

Voters Reject Funding Fire Station Project at Special Town Meeting



Photos by Inanna Arthen



by Inanna Arthen

At a Special Town Meeting convened on Monday, December 1, 243 Winchendon voters rejected both articles on the warrant after an hour of debate. A proposal for the town to collect a lodging excise tax from short-term rentals such as AirBnBs, motels, and hotels, which would have netted the town an estimated \$30,000 or so in annual revenue, failed to pass. Article 2, which asked voters to approve borrowing \$16.6 million to fund the Fire Station Renovation and Addition Project, required a two-thirds majority to pass, because it involved borrowing. The vote on Article 2 came in as a perfect tie, 50 percent in favor and 50 percent opposed. As this fell short of the required two thirds, the article failed.

The Special Town Meeting marked the first Town Meeting presided over by Town Moderator Glenn LaRochelle, who was elected in May and assumed his formal duties after the 2025 Annual Town Meeting. Attorney Tim Zessin from KP Law was present serving as Town Counsel. Voters heeded the advice to arrive early for check-in, so Mr. LaRochelle was able to call the meeting to order promptly at 7:00 p.m. After the Pledge of Allegiance was spoken, Article 1 was brought to the floor.

Article 1 asked voters "to accept the provisions of Massachusetts General law, Chapter 6014 section 3A, authorizing the imposition of a local excise tax upon the transfer of occupancy of any room or rooms in a bed and breakfast establishment, hotel, lodging house, short term rental or hotel in town at a rate of 6 percent of the total amount of rent for each such occupancy, to take effect on the first day of July 2026."

Voter Mary Ellen Lewandowsky rose to ask how much revenue

the town was expecting to generate. Town Manager Bill McKinney responded, "I contacted the Department of Revenue about this, and they said we could expect about \$30,000 per year."

Board of Selectmen member Audrey LaBrie said that "with the understanding that this is something that had not been implemented in the town before," the Board felt that with the town's financial situation, they needed to consider every opportunity to bring in additional revenue. However, she said, "I recognize, I'm speaking for myself, that on top of the state tax that is already in existence, this is a bit of a bind. So I move to amend the motion to a 3 percent tax."

The amendment was then seconded and on the floor. A voter rose to ask where in town the bed-and-breakfast worth \$30K in taxes was, "seems like a total waste of time."

Mr. McKinney explained, "Much like the meals tax and cannabis excise tax, the state actually collects all the funds, and then if the town implements that additional tax, reverts it back to us, so the town doesn't do any extra work for this. So anyone who's registered with the state as a lodging establishment is already collecting state taxes and turning them over to the state. So this would be an additional tax that would again be turned over to the state and then remitted back to the town." While a cogent explanation of the article, the voter said that it didn't answer his question.

The vote on the amendment was called, and the amendment failed with 43 percent in favor, 57 percent opposed.

With the original article back on the floor, a non-resident, Ashley, came forward, explaining that she is the manager of one of the Winchendon properties subject

to the tax, and was speaking on behalf of her brother who owns the property. She explained that AirBnB takes an 18.8 percent cut, the state of Massachusetts takes 9 percent, and then they pay a mortgage and property taxes. The property, on Lake Monomonac, brings people into town who eat at the local restaurants and buy fishing supplies at the tackle shop, and go home and recommend local businesses to their friends. Another 6 percent tax could mean they would have to shut down their short-term rental.

Voter Tina Santos rose to ask if the 6 percent being proposed involved raising the state's 5.7 percent tax to 6 percent or was an additional 6 percent on top of the state's 5.7 percent. Mr. McKinney said it was additional.

Voter Coral May Grout rose to ask how many businesses would be impacted by the tax, and "are we pushing something on the backs of people who already have a lot on their backs?" Mr. McKinney said he didn't have a breakdown of the number of properties and how much each one would pay, but he guessed it was around 15 to 20. They would all have to be registered with the state.

Voter Rick McComsey rose to say, "My concern would be, I know some of these short term rentals are for some local citizens who become displaced, and so we are going to include an additional financial burden upon them, which is totally unnecessary, for only \$15,000 a year. I just don't think that's right."

Voter Marc from Mellen Road rose to say that he didn't think voters understood the amendment that had been voted on and asked for the vote to be repeated. Voters disagreed from the floor and Marc withdrew his proposal.

The vote was then called for Article 1 and it failed, with 44 percent in favor, 56 percent opposed.

Article 2 was then brought to the floor. It asked voters "to raise and appropriate, transfer from available funds, and/or borrow the sum of Sixteen Million Six Hundred Thirty-Two Thousand Four Hundred Ninety-Nine Dollars (\$16,632,499) for the purpose of constructing, equipping and furnishing a Fire Station Addition and Renovation project, including all costs incidental and related thereto; provided, however, that if the Town votes hereunder to borrow funds for this purpose, such vote shall be contingent upon approval by the voters at an election that the amounts required to repay the debt and interest on such borrowing shall be excluded from the limitations on the tax levy imposed by Proposition 2-1/2, so called, pursuant to Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 59, Section 21C(k)."

With Article 2 on the floor, the first voter to come forward was Rick Lucier, who made a "subsidiary motion, S14, to postpone Article 2 until the Annual Town Meeting on May 4, 2026, in order for the residents of the town of Winchendon to assess their tax obligations after they receive their January tax bills." The motion was seconded.

This motion created some confusion for voters who were prepared to speak to the original article and now weren't sure when they could present their statements. Voter Joseph Lillie came forward to say, "People of Winchendon, I just want to plead with you for a moment and just say whatever happens today or later, I can understand both sides of this story. If it does happen to go through, we

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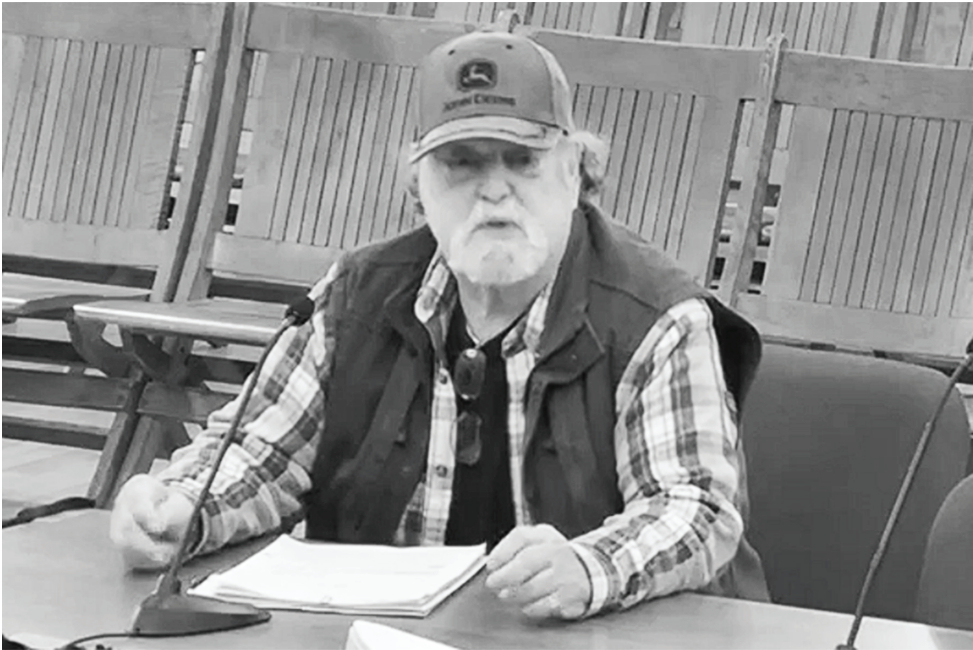
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BOS and Citizens Share Reactions to Town Meeting Fire Station Vote



David Connor addresses the BOS
Photo copyright Town of Winchendon



Rick Lucier addresses the BOS
Photo copyright Town of Winchendon

by Inanna Arthen

At the Board of Selectmen’s meeting on Monday, December 8, Board members and citizens had several opportunities to comment on the Special Town Meeting held a week earlier on December 1.

During the public comment period, citizen David Connor came forward to share his thoughts on the fire station vote. “I had 28 years on the Fire Department and the ambulance here in Winchendon. I’ve been retired from the Fire Department for many years, but still care dearly about it,” he began. “We saw that split vote of 50/50 and I thought about it, and I actually mentioned it to the Town Manager the other day, that I’d like to come and talk about, where can we go from here? The majority of the town, I think, agree we need to do something to repair the building we have today and give them the space that we believe they need, but also do it in a way that we think the town can afford. There’s a lot of talk about future expenses with the schools, other building concerns and other needs at the police station and others.

“What I’m proposing is, when we were getting ready to build the high school back in the early 90s, I was on the original school building committee. We hired the architect and started to move forward, then the committee disbanded, and another committee took over. I really think we need to put a committee together in this town of townspeople,

taxpayers, but also some department heads. I don’t want to make it too big, but I think if we can get concerned people that care about it, and also maybe a few that are naysayers, and put together a committee to look at the plan we have today, what changes can be made to it now, because it’s designed and ready to go out to bid.

“We’ve spent a lot of money so far, but there’s no way the town is going to move forward with the cost of this building. So how do we get the repairs needed on the existing building to give them the space they need? What do we need to do to make it more palatable for the town and affordable? There’s got to be concessions made, because we know the town won’t vote that price in. But also looking at what could be done for future growth.”

Mr. Connor referred to comments made at Special Town Meeting about the issues with the current police station, which is more than 100 years old and was formerly a courthouse that was remodeled into the police station. It has problems with energy efficiency, humidity inside the building, and many other maintenance concerns. “I’m not saying that we need to look at [a whole new] public safety building, but what is the option? What could be the option 10, 15, 20 years down the road, maybe put them together, but also maybe give the Fire Department what they need today, but design a building

that can grow.” He concluded, “We can’t let this building stay the way it is, we also need to protect firefighters and give them a building that we can be proud of, but also can be cost effective.”

Board of Selectmen Chair Andrew Beauvais asked Town Manager Bill McKinney how such a building committee would be formed. Mr. McKinney confirmed that it would fall under the jurisdiction of the Board of Selectmen, and they would need to draw up a definition, number and qualifications of members, and so on, as they did for the Economic Development Task Force.

Citizen Renee Eldridge came forward next to add some comments to the fire station discussion. “In regards to the Fire Department... it sounds like there’s a lot [of money] that hasn’t been collected in the ambulance services,” she said. “I’d like to share that somebody receiving [reimbursement], it depends on your insurance that you have, and individuals can be receiving from their insurance company personally, the monies for the ambulance, and then they’re supposed to forward that to the town. So there may be a lot of people that are not aware that they’re actually getting these monies.

“I say that because I am one of those people, I have a new insurance company, and they handle things differently. It does indicate on the information that you get, as far as what your benefits are, it’ll come out in detail what’s being paid by the insurance and what you owe. And if people aren’t taking the time to open those and look, there’s payments in there. So I just wanted to clarify that you might want to look at some kind of campaign within the town to start to look at those things.” She suggested that perhaps Fire Chief Tom Smith could have an administrative assistant, or share one, to help look into the ambulance accounts receivable.

Citizen Rick Lucier came forward to suggest possible solutions to the fire station dilemma. “My comment has to do with my

pushing of the tax title money that’s owed to the town, and making sure we go after it vigorously. I’m pretty sure if this money is brought in, it goes to the General Fund. Once it hits that General Fund, there should be a punch list that [Fire Chief Tom Smith] has for some things that he could be doing now to help that fire station. There’s a crack in it, well, they should be able to get some type of cement caulking and put it in there until they can get things moving forward. We could be doing some basic maintenance that we’ve heard is just overlooked.

“There’s other things. There could be covers put on windows that are inexpensive, you know, things that aren’t really a lot of money, but some of the firemen, I’m sure they’re pretty adept at some of the construction trades and stuff that can do this as part of their downtime. I don’t know what they really do with their downtime, but they, along with [the Department of Public Works], could be doing some maintenance on that building to help it move along, for say, the next six months until we can start looking at how we’re going to address it.

“The interest rates are going to come down, and that’s going to be to our benefit. And along with that, the construction industry isn’t that stellar right now, so it should make it more aggressive for us to get some things in, and it should be able to be done in some phases. We did the Senior Center in phases, and it went quite well because the public accepted it that way, a lot easier than a big lump sum.”

He added, “I’m sure whoever did the architectural design and stuff like that would probably like to keep his name out there and be good to Winchendon and maybe do some more work on that without an exorbitant fee to redo it, because he has the basic outline. It’s a matter of moving some internal lines to make things up. Maybe a room doesn’t get filled with something. It’s just a room. We could use it as storage until it can then be converted into a

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sleeping quarter or something like that. There's a lot of things that can be done. It just needs time and people's input."

During the Board Members' Closing Comments period at the end of the meeting, Board members shared some views on the Special Town Meeting.

Board member Audrey LaBrie said, "I left the Town Meeting very upset. I won't say I was ashamed of the town, or of being a citizen, but I was very, very upset. And I don't know how we as a town can look in the eyes of our firefighters and expect them to answer the call. They made a 911 call to Winchendon, and we did not respond. We were

not there for them. So if the conversation [during public comment] hadn't happened, I was going to speak up now and say, we still need to do something about this. We cannot let it die. Ricci Ruschioni stood up and talked about his job related disabilities. There are health issues that our firefighters are facing. There's horrors coming down the road that we don't even know about. So I am 100 percent behind continuing the discussion and seeing what we can do to help our fire service personnel have a safe place to work."

Mr. Beauvais said, "Along the same theme, first of all, I want to thank everybody who did attend last week's meeting, although it

was not the outcome 50 percent of us wanted. The other 50 percent did get the outcome they were seeking. I appreciate the fact that folks showed up and they voted their conscience. Now that we have done that, we know where we stand, we know what we need to work on. And I think setting a clear path forward, such as what was recommended this evening by Mr. Connor, I think that is a path forward, and I hope that residents can get behind that and see that we truly are trying to come up with a reasonable request, because there are several folks that have mentioned that this is something that needs to be done, even those that voted against it simply because of a cost and the budgetary

constraints.

"So that's absolutely understood, and I want it to be made clear that the reason why that meeting was set was simply to allow folks to have their voices heard, not to pull the wool over anyone's eyes. Although some may still disagree, that's their right, but I still appreciate every single one of those folks for showing up.

"The one thing I will say when it comes to being ashamed, I was ashamed at the the way some folks behaved during that meeting. The heckling of your neighbors is never called for. It's a place to be respectful of each other. We all are in it together."

BOS Holds Annual Tax Classification Hearing Assessor Does Not Recommend Split Tax Rate for Town

by Inanna Arthen

At the Board of Selectmen's meeting on Monday, December 8, the Board convened the annual public hearing on the tax classification for the current fiscal year. Associate Regional Tax Assessor Robert W Heckman Jr. gave the presentation for the hearing. As Mr. Heckman said, "It's that time of year again for the tax classification hearing in which the Select Board makes a vote as to whether we maintain a single tax rate or opt for a split tax rate." (The topic of a split tax rate had recently been floated by a voter at Special Town Meeting who pointed out that many towns have a higher rate for commercial property than for residential, which helped take the burden off residential property owners. Winchendon has never had different rates for different classes.)

The discussion was quite technical and referred to a packet which the Courier has scanned into a PDF for any readers who would like to see it. You can access it at <https://winchendoncourier.net/archives/2025-12-18/images/tax-classification-hearing-packet.pdf>.

"Each year prior to the mailing of third quarter tax billings, the Select Board holds a public hearing to determine the percentage of the town's property tax levy to be borne by each major property class," Mr. Heckman said. Tonight, the Board needs to decide and vote on the "tax shift factor," meaning the percentage, if any, of the tax burden that will be shifted onto another class of property tax payer. A shift of 1.000 means all payers have the same tax rate. Mr. Heckman also explained what the town's total maximum allowable tax levy is for this fiscal year — \$17,524,297 — which is higher

than it would normally be because of the Proposition 2-1/2 override.

On the question of going to a split rate, Mr. Heckman explained, "Right now, Winchendon currently sits at about 91.4 percent residential and 8.596 percent CIP. CIP is commercial, industrial and personal property. That also includes chapter land as well. So any type of split tax rate would have an effect on the farms as well in the community, they would not be included in the residential, they would be included in the CIP, or commercial, industrial and personal property shift. ("Chapter land" refers to land enrolled in special tax programs (Chapter 61, 61A, 61B) that offer significant property tax reductions in exchange for owners committing to keeping the land undeveloped for forestry, agriculture, or open space/recreation.)

"Typically, when you'll see towns start to look into the option of a split tax rate, you're looking at about 35 percent commercial, industrial and personal property. If you see something that is on the lower end of that, it's typically a town that would have a really significant project on hand. For instance, Berlin, in the past, has elected for a split tax rate, but they also have Solomon Pond Mall. And when you take a town that small and the amount of parcels and residential compared to something of that size, that's where you might not see the 35 percent because it's such a significant project." Splitting the rate doesn't change the total dollar amount of the levy — it is not, in itself, a way of bringing in more revenue for the town. It simply changes the balance of how much of the levy is paid by whom.

"This year is a little different because of the override," Mr. Heckman said. "The town would have to elect a greater than 50 percent shift to keep a residential tax bill equal to last year, which is beyond significant. So as you can see, even in the lower section of the 1.5 shift, even at a \$12 tax rate per \$1000 for residential, the CIP would have to be increased to greater than \$18.88 per \$1000. We are currently still waiting to be approved by the [Massachusetts Department of Revenue] for an official tax rate, but the estimate that I have is typically good for plus or minus a cent. Last year, we're at \$11.75. This year would be \$12.59, is what we're projected for."

Board member Audrey LaBrie said that the projected New Growth revenue of \$106,705 seemed like a small amount and asked how it compared to past years. Mr. Heckman said he didn't think it was unusually low, and it varied a lot, being based on specific projects.

Mr. Heckman said, "As the Assessor and as Chair for the Board of Assessors in town, we recommend that the Select Board adopt a residential shifts factor of 1.000 with a corresponding CIP factor of 1.000 thereby maintaining the relative shares of overall tax burden borne by the residential property owners in past years, based on the above assumptions and single tax rate. With the single tax rate, the estimated levy ultimately to be raised by the town would be \$17,513,241 with an excess levy capacity currently of \$11,056."

No members of the public had any questions. The Board closed the hearing, and voted to "set the residential factor at 1.000 with a corresponding CIP shift of 1.000 pending certification of the town's annual tax recap by the Massachusetts Department of Revenue."

FY2026 Tax Rate

At the Board of Selectmen's meeting on Monday, December 22, Town Manager Bill McKinney told the Board that the Massachusetts Department of Revenue (DOR) has certified Winchendon's tax rate for FY2026 to be \$12.69 per \$1000 of valuation. This will be reflected in the property tax bills being mailed out the week of December 29.


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need to be there for each other. And if it does not go through, if there's any firefighters here, just know that we are not ready yet." Ms. Santos rose to ask about the Board recommendations on the article, but had to wait for the discussion and voting on the motion to be finished.

Voter Brian Croteau came forward to say, "One thing to consider when you push this into the spring, because we're looking at a \$16.6 million price tag that's going to go up by a half a million to a million dollars in that six months. So everybody who's willing to pay more later, that's what's going to happen."

A voter rose to ask about the impact the article had on tax bills. Mr. Lucier came forward to clarify his motion. "The reason I mentioned to have a postponement is so people can assess their tax bills," he explained. "Nobody has seen the January tax bills. You can do an estimation based on a calculation that the town gives you, but that may not encompass everything that comes and your assessed value is going to change along with your taxes. So when you get to go for that override, it could be quite a bit more than what they are projecting. Based on that, I'm just giving people more time with the article that I'm not going to speak to. I'm on Social Security. I don't even know what I'm going to get for an increase from Social Security. If I'm lucky, it might be 1 percent, it's been running less than 3 percent for, I don't know how many years, so I'm not going to be able to cover it, myself and my wife, and I'm not alone in this. There are a lot of other people that are in this, so I feel that we should postpone it for now. Figure out if it can be pared down and everything else, doesn't mean it's going to cost more in the spring, they may come to their senses and tune it down somewhat, if it's not a \$16 million fire station."

Voter Diane Cloutier rose to say, "I just want to talk to you about something bigger than just a building, bigger than just the one line item, bigger than just any simple vote. I want to talk to you about who we are as a town and who we want to become. For decades, we historically carried one of the lowest property tax rates in the region. It brought people here, made us feel thrifty and disciplined, but there's a point when being thrifty becomes being shortsighted and makes it impossible to sustain the town. I think we've hit that point. Our infrastructure is falling apart because we have not invested in it, and now our fire station is outdated, overcrowded and unsafe. This is not an opinion. This has been supported by feasibility studies and official findings... Our schools are losing students through school choice, and we, as a town, we're losing \$5,000 to \$10,000 for every child that leaves, and with a fire station that's outdated and

overcrowded and it's not fair to the men and women who risk their lives for us every day. Our town is struggling to attract new businesses because no company wants to move into a community that's not even maintaining the basics. New business is what brings more taxes into town, and therefore brings our taxes down. If you need proof look at many towns like Bellingham and Franklin, they've got different tax rates. The corporations pay \$19.43."

After clarifying that the original article needed to pass by a two-thirds majority and then followed up with a ballot vote, a vote was called on Mr. Lucier's motion to postpone. The motion to postpone failed, with 47 percent in favor, 53 percent opposed.

The original article was now back on the floor.

Voter Joe Sackett rose to say, "We had the opportunity to tour the fire station with Chief Smith last Saturday, and we heard his compelling case for our town's fire station needs. He took us to every room and described how unsafe it was for our firefighters and paramedics. With no garage ventilation, the living quarters had a permanent smell of diesel. The kitchen has the only deep sink, and must therefore be used both for washing contaminated gear, along with preparing food and drink. Those returning from fires covered in soot and chemicals had to walk through this small shared dormitory to get to the single shower to decontaminate. But to me, most striking was the turnout area. This is where the firefighters got their gear before getting into one of the trucks to head out. The turnout area is a rack that's jammed behind a ladder truck with a three foot space for our firefighters to put their gear on. Chief Smith didn't even have to point out the potential to slow the emergency response caused by this single design flaw."

"Unfortunately, there's many such deficiencies which could endanger both our lives and property, as well as those of the firefighters. I do not know how the fire and EMS staff made do for so long with a wholly inadequate station. My wife Jill and I understand finances and building renovation cost efficiency. We understand how this renovation will pay for itself over time. The plan is minimalist. By the way, there's no gym, that was removed, as far as I understand. And the plan is sound. So if you came here intending to vote no, I can tell you to reconsider. A lot of us do. The property taxes, I understand. They take away value that we have for other needs. But however adequate this fire station was in 1975, after 50 years of heavy use, it is outgrown and unsafe. Our protectors need the renovations, basic life safety improvements, and we deserve the improved protection services that this will provide."

Board of Selectmen member Erika Eitland said that if voters went to the Fire Department website,

winchendonfire.org, they would find a FAQ under Community Documents explaining the whole project in detail. (It's at <https://winchendonfire.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/Color-FAQ-Handout.pdf>)

Voter Russ St. Pierre rose to say, "I work for a community that wasted \$18 million on a police station, and I can't see why we want to waste \$16 million on a fire station. We have a lot of elderly people in our community that are struggling to pay their bills. Food costs are high. Homeowners insurance has gone up 40 percent because of wildfires and hurricanes across the country, and they expect us to pay more for a fire station which the town chose not to maintain for a number of years. You can come up with a smaller number, put a separate outbuilding in to put in showers or a locker room or something to store your trucks in. You don't need a \$16 million station...It's a chronic problem between federal, state and local communities that we don't maintain our buildings. That's not our call as taxpayers. We pay our bills. You come up with a number that we can support, we'll support it."

Voter Darlene Rossi rose to ask how the estimated increase in taxes on a hypothetical \$350,000 home was calculated and how many years the increase would be in place. Winchendon Fire Chief Tom Smith rose to explain that they expected to bond the project for 30 years unless they found a better deal available at the time of borrowing. Combining the project cost and debt service (interest) on the loan, they derived the estimated increase of \$5.19 per week on an "average" Winchendon home. Mr. Croteau came forward to say that the project has already been scaled down to the "bare minimum" and if it went down any more, it wouldn't be worth doing.

Ms. Santos came forward to reiterate her question about the Board recommendations—or in the case of the Capital Planning Committee, the vote not to recommend—as well as to point out that this project has been pushed aside for years, and during COVID, the fire station was one of the few public buildings in town that remained open. In response to her question, Mike Barbaro, member of the Capital Planning Committee, said that the committee voted 3-2 not to recommend, "not that we don't need a new fire station, because we believed we did. We just don't believe in this project."

Voter Ricci Ruschioni rose to speak at length, saying he had worked for the Fire Department for 39 years and was their longest-standing crew member. He described doing rescues using the department's dive truck which currently does not have garage space at the station in the winter. In 2018 he was diagnosed with job-related leukemia because of contaminants he was exposed to on the job. He's

66, he said, and his only retirement is the fire department pension because he doesn't qualify for Social Security. The station was built in 1977, Mr. Ruschioni said, and in the past the department tried to add a one-bay extension to the building, and failed. "It's inevitable that this is going to happen," he said. "You will get a new station, whether it's going to be an addition, whether it will be a big station or small space."

Ms. Eitland said that although she was not present when the Board of Selectmen voted to recommend, she would have voted yes. "We have already spent money on this project, and we spent close to \$800,000 on this project," she said. "So if you are willing to throw away that \$800,000 that is something that will be lost... we cut down this building in terms of square footage and services. The truth of the matter is, this building is 11,000 square feet less than what we had originally spent, and it is costing more because of inflation." The working conditions for the crew are "unacceptable," she said. The new building is being designed to reduce operating costs through energy efficiency and durability. The town has stood by its departments, it's supported its library and Senior Center. "This is an important time to invest in another department that literally is saving lives, and we know that in this town with old infrastructure, we've had multiple fires that have displaced people, and that requires us to have the fire department that shows up, and especially in a population where we know there are older residents that live with us, and therefore that response of the ambulance. We can't afford to wait 20 minutes if there's somebody right down the road who could be there to help us." There is also the question of hiring and retaining qualified employees, who won't want to work in a building that is in poor repair and endangering their health.

After Ms. Eitland spoke, there were yells from the floor to call the vote, but voter Ken Wante was recognized by Mr. LaRochelle. Mr. Wante asked people who had ever called 911 to raise their hands. About a dozen or so people did. "Not too many," Mr. Wante said, "but I guarantee you will at some point in your life, whether it's your mom or your dad having a heart attack, your kid in a car accident, or someone having a fire in a trash can, and all of a sudden a barn goes up, you're gonna dial 911. Wouldn't you want the best possible care and personnel to show up at your house when you're in this state of emergency? We're talking about \$250 a year to upgrade the fire station, provide these people with the best possible equipment and opportunity to save your property and your lives. My sons are in the fire department. I don't want them to get cancer. You heard people come up and talk about that today, it's about time we upgraded

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the fire station and provide everybody in this town with the best possible care and provide the employees of the fire department with the best possible fire station and equipment.”

In response to a question about how much grant and other funding the department hoped to get, Chief Smith named a number of sources, including funding for a portion of the diesel exhaust system for about \$75,000, rebates from National Grid, Green Communities grants for the building, USDA loans and grants, and AFG grants through the federal government. “There are a number of different avenues that we’re looking for to try to reduce the cost,” he said. “Ultimately, once the project is built and the entire \$16.6 million doesn’t need to be spent, if it’s not spent, it’s not needed, it’s not borrowed. So you can have reduction off of that, as well as reduction off of the insurances that are going to have to be added to the town’s protection. So that \$16.6 should be the max of everything, every other thing would be reducing off of that, which would then also reduce the tax impact.”

Marc came forward to argue that people in town with private wells helped pay for the water system used by people on town water. 40 percent of the town doesn’t have access to a fire hydrant, and the fire department needs to bring water in trucks to respond to fire in those neighborhoods. “This is not the government. This is the firemen, like what part of the government is good? The first thing you say is the firemen,” he said.

After one more voter asked again about grants and funds available or potentially available, to offset the borrowed amount (the answers were, as before, unknown for sure) the vote was called. The vote on Article 2 was an even tie, 50 percent in favor and 50 percent opposed. Since a two thirds vote was required, the article failed.

Mr. LaRoche called for an adjournment, at 8:04 p.m.

The recording of the Town Meeting in its entirety may be viewed on WinchendonTV at <https://winchendon.cablecast.tv/CablecastPublicSite/show/330?site=1>.

A Quick Informational Note on Lodging Places in Winchendon

According to the Public Registry of Lodging Operators on the Mass. gov website (<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/public-registry-of-lodging-operators>), there are 17 registered lodging operators in the town of Winchendon: one hotel, one Bed and Breakfast, and 15 “Short Term Rentals”. Most of the short-term rentals are properties on Lake Monomac. The Registry does not give full addresses, only street names. But the streets are:

2nd Street (1)
4th Street (2)
Academy Street (1)
Beachview Drive (1)
Front Street (1, bed and breakfast)
Glenallen Street (5)
High Street (1)
Hilltop Terrace (1)
Island Road (1)
Lakeview Drive (2)
Spring Street (1, hotel)

Not all short term rentals are AirBnBs. But AirBnB lists 13 properties in Winchendon, with their listed fee for a 5-night stay. These range from \$452 for an “apartment” all the way up to \$5,876 (or \$1,175 per night) for a home on the water. The median listing fee is \$1,405 for a five-night stay (or \$281 per night).

For comparison, as of December 4, prices for a room at the Colonial Hotel in Gardner were advertised at \$130 per night, at the King Phillip Motel, \$129 per night, at Great Wolf Lodge, \$173 per night, and the Benjamin Prescott Inn in Jaffrey was listed at \$225 per night.

Winchendon FD Responds to Major Barn Fire in Old Centre, with Assistance from 13 Regional Fire Departments



Photos by Ret. Deputy Chief Ricci Ruschioni

by Inanna Arthen

According to a press release issued by the Winchendon Fire Department on Sunday, December 28, beginning at 8:09 p.m. on Saturday, December 27, “the Winchendon Dispatch Center received multiple 911 calls reporting a structure fire at a large barn on the grounds of 50 Old Center in Winchendon. Residents were advised to get out of the adjacent building. As multiple reports came in reporting the building fully involved, Lt. Garrett Wante requested a second alarm for additional assistance. Upon arrival of 39 Engine

1, Lt. Wante reported heavy fire throughout the barn and requested a third alarm to the scene as well as water tenders to supplement the Town’s water supply.

“Prior to our arrival the barn doors and gates had been opened to allow the many chickens and ducks to escape.

“Winchendon Fire quickly went into a defensive mode on the barn and concentrated on keeping the flames and embers from spreading to the large home. Once the fire was extinguished the efforts turned to getting the residents back in

the adjacent home. Town building and wiring officials worked with Winchendon Fire to isolate the power feeding the barn area and re-energizing the home. The residents were then allowed to return to their home on this frigid night.

“Assisting on scene were Gardner Fire, Templeton Fire, Ashburnham Fire, Westminster Fire, Royalston Fire, Hubbardston Fire, Jaffrey Fire and Rindge Fire. Water Tenders from Troy Fire, Richmond Fire, Fitzwilliam Fire and New Ipswich Fire also staged at the scene. Station coverage was provided by Peterborough Fire and Phillipston Fire with Phillipston handling a medical call during the fire elsewhere in town.

“The Massachusetts State Fire Marshal’s office and the District 8 Investigation Unit were notified and responded. The scene Rehab Unit responded to assist firefighters at the scene. Thank you to the Winchendon Police, Winchendon Dispatch and Winchendon DPW for all their assistance. No injuries were reported and as of [9:00 a.m. on Sunday] the fire is still under investigation.”

50 Old Centre is a congregate living space for veterans that operates as Camelot Farm. At 10:00 p.m. on Saturday night, the temperature in Winchendon was 13°F.

Winchendon Teens Rescued from Mount Monadnock

by Inanna Arthen

A pair of Winchendon 18-year-olds are safe, but famous for all the wrong reasons after being rescued from the slopes of Mount Monadnock in Jaffrey, NH on December 19, as reported by *The Boston Globe*.

The weather that day had taken a turn for the milder, with pouring rain earlier in the day, but temperatures were dropping rapidly. Brendan Girouard and Shawn Paelin decided to begin hiking up Mount Monadnock around 5:30 p.m., more than an hour after sunset and in full darkness. According to officials, the teens had “no food, water, warm clothes, change of clothes, or any cold-weather gear.” They did, however, have alcoholic beverages, according to officials.

Around 10:00 p.m., both young men fell into a brook on Ferry Spring Trail. Another hiker passing by called 911 for emergency response and tried to help the teens, who were now both soaking wet. At that time, according to weather records, it was 17°F in Jaffrey.

Conservation officers reached the hikers at around 11:00 p.m. They

reported that Mr. Girouard was “heavily intoxicated” and unable to walk or move by himself without receiving warming measures by emergency responders. Mr. Paelin was able to walk down the mountain and get into a vehicle to thaw out. Mr. Girouard was taken to a hospital by ambulance around 2:00 a.m. to be treated for “cold weather injuries.” His injuries were not specified, but injuries that commonly result from similar conditions can include hypothermia and frostbite.

Mr. Girouard was charged with alcohol possession.

New Hampshire officials said that they would recommend that Mr. Girouard and Mr. Paelin be billed for the costs of their rescue from the mountain, adding, “These situations are avoidable and put rescue crews at unnecessary risk.”

(The *Courier* thanks New Hampshire emergency responders and the alert hiker who stopped to help for making sure these two Winchendon young people got home.)

Winchendon News

BOS Hears Presentation from Parks & Rec on Successes, Goals, Rebranding the Park and New Rental Fees



from left, Melanie Franklin, Deb Kane and Shaina Cunningham address the Board of Selectmen
Image copyright Town of Winchendon

by Inanna Arthen

At the Board of Selectmen's meeting on Monday, December 22, three representatives of the Winchendon Parks & Recreation Commission appeared before the Board to give a presentation on the Commission's activities and plans for the future, and present a proposed new schedule of fees for use of the Winchendon Community Park and amphitheater. Speaking were Shaina Cunningham, Recreation Coordinator, Deb Kane, Chair of the Commission, and Melanie Franklin, Commission Secretary.

Ms. Cunningham began with an overview of the presentation, explaining that they wanted to review the 2025 season, talk about the impact of their volunteers, go over goals for 2026 and talk about challenges they face. They also want to introduce plans for "rebranding" the name of the park "to something that would be marketed across the region in a more appealing way, to really highlight everything that the venue has to offer." Finally, they would talk about rental fees and some of their sponsors and funders.

"So our mission currently is to enrich the well being of Winchendon residents through inclusive recreation, cultural programming and community driven events that strengthen social connection," Ms. Cunningham said. "Our vision is to create a vibrant and accessible park system where people of all ages gather to learn, explore, celebrate and build a stronger Winchendon together. A lot of what we do, we look through the lens of the Master Plan, and we try to align it with that so it supports community engagement and place making goals, advances public health and outdoor recreation priorities and builds local cultural identity and economic vitality."

Ms. Kane spoke about sponsorship growth for the park and programs. "We had 15 sponsors supporting our 2025 season," she said. "Naturally, we'd like to grow our sponsorship as time goes on. Community insights: we took informal surveys. We go around and we talk to people who are at our concerts and engaged in our events, and they've expressed interest that they'd like to see a lot more live music, food events, free programming, which is hard to do if you want to sustain your facility, more hiking. There's also been strong interest in health and wellness activities, arts and crafts, sports camps, teen activities, cooking and baking."

"Throughout the course of the seasons, we've impacted 13,000 attendees and over 50 events, spread out between the parks and our events that we have indoors, like our Crafternoons and such."

Sponsors have included the Robinson Broadhurst Foundation, Community Foundation of North Central Mass, Winchendon Housing Authority, French Family Foundation, the Romanowski family, Michael & Heather Connor and family, The Farm Stand of Winchendon, Oppure Oil, Harvey Waste Removal & Recycling, Brooks Automotive, Athol Savings Bank, Bellettes and Seigny Incorporated. "We'd like to expand on that, and we've been working on

more sponsors for the coming year. The response has been very slow, whether it be the economy or it's hard to say," Ms. Kane said.

Ms. Cunningham described some of the biggest highlights for the 2025 season—those with high attendance and regional impact. "The Food Truck Festival and Battle of the Bands [at G.A.R. Park], and that's an event that has been anchored in the community for the past four years, and it has a true turnout. We saw roughly 4500 people attend that event. We shifted it to a Saturday, and we saw a significant increase, because it was ranging over a seven hour time period versus a four hour time period, and Saturday seemed to be more successful. So moving forward, we will keep it on a Saturday. We had the Central Mass Irish Festival, and that saw more than 1500 people, and that was by far our largest ticketed event of the season. We had the Haunted Fair, which was a free community day, which saw upwards of 4000 people." Founders Day, an annual event celebrating the opening of the park and amphitheater, was heavily rained on this year, but still saw more than 500 people gather for fireworks after skies cleared in the evening.

Other "Accessible Community Programming" included the band concerts at G.A.R. Park, Movie Nights, Open Mic Nights, Sunset Socials, "Blues, Brew & BBQ," Harvest Festival, Classics Night with vintage cars and bands playing oldies, a Comedy Show, and various indoor programming. "We're continuing to expand and kind of pivot to what the community is looking for" in indoor programs, Ms. Cunningham said. "Karaoke, Trivia Night. We've done Bingo. So we're doing Crafternoons, Breakfast with Santa, and we're open to suggestions. Most recently, we were told Family Feud. We want to see Family Feud happen in Winchendon. So that might be on the horizons to be determined." Another Murder Mystery night, "Murder at Mardi Gras" is planned for February, 2026.

Moving to Volunteer Impact, Ms. Cunningham said, "Our volunteers donated over 200 hours of planning and leadership for events, 400 hours of powering events and logistics on site leading up to it, 150 hours strengthening community outreach, and a total combined together, on a very conservative side, is over 750 hours of community driven impact. We have about 20 volunteers that'll give us 30 hours throughout the season, especially at those larger events, you draw a lot more folks in the concert series, especially, so that's 600 hours right there. And then, with the Commission alone, an average of six members, you have two meetings a month averaging about two hours. That's 48 hours. And if you multiply that by the six commission members, there's 288 hours. So it's a very conservative estimate to say that together, there was over 750 hours of community driven impact."

Ms. Kane put in that volunteer hours aren't logged just during an event, but before and afterwards, with setting up tents, chairs, equipment and so on, and then breakdown at the end. "It does add up to a very long day," she said.

The Commission has four strategic goals for

2026, Ms. Cunningham explained. The first is to complete the Ingleside Woods Disc Golf Course, which is slated to be an 18-hole course. This should be completed by Founders Day (early June), 2026. It promises to be a regional recreation and economic driver, as people already come long distances to play at the disc golf course in the park. The second strategic goal is creating an ADA-accessible, nature-based play area for children in the Winchendon Community Park. The third goal is a parking and multi-use event space in the field, which would support festivals, athletic events and tourism. Finally, the Commission aims to create a "Friends of the Park" volunteer group which would offer formal, structured volunteer and stewardship opportunities and help support ongoing maintenance and beautification of the park. Ms. Cunningham mentioned being impressed by the dedication and energy of similar groups such as the Friends of the Beals Memorial Library and the Friends of Old Murdock.

Challenges include improving the ADA accessibility of areas of the park as events grow larger and programs expand. "At a lot of our larger events, we're finding that there's not enough designated handicap parking spaces with the growth in turnout, and in addition to that, a lot of folks sometimes need to be dropped right off at the stage. So is there potentially another pathway that could be paved around the back where the fencing area is for access? So those are some things that we've been looking into," Ms. Cunningham said. Other challenges include staffing and volunteers, funding stability with sustainable key partnerships and state and federal grants, and developing new revenue sources for long term growth. The benefits include increased economic activity throughout the town and an higher quality of life for residents and visitors alike.

Ms. Cunningham now presented the proposed rebranding of the Winchendon Community Park. The park will be reintroduced as "Ingleside: a Destination for Arts, Recreation and Community." The purpose of the rebrand, Ms. Cunningham explained, "would be a single identity across the amphitheater, trails and Whitney Pond; Cultural Visibility. A lot of folks in the community that I've spoken to that have lived here for a long time and generationally, always go back to Ingleside, asking, 'Why is it no longer Ingleside?' So it would reinforce Winchendon's investment in arts and recreation and community partnership. The rebrand is supported by Robinson Broadhurst Foundation, and elevates the foundation's role in terms of branding on the signs."

She went on to say that the rebranding would afford wayfinding clarity, with clearer signage for visitors and event guests, marketing consistency that aligns web, print and park materials, and community engagement. It would build momentum for park events, tourism and park rentals.

The next slide showed three initial designs created for rebranding concepts (they were all identical except for slight differences in their color palettes). "It would put the amphitheater front and center. It would have Ingleside as a big name. You see performing arts amphitheater, a Robinson Broadhurst foundation destination, and then you also see the highlight of the recreation activities as well. So the Whitney Pond, the trails and fields and the disc golf," Ms. Cunningham said.

Board member Erika Eitland asked who did the design work for the signage. Ms. Cunningham said the designs were done by Melissa Lee

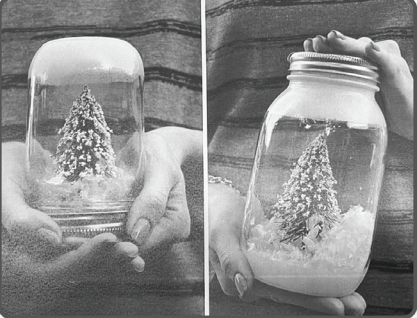


Community Connector

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

Winter Snow Globes



Saturday, January 24th 1PM
52 Murdock Ave Winchendon
Get into the winter spirit and create your own magical snow globe!

REGISTER NOW



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

KIDS SPORTS & ARTS CLINIC
FREE
Ages 6-13 Years
JANUARY 19TH
10 AM - 1 PM
@ THE WINCHENDON SCHOOL
DROP OFF: 10AM
PICK UP: 1PM
LUNCH INCLUDED!

CHOOSE ONE OF THESE FUN CLINIC OPTIONS:
• Hockey
• Arts & Crafts
• Baseball
• Basketball
• Musical Theater

REGISTRATION REQUIRED
REGISTER ONLINE AT: WWW.THE-HUB.ORG
INFO: THEHUB@WINCHENDON-CAC.ORG / 978-297-1667

Want to Add YOUR Event to the Town Calendar?
Contact
winchendonparksandrec@gmail.com

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.

Sponsorship Opportunities

Building Community, Creating Memories, Together.
2026 Winchendon Parks & Recreation

-  PARTNER WITH WINCHENDON PARKS AND RECREATION FOR COMMUNITY SUCCESS.
-  YOUR PARTNERSHIP TRANSFORMS WINCHENDON PARKS AND RECREATION EVENTS.
-  ENHANCE COMMUNITY BY SPONSORING EVENTS AT THE WINCHENDON AMPHITHEATER.

Join Us - Scan Here to See Our Events!



Make an impact - Scan to unlock our sponsorship magazine!



Ready to sponsor or donate? We'd love to hear from you!
Contact:
Shaina Cunningham
Email: scunningham@winchendon-ma.gov
Phone: (978) 297-3155
Address: 52 Murdock Ave, Winchendon, MA 01475
www.townofwinchendon.com

The HUB 5 Summer Dr

Latin Dance Social

Saturday January 3rd 7:00 PM
FREE ENTRY

THE FARM STAND
THE HUB
5 Summer Dr Winchendon MA

Sound Bites

Friday January 9th 2026 6:30 PM

DRY JANUARY
COMMUNITY JAM

WINCHENDON, MA

www.the-hub.org

2026 NEW YEAR'S BOWLING TOURNAMENT

Strike in the New Year
SATURDAY JAN 24TH 5 PM - 9 PM

FUNDRAISER FOR THE WINCHENDON CAC

DINNER INCLUDED W/ REGISTRATION
CHAMPIONSHIP ROUND W/ PRIZES, AWARDS FOR BEST TEAM

LIVE MUSIC FROM: THE CAN COLLECTORS

BEER, WINE & SODA GRABALE
REGISTRATION REQUIRED - \$10 FOR A TEAM OF UP TO 5

TOY TOWN Swing

SAMPLER CLASSES AT THE HUB

STARTING OCT 9TH

@ THE HUB 2-2:30 PM EVERY THURSDAY

\$5 LESSON CHARGE

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

KARAOKE

Monthly on the First Friday

THE HUB 5 SUMMER DRIVE WINCHENDON 6:30 - 9:30 PM

BINGO

At the Bowling Alley

Get ready to shout "BINGO!" with your friends at this fun-filled event.

HOSTED BY

5 Summer Drive, Winchendon
4TH THURSDAY OF THE MONTH
7:00 PM - 9:00 PM

Beer & Wine For Purchase

TOY TOWN Swing

JANUARY 18
FEBRUARY 15
MARCH 15

5:00 PM to 9:00 PM

BIG COVER & LESSON CHARGE

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

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

MORE INFO & SIGN UP HERE:



COMEDY NIGHT

MARCH 21ST 2026
TIME: 7-9PM
WHERE: THE HUB
5 SUMMER DR WINCHENDON



Headliners: John Perrotta + Joe Hebert

Tickets: \$30

MARDI GRAS MURDER MYSTERY

THE HUB, 5 SUMMER DRIVE
SATURDAY, FEB 7, 6:00 PM





JANUARY



THURSDAY JANUARY 1

HOLIDAY - NEW YEARS DAY

FRIDAY JANUARY 2

Karaoke at The HUB

6:30-9:30 p.m. Come one, Come all to The HUB for Karaoke! Join the Winchendon Parks and Rec and have a blast singing and building community together! At The HUB, 5 Summer Dr, Winchendon.

SATURDAY JANUARY 3

Winchendon Farmers Market Winter Market

10:00 a.m.- 1:00 p.m. First Saturday of each month. Inside the Old Murdock Senior Center, 52 Murdock Ave, Winchendon.

Toy Town Bridge Artists Circle

10:00 a.m.- 2:00 p.m. Come and join the Bridge Artistic Network for a time of encouragement, to engage and empower each other to keep creating and become who we were created to be. Bring your art supplies! This is a free event and Lunch is provided. At Cornerstone Church, 122 Gardner Rd, Winchendon.

Latin Dance Social

7:00-9:00 p.m. Come on out to The HUB for some Latin dance lessons! free dancing will be happening as well so come and join us whether you're a seasoned dancer or you're trying it out for the first time. First Saturday of each month. At The HUB, 5 Summer Dr, Winchendon..

TUESDAY JANUARY 6

Social Art Circle with GALA

1:00-3:00 p.m. Explore a variety of art in a supportive social environment—a group with different skill levels who wish to learn, explore, laugh, share, connect, and be inspired in a safe, low key, non-intimidating space. Bring your portable works in progress or try and pick from the shared community art supplies we have on hand. This is a self-led group, but there will be classroom monitors who will assist you. No cost, but registration required, at <https://form.jotform.com/253415023143949>. At the Old Murdock Senior Center, 52 Murdock Ave, Winchendon.

WEDNESDAY JANUARY 7

Ukulele Class

9:00-10:00 a.m. Come to the Winchendon Senior Center and learn how to play the Ukulele, no experience necessary! At the Old Murdock Senior Center, 52 Murdock Ave, Winchendon.

Ukulele Group

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

Teen Cooking Class

3:00-5:00 p.m. Calling all Youth Change-Makers! we have an opportunity for you to receive free cooking lessons at the HUB. Come on out and join us for a wonderful time of learning how to make delicious food. At The HUB, 5 Summer Dr, Winchendon.

Teen GSA Meeting at the Beals

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

THURSDAY JANUARY 8

Dennis Cormier Concert

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

Beals Book Club

3:00 p.m. Join a discussion group that allows avid readers to discuss the themes, plots, and characters of selected books. The library provides the book each month! To find out what book is being read that month, visit or contact the library, 978-297-0300. At Beals Memorial Library, 50 Pleasant St, Winchendon.

Spaghetti Dinner

5:00-6:30 p.m. \$12 per person. Everyone welcome! Sponsored by Winchendon American Legion Auxiliary Unit 193. At Winchendon American Legion Post #193, 295 School St.

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 hearty fish chowder with salad, bread and dessert. Free-will donation \$2 per person, \$5 per family; no one turned away. 126 Central Street.SATURDAY JANUARY 10

SATURDAY JANUARY 10

Art Critique with GALA

10:00 a.m.- 12:30 p.m. Are you looking for encouragement and support from other artists? Bring up to 2 pieces of your artwork (finished or unfinished) to share with your circle of artist friends. You may bring snacks to share with the group. Free to all GALA members. New artists, first 2 classes are free. Email Janet Dupuis to let her know that you will be joining us at Jandu516@gmail.com. For more info about GALA see www.galagardner.org. In the 1st floor Gallery of the Old Murdock Senior Center, 52 Murdock Ave, Winchendon.

Sound Bites Dry January

6:30-9:30 p.m. We are trying something new for our January Community Jam and Open Mic to kick off 2026. Dry January Community Jam. We will have a selection of NA Beers for your sampling and purchase, a whole lot of music and a whole lotta fun! At The HUB, 5 Summer Dr, Winchendon.

MONDAY JANUARY 12

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 JANUARY 13

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.

Teen Dungeons & Dragons

3:30-5:00 p.m. A tabletop roleplaying club for teens! Membership is limited, contact the library at 978-297-0300 to sign up. At Beals Memorial Library, 50 Pleasant St, Winchendon.

WEDNESDAY JANUARY 14

Integrity Medicare Appointments

10:30 a.m.- 12:00 p.m. Have questions about insurance? Call the Senior Center at 978-297-3155 and make an appointment with Margaret from Integrity Medicare! At Old Murdock Senior Center, 52 Murdock Ave, Winchendon.

Lunch at the Park and Virtual Art Gallery Tour

departs 11:30 a.m, returns by 3:30 p.m. Get a ride to the Park Theatre in Jaffrey NH for their monthly Exhibition on Screen series. This month's featured artist: Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio (1571-1610). More info at theparktheatre.org/caravaggio-artsinema. Ride leaves from the Old Murdock Senior Center, 52 Murdock Ave, Winchendon.

THURSDAY JANUARY 15

Red Cross Emergency Preparedness

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

Beals Movie Night

6:00 p.m. Screening this month: TBA. At Beals Memorial Library, 50 Pleasant St, Winchendon.

Social Art Circle with GALA

6:00-8:00 p.m. Explore a variety of art in a supportive social environment—a group with different skill levels who wish to learn, explore, laugh, share, connect, and be inspired in a safe, low key, non-intimidating space. Bring your portable works in progress or try and pick from the shared community art supplies we have on hand. This is a self-led group, but there will be classroom monitors who will assist you. No cost, but registration required, at <https://form.jotform.com/253415023143949>. At the Old Murdock Senior Center, 52 Murdock Ave, Winchendon.

SATURDAY JANUARY 17

Sensory Friendly Browsing Hour at the Beals

9:00-10:00 a.m. Enjoy a special library hour designed to provide a safe and friendly environment for individuals who are neurodivergent, on the autism spectrum, or have other special needs, and their families. For more information, call the library at 978-297-0300. Every 3rd Saturday of the month. At Beals Memorial Library, 50 Pleasant St, Winchendon.

Teen Night at The HUB

6:00-10:00 p.m. Teens Bowl for free! Open mic, karaoke, food. Come on out and join us for a great time of community and free bowling for teens! At The HUB, 5 Summer Dr, Winchendon.

SUNDAY JANUARY 18

Toy Town Swing at The HUB

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

MONDAY JANUARY 19

HOLIDAY - REV MARTIN LUTHER KING JR DAY

Free Kids' Sports & Arts Clinics

10:00 a.m.- 1:00 p.m. Lunch included! At The Winchendon School, 172 Ash St. More details, and register online at www.the-hub.org/event-details/kids-sports-arts-clinic-january-19-2026. For more information, email thehub@winchendon-cac.org or call the Winchendon CAC at 978-297-1667 (Wednesday through Saturday 10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.)

TUESDAY JANUARY 20

Growing Places Mobile Market

10:30-11:30 a.m. Join us and Growing Places for a once a month Farmer's Market that comes to the Senior Center. Fresh vegetables available for purchase using cash, debit/credit or SNAP! At Old Murdock Senior Center, 52 Murdock Ave, Winchendon.

WEDNESDAY JANUARY 21

Classic Movie Matinee at the Beals

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

Teen Cooking Class

3:00-5:00 p.m. Calling all Youth Change-Makers! we have an opportunity for you to receive free cooking lessons at the HUB. Come on out and join us for a wonderful time of learning how to make delicious food. At The HUB, 5 Summer Dr, Winchendon.

THURSDAY JANUARY 22

Our Neighbor's Kitchen Dinner

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

Bingo at The HUB

7:00-9:00 p.m. Bring your friends, grab your lucky charm, and get ready for a fun-filled evening of bingo and prizes! Play 15 exciting games. Last game is a COVERALL with a GUARANTEED \$75 pot! Sponsored by Winchendon Parks & Recreation. At The HUB, 5 Summer Dr, Winchendon.

90s Speakeasy Night at The Snowbound Club

7:00-11:00 p.m. Come join us for a fun night of music by the talented Mike Martin (MM Music). Light refreshments serves & drink specials available. Password to enter: "this one time at band camp!" At The Snowbound Club, 130 Baldwinville Rd, Winchendon.

FRIDAY JANUARY 23

Winchendon Music Festival & Worcester Chorus present Bach Christmas Oratorio Cantatas.

7:00 p.m. Pre-concert talk by Claire Fontijn at 6:00 p.m., concert at 7:00 p.m. Three sections of Bach's popular Oratorio will be performed by a 50-member choir and orchestra. Free to the public. Supported in part by the Winchendon Cultural Council. Refreshments sold. At UU Church of Winchendon, 126 Central St.

SATURDAY JANUARY 24

Crafternoon - Winter Snow Globe Making Day

1:00-3:00 p.m. Get into the winter spirit and create your own magical snow globe! Each participant will design and take home a unique handmade globe featuring a tree, pinecones, and sparkling snow glitter. All materials are provided. \$15 per person. Register at link.clover.com/urlshortener/3PkCM8 or by calling 978-297-3155. For more info, email scunningham@winchendon-ma.gov. Sponsored by Winchendon Parks & Recreation. At Old Murdock Senior Center, 52 Murdock Ave, Winchendon.

RY 2026

New Year's Bowling Tournament

5:00-9:00 p.m. Teams of 5/\$250 per Team. DINNER Included with REGISTRATION. Championship Round with Prizes. Beer, Wine & Soda for Sale. For more information call us at the HUB (978)297-1667. At The HUB, 5 Summer Dr, Winchendon.

SUNDAY JANUARY 25

Winchendon Music Festival presents Capella Alamire

4:00 p.m. Capella Alamire features vocalists from Massachusetts to Maine who perform music from original notation researched and edited by Prof. Peter Urquhart of UNH. This classical concert includes rarely heard Glorias. Free to the public. Supported in part by the Winchendon Cultural Council. Refreshments sold. At UU Church of Winchendon, 126 Central St.

TUESDAY JANUARY 27

Teen Dungeons & Dragons

3:30-5:00 p.m. A tabletop roleplaying club for teens! Membership is limited, contact the library at 978-297-0300 to sign up. At Beals Memorial Library, 50 Pleasant St, Winchendon.

WEDNESDAY JANUARY 28

Integrity Medicare Appointments

10:45 a.m.- 12:00 p.m. Have questions about insurance? Call the Senior Center at 978-297-3155 and make an appointment with Margaret from Integrity Medicare! At Old Murdock Senior Center, 52 Murdock Ave, Winchendon.

Thriller & Mystery Book Club at the Beals

6:30 p.m. If you love the thrills and chills of a good thriller, then join the Beals Mystery Book Club! Participants can share their favorites and enjoy some new ones with other fans of the genre! The library provides suggested books each month. At Beals Memorial Library, 50 Pleasant St, Winchendon.

THURSDAY JANUARY 29

Rubber Stamp Making Class with GALA

1:00-3:00 p.m. OR 6:00-8:00 p.m. Carve your own custom stamp with a design you can print on paper or fabric. Come with your own idea for an image (image size about 2.5" x 2.5"), or use one of the designs provided. You will learn to carve the rubber block using linocut tools. Then you will learn how to print your stamp a couple different ways. We will have paper, cards, sticker paper (for your laptops or notebooks, etc.) and bookmarks for you to stamp on. You can bring your own fabric to stamp on (tote bags, patches or t-shirt, etc.). You'll take everything you make home. \$10 per class. Register at <https://form.jotform.com/253487644237971>. At Old Murdock Senior Center, 52 Murdock Ave, 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 beans 'n franks, salad, bread and dessert. Free-will donation \$2 per person, \$5 per family; no one turned away. 126 Central Street.

SATURDAY JANUARY 31

Trivia Night at The HUB

6:30 p.m. We are ending 2025 with our First TRIVIA NIGHT with Tony's Toxic Trivia. Fun starts at 6:30 PM. Get your friends, make a team and win fun prizes. At The HUB, 5 Summer Dr, Winchendon.

RECURRING WEEKLY EVENTS

MONDAYS

Pickleball - Open Courts

9:30 a.m.- 1:00 p.m. Drop in and play pickleball! At the Old Murdock Senior Center, 52 Murdock Ave., Winchendon. 978-297-3155.

Gentle Yoga with Paula

10:00 a.m. Chair yoga tailored to the older generations to increase flexibility, balance, and breathwork to lower stress levels. 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.

Lego Club for Kids at the Beals

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

Yoga at the Beals Memorial Library

4:30-5:30 p.m. With Chantal from Shadow Academy Wellness. Unwind, relax, and celebrate the beauty of yoga. All skill levels welcomed! Mats and Blocks are available, if needed. Free with a suggested donation. For more info, contact 978-297-0300, bealsmemoriallibrary@gmail.com or visit www.bealslibrary.org. 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.

TUESDAYS

Pickleball - Open Courts

9:00 a.m.- 1:00 p.m. Drop in and play pickleball! 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.

Ukelele Group

10:15-11:15 a.m. 2nd, 3rd and 4th Tuesdays of the month. Come and join our Ukulele group at the Senior Center! 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.

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.

Winch Buddies Afterschool Program

3:30-5:00 p.m. FOR DETAILS and TO RSVP VISIT: <https://www.the-hub.org/event-details/winch-buddies-after-school-program>. At The HUB, 5 Summer Dr, Winchendon.

Sons of the American Legion Tuesday Dinner

5:00-7:00 p.m. Come and join us in the downstairs hall and lounge for a wonderful time of food and fellowship at the Winchendon American Legion. Please see our Facebook page (www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61554947800863) where we will post the menu and prices each week. At Winchendon American Legion Post #193, 295 School St.

WEDNESDAYS

Pickleball - Open Courts

9:00 a.m.- 12:00 p.m. Drop in and play pickleball! At the Old Murdock Senior Center, 52 Murdock Ave., Winchendon. 978-297-3155.

Gentle Yoga with Paula

10:00-11:00 a.m. This class is suitable for all abilities. At the Old Murdock Senior Center, 52 Murdock Ave., Winchendon. 978-297-3155.

Bingo!

12:30-2:30 p.m. At the Old Murdock Senior Center, 52 Murdock Ave., Winchendon. 978-297-3155.

Meet-Up With the Kiwanis

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

THURSDAYS

Pickleball - Open Courts

9:00 a.m.- 1:00 p.m. Drop in and play pickleball! At the Old Murdock Senior Center, 52 Murdock Ave., Winchendon. 978-297-3155.

CFCE Preschool Playgroup at the Beals

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

Toy Town Swing Sampler

2:00-2:30 p.m. By popular demand we are adding a weekly Swing Dance Instructional Session to the HUB to get you ready for our monthly Swing Dance Nights on the 3rd Sunday of the Month. \$5.00 Donation for the class. At The HUB, 5 Summer Dr, Winchendon.

Winch Buddies Afterschool Program

3:30-5:00 p.m. FOR DETAILS and TO RSVP VISIT: <https://www.the-hub.org/event-details/winch-buddies-after-school-program>. At The HUB, 5 Summer Dr, 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.

Cub Scout Meetings

6:30-7:45 p.m. For more information, please contact ccpack193@gmail.com.

FRIDAYS

Pickleball - Open Courts

9:00 a.m.- 12:00 p.m. Drop in and play pickleball! 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. Starting Feb 16

Open Bowling for the Public

10:00 a.m.-10:00 p.m. FOR DETAILS and TO RSVP VISIT: <https://www.the-hub.org/community-bowling>. At The HUB, 5 Summer Dr, Winchendon

Senior Bowling

10:00 a.m.- 12:00 p.m. Suggested donation, \$5. At the The HUB, 5 Summer Dr, Winchendon

SATURDAYS

Toy Town Trolley

8:00 a.m.- 8:00 p.m. Scheduled rides, call or use the Community Connector app to reserve a ride. Sponsored by the Old Murdock Senior Center, 52 Murdock Ave., Winchendon, call 978-297-3155 for more info.

Brunch & Bowl at The HUB

10:00 a.m.- 12:00 p.m. Come on over to The Hub and grab brunch and enjoy bowling! Fun for the whole family. PAJAMAS welcome! Continental breakfast, unlimited coffee, 1 hour of bowling (shoes included), beverages available to purchase. At The HUB, 5 Summer Dr, Winchendon.

Open Bowling for the Public

10:00 a.m.-10:00 p.m. FOR DETAILS and TO RSVP VISIT: <https://www.the-hub.org/community-bowling>. At The HUB, 5 Summer Dr, Winchendon.

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.

Shopping Transportation to Rindge for Seniors

3:30-4:30 p.m. Leaves from the Old Murdock Senior Center, 52 Murdock Ave., Winchendon. Must reserve your ride one week in advance. Call 978-297-3155.

North Central Collective Greenhouse

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

GOODBYE,
2025

HELLO
2026

Art, Music and Dance

Toy Town Swing Sampler Class

Thursdays, 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.

Line Dancing with Mary Lee

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

Karaoke at The HUB

January 2, 6:30-9:30 p.m. Come one, Come all to The HUB for Karaoke! Join the Winchendon Parks and Rec and have a blast singing and building community together! At The HUB, 5 Summer Dr, Winchendon.

Toy Town Bridge Artists Circle

January 3, 10:00 a.m.- 2:00 p.m. Come and join the Bridge Artistic Network for a time of encouragement, to engage and empower each other to keep creating and become who we were created to be. Bring your art supplies! This is a free event and Lunch is provided. At Cornerstone Church, 122 Gardner Rd, Winchendon.

Latin Dance Social

January 3, 7:00-9:00 p.m. Come on out to The HUB for some Latin dance lessons! free dancing will be happening as well so come and join us whether you're a seasoned dancer or you're trying it out for the first time. First Saturday of each month. At The HUB, 5 Summer Dr, Winchendon.

Social Art Circle with GALA

January 6, 1:00-3:00 p.m. and January 15, 6:00-8:00 p.m. Explore a variety of art in a supportive social environment—a group with different skill levels who wish to learn, explore, laugh, share, connect, and be inspired in a safe, low key, non-intimidating space. Bring your portable works in progress or try and pick from the shared community art supplies we have on hand. Spend a few hours to be a part of our social art gathering with artists, friends and seniors! Share your project and make new friends. This is a self-led group, but there will be classroom monitors who will assist you. No cost, but registration required, at <https://form.jotform.com/253415023143949>. At the Old Murdock Senior Center, 52 Murdock Ave, Winchendon.

Ukulele Class

January 7, 9:00-10:00 a.m. Come to the Winchendon Senior Center and learn how to play the Ukulele, no experience necessary! At the Old Murdock Senior Center, 52 Murdock Ave, Winchendon.

Toy Town Swing at The HUB

January 18, 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.

Crafternoon - Winter Snow Globe Making Day

January 24, 1:00-3:00 p.m. Get into the winter spirit and create your own magical snow globe! Each participant will design and take home a unique handmade globe featuring a tree, pinecones, and sparkling snow glitter. All materials are provided—just bring your creativity (and maybe a little sparkle)! This workshop is perfect for adults, families, and older children. \$15 per person. Register at link.clover.com/urlshortener/3PkCM8 or by calling 978-297-3155. For more info, email scunningham@winchendon-ma.gov. Sponsored by Winchendon Parks & Recreation. At Old Murdock Senior Center, 52 Murdock Ave, Winchendon.

Rubber Stamp Making Class with GALA

January 29, 1:00-3:00 p.m. OR 6:00-8:00 p.m. Carve your own custom stamp with a design you can print on paper or fabric. Come with your own idea for an image (image size about 2.5" x 2.5"), or use one of the designs provided. You will learn to carve the rubber block using linocut tools. Then you will learn how to print your stamp a couple different ways. We will have paper, cards, sticker paper (for your laptops or notebooks, etc.) and bookmarks for you to stamp on. You can bring your own fabric to stamp on (tote bags, patches or t-shirt, etc.). You'll take everything you make home. \$10 per class. Register at <https://form.jotform.com/253487644237971>. At Old Murdock Senior Center, 52 Murdock Ave, Winchendon.

For Kids

Lego Club for Kids at the Beals

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

Family Friendly Story Hour at the Chapel

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

CFCE Preschool Playgroup at the Beals

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

Story Time at the Beals

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

Cub Scout Meetings

Thursdays, 6:30-7:45 p.m. For more information, please contact ccpack193@gmail.com.

Winch Buddies Afterschool Program

Tuesdays and Thursdays, 3:30-5:00 p.m. FOR DETAILS and TO RSVP VISIT: <https://www.the-hub.org/event-details/winch-buddies-after-school-program>. At The HUB, 5 Summer Dr, Winchendon.

For Teens

Teen Cooking Class

January 7 and 21, 3:00-5:00 p.m. At The HUB, 5 Summer Dr, Winchendon.

Teen GSA Meeting at the Beals

January 7, 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

January 17, 5:00-9:00 p.m. At the Winchendon Community HUB, 5 Summer Dr.

Teen Dungeons & Dragons

January 13 and 27, 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.

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

Excursions

Lunch at the Park and Virtual Art Gallery Tour

January 14. departs 11:30 a.m, returns by 3:30 p.m. Get a ride to the Park Theatre in Jaffrey NH for their monthly Exhibition on Screen series. This month's featured artist: Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio (1571-1610). More info at theparktheatre.org/caravaggio-artsinema. Ride leaves from the Old Murdock Senior Center, 52 Murdock Ave, Winchendon.

Entertainment

Denis Cormier Concert

January 8, 10:45 a.m. At Old Murdock Senior Center, 52 Murdock Ave, Winchendon.

Sound Bites Community Jam Dry January

January 10, 6:30 p.m. We are trying something new for our January Community Jam and Open Mic to kick off 2026. Dry January Community Jam. We will have a selection of NA Beers for your sampling and purchase, a whole lot of music and a whole lotta fun! At The HUB, 5 Summer Dr, Winchendon.

Winchendon Music Festival & Worcester Chorus present Bach Christmas Oratorio Cantatas.

January 23, 7:00 p.m. Pre-concert talk by Claire Fontijn at 6:00 p.m., concert at 7:00 p.m. Three sections of Bach's popular Oratorio will be performed by a 50-member choir and orchestra. Free to the public. Supported in part by the Winchendon Cultural Council. Refreshments sold. At UU Church of Winchendon, 126 Central St.

Winchendon Music Festival presents Capella Alamire

January 25, 4:00 p.m. Capella Alamire features vocalists from Massachusetts to Maine who perform music from original notation researched and edited by Prof. Peter Urquhart of UNH. This classical concert includes rarely heard Glorias. Free to the public. Supported in part by the Winchendon Cultural Council. Refreshments sold. At UU Church of Winchendon, 126 Central St.

Food and Meals

Winchendon Farmers Market Winter Market

January 3, 10:00 a.m.- 1:00 p.m. First Saturday of each month. Inside the Old Murdock Senior Center, 52 Murdock Ave, Winchendon.

Vet to Vet Cafe

January 13, 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

January 8, 22 and 29, 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.

Spaghetti Dinner

January 8, 5:00-6:30 p.m. \$12 per person. Everyone welcome! Sponsored by Winchendon American Legion Auxiliary Unit 193. At Winchendon American Legion Post #193, 295 School St.

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.

Sons of the American Legion Tuesday Dinner

Tuesdays, 5:00-7:00 p.m. Come and join us in the downstairs hall and lounge for a wonderful time of food and fellowship at the Winchendon American Legion. Please see our Facebook page (www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61554947800863) where we will post the menu and prices each week. At Winchendon American Legion Post #193, 295 School St.

Brunch & Bowl at The HUB

Saturdays, 10:00 a.m.- 12:00 p.m. Come on over to The Hub and grab brunch and enjoy bowling! Fun for the whole family. PAJAMAS welcome! Continental breakfast, unlimited coffee, 1 hour of bowling (shoes included), beverages available to purchase. At The HUB, 5 Summer Dr, Winchendon.

Growing Places Mobile Market

January 20, 10:30-11:30 a.m. Join us at Growing Places for a once a month Farmer's Market that comes to the Senior Center. Fresh vegetables available for purchase using cash, debit/credit or SNAP! HIP benefits accepted! At 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.

Open Bowling for the Public

Fridays & Saturdays, 10:00 a.m.-10:00 p.m. FOR DETAILS and TO RSVP VISIT: <https://www.the-hub.org/community-bowling>. At The HUB, 5 Summer Dr, Winchendon.

Yoga at the Beals Memorial Library

Mondays, 4:30-5:30 p.m. With Chantal from Shadow Academy Wellness. Unwind, relax, and celebrate the beauty of yoga. All skill levels welcomed! Mats and Blocks are available, if needed. Free with a suggested donation. For more info, contact 978-297-0300, bealsmemoriallibrary@gmail.com or visit www.bealslibrary.org. 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

Winchendon News

Winchendon Music Festival Kicks Off 2026 With Choral Double Header



Worcester Chorus Director Chris Shepard will lead the January 23 concert
Photo Copyright Worcester Chorus

by Jill Sackett

The Winchendon Music Festival (WMF) returns to the Unitarian Universalist Church of Winchendon this January with two very different and exciting choral programs.

On Friday, January 23, WMF teams up with the Worcester Chorus to present three cantatas from Bach's Christmas Oratorio. The Worcester

Chorus of Music Worcester, founded in 1858, is one of the oldest continuously performing choral ensembles in the United States. Its Director, Chris Shepard, is a renowned choral conductor and Bach scholar. Each cantata focuses on a different part of the Nativity story and will feature over 65 choristers, orchestra and soloists. It promises to be the largest concert event WMF has presented and is one of J.S. Bach's most festive works. Claire Fontijn (Professor of Music, Wellesley College) will give a pre-concert talk at 6:00 p.m. for those seeking more insight into this popular work. The hour-long concert follows at 7:00 p.m.

On Sunday, January 25, WMF presents Capella Alamire under the direction of music historian and educator Peter Urquhart. Founded in Cambridge, MA in 1984, the small choral ensemble performs music from the Renaissance period. In contrast to Friday's assemblage, Capella Alamire features about ten highly-trained classical vocalists who will sing unaccompanied. This offers an equally enriching, but more intimate listening experience. This hour-long program unveils three rarely-heard Glorias and will begin

at 4:00 p.m.

Now entering its 11th year, WMF was founded by musician and educator Andrew Arceci in honor of his late father and Winchendon resident Robert Arceci. Through Andrew's efforts, Winchendon has been treated to a wide variety of world-class talent and musical genres. To date, most performances are offered free of charge thanks to generous donations from individuals, businesses, Foundations and Local Cultural Councils. It is a special treat to hear music of this caliber, and even more special to enjoy free admission.

The Unitarian Universalist Church of Winchendon, founded in 1866, includes cultural enrichment among its community service priorities, and is thrilled to be hosting WMF. The church is located in downtown Winchendon at 126 Central Street. Ample free parking is available in the church's front circle drive and surrounding streets. Refreshments will be sold at each concert. The church is ADA accessible and all are welcome.

PARKS & REC

continued from page 6

Graphics. (Melissa Lee is a freelance designer based in Ashburnham.) Ms. Eitland and other Board members expressed some ambivalence about the designs shown onscreen, saying that it was difficult to tell what the logo at the top really was—it could be a satellite dish or a solar panel. (It seems to be the amphitheatre seen from the west side). They suggested that the logo be more "celebratory" and express more of the park's natural beauty, and really reflect Winchendon itself as a unique place. Ms. Eitland, Board member Audrey LaBrie and Board chair Andrew Beauvais all suggested that the Commission solicit community feedback and input on the logo and sign designs, which Ms. Cunningham said would be used for signs out on Rte 2 as well as locally. Ms. LaBrie said that she liked the idea of going back to the name Ingleside for the park.

Ms. Cunningham said, "We want whatever ends up being solidified to have community buy-in and community pride and really allow us to market this venue across the region. We love Winchendon Community Park, but it's challenging. It's the home of the Robinson Broadhurst Performing Arts Amphitheater, and it also has the disc golf and the pond and the trails and the fields. And with our current visual and that name, we've run into some issues as we've tried to expand our marketing and also diversify our streams of revenue with rentals. There's a lot of people that would have interest in renting an amphitheater that wouldn't necessarily have interest in renting a community park. So we're really looking for that unified branding that would allow us to really put Ingleside or Winchendon Community Park and the amphitheater on the map."

Ms. Cunningham next introduced the new schedule of rental fees for the park. These were increased in order to support increased costs of maintenance, expansion, and heavier use of the parks. Most of the rates increased roughly 25 to 35 percent at the upper level for most categories. The major change is fees for non-profit organizations. Currently, a non-profit holding a free, or non-ticketed, event is charged the basic operating costs plus \$15 on a weekday and the same rate as a Winchendon resident on a weekend. Now non-profits will be charged a flat \$200 any day of the week. For a ticketed event held by a non-profit group, currently there is no rental fee. It will now



Image Copyright Winchendon Parks & Recreation

be \$400 any day of the week.

Mr. Beauvais asked what comparable facilities the Commission had used to base its rental fees on. Ms. Cunningham said that it was difficult to find facilities in the Northeast that were truly comparable with the Winchendon Community Park. They tend to either be smaller and simpler, or much larger and better equipped than Winchendon. Several parks in other states, including Georgia, Florida and Arizona, that do seem closely comparable to Winchendon Community Park, were used as a basis for the new rental rates.

Ms. Cunningham showed a graph of the percentage of Parks & Recreation funding that comes from various sources. The amounts in the graphic come to \$232,030. Of this, \$66,130, or 28.5 percent, comes from the town. The rest comes from grants, sponsorships, event revenue and donations. The presentation did not include a corollary breakdown of how Parks & Rec funding is spent. Mr. Beauvais asked how much of the funding is spent on marketing. Ms. Cunningham said that she can get that figure for him.

After more discussion by the Board of ways to expand usage of the park (it was noted that Beals Memorial Library has snowshoes for loan in its Library of Things collection), the Board agreed to vote on the proposed new schedule of fees at their next regular meeting, which should be on January 12, 2026.

Winchendon American Legion Family Establishes The Winchendon Emergency Fund

The Winchendon Emergency Fund is a charitable initiative founded by the Winchendon American Legion Family, a community-focused organisation dedicated to supporting veterans, their families, and the broader Winchendon community. The fund has been created in response to the growing need for swift and effective help for individuals and families that are faced with those unexpected emergencies.

The primary mission of the Winchendon Emergency Fund is to provide immediate financial support and resources to Winchendon residents experiencing crises such as natural disasters, house fires, or other unforeseen disasters. By offering prompt aid, and funds the Fund will help alleviate the stress and uncertainty that

often go with emergency situations.

Managed by members of the American Legion Family, the Winchendon Emergency Fund relies on community donations, fundraising events, and partnerships with local organisations. We all know when something happens in town everyone pulls together. Money will be available at once to help with housing, clothing, and food. Then eventually as the funds grow an applications process for more help will be added. This fund will also be used as a portal for specific disasters.

The Winchendon Emergency Fund will play a vital role in strengthening a safety net for residents of Winchendon. By fostering a spirit of solidarity and compassion, the fund not only helps

individuals recover from disasters but also promotes a sense of community resilience that our town has showed many times.

The ongoing success of the Winchendon Emergency Fund depends on the generosity of local citizens, businesses, and volunteers. Those interested in contributing can participate in fundraising activities, make donations, or volunteer their time to help with outreach and support efforts. Every contribution helps ensure that the fund stays a reliable resource for Winchendon residents during times of need.

For more information about the Winchendon Emergency Fund, you may email walaunit193@gmail.com, or visit our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61575269596435.

Winchendon News

Local High School Students are Encouraged to Apply for North Central Massachusetts Chamber Foundation Scholarship Program

North Central Mass. (December 2, 2025) - The North Central Massachusetts Chamber Foundation is excited to announce that applications for the 2026 Scholarship Program are now being accepted from local high school students in North Central Massachusetts.

Each year, the Chamber Foundation awards approximately 25 college scholarships to support students continuing their education, made possible by contributions from members of the North Central Massachusetts Chamber of Commerce. In 2025 the Foundation also introduced a new non-traditional scholarship specifically for students pursuing trade programs or vocational training, expanding opportunities for diverse career

pathways.

Students interested in applying for a scholarship in 2026 should reach out to their high school guidance department. Each school in the Chamber's service area can submit a limited number of scholarship applicants each year. These applications will be reviewed by a committee of Chamber members. The deadline to apply is Saturday, February 28, 2026.

Since establishing its scholarship program, the North Central Massachusetts Chamber Foundation has awarded over one million dollars in scholarships. Many of these awards are made possible through contributions from Chamber members. Scholarships offered through the Chamber Foundation are often named in honor of prominent

members of the North Central Massachusetts business community, whose philanthropy and commitment have significantly shaped the region, or companies that have sponsored a scholarship.

The Chamber Foundation is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization focused on improving the area through charitable activities. Funds raised by the Foundation are primarily used for education and workforce development initiatives, as well as charitable activities in North Central Massachusetts. This includes scholarships for eligible applicants pursuing education and grants to support economic and community development projects.

Donations to support the Chamber Foundation's scholarship program are greatly appreciated.

Contributions can be mailed to the North Central Massachusetts Chamber Foundation at 860 South St., Fitchburg, MA 01420, or made securely online at www.northcentralmass.com/donate.

For those interested in sponsoring or endowing a named scholarship in honor of a prominent business or community leader, please contact Teresa Roberts, Director of Finance, or Roy Nascimento, President, at 978.353.7600 ext. 227 or 225.

For more information on the North Central Massachusetts Chamber Foundation's scholarship program or to view a list of the named scholarships, please visit northcentralmass.com or call 978.353.7600 ext. 222.

"Breakfast With Santa" Draws Crowds to Old Murdock on Saturday Dec 6



Photo by Inanna Arthen

by Inanna Arthen

The Winchendon Parks & Recreation Event "Breakfast with Santa" filled the Old Murdock dining room to bursting on Saturday, December 6 as families showed up bright and early to enjoy a home-made breakfast and a number of holiday-themed activities. Community Outreach Coordinator Shaina Cunningham told the *Courier* that they estimated an attendance overall of more than 500 people.

Vounteers from Cornerstone Church cooked the breakfast of pancakes and sausage – and French toast, because the chefs ran out of pancake batter and had to get more and then improvise. Breakfast began serving at 8:30 a.m.

Along with the breakfast, children could meet with Santa. Family activities included "Letters to Santa" with a special mailbox ready to accept that very important mail, a face painting station which was very popular,



Image Copyright Winchendon Parks & Recreation



Photo by Inanna Arthen

a gingerbread decorating table, and crafts. The "Cookie Crawl" took participants around town with a decorated bakery box to collect cookies from businesses that volunteered to be part of the "crawl."

Ms. Cunningham told the *Courier* that around 75 people braved the cold temperatures to attend the tree-lighting and carol-singing at Grout Park the night before.

In the ten days leading up to Christmas, volunteers from Parks & Recreation, Town Hall and businesses and organizations around town read one of the letters to Santa for a video to be posted each day on the Parks & Rec Facebook page. Brave volunteer readers included Town Manager Bill McKinney, Lt. Garrett Wante from the Fire Department, Melinda Bowler from the CAC and staff from Oppure Oil, Fidelity Bank and Broadview Assisted Living. Videos may be seen at www.facebook.com/Winchparksandrec.



Image Copyright Winchendon Parks & Recreation

Ideas & Information

Gardening



Winter sowing allows gardeners to start transplants from seeds outdoors using recycled items.

Photo courtesy of MelindaMyers.com

Easy and Affordable Winter Seed Starting

by Melinda Myers

Turn off the grow lights, gather a few milk jugs and potting mix and start planting seeds. Winter sowing is a way to start transplants from seeds outdoors without a greenhouse or cold frame.

You'll save money on equipment and time tending the seeds and seedlings. Just transform milk jugs, soda bottles and other items into mini grow chambers to start some of your favorite and hard to find transplants from seeds.

Gather flower and vegetable seeds, milk jugs or two-liter soda bottles, duct tape, a quality potting mix and weatherproof marker. Check the seed packet for information on planting details and timing. Winter sowing dates vary with the growing climate, individual gardener, and the seed variety you are planting.

Try starting hardy perennials, hardy and self-seeding annuals, and cold weather vegetables now through late winter. Other flowers and vegetables seeds are typically winter sown at about the same time you would plant them indoors or a month or two before the transplants get moved into the garden. Keep a record of your planting dates and results to help you fine tune your planting schedule and increase future success.

Wash containers and make four to 12 small holes in the bottom of the jug for drainage. A hot skewer, knife, screwdriver or drill work well for this step. Next, partially cut the jug to create a hinged lid. Make your cut about three to four inches above the bottom, leaving the area with the handle attached so it forms a hinge. Use the bottom of the milk jug handle as your guide.

Place a coffee filter or piece of paper towel over the drainage holes to contain the potting mix while still allowing water to drain. Fill the bottom with moist, quality potting mix. Plant seeds at the depth and spacing recommended on the seed packet. Mix smaller seeds with sand to help with proper spacing. Gently water until the excess runs out the bottom of the container.

Make transplanting easier by using the cardboard tubes from toilet paper to help space winter sown seedlings. Cut the toilet paper cardboard tubes to the right height and set them in the milk jug. Fill the bottom of the milk jug with potting mix and plant the seeds. Otherwise, plan on doing some careful separating of the individual seedlings in each milk jug or soda bottle.

Label the inside and outside of the jug with a permanent marker. Close the lid and seal it shut with duct tape. Remove the cap before setting your milk jugs in a sunny location outdoors where rain and snow can reach it. Set jugs in a milk crate in windy locations and protect them from curious pets and wildlife if needed.

Water your outdoor seed starting chambers during snow-free and dry weather. This will be much less often than those seedlings growing indoors under artificial lights.

Your plants will be ready to move into the garden at their normal planting time. Just open the lid, harden off the seedlings and move them into the garden. In mind this act of kindness generates happiness in ourselves and others.

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 and commissioned by Corona Tools for her expertise to write this article. Her website is www.MelindaMyers.com.

Financial Focus®

New Year's financial resolutions: Making them stick

As the calendar flips to a new year, millions of Americans pledge to improve their financial lives. But without a concrete plan, those well-intentioned resolutions often fade quickly. Financial goals consistently top the list of New Year's resolutions. A 2025 CFP Board study shows that financial resolutions are prominent, with saving more money (45%) and reducing debt (32%) ranking among the top three goals. Unfortunately, most resolutions don't last. A 2023 Forbes Health poll found that over half of people give up on resolutions by the four-month mark and only 1% make it the full year.

The challenge isn't a lack of desire for change. People may set the same resolution year after year, revealing a disconnect between intentions and action. Or it may be that they try to tackle too many goals at once, or aim higher than is realistic, setting themselves up for disappointment.

Set smart financial goals. Before crafting your action plan, consider which financial priorities matter most to you. If you need ideas, here are some areas where you may want focus in 2026:

- Regularly review your financial goals and track progress toward meeting them
- Increase your 401(k) contributions or max out your IRA and/or HSA contributions
- Pay down debt strategically and negotiate lower interest payments
- Build an emergency savings fund of six to 12 months
- Save more consistently

Be specific. Vague resolutions like "save more money" rarely succeed. Instead, it can help to make goals specific and measurable. For example, rather than making a resolution to "start an emergency fund," commit to a specific goal, such as, "I will put \$100 a month into an emergency fund."

This shift from general to specific transforms wishful thinking into actionable steps. When goals are attainable, it's easier to track progress and stay motivated.

Find an accountability partner. Don't go it alone. Having someone to check in with can help you stay on track. This could be a spouse, friend or family member who shares similar goals.

Consider working with a financial advisor who can help you create a realistic plan, monitor your progress and adjust strategies as needed. A professional can provide expertise and accountability, making it easier to stay on track throughout the year.

Start small and build momentum. Rather than overhauling your entire financial life all at once, focus on one or two priority areas. Identify where the largest gap exists between your current situation and where you want to be, then concentrate your energy there.

Breaking larger goals into smaller, manageable actions makes them less overwhelming and more achievable. Each small win builds confidence and momentum for tackling the next challenge.

The new year offers a fresh start and renewed motivation to improve your financial health. With specific goals, a solid action plan and the right support system, this could be the year your financial resolutions finally stick.



This content was provided by Edward Jones for use by Jordyn Lynds, your Edward Jones financial advisor at 978-297-7452 or stop by 113 Central St. Winchendon, MA 01475.

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Free Kids' Sports & Arts Clinic on January 19

On Monday, January 19, The Winchendon School will present a free Sports & Arts Clinic for kids age 6 to 13. The clinic will be held at The Winchendon School, 172 Ash Street, from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Lunch will be included! Families can choose one of five options: Hockey; Baseball; Basketball; Arts & Crafts; Musical Theatre.

Registration is required. Register online at www.the-hub.org/event-details/kids-sports-arts-clinic-january-19-2026. For more information, email thehub@winchendon-cac.org or call the Winchendon CAC at 978-297-1667 (Wednesday through Saturday 10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.).

BOS Formally Endorses Winchendon Community Heart & Soul Statements

by Inanna Arthen

At their meeting on Monday, December 22, the Board of Selectmen returned to the request made to them at their November 10 meeting by members of the Winchendon Heart & Soul team, “that the Board of Selectmen would formally endorse the Heart & Soul statements in a resolution, just to reinforce our commitment and celebration of these statements and everything that the residents have done.” (“Citizens Present Community Heart & Soul Action Plan for Winchendon to BOS” in the November 13-20, 2025 edition of *The Winchendon Courier*) The team agreed to prepare a document for the Board to sign, and submitted the following resolution:

Whereas, the Town of Winchendon has undertaken the Heart & Soul community engagement process to identify and affirm the shared values, priorities and aspirations of its residents, and

Whereas the Heart & Soul process has engaged hundreds of community members through storytelling, public meetings and collaborative visioning, producing a set of Heart & Soul statements that capture what matters most to the people of Winchendon, and

Whereas, these statements serve as a foundation for transparent community-led decision making, ensuring that resident voices guide the town’s direction in matters of planning, development and public service, and

Whereas, endorsement of the Heart & Soul statements by the Board of Selectmen would demonstrate the town’s commitment to inclusive governance and reinforce the values of trust, collaboration and civic engagement, and

Whereas, adopting the principles aligns Winchendon with best practices from other Heart & Soul communities nationwide, which have successfully integrated resident values into municipal planning and policy making,

Therefore, be it resolved that the Winchendon Board of Selectmen hereby formally endorses the Winchendon Heart & Soul community statements and affirms their role as guiding principles in town planning, transportation, economic development, land use and public service decisions, and be it further resolved that all municipal boards, committees and departments are encouraged to consider these statements in their deliberations and initiatives ensuring that the values and priorities of Winchendon residents continue to shape the future of the community.

After Board Chair Andrew Beauvais read the resolution into the record, Board member Erika Eitland said, “I think that I was just really moved when we heard what the process to this resolution was. And so I stand by everything that’s been shared, and hope that we can have this printed or posted somewhere in Town Hall, so people know that it’s not just living digitally, but it’s something that we abide by.”

No other Board members had comments, and the Board voted unanimously to adopt the resolution.

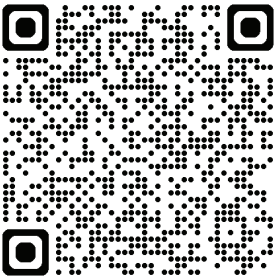
Winchendon Commission on Disabilities Launching with Resident Survey

by Inanna Arthen

At the Board of Selectmen’s meeting on Monday, December 8, Renee Eldridge came forward on behalf of the Winchendon Commission on Disabilities Committee, saying, “I just wanted to come up, give a preliminary hello and say that we’re excited to have our five members so that we can officially get started.” The five members, Ms. Eldridge said, are herself, Pam Smith, Nicole Fleming, Katrina Fleming and Miranda Jennings. The Commission is looking forward to formally appearing before the Board to present their plans, goals, and actions.

“We’re really excited to share with the community the ideas that we have, and share how the community has provided a lot of ADA compliant buildings and things like our YMCA playground that is totally fenced in,” she said. “The children that are able to enjoy that might be on the spectrum and such, and so those kind of things we’re listing out on a flyer. We’re looking to do a survey and distribute this flyer and get that back.”

She went on, “Our goal is to collect community feedback and be able to share that out with you. So we’re excited about the committee. We’re looking to grow our membership as well.” She asked the Board for support in distributing their flyer and information to organizations, placing it on the town website, town Facebook page and WinchendonTV B-reel, and so on. The committee has also completed its Bylaws and sent them to the Board, she said.



The Commission meets on the first Thursday of each month at 4:30 p.m. at The HUB/Winchendon CAC, 5 Summer Drive. The survey may be filled out online at <https://forms.gle/vySfVpABwXKxNPSg6> (or click the QR code to the left).

If you’re interested in joining the Commission, or would like more information, visit one of their meetings, or email winchendoncod@gmail.com.

The Commission was first proposed to the Board of Selectmen at their meeting on April 8, 2024 (see “BOS Hears Details About Proposed Town Commission on Disability” in the April 11-18, 2024 edition of the online *Winchendon Courier* (scroll down)). It was approved by voters at the May 20, 2024 Annual Town Meeting with 91 percent in favor, 9 percent opposed, and no debate.

Winchendon P.D. Offering Annual R.A.D. Self Defense Class for Women

The Winchendon Police Department will be offering a R.A.D (rape aggression defense) class starting in January 2026. The class is FREE to all women. No prior experience is needed as we will teach basic skills that can be applied by everyone.

Class size is limited to 20 so sign up early with a dispatcher at the Winchendon Police Department.

The dates of the class sessions are Tuesdays and Thursdays, January 6, 8, 13 and 15, from 6:00 to 9:00 p.m. Attendance at all four classes is required for successful completion. Minimum age requirement is 14 years old accompanied by an adult/guardian with a signed permission slip.

The first class will be held at the Winchendon Police Department (80 Central Street) in the training room. The remaining classes will be held at the Memorial Elementary School (32 Elmwood Road) in the gym.

Any questions can be directed to:

Officer Tracy Flagg Tflagg@townofwinchendon.com or Officer Jim Wironen Jwironen@townofwinchendon.com, or call the P.D. non-emergency number, 978-297-1212.

Buy Local Winchendon Initiative Launches Into 2026



The Buy Local Winchendon Initiative is part way through its third year of promoting and supporting Winchendon businesses and entrepreneurs and boosting a “shop local first” message in Toy Town. With funding from the Robinson Broadhurst Foundation and the HEAL Collaborative, Buy Local works with local retail businesses, the Economic Empowerment Working Group, the Economic Development Task Force, the Winchendon Agricultural Commission and the Makers Hub. We’ve talked to hundreds of people at events such as Taste of Winchendon, Summer Solstice Fair, Fall Festival and smaller events and vendor fairs. We’ve given away stickers and tote bags. We’ve mailed a Buy Local postcard to every mailbox in town, and we’ve published a print community directory of Winchendon businesses and organizations. We’ve profiled numerous new businesses in the *Winchendon Courier*.

In the next few months, we’ll be featuring Buy Local and more Toy Town businesses in the print and online *Courier*. More businesses are moving into Winchendon all the time, and Buy Local is here to help them prosper and grow.



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.

Employment

Executive Director
Winchendon Housing Authority
Winchendon, MA

The Winchendon Housing Authority (WHA) seeks an experienced and innovative executive director to lead and manage its programs, properties, and contracts. The WHA owns and operates 311 state and federal housing units. This includes 24 Ch. 705 units, 77 Ch. 667 units, 10 Ch. 667 congregate units, 8 Ch.689 units, and 17 MRVP Vouchers, as well as 80 federally funded elderly/disabled units and 51 federally funded family units, as well as administering 38 Housing Choice Vouchers and 6 project-based VASH vouchers. Additionally, WHA manages the Templeton Housing Authority consisting of 52 Ch.667 units and 8 Ch.705 units.

Required Minimum Qualifications: A minimum of four (4) years’ experience in public or private housing, community development, public administration, non-profit administration or a closely related field that demonstrates strong management and organization skills. Knowledge of the principles and practices of housing management, finances and maintenance systems in public or private housing is desired. One (1) year’s experience overseeing at least three staff persons or as a significant project team leader or program administration is required. Excellent written and verbal communication skills required. Knowledge of laws regulating State and Federal housing programs is desired. Experience working with people of various socio-economic backgrounds. While not required for hiring, certification as a property manager or similar classification by a nationally recognized housing or real estate organization or by certification as an MPHA of an EOHLC-approved Massachusetts Public Housing Administrator Certification Program is desirable or must be obtained within the first year of employment. Diverse applicants are encouraged to apply.

The annual starting salary ranges from \$102,508 to \$113,897 per year depending upon experience, certifications, and in accordance with the EOHLC Executive Director Salary Schedule/Calculation worksheet. The work week is 37.5 hrs. per week and includes a generous benefit portfolio.

Candidates should apply in confidence by submitting a cover letter and resume to MassNAHRO, 990 Washington Street, Suite 209, Dedham, MA 02026, ATTN: Winchendon E.D. Search or email info@massnahro.org.

For a complete job description go to: <https://files.constantcontact.com/a08b-9b0e001/c587b54f-6dcc-4fac-a034-67f9153e9444.pdf>

Deadline to apply is close of business on January 9, 2026. Late submissions will not be accepted.

The WHA is an Equal Opportunity Employer. Minorities, women, veterans, and people with disabilities are strongly encouraged to apply.

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

Winter Parking Ban is in Effect
No On-Street Parking Between 11:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m.

EmploymentToy 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.

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.

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.

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

State and Local Agencies Celebrate Ground-Breaking for Veterans Housing in Winchendon

by Inanna Arthen

On Tuesday, December 9, the Executive Office of Veterans Services (EOVS) and the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (HLC) joined town officials, local legislators, partners and the Massachusetts Veterans Outreach Center (MVOC) at the Old Murdock Senior Center auditorium to celebrate the official closeout on financing and groundbreaking on the MVOC Veterans Housing Project. This project, in which MVOC has invested tireless years of planning and fundraising, will see the former Streeter and Poland elementary schools renovated and remodeled into a single building with 44 units of affordable housing for veterans.

An murmur of happy conversation filled the Old Murdock's second floor auditorium, which was set up with chairs, a sound system, and lectern, along with tables filled with MVOC information and sign-up sheets, and hard hats—the event would conclude with a tour of the construction already underway, for those who wanted to participate. Some of those present included Winchendon Town Manager Bill McKinney, Winchendon Board of Selectmen Chair Andrew Beauvais and Winchendon's state representative Jon Zlotnik (who has advocated for the project from the very beginning).

Mr. McKinney called everyone to find a seat, and welcomed the attendees, before introducing the first speaker: Andrea Gayle Bennett, retired Brigadier General of the United States Army, member of the Governor's Veterans Home Council and Deputy Secretary of Veterans Services.

"It is really a great day to be here in Winchendon, my first time, and it's a proud moment for the veterans' community," Ms. Bennett said. "Before anything else, I want to recognize Governor Healy, Lieutenant Governor Driscoll, and Secretary [of Housing and Livable Communities, Edward] Augustus, and they have been a committed ally in this work, and their support reflects a shared belief that veterans deserve safe, stable, affordable housing, and this administration has been clear on that priority, and it continues to guide everything that we do."

She continued, "So today is a milestone, and this construction kickoff marks a turning point in a program that took six years of persistence and partnership. The Montachusett Veterans Outreach Center never lost sight of its goal. Projects like this don't happen without people who stay committed, even when the process is long and complicated, and that's what we're celebrating today. As part of the Healey/Driscoll administration's \$20 million End Veteran Homelessness campaign, EOPS, together with HLC, committed \$13 million to veteran housing across the state. Those investments closed the final gap and allowed this project to move forward."

"And over the past 18 months, communities across the state have seen real progress. Veterans are moving into permanent housing at a pace we have not seen in years, and street homelessness among veterans has dropped significantly, and because of that partnership with them, with your determination, those two historic buildings will soon become 44 units for veterans, not temporary beds, not short term fixes, but a place to call home, a place where veterans can rebuild stability, stay connected to services and feel rooted in their community. And this is exactly the kind of project we need more of local leadership, smart investments and a clear commitment to keeping veterans housed."

Mr. Zlotnik said, "It's really great to be

celebrating another milestone in the construction of this project, a few more steps forward done, and it has been a long road to even get to this point. We started working on this thing with a different governor or different state senator, a different town manager, the housing secretary hadn't even been created, and to this administration's credit, when we continued to ask for more and more financial support, they continued to step up as other funding sources got more complicated. The state and this administration and Secretary Augustus in particular, stepped up to fill gap after gap. They recognize the importance of this, the importance of creating these 44 permanent units for veterans, and really what this means to the town of Winchendon and this whole region, to allow us to have these services right here in our backyard, and this resource in our backyard."

Tom Comeau, President of Commodore Builders (commodorebuilders.com) which is doing the construction, said, "We carry a strong sense of responsibility when it comes to building spaces for veterans who have served. Many of our colleagues and family members and friends have worn the uniform, and we believe veterans deserve not only high quality places to live, but also a place to offer stability, dignity and opportunity." He spoke about the collaboration between his company, which is veteran-owned, the architects at Jones Whitsett, and every member of the team. The buildings will be remodeled but also have their original character preserved, so they will remain a part of town history. "So to the veterans who one day will call this place home, who continue to serve their communities long after their military service, this work is for you. It reflects our gratitude and our shared belief that you deserve the very best. We look forward to continuing partnership and delivering a project that will strengthen the community."

Cathy Stallings McWilliams, President and MVOC Founder, began by telling attendees about her husband Justin, a Vietnam veteran who struggled with PTSD, taking his own life in 1975. "After dealing with the initial shock and grief of his death, I was determined to give not only his life but his death some meaning, determined that his death would not be in vain. I felt that if I could prevent even one veteran from choosing Justin's path, then his death definitely would have some meaning...I began writing letters and making calls to local and state officials and politicians, in fact, anyone who would listen to me. In early 1982 under the administration of Governor Michael Dukakis and Lieutenant Governor John Kerry, the state of Massachusetts awarded us the very first funding for \$25,000. Back then, it was a lot, so we were able to take that money and open our first storefront Veterans Outreach Center in the city of Fitchburg. To this very day, the state of Massachusetts has continued to fund what later came to be known as the Montachusett Veterans Health Center."

Veteran Paul Cormier spoke about his experiences with the shortage of housing for veterans in Massachusetts. He credited the MVOC's programs for helping him transition back to civilian life after 21 years of military service—he's now retired from a second career, financially secure and a productive member of society.

Last to speak was Stephanie Marchetti, the Executive Director of MVOC. "I know many of you know who we are, but you may not know everything that we do," she said. "Housing and supportive services to veterans throughout North Central Massachusetts. We actually, last



year, provided housing and support services to veterans in 13 states in two countries, because word gets around. We are able to do this through federal contracts, state contracts, local foundation and donation sources, and we are able to, through all of those sources, provide veterans with transitional housing, permanent supportive housing, independent housing, suicide prevention programming, housing stabilization, case management, outreach benefits, advisement, financial assistance grants, medical, transportation, a food pantry and much more. And we do all of that with a staff of about 22 people. We serve over 500 veterans a year with those services."

She went on, "The MVOC has been slowly and steadily adding housing to our organization since the 90s. We have two permanent support and group homes, a 12-bed transitional shelter program, and 20 independent apartments, about 55 units in total. But it isn't enough, and there is still a large need for housing, and that is what got us all here today. The Streeter and Poland redevelopment project will really double our housing inventory, providing apartments, which we will focus on, distributed to homeless and high risk veterans in our region."

"Today we mark the start of construction, which actually began about a month ago, and we anticipate 16 to 18 months of construction before we're able to open up and move folks in, which means that about this time next year, maybe in about 13 months, our housing lottery will begin to open. We'll begin accepting candidates, and by spring 2027 we'll begin identifying our occupants for this housing project. This has been exciting. It has been complicated, and we are committed to preserving what we can of these two buildings so generously handed into our care by the town of Winchendon."

Following the speakers, about two dozen attendees took hard hats from the table and walked over to the Streeter and Poland buildings which are almost next door to the Old Murdock, bordering the south side of G.A.R. Park. The buildings have been surrounded by construction fencing for several weeks, and work is underway in both buildings. The Streeter school is further along, which is why visitors could tour it—with their mandatory hard hats and guides. Ben Hebert, the job supervisor from Commodore Builders, and Dorrie Brooks, the principal architect with Jones Whitsett Architects (www.joneswhitsett.com), showed the interested visitors around the very cold rooms, described the plans and answered questions. The Streeter School used its basement, which is half underground, for a cafeteria and other functions, and that level will be opened up to the light more by lowering the grade around the building and converted into apartments. The space between the buildings will be filled by a connecting addition.

For more information about the Montachusett Veterans Outreach Center and its programs, go to veterans-outreach.org.

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