

Town Auditor Report to Tri-Board Meeting Finds Errors in the Town's Favor



Auditor Tony Roselli addresses the Board of Selectmen, Finance Committee and School Committee

Photo copyright Town of Winchendon

by Inanna Arthen

On Monday, October 6, the Tri-Board Meeting of the Board of Selectmen, Finance Committee and School Committee convened to hear the annual audit report from auditor Tony Roselli of Roselli, Clark & Associates, which has done Winchendon's annual financial

audit for the last 15 years or so. This year's report included some surprises. It appears that Winchendon has not been diligent in keeping track of, and going after, funds that it does have or should be collecting. The resulting gap potentially is around \$4 million for the town, although Mr. Roselli emphasized that

it's not as though \$4 million was just sitting out there. Much of this, for example, consists of uncollected taxes which are delinquent for many different reasons.

Mr. Roselli told the Boards that the report doesn't impact the town's bond rating, but it does go to the state, and some parts of the report go to the federal government. Mostly, he said, "It's more of an internal report for you folks to read it and basically use it as an educational tool to improve the town."

Mr. Roselli began with what he explained are "informational items" or observations in the report. In order of severity, these are controlled deficiency, significant deficiency and material weakness. Fraud prevention was a top concern for him. "What I'd like to see in this town, which we haven't seen in a while, is just a check and balance back to the departments," he said. "So either the Town Accountant or the Treasurer should have a process in place where when receipts are turned over for a quarter, you should be able to tally that up for the quarter, go back to the department

and see what sort of records they have—reconcile that back and see what type of procedures they have in place. Also, for the Treasurer's office, the Treasurer should be going back to those departments to see how they store their cash before they turn it in. The checks and cash, is it in a drawer? Is it in a safe? Where is it and how often do they turn it in? So these are just simple procedures that should be done throughout the year by the Treasurer and the Town Accountant. With all the turnover and all the other problems that have been happening in this town, I don't see that process being done enough, so that's something I would definitely like to see the town implement as an internal control."

Mr. Roselli then moved on to the Treasurer-Collector and Town Accountant's offices. He found a large variance—"large" meaning around \$450,000—due to accounts not being reconciled. It's a "positive variance," meaning it's in the town's favor.

To explain this, he began, "In

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First Town Informational Session Held at Town Hall

by Inanna Arthen

On Monday, October 20, at 6:00 p.m., town department heads gathered in the Town Hall second floor auditorium to talk about some of what they're working on and answer residents' questions. Sixteen department heads sat in a line in front of the large tables, facing the audience, with about the same number of residents in attendance to hear what they had to say. No one threw any hard questions out, but there were a few inquiries.

The department heads present included Health Agent James Abare, Town Clerk Wendy Stevens, Town Manager Bill McKinney, Town Assessor Bob Heckman, Department of Public Works Director Pat Wood, Beals Memorial Library Director Manuel King, Community Outreach Coordinator Shaina Cunningham, Director of Special Education for the Winchendon Public Schools Kelsey

Garcia, Fire Chief Tom Smith, Building Inspector Rick Germano, Police Lieutenant Kevin Wolski, Planning and Land Use Coordinator Nicole Roberts and Senior Center Director Miranda Jennings.

After Mr. McKinney welcomed everyone in the audience and explained the purpose of the session, the department heads went down the line introducing themselves. Ms. Stevens wanted to remind residents that dog licenses are available, and about the deadlines for voter registration. Mr. Wood talked about various projects around town that are wrapping up for the winter. There were a few questions and some discussion about the Beech Street project and how the town will take easements for things like sidewalks, and also about traffic problems and ways to address them.

Mr. King thanked Winchendon citizens for supporting the override in May so that the library could stay

open. They had record participation in this summer's reading program with 361 people taking part, and an enrollment of 833 total in all the various programs. The library will be getting new lamp posts for the front of the building, but still needs to find an electrician to connect the wiring. Plans are underway to convert some underutilized space on the second floor, adjacent to the Director's office, to an ADA-compliant accessible bathroom.

Ms. Cunningham said that Parks & Recreation events have been very successful, with 4,000 people attending the "Haunted Happening" on October 18 and 1,500 ticket-buyers attending the Irish Festival on September 27. The department is working to "build out and diversify" its offerings.

Chief Smith had handouts about the Fire Station expansion project, but didn't talk too much about that. He said that the department

seriously needs additional paramedics, and they're working on community outreach and ways of getting information out to more residents.

Ms. Roberts discussed the town's electrical grid, saying that it's close to being at maximum capacity, and may keep the town from growing as much as we'd like it to. She also mentioned changes in the laws making it easier to add Accessory Dwelling Units to properties to help alleviate the housing shortage.

The meeting ended just before 7:30 p.m. Mr. McKinney said that he would like to have these meetings on a regular basis, possibly twice a year or each quarter, so that residents would have an opportunity to meet Town Hall staff and department heads around town, and ask questions they might have directly.

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This special print edition of *The Winchendon Courier*, which includes the center "Community Connector" calendar section, is made possible by a grant to the town from the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT). This same grant is also helping to launch Winchendon's new "microtransit system" and update the town website. But it won't keep the newspaper going forever.

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Police Chief Wolski Gives BOS a Presentation on the State of the Police Department

by Inanna Arthen

At the Board of Selectmen's meeting on Monday, September 22, Winchendon Chief of Police Dan Wolski presented an overview of the Winchendon Police Department. Board Chair Andrew Beauvais explained, "the Board has decided that it's beneficial to have our Department heads and/or committees come before us on a regular basis, just so we can keep everybody informed and so we're all on the same page." He thanked Chief Wolski for being the first Department head to appear. The Communications Committee appeared before the Board on Monday, September 8.

Chief Wolski began with the basic staffing of the department. "We have sixteen full time police officers, nine patrolmen, one school resource officer, three sergeants, a lieutenant, one detective and myself," he said. "We currently have no reserve officers, no police part-time police officer," he went on, adding that in the past, the department did have reserve officers.

The Winchendon Regional Communication Center is a regional dispatch center that provides dispatch services not only for the town of Winchendon, but also for the town of Royalston, which includes dispatching police, fire and DPW for both of those towns. "We also receive the 911 calls," he said. "So if you call 911, whether it be from your house phone or from a cell phone, if you're within the confines of Winchendon or Royalston, that's going to be directed right to our dispatch, our PSAP (Public Safety Answer Point)."

Including all types of calls—regular telephone calls, 911 calls, business line, emergency line—the Winchendon Regional Communication Center receives more than 15,000 calls a year (an average of more than 40 per day). "We have five full time dispatchers, one permanent part time, and four per diem dispatchers. Sometimes those numbers ebb and flow for various reasons, but by and large, that's our staffing in that center. So it's really a relatively small team of people that are doing a lot of work," Chief Wolski said.

Lastly, he added, "we also are regional animal control. Winchendon and Templeton regionalized. We employ the staff, which consists of three part-time animal control officers. They're also on call for emergencies, and that schedule rotates, and they answer any call relative to an animal control situation in both the town or the town of Templeton."

Board member Audrey LaBrie asked how many law enforcement officers were recommended for a town of Winchendon's size (about 11,000 people). "I'm glad you asked," Chief Wolski said. "So the FBI did a study a number of years ago, and they said that per

thousand residents, a town should have approximately 2.1 police officers. So if you just do the quick math, that would be over 20 police officers [for Winchendon]. I have a realistic perspective. We're a relatively busy Police Department, and we have a relatively large population compared to the relative size of the police department, so thank you for drawing that to everyone's attention."

Chief Wolski explained that the Department actively supports Community Policing Initiatives. "There's a group of us, different organizations and agencies within the community, we've collaborated. Currently, we're having some issues with homelessness in the community, so opposed to that simply being the police department's responsibility to try to improve that situation, we all partner, we collaborate, we try to come up with creative ideas, to come up with solutions for problems that affect all of our community."

One initiative is the Community Partnership Breakfast that's held at the Senior Center every other month. "I try to attend the majority of those meetings," Chief Wolski said. "That's again, a collective group where we discuss issues that are confronting the town, and we kind of spit ball, how can we collaborate together to try to tackle this problem?"

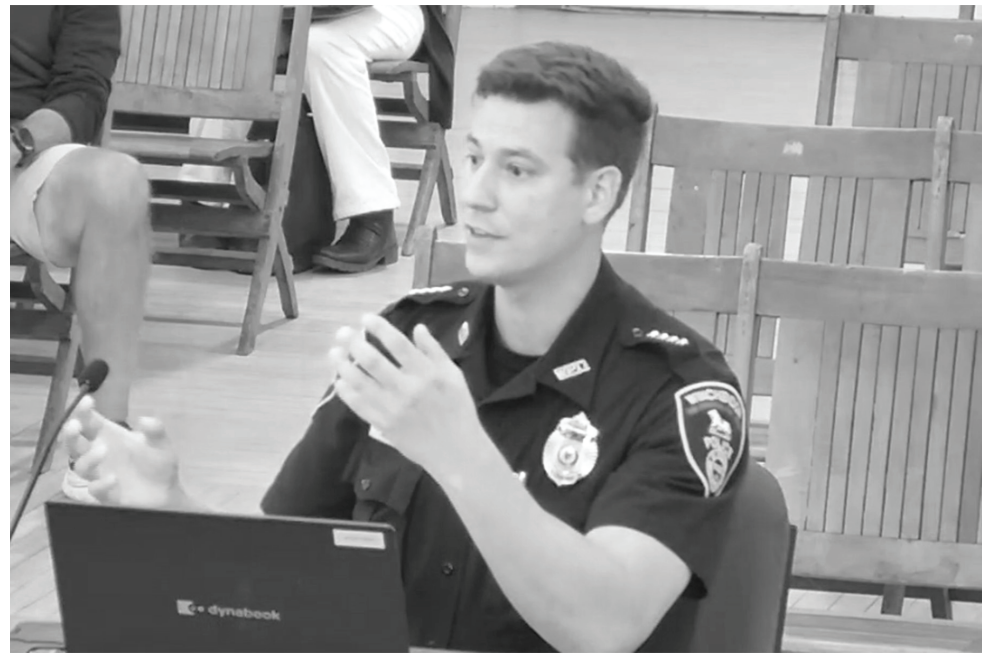
The Post-Overdose Support Team works with GAAMHA in Gardner. "They send out a social worker, and they team up with a Winchendon police officer. We visit the homes of those that suffered a drug overdose, and we inform them of the various resources that exist. If they're interested, the social worker from GAAMHA can connect them to those resources."

The School Resource Officer Program places Officer Tracy Flagg in the schools. "The program expands the role of police into being more than just crime fighters and law enforcement, to where we're now engaged in the school, we're engaged with parents at the school, we're engaged with the students."

The Rape Aggression Defense Program (RAD) is run by Officer Flagg accompanied with a couple of other Winchendon officers.

Officer Derek Blair is a member of the Domestic Violence Task Force that's a collaboration with the District Attorney's office, Chief Wolski said. "If any very high profile domestic violence incidents occur in town, he reports those to this Task Force and is in collaboration with them and in communication with them to try to assist the victim through that situation."

The Internet Scam Awareness/Prevention program runs classes in various internet scams at the Senior Center and senior housing in town like Hyde Park and Ipswich Drive. Seniors tend to be more susceptible



Police Chief Dan Wolski addresses the Board of Selectmen
Photo copyright Town of Winchendon

to internet scams, Chief Wolski said. "Hopefully we can prevent people from having to come to the station and say, 'Hey, I was on the internet and I got scammed.' If they can take away some education, maybe it'll prevent that from happening in the first place."

The newest initiative is the Child Passenger Safety Program. Funded by a grant, this enables the department to purchase child car seats that can be provided to low income families. The department can coordinate with other organizations and agencies in town, including the Housing Authority, CAC and school department, to let them know this resource is available.

Ms. LaBrie said that it would be great if Officer Flagg could share information about issues and concerns she identifies in the schools which the Board might be able to assist with.

Moving on to Special Programs, Chief Wolski talked about K-9 Blitz, the department's current K-9 officer. Blitz is a four-year-old Belgian Malinois and has been with the department for two years. "He's what's considered a utility dog," Chief Wolski said. "So he doesn't just have one skill set. He's received an extensive amount of training, and he's actually certified by the state in Search and Rescue, Criminal Apprehension, Evidence Recovery and Narcotics Detection." Chief Wolski added a follow-up to the recent medical emergency Blitz experienced. After treatment at several emergency veterinary hospitals, Blitz has made a full recovery. He experienced breathing problems which may be related to a problem with his throat, and he may undergo surgery to correct this.

The Worcester County Drug Task Force is part of what Chief Wolski described as the department's "multi-faceted approach" to drug-related problems. "You can have compassion for individuals who are suffering from substance abuse, but there's a lot of consequences that surround it and whenever you have any drug use, you're going to have inherent quality of

life issues that impact the community," he said. "You need to have aggressive investigation and prosecution of particularly drug dealers that are dealing this poison on the streets of our communities."

Detective Caleb Similia works with the WCDTF and has executed several search warrants around town of residences and of individuals who are dealing narcotics in the community. These investigations and search warrants have led to several arrests, Chief Wolski said. The department has applied for a grant through the Byrne Justice Assistance Grant Program which will allow the department to assemble a team of three officers that could be paid overtime for additional hours dedicated exclusively to drug-related enforcement.

Board member Tiffany Newton asked whether the grant could be used to hire more part-time officers rather than loading up overtime hours on the existing officers. Chief Wolski explained that the grant does not allow departments to actually hire new officers. Hiring new staff is more costly, time-consuming and complicated than it sounds.

Chief Wolski went on to say that this was not the kind of extra assignment that contributed to burnout. Often routine police work can be "monotonous" and there are officers in the department who are eager to work in the area of drug enforcement. "Contrary to being burned out, this is going to really give some vigor in folks, that this is going to give them an opportunity to work on something that they otherwise may not have the opportunity to do, and give them a status that they may not otherwise have, where now they're not just patrolling, but they're part of this task force," he said.

Moving on to Important Training, Chief Wolski said, "I don't want to be too morose in talking about it, but I honestly think that probably the most important thing I can be doing right now, as the town's police chief, is focusing my attention on making sure

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the Treasurer's office, we have to tell a story. So, you had Donna, who was here for a long time. She was an Assistant Treasurer, became the Treasurer around 2012 or 2013, held that position for a while, went through a learning process herself similar to what's going on here, and really got the ship straightened out, so that when we came in to look at her records, they were balanced. They were correct. Everything was being done the way it should be.

"She retired in 2021 and that's when you started hiring. There was basically a revolving door in the Treasurer's Office, and this is when the problems began. So we found if you go back to private management letters, you'll see that bank reconciliations were not being done, and if they were being done, they were inaccurate. This goes all the way back to FY 2021-22. It got pretty severe in '22 and '23 and it's still a problem in FY24."

He compared it to an individual person's checking account. Every month when the bank statement comes in (or is made available online), a customer needs to reconcile their own checkbook or accounting records with the bank's record. This shows how much money is actually in the account, where checks haven't cleared and are still outstanding, and so on. The town needs to be doing exactly the same thing, every month, and it wasn't being consistently done—for several years.

In September 2023, the town rehired Donna. Mr. Roselli went on, "So Donna, the old treasurer, came back, the one that had been doing these bank reconciliations correctly, in September and basically started a process of doing the entire year. In fact, she went back to FY22, so she

did FY22 and FY23 and FY24, she rolled it all the way up.

"Then Eric Kinsherf, who's been around the town for about 12 years, he's an accounting specialist that does municipal accounts, he came in to help out the accounting side and at the same time, looked at the Treasurer side to see if that makes sense. So what ended up happening at the end of this process is we still have a reconciling variance of about \$450,000 in the bank, reconciliations in the Treasurer's office that has yet to be resolved. I don't know where they're at in FY25, I don't know if they've started to look at that yet, but at the end of FY24 it's out \$450,000. The good news is it's a positive variance. It's not low, it's high, which tells me that receipts were missed."

School Committee member Karen Kast asked how all that could have been missed, and is the new Treasurer caught up with everything?

Mr. Roselli said, "It started with two Treasurers ago, people thinking the bank reconciliations were getting done. When I came in to do the audit and sat down and asked for the bank reconciliations, I got handed a bunch of documents, but there was a pile of documents where the envelopes weren't even opened for 12 months. So I said, 'When was the last time anybody even looked at this particular account?' And it's the most complicated account, with a lot of things happening to it, and and this is before [Town Manager Bill McKinney]'s time. This is two years ago. This is when all the problems started. So I volunteered, 'Let me open these and see what's in here, see if I can make heads or tails out of them.'" That began a process that started with a discrepancy of millions, got down to \$250K, Donna stepped in to work on it, and

now the variance is at \$450K. "This didn't happen in one day. This was just an accumulation of just not doing this. And so even though they caught up, you'd have to redo everything. You'd have to redo every transaction to really find out where these problems are," he said.

Ms. Kast noted that Mr. Roselli had made a number of recommendations last year that weren't followed, including that the town hire a consulting firm to handle all of this.

Mr. Roselli said, "I thought I'd made some good recommendations. I even found two individuals that were willing to come here—superstars, the best in the field, were willing to come here. And when they called me and said that no one had reached out to them, I said, 'Okay, well, it's out of my hands.'"

School Committee member Greg Vine asked Mr. Roselli to clarify his statement about the accounts being "off by \$450,000," saying, "that's a pretty nebulous statement."

It's cumulative, Mr. Roselli said. "If I go back to FY22 they're off by about \$90K or \$100,000, you go to FY23 and they're off about \$250K and you go to FY24 and there are \$450K, so it's gotten increasingly larger." He went on, "I found some of the problems were that now the state will wire you the money. They don't send you a check, so if you don't open the envelope, you don't know if you got that wire in. So reporting that to the Town Accountant isn't going to happen if you don't know yourself that it's happening. It happened with some of the school grants, because the superintendent before you was saying, 'Why do I have all these deficits?' And when I looked into it, it was because the wires had not been applied. Someone thought, the town's taking those grants...that wasn't the case. It was just that the grants were not being reported as they were coming in."

Mr. Roselli said he guessed that there were a lot of small amounts that weren't being properly recorded as the state dropped the money into the town's bank account. If three payments are being missed every month, in a year there will be 36 payments in the bank but not recorded in the town's ledgers.

There was some discussion about the role the online accounting software systems may have played in creating this situation. Mr. McKinney had explained to the Boards and the public in the past the problems involved with two different software packages being used, requiring data to be ported over manually rather than everything updating automatically. Mr. McKinney said, "Per the auditor's recommendation from last year, I got a grant from the state to be able to move from QDS to Munis, and we're in the midst of doing that conversion right now."

School Committee Chair Mike Barbaro recalled that in 2015, "We had a problem. Someone made a change without telling anybody, and it gummed up the works, in my not so humble opinion. It made it difficult for [Mr. McKinney] to come in or anybody to understand what had gone on."

Mr. Roselli said, "You were running this very expensive system, but you needed an Excel workaround to run it, because the town was on version 2, but Munis was on version 14, so it just wasn't working right. So Charlotte created this Excel workaround, but when Charlotte left, nobody knew how to do that. I remember that and that did hurt you for a few years, till you got it straightened out." Just last year, he said, no one could figure out how to run reports out of the system that he asked for.

Another observation Mr. Roselli had involved "tailings." These are checks issued by the town that are never cashed by the recipients and never clear the bank. The town can run an advertisement to alert people to the fact that these checks are floating around out there, and the recipients can come in and request a replacement. Usually they don't. After 12 months, the town can claim those funds as income. "And there's a lot here, because it hasn't been done in at least eight or nine years," Mr. Roselli said. "There's a lot sitting there, and a lot of it's going to be in that vendor account that you're closing now" to let the account clear out. Mr. McKinney said that Donna had gone through the tailings a few months ago this year. (The *Courier* published the notice.)

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officers of the Winchendon Police Department are well trained to respond to an active shooter situation. Unfortunately, when you turn on the news, you’re seeing it’s all too common. I have children that are school age, and it’s a large concern for everyone. Hopefully, officers never have to utilize the training, but they certainly need to have it.”

Officer Flagg, assisted by other officers, has been running the ALICE training, “the preeminent training in schools across the country,” in the Winchendon schools a couple of times a year. In addition, Chief Wolski said, “the State Police will put on the training, and there is a cost to it, but they come out and they put on a very elaborate training. It’s usually during the summer when there’s nobody at the school, and it’s a very elaborate training where the officers and members of the fire department, we can go into the school, we actually have like paintball, essentially, where we’re actually shooting and stuff like that,” simulating a “live” shooter event. “I want the townspeople to take some comfort in knowing that we do this training, and we’re going to try to do it more, particularly the training with the State Police, because it’s very realistic,” he said

Related to this, Chief Smith said that the department needs additional rifles and body armor. The rifles can be considered an essential part of a police cruiser, as much as the radio. “In 2025 every one of those cruisers needs a rifle on it also, so that God forbid, if we ever had to, we could appropriately respond.” By body armor, Chief Wolski says he means “something in addition to the regular bulletproof vest. You would don that in a situation where you’re going into an active shooter situation. So in my opinion, it’s essential.”

Three additional rifles would be \$6,000 to \$8,000, Chief Wolski said. There were possible sources for grant funding that could be discussed with the Town Manager.

Moving to Challenges, Chief Wolski spoke at some length about how quickly technology becomes outdated and obsolete. One example is the officers’ body cameras,

which were first purchased in 2022. Three years later, the manufacturer, Motorola, is already saying these cameras are at their end of life. If hardware is updated, departments can find that the associated software to run it no longer works with the new hardware. As police departments, like everything else, become more and more dependent on technology, these issues become huge cost drivers for their budgets. Once purchased, they can lock in the department and make changing difficult. Another simple example Chief Wolski offered was the electronic key fobs for getting in and out of the police station. Technology can also bring a whole new package of inherent costs. For example, citizens can now request body cam videos under the Freedom of Information Act, but by law any such videos must be edited to remove or obscure certain information. That takes time and requires someone to be paid to go through the video and edit it.

“I was running up against a similar situation with our tasers,” Chief Wolski said. “The company manufacturers said that they were at end of life and that they were no longer going to support them. And again, it was an issue with operating software, and that technology is very sophisticated, and so it’s very expensive, and we did not have the money in our operating budget to replace them. I did an application with Robinson Broadhurst, and they were very generous to award a grant that is going to cover the cost to get brand new tasers for the entire police department.”

The next challenge was Police Staffing. “I have five officers who are going to be retiring over the next three years. So that certainly presents a challenge,” Chief Wolski said. “The police reform bill in 2020 effectively eliminated part time officers in Massachusetts because it requires that all police officers go to a full time Academy. The problem is, if somebody’s full time Academy trained, there’s no incentive for them to stay as a part time officer.” He went on, “But I would like to have a conversation with the Town Manager. I would like to start preparing now. I know that two people are going to retire next summer. We might be able to, if perhaps somebody is in college right now, we

might be able to hire somebody on a part time basis if they’re guaranteed that they’re going to get a full time job...it might save us money and make for a much smoother transition, opposed to waiting until these folks retire, and then I’m going to be short staffed, and then you’re certainly going to run into, potentially burnout and an excess of overtime.”

Building Maintenance for the police station presents a couple of challenges: the HVAC system and the brick masonry on the exterior. The building itself is over 100 years old, Chief Smith said. The HVAC system in the building was in use during the 1990s when that building was a courthouse. In much of the building, it doesn’t work, and the department has installed window air conditioning units. The old system also uses R22 coolant gas that the EPA is now phasing out.

The brick masonry on the exterior of the building needs repointing, which involves replacing the mortar between the bricks. Former Police Chief Dave Walsh was trying to get the repointing done and got quotes for the work, but it didn’t happen.

Chief Wolski concluded his presentation with, “We are a relatively small police force given the size of the town. The town has some financial constraints, which creates a greater burden. However, with all that said, we have a fantastic police department here in Winchendon, thanks to the members on it. The people that are working on the department, the patrolmen, sergeants, the detective and so on, we’re always striving to improve our performance. We’re constantly striving. But I think we should celebrate the fact that we fulfill the department’s mission. We can always find areas to improve right now with the police department that we have, but we meet this mission and we do positively impact the lives of those that we serve.”

Ms. Newton asked whether the department could get a Green Communities grant for the HVAC system.

“Green Communities would not allow us to apply for the grant until we had a weatherization done first,” Chief Wolski said. “Weatherization is insulation improved and having different portions of the windows

improved in terms of weather stripping and things like that. So we applied for a grant through Green Communities just to have that weatherization done. I think I’m correct in saying that it was granted for several buildings in town, including the school, the library, the police station, so that work has been completed. So now with that, I think that’s basically the first step...I don’t know where we stand on that in terms of Green Communities, but it’s certainly something we would consider before we would go to the taxpayers.”

Asked about the brick repointing, Chief Wolski said that Chief Walsh had been planning to have one wall of the building done at a time, which was quoted for something like \$10,000 at that time. It would be possible to get a new quote.

After Chief Wolski concluded, David Connor, director of Winchendon Templeton Housing Authority, came forward to say, “The Housing Authority has a lot of brick buildings, brick veneer, not solid brick like your building is, but we’ve partnered with Monty Tech and their masonry department, and over the last few years, their 10th, 11th and 12th grade students have come out, usually a couple of times a month, for a week at a time, and worked on our buildings at Pearl Drive. They’re already on building number 4, working their way around the development. So as a thought in looking forward, is possibly trying to partner with them, and they could come out and do an assessment and maybe see, because they were telling me that these are the projects that they’re looking to train the kids on, the repair work.”

Mr. Beauvais said to Chief Wolski, “I just want to say thank you for being our first guinea pig. That was a beautiful presentation. I can tell you put a lot of heart and soul into it. To you and the rest of the officers, we sincerely thank you for everything you guys do for this community. I appreciate the fact that you’re proactive. You find ways to save the town money while still giving your best. So I appreciate that. Thank you.”

Fire Department Offering Information Sessions About Fire Station Project

The Winchendon Fire Department invites all residents and stakeholders to attend a series of Public Information Sessions regarding the proposed Fire Station Addition and Renovation Project. These meetings will provide an opportunity to learn about the project, ask questions, and share feedback before the Special Town Meeting on December 1, 2025.

Tues, November 4	7:00 p.m.	online Zoom forum. Residents may ask questions about the project,
Sat, November 8	9:00 a.m. to noon	Fire Station Open House, with tours of the station and an obstacle course for kids.
Tues, November 18	7:00 p.m.	online Zoom forum,
Tues, November 25	6:30 p.m.	Project Overview and Presentation. Location TBA.
Sat, November 29	10:00 a.m. to noon	Station tours and Q & A about the project.

For details and more information (such as Zoom links), see the Fire Department Facebook page at www.facebook.com/winchendonfire. Your input is vital to the success of this project. It is the desire of the Fire Department to provide our voters with the necessary information about the project to make an educated decision at Town Meeting. Special Town Meeting will be held on Monday, December 1, at 7:00 p.m., in the Murdock Middle High School Auditorium, 3 Memorial Drive, Winchendon.

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Mr. Roselli said that when the tailings were done ten years ago, \$54,000 of them were never brought into income—it just got left on the general ledger. That can be added to Free Cash. “At the end of this process, what you’re paying to get this done is worth it, because you’re freeing up probably \$500,000 or \$600,000. So it’s good to spend the money [to take care of it].”

Moving to the Town Accountant’s office, Mr. Roselli said that a big factor there is that the Accountant can’t work accurately without knowing the correct cash balance. “So part of the Accountant’s problems is the Treasurer not reconciling the receivable balances with the Collector. And the other thing that’s very important is the school grants reconciling with the school business officer. That obviously didn’t happen as well, and the balance sheets got turned in many months late.”

Continuing through the report, Mr. Roselli went on, “There’s a bunch of Town Meeting votes that never got recorded, so those all do need to be recorded in fiscal 2025. So it’s fortunate you didn’t do your Free Cash because you had all these things missing, so it would have been an incorrect figure.”

He went on, “The last couple years I’ve talked about outstanding receivables piling up. Anyone who runs a business, if you can’t collect your receivables, you’re not going to be in business long. Same thing applies to towns. The receivable balances were accumulating. I looked and found that the liens hadn’t been done since Donna did them last back in FY21, so that’s way too long to go without doing liens. People out there start to understand that the lien process doesn’t happen, so they start to game the system, which makes it worse.” The demands have been sent out through the end of FY 2025, but the liens haven’t been done for about four years, according to Mr. McKinney, who affirmed that the town will need the help of an attorney to get that process done. “That’s important that that gets done,” Mr. Roselli said. “Most folks will pay once they get the demand, but some of them will wait to be liened before they pay, and you definitely don’t want that balance getting much bigger.”

That would be bigger than \$2.6 million, the current receivable balance stated in the report. \$1.4 million of that is in tax title now.

Mr. Roselli said that a lot of towns are bringing in companies that will take over a property in tax title, buy it from the town and then the company deals with the property owners. They keep the interest and make money with the process, and it’s all taken off the town’s shoulders. “They’re not going to treat the taxpayers as well as you folks will...It’s a desperation move,” he said.

After quickly going through OPEB, compensated absence, and FEMA monies with glitches to be cleared up, Mr. Roselli came to “stagnant balances.” These are funds that came in from one-off sources—“gifts” or donations, grants—that were never spent and are just sitting there. “Folks will give gifts to the Police, Fire, Public Works, Council on Aging. They go into a gift account, and you can spend it on things that are outside the budget, that are related to the department, or it could be a specific gift. Someone says, ‘Hey, I’m going to give you this gift, but you got to do that project.’ So what’s happening is, because of the turnover in the town, these gifts that have accumulated in the departments, the department heads don’t know about them. So someone should be sitting down with the department heads and say, Hey, you got these gifts. Or a revolving fund could have been set up. Someone could have created a revolving fund in 2017 that doesn’t exist anymore, but you accumulated money in that revolving fund. Some grants that never got spent down to zero could still be possibly used, even that are sent back to the state.”

Mr. Roselli said he identified \$730,000 sitting in these various special revenue accounts. Each account has to be looked at individually to see how it can be used. The accounts do not earn interest.

Mr. Roselli also said that there is “about a half million dollars” left in 15 capital projects that could be reimbursed. That money could be used by departments, appropriated or used to pay debts.

Mr. Barbaro put in that according to his calculations, the town may have up to \$4 million in funds it hasn’t recorded or could collect—\$450K from account

reconciliation, \$730K from special revenue accounts, \$500K from capital projects, and \$2.6 million from tax title revenue, although as Mr. Roselli said, “you can make an attempt to go get that, right.”

All of these amounts are conditional and have circumstances unique to each one, so bringing them into the budget will be neither simple nor always certain. Ms. Kast expressed concern about citizens accusing the town of hiding funds while it asked for an override. Mr. Roselli said, “No, you’re not hiding anything. The \$2.6 million... the town always has a receivable balance. So you’re not just going to collect that \$2.6 million, it’s just not going to happen. There’s always the new ones are going to create a balance. So the \$2.6 million, if you put good efforts towards it, maybe a million of that comes in quickly. The rest is kind of a staggered process.”

He went on, “The tax title process takes a while. It’s not something that you just wake up and say, I’m doing tax titles today. It’s a process you’re probably going to need legal help to get it done, because some of them are probably tricky and then some people decide not to pay you, and you’re gonna have to take them into tax court and tax foreclosure. But this [outstanding balance] is unusually high.

“So there is the ability to recoup some of that pretty quickly, just from the fear that the town is doing that. If I’m sitting back at home with three years outstanding taxes and I’m watching this, I’m like, maybe I should pay my taxes before something happens. So don’t underestimate the fear of doing that. Even if you say we’re thinking about going to hire, let’s have this guy come in and talk to us, some of these attorneys. And just knowing that that’s going to happen, that you’re talking to people, creates fear.

“To me, it’s not fair. This is where I get a little emotional. The rest of the taxpayers, 99 percent of the taxpayers in this town pay and 1 percent are off the hook. So do something. Just do it and and be responsible.”

Mr. Vine said, “Can you, or [Mr. McKinney], or both of you, give us something positive moving forward? Because just to look at this report and have people listen to it at home, it’s basically, what it’s saying to the taxpayers, is that we haven’t

done such a great job keeping track of your money.”

“You haven’t,” Mr. Roselli said. “Let’s not hide that you haven’t done a good job.” But he said, right now the town has some extremely good people working on their finances. The schools have “a great school business manager.” The FY 2025 books should be closed in November. A lot of decisions will still need to be made about how to handle the variances and reconcile everything going forward. Some problems may originate so far back, tracing them would take too much time, and it might be better to just “make a clean slate.”

The Boards discussed how to get the town back on track and keep this from happening. Mr. Roselli said that three years ago, he had pointed out to the Boards that “Everybody’s retiring” and this was going to be an issue. “I said as quickly as that got built up and you got rid of that deficit, that \$3.6 million deficit...it was a ten-year note and you guys had it paid off in four years. You know, great management, great processes in place. The departments were all working well together. And I said, as quickly as you built that up, if you don’t replace the people that are retiring with qualified people, it’s going to fall so much faster.”

The Boards discussed the shrinking pool of qualified people who want to work in municipal positions. Towns can only afford to offer so much. Training people who can step into higher positions, and having backup people for vacations and so on would be good. Some towns now are sharing an Accountant, who works one or two days a week in each town, Mr. Roselli said. In the near future, municipalities may have financial staff who work remotely.

Board of Selectmen Chair Andrew Beauvais asked, “I wanted your take compared to what you saw last year, what you just went over with us this evening, and the forward momentum, the things that we’re working towards. Are we on the right track right now?”

“Yes,” Mr. Roselli said. “Last year, there was no plan. This year, there’s a plan...Everyone seems to be motivated to keep the ship moving forward. The school is not an anchor...so yes, I see it going in a positive direction. It’s much better than last year.”

Suspect in El Toro Restaurant Burglaries Arrested by Winchendon PD

(9/22/2025) - In the early morning hours of September 14th and 17th, 2025 the El Toro restaurant on Spring St. in Winchendon was broken into. Numerous items were stolen from inside the building including liquor, food, clothing, and toilet paper. Winchendon Police responded to both break-ins collecting evidence including blood, fingerprints, and video surveillance. Officers also spoke with at least one witness which led them to focus on 51-year-old Raymond Mckenney as a suspect.

On September 17, 2025, at approximately 4PM Winchendon Police executed a search warrant at the Countryside Motel Room #3, for evidence of breaking and entering at the El Toro Restaurant. During the search warrant items stolen from the restaurant were located in the room. The occupant and target of the search warrant, Raymond Mckenney, was placed under arrest. He was booked at the Winchendon Police Department on an outstanding

warrant and additionally charged with two counts of breaking and entering in the nighttime to commit a felony; two counts of larceny from a building; and two counts of vandalism at the El Toro Restaurant.

Mr. Mckenney was arraigned at the Winchendon District Court on September 18, 2025. Detective Caleb Similia is the investigating officer.

Although the alleged perpetrator was caught, El Toro Restaurant posted on its Facebook page on September 17, “To our loyal customers, due to circumstances beyond our control El Toro will be temporarily closed. Please continue to look and follow our pages for updates. Thank you for your continued support.

“In full disclosure, we’ve experienced multiple break ins within 3 days. We are going to take this time to revamp, re-gather and reconsider options.

“Thank you for your support and understanding.”

First Annual Central Mass Irish Festival Packs the Winchendon Community Park

by Inanna Arthen

The Winchendon Community Park was as full as it ever has been on Saturday, September 27, with the organizers announcing attendance of more than 1,500 ticket holders through the day. Local Parks & Recreation volunteers told the *Courier* that they could verify almost 1,000 attendees by mid-afternoon—and that was before headliners Slainte arrived as the Festival’s closing act.

The earlier part of the day included children’s activities such as an Irish-themed story walk and a kids’ dance group, “The Flying Irish Dance Troupe.” Vendors included jewelers selling Celtic-themed jewelry, Irish-themed clothing, some local vendors and crafters, and some

organizations—you could get information about foster parenting and home energy audits. A tent with a traditional “rock lifting” challenge accommodated anyone who wanted to give it a try, including women and one very small young man who gave it his best shot (the rocks came in a full array of sizes).

The lead singer of The Pourmen, a band from New Bedford, MA, asked the crowd if they wanted to see a second Central Mass Irish Festival next year, and the roar of “YES!” was surely heard on the other side of Whitney Pond. If the luck of the Irish holds out, Winchendon will see another—maybe even bigger—Irish Festival next year! The date has been announced as September 26, 2026.



The amphitheater tiers were full, people were sitting in the shady areas on both sides, at the top of the tiers and in parts of the park surrounding the stage

Photo by Inanna Arthen



The *Courier* heard an unconfirmed rumor that this baker sold out in two hours

Photo by Inanna Arthen



“Rogue and Raven,” with bagpiper Coreyanne

Photo by Inanna Arthen



Because you have to have an Irish pub, selling genuine Guinness!

Photo by Inanna Arthen

“Haunted Happening” Draws Thousands of Attendees for Trunk or Treat and Haunted Trails Activities

by Inanna Arthen



far and wide. The line of costumed “trunk-or-treaters” ran from the park up past the parking lot for more than an hour, never seeming to get shorter. Nevertheless, spirits seemed high and attendees kept their good cheer—aided by the beautiful fall weather that blessed the day.

Some 4,000 people of all ages converged on Winchendon Community Park in the late afternoon of Saturday, October 18 for “Haunted Happening”—a number that caught organizers by surprise and pushed the envelope of the site’s parking capacity. This year, Winchendon Parks & Recreation combined their “Haunted Trails” event with the Clark YMCA’s annual “Trunk or Treat”, attracting families from

The treat-distributing “trunks” were arranged around the large field in a semi-circle, each vehicle or station decorated in its own unique (and not too scary) way. The rounds began at 4:00 p.m. Inflatable costumes were popular, especially dinosaurs, although the Stay-Puft Marshmallow Man from *Ghostbusters* was also seen, with the green “Slimer” ghost in tow. There were many young princesses and superheroes, a remote-controlled giant spider roving around, and a crew member from the Enterprise who beamed down with her family.

For those finished with the “trunk” round, or just there for the show, Murdock Farm ran a free hayride. Tavern in the Square operated a food concession that sold entirely out of fare by the end of the evening. Acoustic dance band Tattoo played from the amphitheater stage, and the Animal Craze Petting Zoo had chicks, bunnies, pigs and goats. A number of local vendors had tables, including Miss Judy’s Salsa.

The “Haunted Trails” tours began at 7:00 p.m., and were designed for an older and tougher audience than the little folks at the Trunk or Treat. Volunteers had stations around the wooded trails to the west of the amphitheater, making the most of blind turns and tall bushes to get

intrepid attendees to shriek, duck, clutch at each other, and of course, laugh. The actors had instructions to keep things tamer for the first hour, but after that, it was anything goes to make their audience jump (all in the spirit of fun!).

The whole evening was free and open to all, sponsored by Winchendon Parks & Recreation, the Clark Memorial YMCA, Brooks Automotive and many other generous supporters.

Community Outreach Coordinator Shaina Cunningham said, “I want to extend my sincere thanks to everyone in the community and across the region who attended the Haunted Trails event. Your support and enthusiasm helped make it an unforgettable experience.

“I also want to express my heartfelt gratitude to all the incredible volunteers who helped staff the event, the organizations who brought the trails to life with their haunting creativity, the Police Department, the YMCA, the Fire Department for their spotlights, the DPW, and of course, our Parks and Recreation Commission.

“Your dedication, teamwork, and commitment were the driving force behind this event’s success. Thank you all for making it such a memorable and meaningful community celebration.”

(Photos by Inanna Arthen)





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).

Old Murdock Senior Center

52 Murdock Ave

Saturday November 15

CRAFTAFTERNOONS

1:00PM-3:00PM

NOVEMBER 15TH

VOTIVE CANDLE HOLDER

52 MURDOCK AVE
WINCHENDON, MA

The HUB 5 Summer Dr

Saturday November 1

Sunday November 23

THE WINCHENDON CAC INVITES YOU **THE HUB**

Open House & Ribbon Cutting

Saturday, November 1, 2025

4:00-6:00 pm

Winchendon CAC, 5 Summer Dr.

Come Celebrate with Us!

You're invited to an evening of fun, food, and community at our Fire & S'mores Open House! Bring your friends and family for a cozy gathering filled with laughter, connection, and tasty treats.

What's Waiting for You

- Roast & Relax - Enjoy delicious s'mores by the fire.
- Scavenger Hunt - Explore CAC/HUB programs and win raffle prizes!
- Sunshine Café - Sip warm drinks and sweet treats.
- Interactive Food Stations - Sample local favorites.
- Bowling Fun - Perfect for the whole family!
- Creative Arts Table - Get crafty and inspired.
- Fashion Fun at Community Threads - Polaroids, photo booths & style fun.
- Food Pantry Recipe Challenge - Show off your culinary creativity!

RSVP & Admission

FREE & OPEN TO ALL!
Donations are appreciated and benefit CAC/HUB programs.
Food drive contributions are also welcome!
We can't wait to see you!

THE HUB WINCHENDON, MA

THE HUB PRESENTS:

TOY TOWN Swing

OCT 9TH
NOV 23RD
DEC 21ST

5:00 PM to 9:00 PM

NO COVER & LESSON CHARGE

- DANCE CLASS 5-9:30
- NO PARTNER NEEDED
- NO EXPERIENCE NEEDED
- DROP IN'S WELCOME
- FREESTYLE, LEARN & HAVE FUN!
- FOOD, DRINKS, WINE & BEER FOR SALE
- 100% PROCEEDS BENEFIT CAC

QUESTIONS OR TO SIGN UP, CONTACT:
THEHUB@WINCHENDON-CAC.ORG
978-297-1667

MORE INFO & SIGN UP HERE

Sunday November 2

Join us for a

PATS WATCH Party

New England Patriots vs Atlanta Falcons

NOVEMBER 2ND | 12 PM

5 Summer Dr Winchendon

Featuring Andy's On The Run Food Truck

See you there!

TOWN OF WINCHENDON PARKS & RECREATION

THE HUB

Thursdays
November 6 & 13

THE HUB WINCHENDON, MA

THE HUB PRESENTS:

TOY TOWN Swing

SAMPLER CLASSES

STARTING OCT 9TH @ THE HUB 2-2:30 PM

\$5 LESSON CHARGE

OCT 9 & 16
NOV 6 & 13
DEC 11 & 18

QUESTIONS OR TO SIGN UP, CONTACT:
THEHUB@WINCHENDON-CAC.ORG
978-297-1667

MORE INFO & SIGN UP HERE

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.

DON'T MISS OUR NEXT BIG EVENT!

BE THE FIRST TO KNOW ABOUT UPCOMING EVENTS & RECEIVE SPECIAL DISCOUNTS



SCAN ME

FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL!

@WINCHPARKSANDREC

@WINCHENDONAMPHITHEATER

@WINCHPARKSANDREC

November Holidays

Tuesday Nov 11
Veterans Day

Thursday Nov 27
Thanksgiving Day

Friday Nov 28
Civic Holiday

Beals Memorial Library Hosts Two "Bad Guys" Movie Nights in November!

Thur, November 13
6:30 p.m.

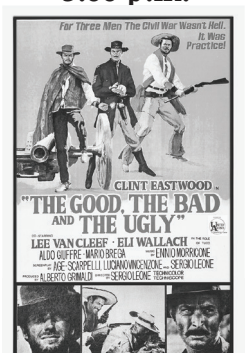
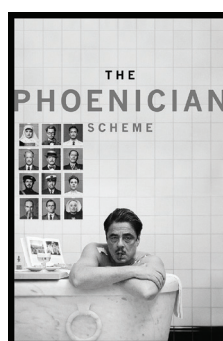
Wed, November 19
3:00 p.m.

FREE
ADMISSION!

50 Pleasant St,
Winchendon

Shown in 2nd
floor auditorium.

Call 978-297-0300
for more info





NOVEMBER

SATURDAY NOVEMBER 1

Winchendon Cares “Most Wonderful Time of the Year” Drive
9:00-10:30 a.m. Bring donations or come in to help fill packages! At Winchendon American Legion Post #193, 295 School St.

Harper Grace Memorial Scholarship Fund 5K Walk/Run
9:00-11:00 a.m. For information about the event, and to register, see www.racewire.com/register.php?id=14704. Starts at The HUB, 5 Summer Dr, Winchendon.

The HUB Open House & Ribbon Cutting
4:00-6:00 p.m. Join us for an evening of fun, food and community at our Fire & S’mores Open House! Bring your friends and family for a cozy gathering filled with laughter, connection and tasty treats. 5:00 p.m. Bowling Tournament FINALS! At Winchendon Community HUB, 5 Summer Dr.

Sound Bites Community Jam
6:00 p.m. At Winchendon Community HUB, 5 Summer Dr.

SUNDAY NOVEMBER 2

Pats Watch Party at The HUB
12:00 p.m. Free Admission, All Ages Welcome! Grab your jerseys and get ready to cheer—it’s Game Day with Parks & Rec! Food available from Andy’s on the run food truck.
Game Day Eats & Drinks
Tailgate Games & Raffles
Big Screen Viewing
Fan Contests & Prizes!
Bring your friends, family, and team spirit as we root for the Pats together! Wear your best Patriots gear for a chance to win team-themed prizes. Doors open at 12:00 p.m. & kick off at 1:00 p.m. Let’s show some hometown pride—GO PATS! Sponsored by Winchendon Parks & Recreation. At the HUB, 5 Summer Dr, Winchendon.

TUESDAY NOVEMBER 4

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 NOVEMBER 5

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..

THURSDAY NOVEMBER 6

Bill O’Connor Life Care: Brain Games at the Senior Center
10:30-11:30 a.m. Come in to learn and have fun at the same time! Bill from Lifecare will be here to educate and entertain! At Old Murdock Senior Center, 52 Murdock Ave, Winchendon.

Toy Town Swing Sampler Class
2:00-2:30 p.m. \$5 per lesson. To get more info or sign up, contact thehub@winchendon-cac.org or call 978-297-1667. At The HUB, 5 Summer Dr, Winchendon.

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 Soup & Sandwiches by Sue Cheries. Free-will donation \$2 per person, \$5 per family; no one turned away. 52 Spruce Street, Winchendon.

FRIDAY NOVEMBER 7

Annual Turkey Raffle at the Snowbound Club
7:00 p.m. Doors open @ 6:30pm. \$1 per round & also \$2 round specials. Free chili chowder & mac & cheese. Two Thanksgiving Food baskets to be raffled off. Cash bar available. Open to the public. At the Snowbound Club, 130 Baldwinville Rd, Winchendon.SATURDAY NOVEMBER 8

2nd Annual Turkey Raffle for Winchendon Firefighters Local 4542
7:00 p.m. Join us for a night of raffles, prizes, and community fun!
* Raffle baskets, door prizes, and refreshments
* Bring a non-perishable food item and receive one free ticket per item.
* All food donations and proceeds from the final round will benefit the Winchendon CAC (The HUB) to support local families in need
Sponsorship Opportunities Available
Support the event and promote your business while giving back:
* Half Round Sponsor - \$100
Your name or company will be advertised at the raffle.
* Whole Round Sponsor - \$200
Your name or company will be advertised at the raffle, and you will also receive a free event T-shirt. Checks can be made payable to: Winchendon Permanent Firefighters
For questions or sponsorships, please contact Heather, Marty, or Clay at 978-297-2324. At Winchendon American Legion Post #193, 295 School St.

SATURDAY NOVEMBER 8

Immaculate Heart of Mary Fall Festival
9:00 a.m.- 8:00 p.m. Family, food and fun! Silent auction, country kitchen, raffles, muffin tin game, Christmas booth, kids’ booth, and more!
Spaghetti and meatballs dinner tonight, \$12 per person.
Cornhole Tournament: starts at 1:00 p.m. Sign up before Nov. 5. \$20 per team, winner takes 50% of entry fees. Contact Dan at 508-331-2340.
Continues on Sunday. At Immaculate Heart of Mary, 52 Spruce Street.

SUNDAY NOVEMBER 9

Immaculate Heart of Mary Fall Festival
8:00 a.m.- 12:00 p.m. Continued from Saturday. At Immaculate Heart of Mary, 52 Spruce Street.

TUESDAY NOVEMBER 11

VETERANS DAY HOLIDAY

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.

WEDNESDAY NOVEMBER 12

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: “Munch 150.” For more information, contact the Senior Center. Sponsored by 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.

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 NOVEMBER 13

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

Toy Town Swing Sampler Class
2:00-2:30 p.m. \$5 per lesson. To get more info or sign up, contact thehub@winchendon-cac.org or call 978-297-1667. At The HUB, 5 Summer Dr, Winchendon.

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 a traditional Thanksgiving dinner with all the fixin’s.. Free-will donation \$2 per person, \$5 per family; no one turned away. 126 Central Street.

Movie Night at the Beals
6:00-9:30 p.m. Screening this month: *The Phoenician Scheme*. At Beals Memorial Library, 50 Pleasant St, Winchendon.

FRIDAY NOVEMBER 14

The Willies!
7:00-10:00 p.m. They’re Back! Playing all your favorite 60s 70s and 80s rock ‘n’ roll and a little bit of country & blues too! \$5 cover. Club opens at 6:00 p.m. Cash bar available. Come Join us!At the Snowbound Club, 130 Baldwinville Rd, Winchendon.

SATURDAY NOVEMBER 15

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.

Holly Bazaar at United Parish
9:00 a.m.- 2:00 p.m. Come and enjoy this event with free admission to see our congregation’s family nativity scenes on display upstairs in our sanctuary and check out all that the vendors have to offer in our fellowship hall downstairs. We will have vendors selling homemade items, a bake sale, and an area where your kids can enjoy building gingerbread houses for free. You can also make a day of it and purchase lunch between 11:30-1:30. Our menu consists of assorted cold sandwiches, a choice between 3 different kinds of soup, chips, dessert and beverages (prices vary on selections) At United Parish, 39 Front St, Winchendon.

Votive Crafternoon
1:00-3:00 p.m. Join us for a cozy Crafternoon and make your own beautiful votive candle holder—the perfect seasonal touch for your fall décor or Thanksgiving table! All materials are included, and no prior experience is needed. This is a relaxed, beginner-friendly craft session open to adults and older teens. \$15 per person. Register online at link.clover.com/urlshortener/JCgJZK or register by phone: 978-297-3155. For more info, email scunningham@winchendon-ma.gov. At Old Murdock Senior Center, 52 Murdock Ave, Winchendon.

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

MONDAY NOVEMBER 17

Walking Beside You: Caregiver Support Group
6:00-7:30 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 NOVEMBER 18

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 NOVEMBER 19

Classic Movie Night at the Beals
3:00-5:30 p.m. Screening this month: *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly*. At Beals Memorial Library, 50 Pleasant St, Winchendon.

THURSDAY NOVEMBER 20

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

SATURDAY NOVEMBER 22

Small Business Alley Crawl
10:00 a.m.- 2:00 p.m. Shop ‘n’ sip! Support our growing local businesses and check out the crafts and culinary creations of some of Winchendon’s talented entrepreneurs! Food, vendors, drinks. At The HUB, 5 Summer Dr, Winchendon.

WEDNESDAYS

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](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.

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

10:30-11:30 a.m. 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.

7:00 p.m. He is back...Downstairs in the Speakeasy! No cover charge! Open to the public! Come join us! At the Snowbound Club, 130 Baldwinville Rd, Winchendon.

A graphic featuring the text "BUY LOCAL WINCHENDON" in a bold, sans-serif font. The word "LOCAL" is significantly larger than "BUY" and "WINCHENDON". A small shopping bag icon with a heart on it is positioned between "BUY" and "LOCAL". The entire graphic is set against a white background with a subtle shadow.

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.

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

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

Taste of Home Lunch
11:30 a.m.- 12:30 p.m. Enjoy a homecooked lunch made by volunteers! At the Old Murdock Senior Center, 52 Murdock Ave., Winchendon. 978-297-3155.

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

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.

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

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

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.

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

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 Cailte Kelly, 978-413-9930. Hosted by Kiwanis of Winchendon MA. At the Clark Memorial YMCA Community Room, 155 Central St., Winchendon.

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

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.

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

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.

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.

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.

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.

Friends' Book and Used Media Sale
10:00 a.m.- 12:00 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.

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.

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 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 Dntown, 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

Lunch and Art Gallery Tour at the Park

November 12, 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: "Munch 150." 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 Sampler Class

November 6 & 13, 2:00-2:30 p.m. \$5 per lesson. To get more info or sign up, contact thehub@winchendon-cac.org or call 978-297-1667. At The HUB, 5 Summer Dr, Winchendon.

Toy Town Swing at The HUB

November 23, 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.

For Teens

Teen Cooking Class

November 12 & 26, 3:00-5:00 p.m. At The HUB, 5 Summer Dr, Winchendon.

Teen GSA Meeting at the Beals

November 5, 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

November 15, 5:00-9:00 p.m. At the Winchendon Community HUB, 5 Summer Dr.

Teen Dungeons & Dragons

November 4 & 18, 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

Old Murdock Senior Center
52 Murdock Ave, Winchendon
978-297-3155
facebook.com/oldmurdock

The HUB / Winchendon CAC
5 Summer Dr, Winchendon
978-287-1667
www.the-hub.org
facebook.com/winchendoncac

UU Church of Winchendon
126 Central St, Winchendon
978-297-0554
uucw.ncmuuc.org

Immaculate Heart of Mary Church
52 Spruce St, Winchendon
978-297-0280
www.heartofmary.net

Winchendon American Legion Post #193
295 School St., Winchendon
978-297-0754

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

Murdock Middle High School
3 Memorial Dr, Winchendon
978-297-1256
www.winchendonk12.org

Clark Memorial YMCA
155 Central St
978-297-9622
www.theclarkymca.org

Food and Meals

Vet to Vet Cafe

November 11, 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

November 6, 5:15 p.m. at Immaculate Heart of Mary Church. Served in the Parish Hall. This week the menu is Soup & Sandwiches by Sue Cheries. Free-will donation \$2 per person, \$5 per family; no one turned away. 52 Spruce Street, Winchendon.

Annual Turkey Raffle at the Snowbound Club

November 7, 7:00 p.m. Doors open @ 6:30pm. \$1 per round & also \$2 round specials. Free chili chowder & mac & cheese. Two Thanksgiving Food baskets to be raffled off. Cash bar available. Open to the public. At the Snowbound Club, 130 Baldwinville Rd, Winchendon. SATURDAY NOVEMBER 8

2nd Annual Turkey Raffle for Winchendon Firefighters Local 4542

November 7, 7:00 p.m. Join us for a night of raffles, prizes, and community fun!
* Raffle baskets, door prizes, and refreshments
* Bring a non-perishable food item and receive one free ticket per item.
* All food donations and proceeds from the final round will benefit the Winchendon CAC (The HUB) to support local families in need
Sponsorship Opportunities Available
Support the event and promote your business while giving back:
* Half Round Sponsor - \$100
Your name or company will be advertised at the raffle.
* Whole Round Sponsor - \$200
Your name or company will be advertised at the raffle, and you will also receive a free event T-shirt. Checks can be made payable to: Winchendon Permanent Firefighters
For questions or sponsorships, please contact Heather, Marty, or Clay at 978-297-2324. At Winchendon American Legion Post #193, 295 School St.

Our Neighbor's Kitchen Dinner

November 13, 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

Tuesdays, 11:30 a.m.- 12:30 p.m. Enjoy a homecooked lunch made by volunteers! At the Old Murdock Senior Center, 52 Murdock Ave., Winchendon. 978-297-3155.

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.

Growing Places Mobile Market

November 18, 10:30-11:30 a.m. Fresh local produce. SNAP and HIP accepted. at Old Murdock Senior Center, 52 Murdock Ave, Winchendon.

Entertainment

The HUB Open House & Ribbon Cutting

November 1, 4:00-6:00 p.m. Join us for an evening of fun, food and community at our Fire & S'mores Open House! Bring your friends and family for a cozy gathering filled with laughter, connection and tasty treats. 5:00 p.m. Bowling Tournament FINALS! At Winchendon Community HUB, 5 Summer Dr.

Pats Watch Party at The HUB

November 2, 12:00 p.m. Free Admission, All Ages Welcome! Grab your jerseys and get ready to cheer—it's Game Day with Parks & Rec! Food available from Andy's on the run food truck.
Game Day Eats & Drinks
Tailgate Games & Raffles
Big Screen Viewing
Fan Contests & Prizes!
Bring your friends, family, and team spirit as we root for the Pats together! Wear your best Patriots gear for a chance to win team-themed prizes. Doors open at 12:00 p.m. & kick off at 1:00 p.m. Let's show some hometown pride—GO PATS! Sponsored by Winchendon Parks & Recreation. At the HUB, 5 Summer Dr, Winchendon.

Immaculate Heart of Mary Fall Festival

November 8 & 9, 9:00 a.m.- 8:00 p.m. Family, food and fun! Silent auction, country kitchen, raffles, muffin tin game, Christmas booth, kids' booth, and more!
Spaghetti and meatballs dinner tonight, \$12 per person.
Cornhole Tournament: starts at 1:00 p.m. Sign up before Nov. 5. \$20 per team, winner takes 50% of entry fees. Contact Dan at 508-331-2340.
Continues on Sunday. At Immaculate Heart of Mary, 52 Spruce Street.

Denis Cormier Concert

November 13, 10:45 a.m. At Old Murdock Senior Center, 52 Murdock Ave, Winchendon.

Movie Night at the Beals

November 13, 6:00-9:30 p.m. Screening this month: *The Phoenician Scheme*. At Beals Memorial Library, 50 Pleasant St, Winchendon.

The Willies!

November 14, 7:00-10:00 p.m. They're Back! Playing all your favorite 60s 70s and 80s rock 'n' roll and a little bit of country & blues too! \$5 cover. Club opens at 6:00 p.m. Cash bar available. Come Join us!At the Snowbound Club, 130 Baldwinville Rd, Winchendon.

Holly Bazaar at United Parish

November 15, 9:00 a.m.- 2:00 p.m. Come and enjoy this event with free admission to see our congregation's family nativity scenes on display upstairs in our sanctuary and check out all that the vendors have to offer in our fellowship hall downstairs. We will have vendors selling homemade items, a bake sale, and an area where your kids can enjoy building gingerbread houses for free. You can also make a day of it and purchase lunch between 11:30-1:30. Our menu consists of assorted cold sandwiches, a choice between 3 different kinds of soup, chips, dessert and beverages (prices vary on selections) At United Parish, 39 Front St, Winchendon.

Votive Crafternoon

November 15, 1:00-3:00 p.m. Join us for a cozy Crafternoon and make your own beautiful votive candle holder—the perfect seasonal touch for your fall décor or Thanksgiving table! All materials are included, and no prior experience is needed. This is a relaxed, beginner-friendly craft session open to adults and older teens. \$15 per person. Register online at link.clover.com/urlshortener/JCgJZK or register by phone: 978-297-3155. For more info, email scunningham@winchendon-ma.gov. At Old Murdock Senior Center, 52 Murdock Ave, Winchendon.

Classic Movie Night at the Beals

November 19, 3:00-5:30 p.m. Screening this month: *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly*. At Beals Memorial Library, 50 Pleasant St, Winchendon.

Music with Bob Jordan

November 24, 11:00 a.m.- 12:00 p.m. At the Old Murdock Senior Center, 52 Murdock Ave., Winchendon. 978-297-3155.

Thanksgiving Eve Party with Nick Staples

November 26, 7:00 p.m. He is back...Downstairs in the Speakeasy! No cover charge! Open to the public! Come join us! At the Snowbound Club, 130 Baldwinville Rd, Winchendon.

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

Winchendon News

Town Organizations and Agencies Collaborating to Find Solutions for Homelessness in Winchendon



From left, Pastor J Lillie, Police Chief Dan Wolski, Shaina Cunningham and Senior Center Director Miranda Jennings address the BOS on the new homelessness initiative

Photo copyright Town of Winchendon

by Inanna Arthen

At their meeting on Monday, September 22, the Board of Selectmen heard a presentation by several Winchendon organization and department leaders about the problem of homelessness in town, and collaborative efforts to address the issue on multiple levels. Coming forward to speak were Pastor J Lillie from Cornerstone Church, Chief of Police Dan Wolski, Community Outreach Coordinator Shaina Cunningham and Senior Center Director Miranda Jennings.

Ms. Jennings began by explaining that they and others in town have been meeting regularly at the Community Partnership Breakfasts at the Senior Center, and the problem of homelessness in town has been coming up consistently. Last month's meeting focused on the topic with an in-depth brainstorming session, and now participants have formed a task force to move forward on creating cooperative immediate and long-term strategies.

"Tonight, we wanted to just highlight what is being done, what are some of the gaps and some opportunities, knowing that we do plan on coming back in October to do a more in-depth presentation and build off of this, because this is not something we just present on and it's solved," she said. She went on, "I'm sure we've all been impacted by homelessness personally or someone that we know and love, and each person that experiences homelessness is experiencing something different. This isn't just a bandaid, one cookie cutter solution fits all...these are all people that we know, we've been working with for four years, and we've seen a lot of really great progress and a lot of challenges."

Board member Audrey LaBrie asked how many people Ms. Jennings was actually talking about, and what were the demographics of the homeless in Winchendon?

Ms. Jennings said that she and Ms. Cunningham were tracking about 45 people, who they were helping with services. This obviously didn't include everyone experiencing homelessness who were not seeking services locally. Ms. Jennings said, "If we do want to go for some larger grants and bigger, longer term solutions, we need to be tracking that, and there are some grants to help us do that, which we'll talk about at the end. We do have those systems in place to track a single person that comes into the food pantry—we welcome them, get their information, and that is one of the questions we ask, along with, do you own a car? What's your income? What other needs do you have? What goals do you have? So we are looking at all the information."

Ms. Cunningham said they work with an array of different circumstances. There are individuals, "men and women, and you see the underlying causes, the mental health and addiction that drive that. You also see a lot of families that were displaced because of inflation rates or eviction or their multifamily units were purchased by a developer, and the rents were increased or hiked. We even had a couple house fires last year as well as Board of Health closures."

Ms. Jennings added, "There's homelessness that the public sees, and then there's a lot that people are staying on friends' and families' couches. Within the state of Massachusetts, that is considered homeless. So, it's impacting mothers, fathers, children, single individuals, people with disabilities."

Ms. Jennings showed a chart with three levels of response to the problem—"Emergency/Triage," "Stability/Transitional Supports" and "Long-Term Housing & Prevention", which make up the "continuum of care" currently available for persons experiencing homelessness and seeking help. The CAC serves as a "point contact" and can refer people to many other resources, but she emphasized, "this isn't a CAC thing." Only teamwork of agencies and organizations throughout the town will lead to real solutions.

At the Emergency/Triage level, current services include:

- emergency hotel or campground placement via the CAC (funding is limited)
- CAC has food, blankets, tents and clothing

- the Senior Center can provide lunches for those age 55+
- the Clark YMCA opens warming centers in the winter
- the Clark YMCA can offer space to take showers and do laundry
- the CAC offers one-on-one appointments to assist persons who need to find resources
- the Police and Fire Departments collaborate with emergency support

Challenges and service gaps at this level include: limited shelter or campground space with time-limited stays. There is no local shelter to Winchendon and no "wet shelter" (shelters for those who have not been sober from alcohol or drugs for a certain amount of time) options. The CAC has limited funding to do case management. The stigma and isolation of homelessness can interfere with persons finding services.

At the Stability/Transitional Supports level, current services include:

- CAC case management for housing referrals, finances, SNAP, getting IDs, Social Security, applying for housing, getting a cell phone, getting fuel assistance, and getting an address to use for services, voter registration, and job applications.
- Alyssa's Place for recovery support
- SHINE and Integrity Medicare health counseling at the Senior Center
- Aging Services of North Central Mass supports persons aged 60+
- Winchendon's Community Connector offers free transportation in the area, connections to the MART system and via MART, to the state commuter rail in Fitchburg

Challenges and service gaps at this level include: a two-month waiting list for CAC case management, no available transitional housing or long-term shelters, limited hours and funding, a lack of stable interim housing options, and the stigma and isolation of homelessness.

At the Long-Term Housing & Prevention level, current services include:

- via the CAC, RAFT/RCAP eviction prevention
- via the CAC, limited funds for rental or mortgage assistance
- via the Winchendon Housing Authority, housing and outreach
- assistance to families through the Winchendon Public Schools, including the Murdock School-Based Health Center (SBHC) operated by Heywood Hospital and Community Health Workers (CHW) in the schools, teachers, student-operated programs and other families
- via the CAC, the Youth workforce/afterschool program
- transportation via the Community Connector
- HEAL Collaborative Resident and Youth Leaders

Challenges and service gaps at this level include: long waiting lists for housing, no transitional housing programs that allow for recidivism, limited child care and job skill support, remaining gaps in transportation networks, the regional shortage of affordable housing generally, and the stigma and isolation of homelessness.

Chief Wolski said that from the perspective of the police department, the paradigm for framing the problem of homelessness in a community has changed. Homeless persons used to be labeled "vagrants" and treated as criminals. "We're not doing that," he explained. "We're trying to solicit help from the other organizations. We're really better suited to address the issue, and we use what limited means the police department has, which unfortunately, oftentimes, is a last resort of criminalization. And so we were trying to use that as that very last resort when we have to deal with some of the issues, particularly some of the issues that are most apparent to people in town, the visual aspects of homelessness that a lot of residents see."

Ms. Cunningham said, "Most recently, the furthest stop that we had been transporting folks was to the Queen Street shelter in Worcester, and even that is at capacity. So we had been transferring folks out there that ended up sleeping on benches across the street, that are then making their way back to us because there are no resources available."

Ms. Jennings said that as winter approaches, there will be no place to put people. They are applying for a state grant that will provide funding for an expanded warming center, more staffing and more case management.

Ms. Cunningham said, "Raising awareness around the services that we do have locally is essential, because preventative care is always the best route to go. It's challenging when folks end up at our doorstep with their bags once they're in full crisis mode, or they have a past due bill of \$20,000 because that's a really challenging situation to address. So we do want to raise awareness around the services that we offer" for the "upstream" and long-term supports as described above.

Ms. Jennings stressed the value of the new Community Connector because transportation can be critical. "We have had residents that say, 'I have a job, I am able to pay for my house, but I can't get to my job, and if I can't get to my job, I'm going to lose my house.' So we have a 40 mile radius transportation that is free for residents for employment, as well as medical and other things like that."

Ms. Cunningham added that all persons experiencing homelessness need to be treated with dignity and respect. Also, the current systems often end up breaking apart families because there are so few options for a two-parent family with children. Often the father goes to one shelter, the

Winchendon News

HOMELESSNESS

continued from page 11

mom and kids to another, and then the Department of Youth and Families steps in just because the family is homeless.

Pastor J, explaining that he was representing the Council of Churches in Winchendon, emphasized how vital it is for everyone to be collaborating and coordinating efforts, not just in helping those who are already homeless, but in intervention to prevent families and individuals from becoming homeless. "People that I've been working with through my own church [say] that they're not going to be able to get oil because they haven't paid off last year's oil bill and are not being able to make choices between paying their rent or paying their housing. We've got young families who are finding themselves being priced out of apartments at this moment, or questioning, can we pay the taxes on our house? Can we pay the mortgage?...in between the month of August and September, just between two churches here in town, we've put out somewhere around \$8,000 to minister to folks facing homelessness or situations that are going to end in homelessness."

The panel was joined by David Connor, Director of Winchendon Templeton Housing Authority. Agreeing with everything that had been said about collaboration, he said, "My staff works hard every day to try to supply decent, safe and sanitary housing that's in good repair. That's our mission statement...we have 250 units here in Winchendon that the Housing Authority manages. That's just physical apartments here in Winchendon, anywhere from a one bedroom all the way up to a four bedroom apartment. I can tell you that our waiting list is years to get into our housing. Now, that can change depending on your preference and priority." On the state level, he said, the waiting list has over 12,000 applicants. People apply to Winchendon who have never heard of the town and have no idea where it is.

All Winchendon units that are not being actively renovated are full, Mr. Connor said. The Board is working on plans to develop more housing, but the immediate question with winter approaching is, what do they do for the next four to six months?

"We actually have more federal public housing here in Winchendon than we do state, very rare in a community our size, in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts," he said. "We're blessed to have that, and that's the hard work people have done in generations past to get that kind of housing here in Winchendon."

"But that waiting list we have on our elderly side, we have a total of 106 people. Of that, 21 of them are considered local. Others could be Gardner, Templeton, Ashburnham, local, but not Winchendon residents. On our family side, we have actually nine homeless families that are considered homeless. On our waiting list, they're considered emergencies. Again, no vacancies. We have a total of 38 local families waiting to get into housing, and a total of 173 families. That's for anywhere from a one bedroom all the way to a four bedroom apartment. So just to give you an idea of the need in the community, it's large."

Regarding the planned veterans' housing at the former Streeter and Poland Schools, Mr. Connor said that there is a federal voucher program, VASH, for veterans' housing that veterans will be able to use at that facility when it opens. This alleviates the housing subsidy that housing authorities at the local level cover for affordable housing.

After a few questions from Board members, Board Chair Andrew Beauvais said, "I just want to say thank you to all of you who came up and spoke on this. I know I didn't give you a lot of time, I gave you about a week to put it all together, but I know this is something that you all have been working on diligently for quite a while, and so I appreciate the information that you presented tonight. It's a bit overwhelming. It's definitely something that needs to be addressed. And to the point that was mentioned earlier, we all need to work together to make this happen. So I appreciate you chasing after those grants. Hopefully we can get that one for the warming center and extending those hours, and then, of course, developing a plan. I see you have a Mass Development Planning Grant on there to create transitional housing. So just a huge thank you to all of you and everybody who's involved in the task force and presenting on this tonight, and I look forward to future updates and any support that we can provide."

Karolina Zapal Wins Beals Prize for Poetry



A panel of three distinguished judges recently proclaimed Florence resident Karolina Zapal the winner of the Beals Memorial Library's sixth annual Beals Prize for Poetry, for her poem, *Cost of Love*. Second went to Hillary Smith-Maddern of Greenfield for *At Banshee Bar*, and Miriam O'Neal of Plymouth took third prize with *the God Chronicles*.

Karolina Zapal is a poet, prose writer, and translator whose work dwells in the spaces between languages, landscapes, and longing. As a Polish immigrant, she's drawn to the questions that come with leaving one's home and making another. She is the author of *Notes for Mid-Birth (Inside the Castle)* and *Polalka (Spuyten Duyvil)*, and her writing has appeared in *Exposition Review*, *The Rumpus*, *The Seventh Wave*, and elsewhere. Her co-translations of Halina Poświatowska's poetry have appeared or are forthcoming in *Poetry Magazine*, *Circumference*, *FENCE*, *The Massachusetts Review*, and others. A graduate of Naropa University's

MFA in Writing & Poetics, she lives in Florence with her husband and daughter and works at the Massachusetts Center for the Book.

Other competition finalists included: Laura DiCaronimo of Hubbardston for *Mother's Daughter*; Sarah Hall of Athol for *Abecedarian in the Spring*; Howard Kogan of Ashland for *This Poet*; Lilla Lyon of Peterborough NH for *The Blame Game*; Connolly Ryan of Florence for *All Over the Map*; Lynne Viti of Westwood for *Suburban Living*; and Prudence Wholey of Shelburne for *Vanished*.

Jurors for the contest were poets Sara Letourneau, 2023 winner of the Beals Prize for Poetry, the Managing Editor at Heart of the Story Editorial & Coaching Services, and the author of *Wild Gardens*; Maria Williams, author of *White Doe*, winner of the 2023 Verse Daily Prize, and the chapbook, *A Love Letter to Say There is No Love*; and Cleo Rohn, poet, spoken word performer, educator, and the 2024 Beals Prize for Poetry winner.

The contest honors the memory of Charles L. Beals, the benefactor of the Beals Memorial Library, whose dedication to the written word continues to benefit the townspeople of Winchendon, Massachusetts over 100 years later.

The Beals Prize for Poetry was funded in part through a grant from the Winchendon Cultural Council and by the Friends of the Beals Memorial Library.

Mass. Member Elected National American Legion Auxiliary 2025-2026 Vice President



September 30, 2025 - INDIANAPOLIS - Dr. Coral May Grout was elected national vice president of the American Legion Auxiliary (ALA) during the organization's 104th National Convention in Tampa, Fla.

Grout is a member of Massachusetts' Eugene M. Connor Unit 193. She is eligible for membership through her father, Charles E. Grout, who served in the U.S. Air Force in the Philippines and Australia during World War II. She also adds the military service of her grandfather, Stanislas Laplante, who served in the U.S. Army during WWI. She is the first national vice president from Massachusetts in 85 years.

Before being elected to this role, Grout held numerous leadership positions in the organization at the unit, district, department (state), and national levels. She was the district Education Committee chair for 25 years and department president three times.

At the national level, Grout served as chair of several committees, including Children & Youth, Veterans Affairs & Rehabilitation, Education (twice), Americanism, Constitution & Bylaws, Public Relations,

Legislative, Leadership, Community Service, and Junior Activities. She also served on the National Executive Committee (the ALA's national governing board), and as national secretary and national historian. After receiving a bachelor's degree from Mount Holyoke College, Grout earned a Master of Education degree from Boston College and then took her love for learning to the next level by graduating with a Doctor of Education degree from the University of Massachusetts.

Grout is a retired superintendent of schools, assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction, middle school administrator, and middle school teacher. She is an adjunct faculty at Franklin Pierce University and Worcester State University. For the last 14 years, Grout has been a Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education consultant for underperforming school districts and RETELL. She is a national presenter on grantwriting and leadership topics, and on the board of directors for Trusted Financial Life Insurance Corporation in Milwaukee. Grout is treasurer for the Mount Holyoke College Class of 1975 and is a leader and eucharistic minister for the St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Church. She is also a town moderator for Winchendon, Mass.

Grout lives in Massachusetts and Florida with her cat, Chloe. Her favorite pastimes include traveling, playing golf, exercising, and gardening.

For more information, visit www.ALAforVeterans.org.

Regional News and Events

Gardening

Improve Your Garden Soil with Fall Leaves and Landscape Trimmings



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

Photo courtesy of MelindaMyers.com

by Melinda Myers

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

Start by putting fall leaves to work in the garden. Use your mower with the bag attached to shred and collect fall leaves. Work them into the top 8" to 12" of soil. They break down over winter, adding organic matter and nutrients to the soil before you begin planting in the spring.

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

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

Incorporating two to four inches of compost or other organic matter into the top 8 to 12 inches of soil is another option. Organic matter adds nutrients but also improves drainage and aeration in heavy soil and increases water- and nutrient-holding capacity in fast draining soils.

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

Another no till method uses a five-inch layer of compost on top of non-shiny cardboard, covering the soil surface. The cardboard helps suppress the weeds and the compost provides the growing medium for seeds and transplants. The compost is replenished yearly, and the cardboard eventually breaks down, adding organic matter to the soil.

Convert landscape and garden trimmings, fall leaves and compost into a rich planting medium with lasagna gardening. This system employs composting methodology to build soil in free-standing or contained raised beds.

Start your lasagna garden by measuring and marking the layout of your garden bed. Cut any grass and weeds in this area very short and cover with moist newspaper or cardboard. This smothers any existing grass and weeds.

Next, add a two- to three-inch layer of peat moss or compost. Top this with four to eight inches of plant debris such as leaves, plant-based kitchen scraps, herbicide-free grass clippings, straw or similar materials. Sprinkle a bit of low nitrogen fertilizer over this layer. Cover with an inch of compost. Repeat the layers, just like making lasagna, until your garden is 18 to 24 inches high.

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

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

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

Melinda Myers has written 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®

Making the most of Medicare open enrollment

When you turn 65, Medicare becomes a vital part of your health care coverage. But signing up is just the beginning. Many people don't realize that Medicare isn't a "set it and forget it" program. In fact, you have the opportunity – and often the need – to review and adjust your coverage every single year.

The annual Medicare Open Enrollment period, which runs from Oct. 15 through Dec. 7 each year, is your chance to take a fresh look at your health care needs and make sure your Medicare plan still fits your life. Then you can determine whether your medical and prescription plans need to be switched or dropped.

Just like your health can change from year to year, so can Medicare plans. Insurance companies may adjust their coverage and costs or even discontinue certain plans entirely. By taking time during the open enrollment period to compare your options, you might discover a plan that saves money, offers better coverage or both.

As a reminder, you have several options when it comes to your Medicare coverage.

- Original Medicare (Parts A and B) covers hospital stays and medical services such as doctor visits. Part A typically comes with no monthly premium if you've worked for at least 10 years. Part B requires monthly premiums – \$206.50 or more in 2026, depending on your income. They may also be copays and deductibles.
- Medicare Advantage (Part C) offers an all-in-one alternative to Original Medicare. These plans are offered by private insurance companies. They often bundle together hospital, medical and prescription drug coverage. They may also include extra benefits like vision, dental and wellness programs that Original Medicare doesn't cover.
- Medicare Part D provides standalone prescription drug coverage for those who stick with Original Medicare.
- Medicare Supplement (Medigap) policies help cover the out-of-pocket costs that Original Medicare doesn't pay, such as copayments and deductibles.

When shopping for Medicare plans, there are several important areas you should consider to determine which options are right for you:

- Out-of-pocket costs such as monthly premiums, deductibles, copayments and any other expenses Medicare doesn't cover. Sometimes a plan with a higher premium saves you money overall because of lower copays.
- Prescription drug coverage deserves special attention. All Medicare plans for 2026 will include a \$2,100 cap on what you pay out of pocket for covered prescription drugs, up from \$2,000 in 2025. However, this cap only applies to drugs that your plan covers, making it crucial to verify your medications are included.
- Your health care needs for the coming year matter too. Do you have surgeries planned? New health conditions to manage? You'll want to make sure your potential plan covers the care you expect to need.
- Travel plans can also influence your choice. Original Medicare typically doesn't cover services overseas, so frequent travelers might want supplemental coverage for emergencies abroad.

If you don't make any changes during open enrollment, you'll likely be automatically reenrolled in your current plan for the following year, as long as it's still available and you continue paying required premiums.

Don't let your Medicare plan run on autopilot. Take advantage of the annual open enrollment period – between Oct. 15 and Dec. 7 – to ensure your coverage continues to serve you well in the year ahead.



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Sleepy Hauler Antique Center Wakes Up Lower Central Street As Thriving Business Moves to Toy Town

by Inanna Arthen

Sleepy Hauler Antique Center, Winchendon’s newest business, is far from new. It’s been operating in two previous towns for some forty years, and has now re-settled in Toy Town, in the former home of Dick’s Furniture at 67 Central Street. Sleepy Hauler officially opened with a ribbon cutting on Saturday, October 4, attended by Winchendon Garden Club President Linda Dellasanta, Board of Selectmen Chair Andrew Beauvais, Board of Selectmen member Audrey LaBrie, State Representative Jon Zlotnik, Planning Board Chair Guy Corbosiero and Winchendon Redevelopment Authority member Les Goodrich. Its sign, made by local business Patriot Designs, had been displayed on the building facade for several weeks, tantalizing residents who wondered what this somewhat dramatic image – the headless horseman from the famous Washington Irving story, “Legend of Sleepy Hollow” – might portend.

During Fall Fest, the store was open and visited by a continuous stream of curious people, who quickly learned that the items inside aren’t at all spooky. Beautiful, unique, intriguing, amazing and irresistible all come much closer to the mark. The *Courier* stopped by when it was a little quieter to talk to proprietor Jeff Simpson and learn more about the store.

“We’ve been doing the antiques for well over 40 years,” Mr. Simpson said. “We’ve had stores in Charlton and Barre, and now we moved here, and we love it here. We do a lot of higher end antiques, hard to find antiques. We do some lower end stuff. So there’s something for everybody. We love people. We just have a good time – we’re here to have a good time.”

His parents did antiques, Mr. Simpson said, and he grew up in the business. “They included me with everything that they ever did, which made me love it just as much as them,” he said. “They didn’t try to do it when I was in school and get it done before I got home, so they could have their peace and quiet. They brought me along with them to make sure I enjoyed it also.”

Sleepy Hauler had to move because its space in Barre became unavailable, Mr. Simpson said. “This building came up for sale, and it’s in our range of area that we were looking at. I came up and looked at it, and it was every single thing we wanted. It’s one level, giant size, a lot of space for people, and we could do every single aspect that we wanted to do. We run auctions. We run special pop-up sales. We have special vendors coming in. We spread it out.”

Space is critical because Sleepy Hauler Antique Center has an unusual business model. It’s a “group shop,” Mr. Simpson explained. “There’s 17 different dealers, that way we can accommodate every type of antique. I specialize in clocks and mechanical items. You might do artwork and glass. The other person might do mid-century. The other person might do bronzes and things like that.” Each dealer essentially rents a space in the center. The center handles all sales and sales tax, deducts the rent and pays the dealers every month. At least 85 percent of a dealer’s stock must be antiques. There are a few reproductions among the offerings. To be a true antique, Mr. Simpson explained, an item must be at least 100 years old.

The store also hosts pop-up sales of items it normally wouldn’t carry on an ongoing basis. One example would be the pop-up sale of vinyl records during Fall Fest. There are also online auctions with pick-up of goods handled by the store, which also brings potential customers in to see what’s available.

Mr. Simpson said that he isn’t licensed to do formal appraisals – this requires insurance – but he’ll be happy to look at a piece and give his educated assessment of its worth. He buys pieces from the public as well as sells them. He will buy gold and silver pieces, which are a very hot market right now, he said.

Asked what some of his favorite types of antiques are, Mr. Simpson listed phonographs, jukeboxes, slot machines, bronze cash registers, and “really old” furniture – Victorian, Empire, Federal and so on. But his real passion is clocks. The store already has dozens of them, but Mr. Simpson is still working on a room which will be entirely filled with clocks – more than 500 of them. They’re still reinforcing the walls to support them all, he said.

The name “Sleepy Hauler” just came to him, Mr. Simpson said. He liked the play on words, and he could use the headless horseman as a motif. Most of the business promotion is done on Facebook.

Asked what he’d like the people in Winchendon to know, Mr. Simpson said, “I’m here because I love people. And so far, the town has been great to us. They’ve been open arms. They’ve done a ribbon cutting ceremony when we opened, they helped me through every every issue that I have that I asked them about. I’d like people to know that we’re going to be fair with people. We’re going to give them a fair price when we buy stuff, and we’re going to give them a fair price when we sell stuff. And we stand behind it 100 percent.”

You can follow Sleepy Hauler Antique Center on Facebook at www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100063450409867. The store is located at 67 Central Street, Winchendon. It is closed on Tuesday and Wednesday, and open from Thursday through Monday 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., or by appointment. Phone number: 978-602-6932.

Below is a sampling of what you might find when you visit!



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

Community Notice Board

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.

Toy Town Trolley Now Running Later on Saturdays!

We’ve expanded service hours to help more Winchendon residents—especially those in need of transportation to warming centers, shelters, and essential services.

New Saturday Hours are 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Book ahead! Saturday rides must be scheduled by 3:00 p.m. on Friday.

Door-to-door rides within Winchendon are available for:

- Medical appointments
- Grocery shopping
- Shelter and warming center access
- Pharmacy trips
- And more

Call (978) 297-3155 or email communityconnector@winchendon-cac.org.

Prefer to book with your phone? Download the Community Connector app at www.townofwinchendon.com/577/Get-the-App

Let your neighbors know! This expanded schedule helps ensure safe, reliable transportation for those who need it most—especially during colder weather.

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”

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

Fall Special Town Meeting

Monday, December 1, 2025

7:00 p.m.

Murdock Middle High School Auditorium

3 Memorial Drive, Winchendon

Town Committee Vacancies as of October 27, 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
- Audit Committee - 1 vacancy
- Board of Health - 1 vacancy
- Charter/Bylaw Review Committee - 1 vacancy
- Communication Committee - 1 vacancy
- Council on Aging - 2 vacancies
- Cultural Council - 11 vacancies
- Fence Viewer and Field Driver - 1 vacancy
- Historical District Commission - 1 alternate vacancy
- Parks & Recreation Commission - 1 vacancy, 1 student vacancy
- Planning Board - 1 vacancy
- Winchendon Commission on Disabilities - 1 vacancy
- Zoning Board of Appeals - 1 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).

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.

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

Winchendon News

The First Annual A Toy Town Christmas November 15 - December 13

Celebrate the season by exploring local shops in Winchendon and neighboring communities.

A showcase of festive storefronts, seasonal delights, and unique gifts.

Pick up a passport at any participating shop to start collecting stamps.

Visit all locations for a chance to win the grand prize.

Collect stamps from 5 shops to enter a drawing for an item from one of the shops.

www.toytownchristmas.com

Visit the website for updates, more information and a list of participating businesses!

Perfect Weather and Plenty of Visitors for 9th Annual Winchendon Fall Fest

by Inanna Arthen

The 9th Annual Winchendon Fall Festival took over Central Street on Saturday, October 11 from 10:00 a.m. until 7:00 p.m., with close to 200 vendors and booths lining both sides of the street from CVS on the corner of Maple Street, to Cumberland Farms at Blair Square. Along with the pop-up tents and tables, Central Street businesses were open, some with special attractions like a pop-up vintage vinyl record sale at the newly opened Sleepy Hauler Antique Center. With perfect weather—temperatures in the 60s and a partial overcast to keep the sun from being too oppressive—visitors poured in. From 10:30 a.m. until around 3:00 p.m., the roadway was consistently so crowded, the rolling mini-train making circuits up and down the street had some challenges getting through.

The parking lot by the Clark YMCA served as a center for the event. The equipment for the live bands was arranged there, although this year there was no stage or platform elevating the players above the pavement. A large party tent with seating underneath sheltered visitors as they ate food or listened to the musicians. Bands included Maggie Neff, TWO for the ROAD, Down Daizy and Winchendon's own hometown favorite, The BIG RanDom, which has been taking some time off this year and has been missed.

Around the big tent clustered some of the food concessions, including The Glen Caffe and Not Just Produced, The CAC/Kiwanis food tent, and The Farm Stand. The Parks & Recreation booth faced the street, with the pie baking and pie eating contests, a corn hole set up and a pumpkin painting station for the kids.

But there were far more food offerings than would fit in the lot. Eateries along the street were open for business, with some, such as C & S Pizza, bringing a stand out to the curbside. Gabby's Pizza, Christos Pizza, Friends Garden, and Subway were all welcoming customers. The UU Church of Winchendon was selling its annual homemade chili and hot dogs. Those seeking

dessert could try Uncle Joey's Cannolis, Maddy's Ice Cream or Pops Sweet Harts—not to mention the vendors selling pastry, fudge and cookies, and the trick or treat candies many booths set out to tempt customers.

Besides vendors, numerous non-profit organizations had booths, with information and handouts. There were many fundraisers and raffle baskets, and some booths had activities and freebies. Murdock sports and Ahimsa Haven Animal Rescue had costumed "mascots" greeting attendees—you could have your picture taken with the "Murdock Blue Devil", who was a very animated fellow.

There were numerous activities for children to enjoy. Animal Craze brought its petting zoo, with chickens, ducks, bunnies, baby pigs, and baby goats in fenced enclosures where the kids could get up close and personal with the animals. Hyridge Farms was operating pony rides almost non-stop, circling around the Clark's lawn with three very patient ponies of different sizes. The pie-eating contest had three sections: for tweens, teens and adults. New this year was an exciting attraction from Rock'n'Roll Racing, where kids could try their hand operating remote-controlled miniature cars on a track with steering wheels mounted on the side of the track. The result was more bumper cars than racing, but a great time was obviously had by all.

Among the more energetic activities was a kids' "obstacle course" run by the Winchendon Fire Department. FD Lt. Garrett Wante explained to the *Courier* that the "obstacle course" was made up of the procedures that firefighters might find at an actual fire. Each "runner" was timed as they went through a series of actions in order: bringing out the ladder and setting it in place, bringing out the folded hose, breaking down a door (safely on the ground) with a fire axe, carrying a "victim" (a life-size teddy bear) to safety, and finally unrolling an actual water-loaded hose and knocking down a "fire"—plastic "flames" in the windows of a mocked-up building facade. The

Fire Department has done other demos at past events. Lt. Wante said that they want to create different activities and not always do the same things. The "obstacle course" was very popular, with a continuous stream of participants taking the simulated fire call challenge. One young person finished the whole series in just 38 seconds! Lt. Wante took some kidding about the fact that the Fire Department is currently hiring, and this being a perfect aptitude test for aspiring future members of the team.

Festival organizer Nicole Roberts told the *Courier* she estimated about 5,000 visitors attended the event through the afternoon. By 3:00 p.m. the foot traffic in the street was thinning out, but Fall Fest was still busy. The closing time was extended to 7:00 p.m. partly so that vendors could enjoy some of the music and food after they closed up their tables.

Many thanks go to the Winchendon Police Department, Fire Department and Department of Public Works for all their help in putting on the event, along with all the hard-working volunteers, the vendors and presenters, and the businesses on Central Street and beyond.

Ms. Roberts posted on Facebook, "Thank You for a Wonderful Fallfest! I want to sincerely thank everyone for the kind and thoughtful compliments I received about Fallfest. It means so much to know that the event was enjoyed by so many. I take great pride in organizing Fallfest, but it truly wouldn't be possible without the incredible support of our community and dedicated vendors. Your enthusiasm, participation, and collaboration are what make this event so special year after year. Thank you all for being a part of it!"

We're all waiting eagerly for next year: Number Ten! If you'd like to be part of making it special, talk to Ms. Roberts and let her know your thoughts.



The Parks & Rec pie-eating contests took some bravery, as a few pesky bees wanted that pie, too!

Photo by Inanna Arthen



It wasn't easy for the train to get up and down Central Street through all the visitors

Photo by Inanna Arthen



The pumpkin-painting station run by Winchendon Parks & Rec was always busy

Photo by Inanna Arthen

The December print edition of The Winchendon Courier will go to press on Tuesday, November 25 at noon.
Content for that edition must be received by the publisher by Sunday, November 23.