like them and you want them.”

Dave Allen, owner of a two-toned Volkswagen Beetle, told Winchendon TV, “This is Lady Tremaine. Okay, anybody knows who that is? She was evil until she got her name. Now that she’s named, she’s calmed down. It’s a 1963 Volkswagen with a rat factory ragtop car, meaning the big hole in the roof came like that from Volkswagen. This was the last year they did it, which is the reason we saved the car. Car originally came off the road in 1984 after a tree branch fell on it, kids and I got it about twenty years afterwards and restored it. It was built by myself, my daughter, who is now 14, and my son who is now 12, took us two years start to finish.”

Along with the cars, attendees enjoyed classic oldies played by the Fred Ellsworth Band and the Reminisants. Numerous vendors and organizations included local crafters, Home Fruit Wine, an information table about becoming adoptive parents, the Parks & Rec table, and the Youth Changemakers selling food and beverages. Maddy’s Ice Cream truck offered ice cream treats. Kids were doing sidewalk chalk art on the walks at the top of the amphitheater tiers.

The volunteers at the gate told the *Courier* that by about 6:00 p.m., they had seen 119 adults buying tickets, along with about 50 kids and some 70 car owners and vendors. More folks were still arriving and the overflow parking in the soccer field had at least two rows of cars.

The Classic Cars on display gave Winchendonians a fascinating historical snapshot of one of America’s most unquenchable loves and defining technologies: the automobile.



The La Salle was mentioned in the theme song of the TV show “All in the Family” (this looks like a 1937)
Photo by Inanna Arthen

Advertise in the Winchendon Courier!

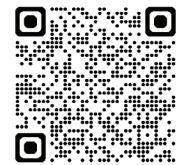
The *Winchendon Courier* Online is uploaded every Thursday night and reaches hundreds of Winchendon readers every week. The monthly print edition of the *Winchendon Courier* has a press run of 500 and an uptake of over 90 percent. The press run will be increased as circulation and demand grow.

If you’re a business owner, entrepreneur, local organization or individual, contact us for information about display ad requirements and rates. We offer:

- Free ad design services for our paying advertisers, if desired
- Discounted annual rate for advertisers who commit to a full year of weekly ads
- Automatic placement of their ad in the monthly print addition, at no extra charge, for advertisers who place their ad for a full month in the online edition
- A range of sizes from business card to (in the print edition) full page
- Flexibility—if you have questions about formatting or dimensions, contact us.

For a rate card, more information or questions, contact:

editor@winchendoncourier.net



Read the Winchendon Courier Online Every Week!
News, events, police logs, obituaries, community directory
and archives of every previous issue back to September, 2019
winchendoncourier.net

Read it on your
phone!

Uploaded every
Thursday night

Town Committee Monthly Meetings by Week
All Meetings in Town Hall

week	MON	TUE	WED	THUR
1st	Communications Committee 4:30pm Board of Health 6:00pm	Planning Board 6:00pm		School Committee 6:00pm
2nd	Board of Selectmen 6:30pm	Finance Committee 7:00pm	Agricultural Commission 7:00pm	Conservation Commission 6:00pm
3rd		Planning Board 6:00pm	Winchendon Redevelopment Authority 5:00pm Zoning Board of Appeals 7:00pm	School Committee 6:00pm
4th	Board of Selectmen 6:30pm			

Agendas, minutes and meeting recordings available on the Town website at www.townofwinchendon.com/129/AGENDAS-MINUTES, as well as on the pages for each Board or Committee.

Boards may cancel or change times for meetings, or add extra meetings, based on specific business at hand. Check the Town Meetings Calendar on the town website, www.townofwinchendon.com.

Take the TOY TOWN TROLLEY On Saturdays! FREE!

Beginning on Saturday, January 11, the Toy Town Trolley will be making three circuits around Winchendon and up to the Rindge shopping areas every Saturday. Rides are FREE to all residents! This service is funded by a grant from the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) and sponsored by the Town of Winchendon, the Winchendon CAC, the Winchendon Council on Aging and the Winchendon CCAP Task Force.

Each circuit will start at Hyde Park and stop at the end of Pearl Drive, the Town Hall bus shelter, Dollar Tree Plaza, the YMCA/GFA bus shelter, CVS, the fire station bus shelter, Ipswich Drive, the end of Ready Drive, the end of Goodrich Drive and the Winchendon Community Park. From there the trolley will head up 202 (so you don't have to!) and stop to let off shoppers at Tractor Supply, Market Basket/Marshalls, Walmart and Hannaford. It then returns to Not Just Produced and Sippin' Serendipity and immediately starts its next circuit with Hyde Park. Shoppers who were let off on the first through fourth circuits can reboard the trolley for home when it returns.

The first circuit starts at Hyde Park at 9:15 a.m. and the last circuit leaves Hannaford at 2:51 p.m.

For a grid of the complete updated schedule with times, see https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/u/0/d/1E0NiGrFeB_wtjV61TCosVYm0p-5g4dKQ6vExvOrI9288/htmlview. For a map of the route, see bit.ly/3W9g-GYG. Printed copies are available at the Senior Center (52 Murdock Ave), Winchendon CAC/The Hub (5 Summer Dr), the Clark YMCA (155 Central St) and Not Just Produced (290 Central St).

If you have questions, concerns or suggestions, contact winchendon-ccap@gmail.com or call 978-297-3155.

Town Street List and 2024 Town Reports Available

Copies of the 2025 Winchendon Street List of Residents are available at the Town Clerk's office in Winchendon Town Hall, 109 Front St. The cost is \$17 each, \$14 for seniors.

Report a Pothole to the DPW

You can report potholes directly to the DPW using this form on the town website:
www.townofwinchendon.com/FormCenter/Public-Works-6/Report-a-Pothole-50

Winchendon Lions Want to Welcome You!

The Winchendon Lions meet at the Winchendon American Legion Post 193, 295 School St., downstairs hall, 7:00 p.m.

Meetings are on the third Tuesday of each month, September through June. Dues are used for all Administrative cost, which is why we can say "All money received through fundraisers go back to the community, eye research, or other natural disasters around the world!"

Feel free to join us and try it out. We would love to see you!

If you have any questions feel free to call Joni 978-297-2753. Please leave a message if no answer!

"WHERE THERE'S A NEED, THERE IS A LION"

Town Committee Vacancies as of August 5, 2025

If you'd like to be an active participant in decision-making and management for your community, consider joining a town committee or board. There are a number of vacancies currently open.

Agricultural Commission - 1 vacancy, 3 alternate vacancies
Board of Health - 1 vacancy
Charter/Bylaw Review Committee - 1 vacancy
Communications Committee - 1 vacancy
Conservation Commission - 2 vacancies
Council on Aging - 3 vacancies
Cultural Council - 8 vacancies
Fence Viewer and Field Driver - 1 vacancy
Historical District Commission - 1 alternate vacancy
Parks & Recreation Commission - 2 vacancies, 1 high school rep vacancy
Winchendon Commission on Disabilities - 1 vacancy
Zoning Board of Appeals - 1 alternate vacancy

If you'd like more information about any of these positions or are interested in being considered for an appointment, contact the Town Manager's office at 978-297-0085, or send a letter of interest to ddennis@winchendon-ma.gov or Town Manager, 109 Front Street Dept. 1, Winchendon MA 01475.

For a description of each board or committee, see: www.townofwinchendon.com/DocumentCenter/View/440/Selectmen-Appointed-Boards-and-Committees-July-2024-PDF (PDF).

Fire Department Offering Free COVID-19 Test Kits to Residents

To all Winchendon residents, the Winchendon Fire Department has been able to secure multiple boxes of COVID-19 home test kits at no cost through a program with MA State DPH. Feel free to stop by the station and pick up what you need for you and your family. Here at WFD we will continue to search for ways to bring any additional care possible to our residents. The Fire Department is located at 405 Central St, Winchendon, and the business phone number is 978-297-2324.

Senior Workoff Program Applications for FY26 Available on Town Website

Applications for the Senior Property Tax Work-Off program for FY26 (July 1, 2025 to June 30, 2026) are now available at www.townofwinchendon.com/civicalerts.aspx?aid=40.

This program allows eligible senior citizens to do odd jobs for the town in exchange for an offset in their property taxes. The credit is equivalent to \$15 per hour for a maximum of \$1,100 per household during the fiscal year.

To qualify, a senior must be at least 60 years old, own and occupy a home in Winchendon, have an annual income of less than \$40,150 if single or a combined household income of less than \$45,900 if married, have transportation to work, and be able to work during regular business hours of 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Applications for the program are now available in the Town Manager's office and on the town website at <https://www.townofwinchendon.com/documentcenter/view/226>, and will be accepted until the ten (10) slots are filled. There are different types of positions that are available depending on preference and qualifications of the resident and the needs of each department.

Types of past and current positions have been: Custodial services, clerical help for both School & Town, Library Aides, Senior Center Aides, Cable Station Operator, Bike Path Clean up, Painting, Light Outdoor Work and Classroom Volunteers.

Please contact the Town Manager's Office at (978) 297-5431 or ddennis@winchendon-ma.gov for more information or if you need an application mailed to you.

Questions or Concerns? Email the Town Manager!

A one-click email form has been added to the town website for all residents who would like to contact the Town Manager with concerns and questions about things happening in the community. The direct link is: www.townofwinchendon.com/506/QUESTIONS-COMMENTS-FOR-THE-TOWN-MANAGER

Winchendon Fall Festival 2025
Saturday, October 11
10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

188 vendors have signed up for this year's Fall Fest. Activities include pony rides, the Animal Craze petting zoo, a race track with 1/12 scale racing cars, live music including Winchendon's own The BIG RanDom, and much more! Central Street will be closed to vehicular traffic during the fair.

Winchendon News

White Family Donates Historic Marchmont Property, Expanding Protection of 400 Acres of Winchendon Woodlands

WINCHENDON — Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust is proud to announce the “Marchmont” property, nearly 400 acres of woodlands just west of Lake Monomonic, has been donated to Mount Grace by the White family. The unfragmented forest supports a rich mix of hardwood species and provides vital habitat for native wildlife.

This milestone represents the second chapter of a conservation journey that began in 2012, when the first conservation restriction was placed on Marchmont. “With this agreement, we fulfill that vision and expand it by securing the 11-acre site of the former Marchmont Castle, previously unprotected,” said Emma G. Ellsworth, Executive Director at Mount Grace. “Mount Grace is deeply grateful to the White family for their generosity and to the Town of Winchendon for their partnership. This achievement both honors Winchendon’s heritage and invests in its future.”

“I’m so glad Mount Grace will be caring for this land,” said June Girouard, a Winchendon resident whose family runs the neighboring Murdock Farm. “It’s beautiful here in a way you don’t fully appreciate until you walk the trails. From the road it looks like just fields or woods, but once inside you discover how peaceful it really is.”

With nearly 400 acres of the historic Marchmont property now officially transferred to Mount Grace, the land trust now holds the land as a public resource, with the Town of Winchendon holding a conservation restriction (CR) to ensure its permanent protection. The project really began back in 2011, when the White family and the Town of Winchendon partnered with Mount Grace to protect the first portion of the property. At that time, much of the estate was covered by a conservation restriction, but roughly 11 acres surrounding the site of the historic Marchmont Castle—destroyed by fire and removed in 1955—were excluded from the CR. With this new transfer, those 11 acres are now secured as well and will be managed by Mount

Grace for community events and recreation.

The property sits within the Millers River Watershed and is home to mature woodlands of white pine, red oak, hemlock, and red pine. A long-established network of multi-use trails weaves through the forest, enjoyed for decades by local snowmobile groups and other visitors. Open to the public since 2012, the land will remain accessible. Now, with Mount Grace as its new steward, plans are underway to enhance the trail system with clearer signage and improvements in areas where water or rough terrain can limit access. The newly protected 11-acre parcel includes open fields with exciting potential for community use, offering space for activities such as disc golf, archery, and other outdoor gatherings.

Marchmont Forest was both a key piece of the Southern Monadnock Plateau project—completed in 2012—and a southern link in the larger Quabbin-to-Cardigan Initiative. The land enhances regional conservation connectivity while opening new recreational opportunities for the public.

For generations, the White family has been central to Winchendon’s history, and their dedication to land conservation continues that legacy. Mount Grace is deeply grateful to the White family for their vision and ongoing support, and to the Town of Winchendon for their partnership. The protection of Marchmont is both a celebration of Winchendon’s heritage and a lasting investment in its future.

Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust (Mount Grace) is a non-profit, regional land trust that conserves and cares for our forests, farms, and waterways to promote healthy communities in climate-resilient, biodiverse landscapes. They serve 23 towns in central and western Massachusetts and are Land Trust Alliance certified. To find out more about Mount Grace, visit mountgrace.org.



Exploring the recently donated Marchmont property on a group hike co-hosted by Mount Grace and the Winchendon Historical Society.
Photo courtesy of Mount Grace

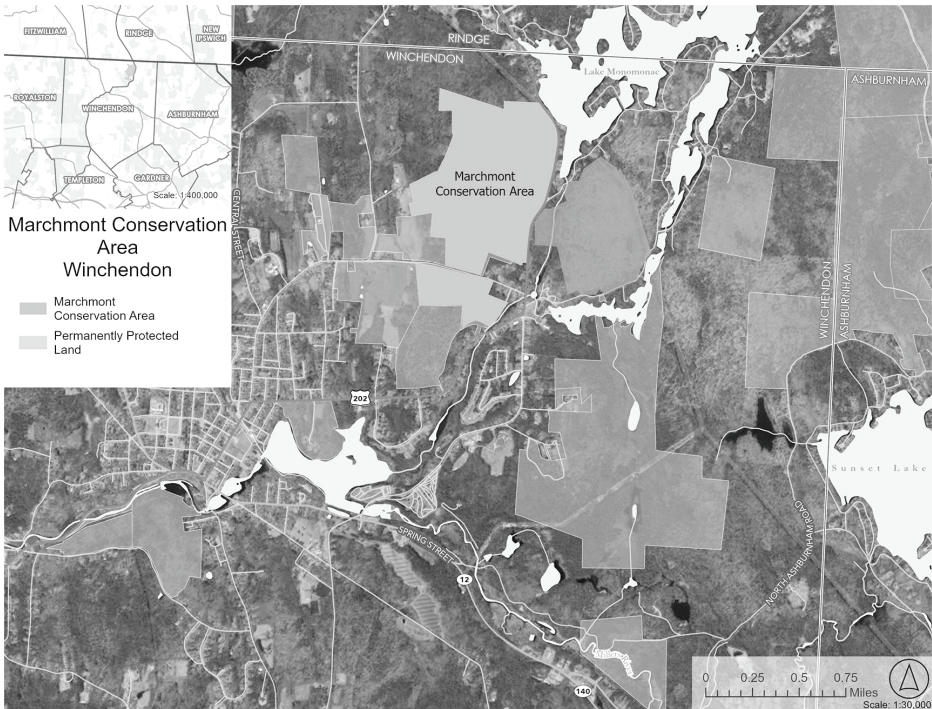


Photo courtesy of Mount Grace



WINCHENDON FALL FESTIVAL

Central Street, Winchendon

Saturday, October 11 • 10am–5pm, rain or shine

Live bands Bounce House/Face Painting Food Trucks
Local Artists Performances Kids’ Activities Over 150+ vendors

Local Restaurants

www.TownofWinchendon.com
facebook.com/Winchendon-Fall-Festival-2285999178280306
Ad Sponsored by the Winchendon Redevelopment Authority



Pie Baking Contest
Submit Pies 10:00 - Noon

Pie Eating Contest
11:30 Ages 7-12
12:30 Ages 12-18
1:30 Adults

Free Kids Pumpkin Painting

Giant Soft Pretzels

The November print edition of The Winchendon Courier will go to press on Tuesday, October 28 at noon. Content for that edition must be received by the publisher by Sunday, October 26.