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Fire Chief Smith Answers More Questions from BOS and FinCom About Proposed Staff Increase and Ambulance Service Expansion



Chief Tom Smith addresses the BOS and Fincom
Photo copyright Town of Winchendon

by Inanna Arthen

On Monday, March 2, a follow-up Tri-Board meeting including the Board of Selectmen, Finance Committee and School Committee was scheduled to continue the discussion of the developing FY2027 budget. This discussion started at the Tri-Board meeting on Thursday, February 5 when Town Manager Bill McKinney presented his first draft budget. Due to questions about whether the agenda had been legally posted for the School Committee, members of that committee were not present.

The meeting began with taking the agenda item about the Fire Department's proposed expanded

ambulance service out of order. Board of Selectmen Chair Andrew Beauvais said, "This is a continuation of the conversation that we had on February 5. I believe it was a rather lengthy meeting for any of you in the audience that attended or watched at home. It was an important conversation that we felt it was important to continue."

To give a quick overview, ambulance revenues come from fees paid for ambulance services by patients' health insurance. Fees are set by the Fire Department, which can increase or decrease them within a certain range. The Department bills for calls they respond to. The potential amount of revenue, therefore,

is highly fluid, depending on the number of calls, and limited by the ability of the department to respond to calls. Fees can also be higher when the Department can respond to more calls requiring a higher level of expertise and emergency care administered immediately to patients. This is the difference between BLS (Basic Life Support) and ALS (Advanced Life Support) ambulances. BLS focuses on non-invasive care for stabilizing patients and ALS can provide invasive, life-saving interventions for critical patients. BLS is staffed by EMTs, while ALS requires paramedics.

For FY2026 (the current year), the Fire Department's budget is \$1,678,555. Budgeted (or projected) ambulance revenues are \$650,000. For FY2027, the proposed Fire Department budget is \$2,024,200, an increase of \$345,645 or 20.6 percent. The two largest line item changes within the department budget are Housemen salaries (the regular shift crew who staff the station around the clock), which increases \$273,780, or 35.4 percent, and budgeted overtime, which decreases by \$90,000, or 47.3 percent. Meanwhile, projected ambulance receipts for FY2027 are estimated at \$950,000, an increase of \$300,000 or 46.1 percent. This would more than offset the increase in Housemen salaries.

Fire Department Chief Tom Smith came forward to address the boards. He began with a recap of the proposal, explaining that the department was looking at ways to both reduce costs and bring in more revenue for the town. "Looking at our scheduling, we decided to potentially do our scheduling different, but in order to do this, we would need to hire two additional full time people," he said. "By hiring two additional full time people, we can expand our revenues over double the cost that the two full time people are." He explained that they "need to run the ambulance service more like a business," and this would also provide better care for the communities.

The Department will be able to have three people on every shift

and a per diem person as a fourth crew member in the daytime, so they could staff two ambulances every shift. By working out of Clearbrook Treatment Center, Chief Smith said, they could pick up 125 to 200 additional Templeton calls a year. Royalston may start paying \$20,000 for transporting ambulance service, and Chief Smith is talking to the new fire chief in Rindge, NH. "There's many streets on the lower end or the southern end of 119 that we're much closer to than their responding ambulance coming from Jaffrey, and I'd like to discuss with him the possibilities of covering the lower section of that which would also increase our [revenue] about \$50,000 a year," he said. (This area includes the Rindge homes on Lake Monomonic.)

Chief Smith said that actual receipts for FY2026 were projected to be \$175,000-\$180,000 more than the budgeted estimate.

FinCom Chair Tom Kane responded that the budget development process was different than a usual year because of the projected \$1.4 million shortfall in the town's preliminary budget. He said he'd like to see a "level service budget... which would include all of your contracted services, but not additional monies or additional needs beyond what's budgeted this year, so that the beginning point would be that, then to see what the gap is between what we need to provide the services that we currently provide, and focus in on how we're going to close that part of the gap. So from my perspective, your proposal might be a good one. You said there's no good time to ask for an expansion of a program. And I have to say that I agree with that, but this is certainly one of the times that it just doesn't make sense."

Chief Smith explained that having three staff per shift was a requirement in the contracts. Mr. Kane said, "so we have a contract that calls for more men than we actually hire, which is why we're \$100,000 over overtime last year and will be \$100,000 over overtime this

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Dilapidated Mill Building on Lincoln Avenue Destroyed in Dramatic Pre-Dawn Inferno

by Inanna Arthen

In the early hours of Friday, March 20, a crumbling mill building at 283 Lincoln Avenue Extension burned to the ground in a raging fire that engulfed the entire structure and threatened a row of homes directly behind it.

Winchendon Fire Department said in a press release,

"On March 20, 2026, at approximately 3:38 a.m., the Winchendon Dispatch Center received multiple 911 calls reporting a structure fire at a large, abandoned mill building located at 283 Lincoln Avenue Extension.

Upon arrival, Shift Commander Tyler Pelkey reported a fully involved three-story abandoned mill building with multiple exposures and

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Winchendon News

AMBULANCE
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year too, because we have to find three additional shifts that we don't have because we don't employ that many people." Chief Smith said yes, and the FinCom told him he had to reduce his overtime, so he put this plan together, which does that. "It'll reduce your overtime, but it'll increase your Housemen salary by 30 percent," Mr. Kane said. Chief Smith said yes, but it will bring in approximately \$300K-\$500K more to the town.

"See, I'm not convinced of that," Mr. Kane said, going on to argue that if the department looked at the budgeted amounts in the Housemen, overtime and Spare Housemen line items, it might be able to squeeze out enough to hire one additional person. He added, "because it's a new service, I'd be very interested in it, but not this year."

Chief Smith said, "You told me to try to find more revenue. So that's how you get more revenue. I don't know what else...and improve service."

Mr. Kane said that he could see from looking over the last three years, that the ambulance service had consistently brought in more revenue than the budget projected. So there was staff there to be bringing that in, he suggested.

"That's your opinion," Chief Smith said. "I don't think you figure out the staffing correctly. However, that's how you figure it. Now I figure it very different. On the scheduling, I'm trying to do what you had suggested last year as a Finance Chair, to reduce the overtime and increase the revenue, which is what I have in front of you. And this, I respect your opinion on it. I disagree with it, but I respect your opinion."

Mr. Kane asked, "Am I wrong to say that the reason we spend so much money on overtime is we have to pay for three additional shifts a week, every week?" Chief Smith said, "Yes, you are."

Mr. Beauvais said that he wondered whether the consistently higher revenues than projected was a problem with underestimating the projected amounts. He added, "One concern that I have is the collectibility of some of those funds we've had to write off in years past, more than I'd like to admit, and I don't think anyone here would like to say that we're happy with writing off revenues...How would you ensure that we're actually collecting what we're billing out?"

Chief Smith explained in some detail about the write-off of past-due ambulance receipts. There had been a large lump sum that included unpaid bills going back before 2012, he said, and the auditor wanted them just cleaned off the books. Unpaid bills should be closer to \$5,000-\$11,000 in a year. The Chief is working every month with the town accountant to make sure they're up to date.

Mr. Beauvais asked if the town should look at other vendors to handle the billing. Chief Smith said, "The collectability is through Coastal Medical Billing right now, they've consistently been the best billing company out there, as far as medical billing-wise, as far as departments using them. They don't get paid anything unless they do collect the revenue. We don't pay them. They're not on a retainer. So they have every reason to collect, they don't make any money if they don't pursue collections." If they can't find a patient—sometimes people give wrong information or disappear—eventually they will

turn the account over to the collection agency used by the town, First Financial, who can pursue the debt more aggressively.

Mr. Beauvais asked, "Historically, say past two or three years on average, what percentage of ambulance calls required mutual aid that we missed out on?"

Chief Smith said, "Currently, this year, we missed out on approximately 69 calls. We called mutual aid for 49 of these, which were EMS that we could not send a second truck out for that. The fact that 61 percent of our calls are ALS and 39 percent BLS...just in those calls alone, we lost over \$100,000 in revenue." That's affected by whether the call is private-pay insurance, Medicare, Mass Health, and so on. He explained that when he projected the revenue numbers, he adjusted for the likelihood that a certain percentage of them would end up not being collectible. He added, "We don't collect anything when we go mutual as far as when mutual aid comes in for transporting, the transporting agency is the one that would bill on those calls."

Board of Selectmen member Erika Eitland said, "I think there's also other costs to the town that we need to be mindful of. What I mean is there's potential burnout. If you're running a group that doesn't have enough coverage, you have safety concerns. We have legal fees that might be associated with those. So when we're talking about investing in the firehouse, the investment in the firehouse is also about retention and staffing. Those things are not actually discrete. So if we're not going to be moving quickly on figuring out the firehouse, this feels like a much more doable cost to invest in, so that we aren't taking that toll on burnout safety, legal fees

that could be incurred...we're not sending in firefighters who don't have coverage, and somebody can pull them out if they get smoke inhalation."

Asked about the town's insurance rating as impacted by the fire department's capabilities, Chief Smith said, "ISO is figured in on your response time and the amount of people you have and how much water you can have on a scene at the same and within a certain period of time, and we don't fall anywhere near that. We're never going to fall perfect on the staffing model. They want us to have six to eight people on per shift. It's not going to happen." The best they can do is work up toward that goal a step at a time. He spoke about Paramedic Home Care in which paramedics can respond to calls in a patient's home, such as an elderly person, and provide medical care without transporting them. That is a billable service that could help add revenue down the road. But right now, the staffing model isn't in place for it.

Board of Selectmen member Melissa Blanchard asked if the station had capacity for even one additional Houseman on shift? Chief Smith said that there is a single bunkroom, with four beds, and the staff would have to adapt to it in exceptional situations like the recent big snowstorms. A staff person could sleep in a chair if necessary.

Asked whether they might try out the additional Housemen for one year and see if the revenue generated actually did cover their salaries, Chief Smith said it would be very hard to hire qualified people on that basis. They'd be asking staff to relocate to Winchendon without knowing if the position was lasting more than a year. The standard contract is three years.

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Winchendon News

BOS, Town Manager and FinCom Discuss FY2027 Budget Shortfall



Members of the Board of Selectmen and Finance Committee listen to Town Manager Bill McKinney explaining adjustments to the draft FY2027 budget numbers
Photo copyright Town of Winchendon

by Inanna Arthen

At a joint meeting of the Board of Selectmen and Finance Committee on Monday, March 2, to continue the discussion about the FY2027 town budget, Town Manager Bill McKinney, FinCom Chair Tom Kane and other board members more or less “workshopped” the shortfall dilemma without making any firm decisions. The School Committee was not able to attend the meeting due to questions about whether its agenda had been legally posted, so some ideas tossed on the table wait for more input and information.

Mr. Kane was especially concerned about the deficit of \$1.4M in the first draft budget presented by Mr. McKinney at the Tri-Board meeting on February 5. In response to Mr. Kane’s questions about the town doing a “level service” budget, Mr. McKinney said, “Aside from [Fire Chief Tom Smith] asking for the two new employees, which the [increased ambulance revenue] would more than cover, and the DPW expenses, which just continue to grow, other than that, there’s no other new positions in the budget. There’s really nothing else. In years past, we’ve said, Okay, what would it really take to run [your department] and that’s where we end up with a larger deficit this year. We’re just going forward with a level service budget, just so the public could see what the gap is. And this is the gap.

“So the revenue number for the ambulance will go higher. So that will close some of that gap. And then we’re going to go through it again, squeeze some other things out, but again, squeezing it out really puts hamstrings to departments, because it’s not going to come from the salary side. It’s going to come from expenses. So it ends up squeezing expenses so things don’t get replaced, repairs don’t get made. That’s the problem that we have to be aware of, because then things just break, and now it costs

even more to fix. Especially from the DPW, they’re repairing vehicles all the time, and that gets expensive, and he’s already over on those. So it means now we’re not going to be able to pave as much as we wanted to, because we have to put a lot of money into the repair of vehicles. So the higher number is in there for that.

“But we have to cut back on materials and supplies, which means less work gets done around town. So that’s the challenge. So that’s what I want to throw out there. This is not anything really more than the level service budget. So when you ask what the level service budget looks like—this is it.”

The public wants to know why potholes aren’t filled or sidewalks repaired, Mr. McKinney said—it’s because they can’t afford the materials.

A “level service” budget keeps services and staffing exactly the same and increases only to cover the increased expenses for those same services and salaries imposed from the outside. A “level funded” budget keeps funding at exactly the same amount and cuts services, salaries and/or staff to what can be afforded for that amount, given that their costs have risen.

One area where changes might be made, board members floated, might be school bus routes. The town pays for regular school busing, it is not part of the school district’s budget. The budgeted amount for FY2027 is \$1,856,000, an increase of 5.8 percent. Mr. McKinney said, “I’ve asked [the School Committee] for all the numbers of students that are taking the bus where they live. Unfortunately it comes out of our side of the budget, but it’s really up to the school department how they do that. A couple years ago, they had nine bus routes. They increased it up to ten. If we went back to nine, that would save over \$70,000 a year per bus route. State law requires that anyone who lives outside of two miles up through sixth grade, we have to transport. Right now, I think they have a lower standard. So if the school committee were to raise that standard, we’d be able to save some money there.”

Board of Selectmen
Chair Andrew

Beauvais said he thought the limit was one mile. He suggested that the town might start charging fees for bus rides for students between one and two miles away from the school. Consolidating bus routes was also mentioned. Mr. Beauvais firmly clarified, “And for the record, I do not agree with having kindergarteners and first graders walking two miles to school. That’s not the answer to this. The answer is more complex, but it is certainly up for discussion.” Mr. McKinney said he will be talking to Superintendent Charlotte King about all this.

Health insurance did not go up quite as much as Mr. McKinney expected, he said—about 8.5 percent rather than 15 percent. This, along with the projected additional ambulance revenues, reduce the FY2027 shortfall to about \$900,000. On the other hand, the Montachusett Regional Vocational Technical School assessment and liability insurance both came in higher than Mr. McKinney’s placeholder amounts in his first draft budget.

There was discussion about how the tax takings work for properties and how much the town can realize from a tax taking. “So what happens is, at the end of a fiscal year, if a real estate bill is unpaid, we send a demand notice, so we charge the \$15 demand fee and also 14 percent interest, per state law, that is sent out to the homeowner,” Mr. McKinney explained. “They have 14 days to pay. If they don’t pay, then we can start the tax taking process, which is putting it into tax title, which puts a further lien onto the property. The tax title process means advertising in a newspaper, sending a certified letter that we are going to be putting a lien on the property unless it’s paid. It becomes public information at that point, and so that’s where the tax title is. It’s just a further lien.

“So if the property is ever sold, the town gets the money back, or if we end up having to go through Land Court, which is once it’s in tax title, that doesn’t mean we just get the money. We still have to invoice the homeowner for the payment that’s due. And if they don’t pay, then we have to take them to court. Sometimes the homeowner might pass away. So there might be a trust involved that you have to figure out, who are the multiple heirs, or trustees. So a lot of different issues

in it, and that’s why each tax title property is unique. So they could take a couple years to go through Land Court.”

Massachusetts changed the law a few years ago, Mr. McKinney said, in favor of property owners and making it more difficult for municipalities to foreclose on delinquent properties. “The tax title used to go from 14 percent interest rate, and then once it went into tax title went to 16 percent. But the Governor and the legislature, for some reason, changed it to going to 8 percent so once it goes into tax title, we actually collect less interest or accrue less interest on the property.” In addition to this, if towns complete the foreclosure, take possession of the property, and sell it, the town cannot keep the proceeds from the sale. The town can only keep the total amount of taxes, interest and fees that are owed, and all the rest of the equity in the property is returned to the original property owner.

Other revenue sources that might have potential to increase were discussed. Mr. McKinney remains untrusting of cannabis sales, fearing that New Hampshire will legalize recreational marijuana and end the flow of traffic across the border to Massachusetts retailers. The industry itself is stagnating with a glutted market.

A question about Medicaid reimbursements for Special Education students would have to be explored with the school district and/or the School Committee.

BOS member Erika Eitland said, “The reason this is valuable is that when I see a number like that, I hear ‘please don’t tell me you want to override,’ that’s not what we’re saying. And I think we’re in a really nice place for it, to not have to worry about something like that. So it’s more to reassure other people that we’re working our way towards something much more manageable. Because I look at that number and go, Oh, cuts. And I think there is some maybe, but not a huge issue.”

“Yeah, I think we’ll be okay this year,” Mr. McKinney said. “There was a plan for it, but I wanted to show where we started. And I think last year, where we started with a \$4 million deficit, and that was very alarming, and the town needed the override to keep the services going, this year, it was a much smaller deficit.”

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Building Commissioner Gives Updates to the BOS



Winchendon Building Commissioner Rick Germano addresses the BOS
Photo copyright Town of Winchendon

by Inanna Arthen

Continuing the series of department heads appearing before the Board of Selectmen to give updates on their departments, at the Board of Selectmen's meeting on Monday, March 8, Winchendon Building Commissioner Rick Germano came forward to give his report.

After introducing himself, Mr. Germano began, "My goal for the department is to streamline our permitting process to get them up into the 20th Century and get away from paper. As you know, we're got a lot of paper permits and applications that come in. This is going to entail online submittal of building applications, plans and whatever goes with the permitting application. This will help contractors and homeowners to be able to relax in their own atmosphere, take their time, be more transparent, and get their permits issued a little bit easier through that process."

"The software that we're going to be using is MyGovernmentOnline. Right now we are in the submittal phase of all the documents for them to start the workflow process. I've been working with [Planning and Land Use Coordinator] Nicole Roberts and streamlining that timeline. We will be seeking a grant from Robinson Broadhurst to help us with the fee for that process," Mr. Germano said.

The second goal he has for the Building Department is to hire a Municipal Hearings Officer to review complaints. "This person would be a liaison for the town and through a building permit ticketing process, a non-criminal process. So I'm looking into finding a qualified person for that. Being a one person staffed department, trying to streamline the process for documentation when homeowners and contractors come in alike to make it easier for them to fill out permits, get more information, get more education."

Board Chair Andrew Beauvais said he was glad to hear that processes were being modernized, and asked if people would be able to track the progress of their permit online.

"Absolutely 100 percent, yes, they will," Mr. Germano said. "They will start an account with their email address, and they'll be able to follow that

process all the way through with comments, suggestions, or questions that they have. Not only will this be linked to the Building Department, it's going to be linked to other departments in the town, if they so choose to jump on with this, which I think everybody has a good feeling about and wants to do that. It'll make things more transparent. It'll get more people involved, and people will be able to ask questions and get answers a little bit more quickly. Instead of waiting for paperwork to go through, they can also get a little notification. They'll know when they have a question. They can answer it right there at the computer and follow along."

Board member Melissa Blanchard asked if the department will still have paper forms for those who might not have ready access to a computer.

"Yes, we will on a limited basis," Mr. Germano said. "Eventually, we'd like to get everybody on paper, but we know that's kind of...we'll work with people, if they don't have a computer, or they need to come in and talk with us and stuff, we'll have the ability to do that." People will be responsible for having printed copies of their permits to post at the physical site, he said, because those are legal documents.

Board member Tiffany Newton asked what the cost would be annually for the MyGovernmentOnline software. Mr. Germano said that it is currently \$20,000 a year. Ms. Newton asked, "Are we planning to look at our building permit fees to help incorporate the cost on a yearly basis?"

Mr. Germano said, "I am right now drafting a fee increase with reluctance, but we're a little bit behind on keeping up with those fees. The fees that I've been coming up with are very moderate, I would think less than a 10 percent increase across the board, and we are getting in line with other towns that are our size, in our size population."

Ms. Newton asked how the Municipal Hearings Officer position would be funded. Town Manager Bill McKinney said that it's not a full-time position and will be paid on an as-needed basis.

Board member Audrey LaBrie asked about the inspection process for multifamily homes, which there had been some issues with in the past. "Could you give us an update on the process of those inspections and how that's going, and any issues, and perhaps even provide us with a list of the properties and where they are in the cycle?"

Mr. Germano said that the previous Commissioner "did a good job on getting most of those done. The last few years that he was here, I thought he worked very hard at that. So he he did make it easy for me." However, because of a changeover in staff, he said, "the way it was, and all the information was gathered, we need to kind of reinvent the wheel a little bit because the person that was doing it is no longer here, so we have to set up our own process, and we're in the process of doing that right now." He added that it is the responsibility of the property owner to make sure that the inspections all get done.

Asked whether the annual end of year inspections fall more under the Fire Department or the Building Department, Mr. Germano explained that it all overlaps under the same code. "The Chapter 304 was created because of The Station nightclub fire. From that point on, fire services and the building department collaborated together to do these inspections to make sure that that doesn't happen again. So I've been working very well with [Deputy Chief] Bryan Vaine, on fire protection. I think we make a great team. We go out and we do our inspections, and we will be getting those done."

FIRE

continued from page 1

immediately requested a second alarm. Due to the size and intensity of the fire, a third alarm was subsequently struck, bringing additional personnel and apparatus to the scene.

"Winchendon Fire and Police Departments acted swiftly to evacuate residents from Brown Avenue, located directly behind the fire building, as a precautionary measure. Fire crews prioritized protecting nearby residential structures and successfully prevented the fire from spreading to adjacent homes. Two additional mill-style buildings located across the street sustained minor fire damage from spot fires; however, crews were able to quickly contain and extinguish these extensions.

"Firefighters remained on scene throughout the morning and early afternoon conducting overhaul operations. An excavator was utilized to assist with extinguishing persistent hot spots. As of approximately 1:50 p.m., operations were concluding, and residents were permitted to return to their homes. However, power restoration in the area is expected to require extensive work.

"Mutual aid assistance was provided by the Gardner Fire Department, Templeton Fire Department, Ashburnham Fire Department, Westminster Fire Department, Royalston Fire

Department, Jaffrey Fire Department, Rindge Fire Department, Gardner Fire EMS, and the Ashburnham Drone Unit. Richmond Fire Department provided station coverage during the incident.

"The Massachusetts State Fire Marshal's Office and the District 8 Fire Investigation Unit responded to the scene and are actively investigating the cause of the fire. The Department of Fire Services Rehabilitation Unit was also on scene to support the firefighters.

"The Winchendon Fire Department extends its appreciation to the Winchendon Police Department, Winchendon Dispatch Center, Winchendon Senior Center, Winchendon Emergency Management, Winchendon Building Inspector, National Grid and the Winchendon Water Department for their assistance during this incident."

The building was what remained of the former White Mountain Freezer Company complex. Another structure in the complex, across the narrow road from this one, was demolished in 2019 after one of its walls collapsed into the road. The second floors of the two buildings had once been connected by an enclosed walkway that spanned the road. The mill structures were built around 1830, according to the Town of Winchendon Assessor's records, and were listed as being in

"very poor" condition. The owner is listed as J.A. Jameson, through a realty trust, which acquired the property from the White Mountain Freezer company in 1994. In 2019, the *Courier* found that Mr. Jameson lived in Puerto Rico and owed over \$13,000 in delinquent taxes. Then-Town Manager Keith Hickey said "the owners have not been cooperative" with the town. According to the Treasurer/Collector's office as of Monday, March 23, 2026, the town has had the property in tax title since 2022, but the case is currently sitting in Land Court.

The row of tidy homes lined along Brown Avenue directly behind the mill building were built around 1900, probably as housing for mill employees. They are about 150 feet away from the mill. Residents, some of whom had awakened to see the three-story mill blazing across their front yards, were evacuated to the police station. The Old Murdock Senior Center opened its doors to those who were displaced by the flames. Resident Todd Richards told Boston 25 News, "I went to look out the door, and I looked over and there was a big fire sitting over here at the building, so it was pretty crazy." He called 911. Another resident said it was a scary situation. It was a very impressive accomplishment for the firefighters that the homes only sustained minor damage.



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Semican Gift Bundles (4 bundles at each store of the following - 2 per month at each store)

20 lb Black Oil Sunflower + 1 case of suet

50 lb Alfalfa Pellets, 50 lb Turcotte Oats & 2.5 lb Carrot Oat Snacks

Bag of Goody Mix, Bag of Goody Crickets & a Goody Block

Assorted Themed Gift Baskets

Punch Cards to Earn free gift certificates

Many more unadvertised specials in-store!

Special Events - Follow Horse & Buggy on Facebook for Announcements!

WINCHENDON STORE
380 School Street
978-297-2518

<https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100046314855853#>



APRIL 3-APRIL 4

Save \$2.50 on all Blue Seal Sentinel, Home Fresh & Entrust 40-50 lb bags

Save \$2.50 on all 20 lb Blue Seal Birder's Secret Wild Bird Food

Buy any Fromm Gold Product and get one 50% off



APRIL 3-MAY 30

Blue Seal \$0.50 off 40 lb / 50 lb bags (excludes whole grains)

Poulin Grain* & Green Mountain Organic Feeds*-\$0.50 off per bag

*Quantity discounts will still apply!

All A&E Smakers Small Animal Treat Sticks-50% off

Buy 1, Get 1 Free on 3.5 oz Stella and Chewy Meal Mixers & Cat Morsels

50% off Nyalbone Birthday Swirl Bones (while supplies last)

50% off Redbarn Variety Packs Canned Dog Food (while supplies last)



APRIL 3-APRIL 11

Inception Dry Dog Food-Buy 1, Get 1 50% off

Fussie Cat Dry Cat Food-Buy 1, Get 1 50% off

Wellness Appetizing Entree 2.8 oz Pouches-Buy 3, get 2 Free (limit 2 deals)

APRIL 13-APRIL 18

Zignature Dry Dog Food-Buy 1, Get 1 50% off

Fussie Cat Pouches-Buy 5, Get 5 free

Fussie Cat Market Fresh/Fine Dining Cans-Buy 1, get 1 Free

Old Mother Hubbard 100th Anniversary Biscuits-Buy 1, Get 1 Free (limit 2 deals)



APRIL 22

Earth Day!

1 Day Sale-25 lb Earthborn Dog Food-50% off

APRIL 25

Monadnock Kitty Rescue 10:00-2:00 at Winchendon Store

1 Day Sale-50% off Redbarn Air Dried Cat Food

APRIL 27-MAY 2

Inception/Zignature Canned Dog Food-50% off

\$10 off Fussie Cat Puree Tubs

Wellness Dry Dog Food-10 lb Bags-\$10 off (limit 1 deal)



APRIL 28

MJ Roy from Semican in Winchendon for sample day 11:00-5:00

APRIL 29

MJ Roy from Semican in Keene for sample day 9:00-4:00

Another month of savings, sales, surprises and celebrations coming in May!

We reserve the right to limit quantities
All terms are while supplies last

KEENE STORE
24 Dunbar Street
603-352-0328

<https://www.horseandbuggyfeeds.com>

New Independent Music Festival “Montapalooza” Debuts in North Central Massachusetts



WINCHENDON, MA: A brand-new outdoor music festival, Montapalooza, is set to launch this spring, bringing a community-focused celebration of independent music and local culture to North Central Massachusetts. The festival will make its debut on Saturday, May 30, 2026 (rain date: May 31), at the Winchendon Community Park & Amphitheater. Designed as an inclusive experience to kick off the summer season, Montapalooza will run from 12:00 to 9:00 p.m. Attendees can look forward to live music across two stages, a curated local vendor area, and a variety of food truck options.

Montapalooza was created with a simple but meaningful mission: To showcase and celebrate independent musicians, strengthen community connections, and highlight the creative culture of the Montachusett region. The festival features a diverse roster of artists from across New England:

- On the Water Stage: The Far Out (Headliner), Joey Wit, Hotel Saturn, The Maladaptive, and Kilroy.
- On the Sun Stage: John Gerard, The Bluesberries, The Rusty Truck Saloon Band, and The Can Collectors.

Tickets are \$20 in advance, or \$25 at the gate. To buy advance tickets, or to apply for a vendor spot, see www.eventeny.com/events/montapalooza-27237

Montapalooza is a joint endeavor by Winchendon Parks & Recreation, Montachusett TV, Sound Bites Events, and Scene Mom Says. Organizers aim to establish North Central Massachusetts as a premier destination for music lovers throughout New England.

This program is supported in part by a grant from the Winchendon Cultural Council, which is supported by the Mass Cultural Council, a state agency.

For updates, check the website, www.montachusett.tv/montapalooza and follow Montapalooza on Facebook, www.facebook.com/montapalooza

Winchendon Music Festival Announces Spring 2026 Season Exploring How Artificial Intelligence Is Changing Music Without Losing the Human Voice

An eleventh season convening leading artists and scholars to examine artificial intelligence and the future of music



Capella Alamire was presented by the Winchendon Music Festival at UU Church of Winchendon, January 2026
Photo by Jill Sackett

Los Angeles, CA, California, United States, February 26, 2026 — The Winchendon Music Festival, founded by internationally recognized musician and scholar Andrew Arceci, announces its Spring 2026 season with a timely national conversation at the intersection of music, technology, and ethics. Now entering its eleventh year, the Massachusetts-based festival continues to unite world-class artistic performance with rigorous public discourse, positioning itself as a leading cultural forum where centuries-old musical traditions engage directly with the future of artificial intelligence. Under the leadership of founder Andrew Arceci, the Winchendon Music Festival has become known for presenting internationally acclaimed performers and scholars in an intimate community setting while remaining entirely free and open to the public. What began as a memorial honoring Arceci’s father, Robert J. Arceci, MD, PhD, has grown into a nationally recognized model for accessible, community-centered cultural programming. The Spring 2026 season expands the festival’s mission with a featured panel and performance series titled How AI Is Changing Music. Bringing together faculty and thought leaders from Berklee College of Music, New England Conservatory, Longy School of Music of Bard College, UMass Amherst, and experts in music law and intellectual property, the program will examine how artificial intelligence is reshaping composition, performance, pedagogy, copyright, and authorship. The Winchendon Music Festival Spring 2026 season will run from April 16 through April 25, 2026, with events including:

- Thursday, April 16, 2026
How AI is Changing Music
6:00 to 8:00 p.m.
Murdock-Whitney House, 151 Front St, Winchendon, MA

- Sunday, April 19, 2026
An Tran, classical guitar
7:00 p.m.
Murdock-Whitney House
- Thursday, April 23, 2026
Asako Takeuchi, Andrew Arceci, & John Lenti
7:00 p.m.
Murdock-Whitney House
- Saturday, April 25, 2026
WMF Artists: chamber choir & chamber ensemble
7:00 p.m.
Unitarian Universalist Church, 126 Central St, Winchendon, MA

Unlike commercially driven technology conferences or promotional AI showcases, the Winchendon Music Festival offers a scholar-led, artist-driven environment grounded in historical awareness and ethical inquiry. The conversation will explore how emerging technologies can coexist with, and even enhance, human creativity without diminishing artistic intent or authorship.

Artificial intelligence is transforming the creative landscape at an unprecedented pace, and according to founder and Artistic Director Andrew Arceci, the responsibility of musicians and scholars is not to respond with fear or uncritical enthusiasm, but to examine these tools with discernment, historical perspective, and a clear commitment to preserving the human voice at the center of music making.

The festival’s programming continues to bridge early music, contemporary composition, jazz, folk traditions, and global repertoire. By placing early music performance practice in dialogue with discussions on artificial intelligence, the Winchendon Music Festival reframes innovation as part of a continuum rather than a rupture. The result is a rare cultural model where tradition and technology are examined together within a cohesive artistic framework.

A defining feature of the Winchendon Music Festival remains its commitment to free public access. In an era when high-level cultural programming is often inaccessible due to cost, WMF’s open model stands as a deliberate ethical statement about the role of the arts in civic life. World-class artists who regularly perform at institutions such as Harvard University, Oxford University, and Cambridge University, as well as major international concert stages, engage directly with audiences in a small-town setting, challenging assumptions about where serious cultural leadership can occur.

This dynamic positions the Winchendon Music Festival as both a national thought leader and a community-rooted institution. By translating conservatory-level scholarship and technological discourse into accessible public programming, the festival demonstrates how advanced cultural dialogue can move beyond academic silos into everyday civic life.

Media coverage for the Spring 2026 season will focus on the intersection of artificial intelligence and the arts, the decentralization of cultural authority beyond major metropolitan centers, and the festival’s commitment to artistic integrity and public good. Through performances, panels, and community engagement, the Winchendon Music Festival continues to serve as a laboratory for examining the evolving relationship between creativity, technology, and human expression.

The Winchendon Music Festival Spring 2026 season will take place in Winchendon, Massachusetts. All events are free and open to the public.



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).



The HUB 5 Summer Dr

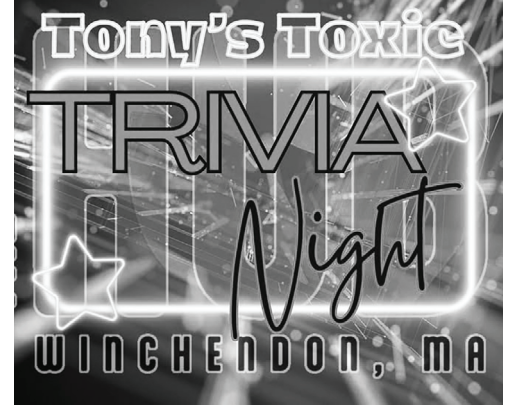


Friday April 10

Thursday April 23

Friday April 24

Saturday April 25



G.A.R. Park
Murdock Ave & Grove St
Saturday April 4

COMING NEXT MONTH!
Winchendon Community Park
86 Ingleside Dr

Saturday May 23

Saturday May 30



Check Out the New Parks & Rec Events Brochure!

MAY Ed Sullivan's Band May 23rd 2PM-4PM Tickets: FREE The Ed Sullivans bring the timeless hits of the '60s & '70s to life with high-energy performances. MontaPalooza May 30th 12PM-6PM Tickets: \$20 Full-day outdoor music festival bringing live music, community energy, and summer vibes.	JUNE (Continue) Food Truck Festival & Battle of the Bands June 27th 12PM-7PM Tickets: FREE Food trucks, craft drinks, games, and local bands battling for the crown. JULY Sunset Social Island Vibes July 11th 6PM-10PM Tickets: \$5 Enjoy a summer night of warm breezes, sunset views, and laid-back island grooves. Into the Floyd July 18th 7PM-9PM Tickets: Early Bird \$20 Regular \$25 Five talented multi-instrumentalists recreating the full experience of a live Pink Floyd concert. Open Mic Night & Picnic July 24th 4PM-8PM Tickets: FREE An all-ages community event featuring live local talent—music, comedy, storytelling, and more. The Reminiscent July 25th 4PM-8PM Tickets: Early Bird \$10 Regular \$15 The Reminiscent deliver a high-energy mix of classic hits and crowd favorites spanning multiple decades.	AUGUST 4everfab Concert August 8th 7PM-9PM Tickets: Early Bird \$5 Regular \$10 New England's premier Beatles tribute band, performing together for over a decade. Italian Street Fest August 15th 12PM-6PM Tickets: \$5 Enjoy live Italian music, delicious food, and vendors celebrating Italian culture. Open Mic Night & Picnic August 28th 4PM-8PM Tickets: FREE An all-ages community event featuring live local talent—music, comedy, storytelling, and more. Blues Brew & BBQ August 29th 3PM-9PM Tickets: \$15 One of the sweetest summer evenings—great music, delicious BBQ, and refreshing brews.	SEPTEMBER Sunset Socials - Harvest Social September 12th 6PM-10PM Tickets: \$5 An autumn-inspired evening of live music, seasonal flavors, and cozy community vibes as the sun sets. Cowboys and Hippies September 19th 2PM-9PM Tickets: Early Bird \$20 Regular \$25 A boots-meets-flower-power celebration blending country charm and groovy throwback fun. Central Mass Irish Festival September 26th 12PM-8PM Tickets: Early Bird \$20 Regular \$25 A lively celebration of Irish culture featuring traditional music, dance, food, and festive fun.	OCTOBER Winchendon Honky Tonk October 3rd 4PM-8PM Tickets: Early Bird \$15 Regular \$20 A high-energy night of country hits, dancing, and classic honky-tonk good times. Haunted Happenings October 17th 4PM-10PM Tickets: FREE A family-friendly fall festival filled with haunted trails, costumes, and Halloween magic. Mega Monster Mash October 24th 6PM-10PM Tickets: \$5 A thrilling Halloween bash packed with big costumes, bigger energy, and monstrously good fun.	Winchendon PARKS & RECREATION 2026 Events @winchendoncommunitypark @winchparksandrec @winchendonamphitheater Winchendon Parks and Recreation townofwinchendon.com/parks-and-recreation
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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

Sign Up For the Parks & Rec Email List!

DON'T MISS OUR NEXT BIG EVENT!

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FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL!

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- @WINCHENDONAMPHITHEATER
- @WINCHPARKSANDREC

Attention!

WE HAVE OPEN SEATS ON THE PARKS AND REC COMMISSION

SUBMIT YOUR LETTER OF INTEREST TODAY!

Interested?

Submit your letter of interest to:
Shaina Cunningham - SCunningham@winchendon-ma.gov
Deb Dennis - DDennis@winchendon-ma.gov

Have questions?

Reach out to Shaina Cunningham:
SCunningham@winchendon-ma.gov

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.

Want to Add YOUR Event to the Town Calendar?

Contact
winchendonparksandrec@gmail.com

Sunday, April 5
Easter Sunday
Monday, April 20
Patriots Day
Wednesday, April 22
Earth Day



APRIL

WEDNESDAY APRIL 1

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.

Teen Gender & Sexuality Alliance 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 APRIL 2

Teen Cooking Class

4:00-6:00 p.m. These hands-on classes help teens (age 13-18) build real-life cooking skills, confidence, and independence in the kitchen—all in a fun, supportive environment. Limited to 5, register at docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfxPCfHsdf9-C0K-cVQeNrBMM-ee4biel-7ajliPq4Lv0_idQ/viewform. Sponsored by United Way. At The HUB, 5 Summer Dr, Winchendon.

Documentary Night at the Beals

6:00 p.m. Showing tonight: the PBS Independent Lens documentary, *Understanding Autism* in celebration of Autism Acceptance Month. A discussion of the film and its topic will take place after the screening. Free admission. At Beals Memorial Library, 50 Pleasant St, Winchendon.

FRIDAY APRIL 3

Good Friday Service with United Parish

6:00-7:00 p.m. Join us as we walk with Jesus during his final days on earth. At United Parish, 39 Front St, Winchendon.

SATURDAY APRIL 4

Winter Market

10:00 a.m.- 1:00 p.m. Winchendon Farmers Market Winter Market—produce, preserves, salsa, crafts, jewelry, baked goods and more! Inside the Old Murdock Senior Center, 52 Murdock Ave, Winchendon.

Easter Egg Hunt

10:00 a.m.- 12:00 p.m. FREE! Bring the kids to hunt for colorful eggs, meet the Easter Bunny This event is FREE and open to the community—just bring your baskets and your smiles! Questions? Call (978) 297-3155 or email scunningham@winchendon-ma.gov. Sponsored by Winchendon Parks & Recreation. At G.A.R. Park, 52 Murdock Ave, Winchendon.

Winter Market

10:00 a.m.- 1:00 p.m. Winchendon Farmers Market Winter Market—produce, preserves, salsa, crafts, jewelry, baked goods and more! 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.

Bingo Night Benefiting Ahimsa Haven Animal Rescue

6:00-9:00 p.m. Raffles, light fare, 50-cent cards. Doors open at 5:30 p.m. At Gardner American Legion, 22 Elm St, Gardner, MA.

SUNDAY APRIL 5

Sunrise Easter Service

6:00-7:00 a.m. Worship with Jesus' followers as they discover the empty tomb. At Old Centre Common, Winchendon.

Easter Worship Service & Easter Egg Hunt at United Parish

10:00-11:45 a.m. Join us as we celebrate our risen savior! Following the service kids are invited to join in on our egg hunt. At United Parish, 39 Front St, Winchendon.

Easter Service at UU Church of Winchendon

11:00 a.m. Minister Emerita Rev. Inanna Arthen will lead a service celebrating hope and rebirth. An Easter Egg hunt will follow! At UU Church of Winchendon, 126 Central St.

MONDAY APRIL 6

Town Department Heads Public Meeting

5:30 p.m. Join the Department Heads for updates, ask questions, bring your concerns! Winchendon Town Hall, 2nd floor auditorium, 109 Front St.

TUESDAY APRIL 7

Music with Bob Jordan

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

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.

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.

THURSDAY APRIL 9

Merrily's Card Making Class with GALA

10:30 a.m.- 12:30 p.m. Come on out to the Winchendon Senior Center where we are hosting our Free Card Class with Merrily! To register go to: <https://form.jotform.com/242247912496968>. At the Old Murdock Senior Center, 52 Murdock Ave, Winchendon.

Denis Cormier Concert

10:45 a.m.- 12:15 p.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! Contact the library for this month's title. At Beals Memorial Library, 50 Pleasant St, Winchendon.

American Legion Spaghetti Dinner

5:00-6:30 p.m. \$12 per person, open to all! 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 curried chicken over rice. Free-will donation \$2 per person, \$5 per family; no one turned away. 126 Central Street.

FRIDAY APRIL 10

Sound Bites Community Jam

6:30-9:45 p.m. The HUB's very own Open Mic. Sign up list is available at the HUB at 6:00. Music starts at 6:30. For more information contact Sound Bites Events. www.soundbitesevents.com/. At The HUB, 5 Summer Dr, Winchendon.

Rusty Truck Saloon Band

8:00-11:00 p.m. Dust off your dancing shoes & come join us for some some live music by these well known amazing musicians! No cover charge & cash bar available. Club opens @ 6pm so come early to get your seat. At The Snowbound Club, 130 Baldwinville Rd, Winchendon.

SATURDAY APRIL 11

Springtime English Tea & Celtic Music Concert

11:00 a.m.- 1:00 p.m. Tickets \$25 for adults, \$12 for youth age 10-17. Dust off your fascinators and reserve your spot for a traditional English Tea luncheon while enjoying a lively Celtic concert. Limited space available, purchase your tickets by visiting the library by April 6. This is a Friends of the Library fundraiser event and all funds raised will support future programs and events at the Beals Memorial Library For more information contact the library at 978-297-0300 or visit bealslibrary.org/friends.

Monoprint with Gelli Plate Class with GALA

11:00 a.m.- 2:00 p.m. Cost: \$35. To register go to: <https://form.jotform.com/260074839415965>. At the Old Murdock Senior Center, 52 Murdock Ave, Winchendon.

MONDAY APRIL 13

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. 3rd Monday of each month. For more information visit the library or see bealslibrary.org. At Beals Memorial Library, 50 Pleasant St, Winchendon.

TUESDAY APRIL 14

Baseball Trivia with Bill from Lifecare

10:30-11:30 a.m. Have a fun morning of baseball trivia with Bill O'Connor from Lifecare! At the Old Murdock Senior Center, 52 Murdock Ave, Winchendon.

WEDNESDAY APRIL 15

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.

Purple Up! For Military Kids with the American Legion Family

6:30-7:30 p.m. Join us as we celebrate the month of the Military Child with a fun-filled evening for the entire family! Games & Prizes, Crafts & Activities, Snacks & Refreshments. And T-shirts! Adults and Kids (L, XL) \$20 each, Kids (Sm, Med) \$15 each. Order your t-shirts by contacting Kristin Stanley 781-999-0033 or Monique at 978-792-6773. At Winchendon American Legion Post #193, 295 School St.

THURSDAY APRIL 16

Teen Cooking Class

4:00-6:00 p.m. These hands-on classes help teens (age 13-18) build real-life cooking skills, confidence, and independence in the kitchen—all in a fun, supportive environment. Limited to 5, register at docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfxPCfHsdf9-C0K-cVQeNrBMM-ee4biel-7ajliPq4Lv0_idQ/viewform. Sponsored by United Way. At The HUB, 5 Summer Dr, Winchendon.

Our Neighbor's Kitchen Dinner

5:15 p.m. at Immaculate Heart of Mary Church. Served in the Parish Hall. This week the menu is chicken casserole with noodles, dinner roll and dessert. Free-will donation \$2 per person, \$5 per family; no one turned away. 52 Spruce Street, Winchendon.

Panel Discussion: How AI is Changing Music

6:00-8:00 p.m. Andrew Arceci - Director, Winchendon Music Festival, with Chris White - Associate Professor of Music Theory, UMass Amherst; E. Michael Harrington - Course Author & Professor of Music Business, Berklee Online & Berklee College of Music; John Mallia - Director of the Electronic Music Studio & member of the Composition faculty, New England Conservatory; John McKean - Instructor of Music History, Longy School of Music-Bard College; Jonathan Wyner - Head of Artistic Technology Initiatives @ BEATL, Professor, MP&E, Berklee College of Music; Sally R. Gagliini, Esquire - Music & Entertainment specialist, Gagliini Law Group LLC. At the Murdock-Whitney House, 151 Front St, Winchendon.

Movie Night at the Beals

6:00 p.m. Showing tonight: *Killers of the Flower Moon* (2023). Rated R. Free admission! At Beals Memorial Library, 50 Pleasant St, Winchendon.

FRIDAY APRIL 17

The Bridge Artistic Network Presents: My Hiding Place

7:00-9:00 p.m. Based on the life of Corie Ten Boom, this one-woman show is a story of love and forgiveness at any cost. Free admission, donations accepted. For more information contact Pastor J at 978-297-3125 xt. 105 or pastorj@cornerstoneag.net. At Cornerstone Church, 122 Gardner Rd, Winchendon.

SATURDAY APRIL 18

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. The first 15 minutes will be social time, then we will go into sharing our artwork. You may bring snacks to share with the group. Free to all GALA members. New artists, first 2 classes are free. Janet Dupuis will help guide us during our time together. Email Janet 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.

SUNDAY APRIL 19

Classical Guitar Performance with An Tran

7:00 p.m. Works by Juan Erena, Olga Amelkina-Vera, Nguyễn Thế An, Khiêm Nguyễn-Duy, Sara d'Ippolito Reichert, Đặng Ngọc Long, and others. Part of the Winchendon Music Festival. At the Murdock-Whitney House, 151 Front St, Winchendon.

TUESDAY APRIL 21

Growing Places Mobile Farmers Market

10:30-11:30 a.m. Fresh local vegetables available for purchase using cash, debit/credit or SNAP/HIP benefits! At the Old Murdock Senior Center, 52 Murdock Ave, 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 APRIL 22

Classic Movie Matinee at the Beals

3:00 p.m. Showing today: *Lilies of the Field* (1963). When traveling handyman Homer Smith (Sydney Poitier) stops by a farm in rural Arizona, he is welcomed by a group of Roman Catholic nuns who have emigrated from Germany. Impressed by Homer's kindness and strong work ethic, the nuns come to believe that he has been sent by God to help build them a chapel. Not rated. Free admission! At Beals Memorial Library, 50 Pleasant St, Winchendon.

THURSDAY APRIL 23

Crafty Kiddos: Open Craft Time

2:00-3:30 p.m. Calling all crafty kids! Join us for a fun creative time where the only limit is your imagination! We provide various craft supplies for you to create your next masterpiece. At Beals Memorial Library, 50 Pleasant St, Winchendon.



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

Documentary Night at the Beals
6:00 p.m. Showing tonight: the PBS documentary, *The Librarians*. A discussion of the film and its topic will take place after the screening. Not rated. Free admission. At Beals Memorial Library, 50 Pleasant St, Winchendon.

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.

Winchendon Music Festival Concert
7:00 p.m. Asako Takeuchi, baroque violin;Â Andrew Arceci, viola da gamba; andÂ John Lenti, theorbo performing works by Arcangelo Corelli (1653-1713), Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741), and Francesco Barsanti (c.1690-1775). At the Murdock-Whitney House, 151 Front St, Winchendon.

FRIDAY APRIL 24

Friday Night Frequencies at The HUB
7:00-9:00 p.m. Whether you’re coming to support local musicians, hang out with friends, or just enjoy a fun Friday night, this event is for you! Free & open to the public, all are welcome! Come out, bring a friend, and keep the music alive in Winchendon! Featured musician this month: Andy Kuchta! Check them out on Facebook: www.facebook.com/andy.kuchta.231807. Sponsored by Winchendon Parks & Recreation. At The HUB, 5 Summer Dr, Winchendon.

SATURDAY APRIL 25

Bridging Ideas and Building Futures: Community Conversations
10:00 a.m.- 12:00 p.m. Topic: How do we build the community we want to live in? So, how do we transform our collective aspirations into concrete action? How do we build the community we want to live in, starting right now? Let’s roll up our sleeves and map out the journey together. At Beals Memorial Library, 50 Pleasant St, Winchendon.

Toxic Trivia with Tony
6:00-9:00 p.m. Custom team based/pub style trivia games w/hosting and interactive media/music. Custom games tailored to occasion and or interests. Bring your family and friends. Test your knowledge and win prizes!!! At The HUB, 5 Summer Dr, Winchendon.

Laugh Your Tail Off Comedy Event
7:00-10:00 p.m. Legendary Boston comedian and actor Lenny Clarke headlines along with Jason Merrill. Silent Auction and Raffle items and a cash bar for anything cocktail or non cocktail drinks. All proceeds benefit Ahimsa Haven Animal Rescue. Tickets \$30 and \$40 per person, available at www.eventbrite.com/e/laugh-your-tail-off-comedy-event-featuring-lenny-clarke-jason-merrill-tickets-1974521053624. At the Polish American Citizens Club (PACC), 171 Kendall Pond Road West, Gardner, MA.

Winchendon Music Festival Chamber Choir & Chamber Ensemble
7:00 p.m. Works by Pauline Oliveros, Terry Riley, Andrew Arceci (Missa Brevis, world premiere), and others. Free admission; refreshments will be sold. At UU Church of Winchendon, 126 Central St.

WEDNESDAY APRIL 29

Thriller & Mystery Book Club
4:00 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 APRIL 30

Teen Cooking Class
4:00-6:00 p.m. These hands-on classes help teens (age 13-18) build real-life cooking skills, confidence, and independence in the kitchen—all in a fun, supportive environment. Limited to 5, register at docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfxPCfHsd9-C0K-cVQeNrBMm-ee4biel-7ajliPq4Lv0_idQ/viewform. Sponsored by United Way. At The HUB, 5 Summer Dr, Winchendon.

RECURRING WEEKLY EVENTS
EVERY DAY

Prayer at TWR House of Prayer
5:00 p.m. TWR House of Prayer is open to the public and all are welcome to come and participate. While in the prayer room, feel free to worship, read and study the Bible and engage in prayer. Every prayer meeting is lead by live continuous worship music and each hour has a specific prayer topic that all are encouraged to pray for. For more details and information check out our website at twrhouseofprayer.org. At TWR House of Prayer, 10 Pond St, Winchendon.

MONDAY through FRIDAY

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.

MONDAYS

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 with Chantal from Shadow Academy Wellness
4:30-5:30 p.m. Unwind, relax, and celebrate the beauty of yoga. All skill levels welcomed! Mats and Blocks are available, if needed. Open to adults and teens. For more info, contact 978-297-0300, bealsmemoriallibrary@gmail.com or visit www.bealslibrary.org. At Beals Memorial Library, 50 Pleasant St., Winchendon.

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

TUESDAYS

Strength Training with Mary Lee
8:30-9:15 a.m. Work at your own pace, with guidance from Marylee, to build and retain muscle utilizing handweights. You may bring your own or use the weights on hand! 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.

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! Call 928-297-3155 to reserve a spot. At the Old Murdock Senior Center, 52 Murdock Ave., Winchendon. 978-297-3155.

Game Day Tuesdays
12:00-3:00 p.m. Tables will be set up with a variety of games, including cribbage, Scrabble, checkers, chess and cards. All experience levels welcome to drop in and play. Transportation available via the Community Connector. Contact the Senior Center at 978-297-3155 or winchendoncoa@gmail.com with any questions. At the Old Murdock Senior Center, 52 Murdock Ave., Winchendon.

Winch Buddies After School Program
3:15-4:45 p.m. A perfect blend of fun, learning, and growth for Toy Town Elementary students. Tuesdays & Thursdays. Register at <https://www.the-hub.org/event-details/winch-buddies-after-school-program-december-2025-1/form>. 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

Ukelele Class with Julie
9:00-10:00 a.m. 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.

ESL Classes
6:00-8:00 p.m. At The HUB, 5 Summer Dr, Winchendon.

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 (in new gymnastics building down by the bike path), 155 Central St., Winchendon.

THURSDAYS

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

Friends’ Book and Used Media Sale
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.

Winch Buddies After School Program
3:15-4:45 p.m. A perfect blend of fun, learning, and growth for Toy Town Elementary students. Tuesdays & Thursdays. Register at <https://www.the-hub.org/event-details/winch-buddies-after-school-program-december-2025-1/form>. At The HUB, 5 Summer Dr, Winchendon.

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

FRIDAYS

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.

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 Lunch and Free Bowling
10:00 a.m.- 12:00 p.m. Come in and enjoy lunch, free bowling, and fellowship! Please call 978-297-3155 at least 24 hours in advance to reserve a lunch. Bowling is free for all seniors 55+ from 10:00 a.m.- 12:30 p.m. Suggested donation, \$5. At the The HUB, 5 Summer Dr, Winchendon.

Zumbini with MaryLee
11:15 a.m.- 12:15 a.m. At the Old Murdock Senior Center, 52 Murdock Ave., Winchendon. 978-297-3155.

Teen Drop-in at The HUB
4:00-6:00 p.m. Looking for a safe, welcoming place to hang out after school? Teen Drop-In at The HUB is your space to relax, connect, and have fun—completely free. In partnership with The Sunshine Café, we're offering free bowling plus a rotating lineup of activities designed just for teens. Whether you’re competitive, creative, or just want to chill with friends, there's something for you every week. 1st Friday, Gaming Night; 2nd Friday, Paint & Sip; 3rd Friday, Movie Night; 4th Friday, Surprise event. At 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
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.

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.

SUNDAYS

ESL Classes
6:00-8:00 p.m. At The HUB, 5 Summer Dr, Winchendon.

Ideas and Discussions

Documentary Night at the Beals

April 2, 6:00 p.m. Showing tonight: the PBS Independent Lens documentary, *Understanding Autism* in celebration of Autism Acceptance Month. A discussion of the film and its topic will take place after the screening. Free admission. At Beals Memorial Library, 50 Pleasant St, Winchendon.

Panel Discussion: How AI is Changing Music

April 16, 6:00-8:00 p.m. Andrew Arceci - Director, Winchendon Music Festival, with Chris White - Associate Professor of Music Theory, UMass Amherst; E. Michael Harrington - Course Author & Professor of Music Business, Berklee Online & Berklee College of Music; John Mallia - Director of the Electronic Music Studio & member of the Composition faculty, New England Conservatory; John McKean - Instructor of Music History, Longy School of Music-Bard College; Jonathan Wyner - Head of Artistic Technology Initiatives @ BEATL, Professor, MP&E, Berklee College of Music; Sally R. Gaglini, Esquire - Music & Entertainment specialist, Gaglini Law Group LLC. At the Murdock-Whitney House, 151 Front St, Winchendon.

Documentary Night at the Beals

April 23, 6:00 p.m. Showing tonight: the PBS documentary, *The Librarians*. A discussion of the film and its topic will take place after the screening. Not rated. Free admission. At Beals Memorial Library, 50 Pleasant St, Winchendon.

Bridging Ideas and Building Futures: Community Conversations

April 25, 10:00 a.m.- 12:00 p.m. Topic: How do we build the community we want to live in? So, how April 25, do we transform our collective aspirations into concrete action? How do we build the community we want to live in, starting right now? Let’s roll up our sleeves and map out the journey together. At Beals Memorial Library, 50 Pleasant St, Winchendon.

Food and Meals

Winchendon Farmers Market Winter Market

April 4, 10:00 a.m.- 1:00 p.m. First Saturday of each month. Inside the Old Murdock Senior Center, 52 Murdock Ave, Winchendon.

American Legion Spaghetti Dinner

April 9, 5:00-6:30 p.m. \$12 per person, open to all! Sponsored by Winchendon American Legion Auxiliary Unit #193. At Winchendon American Legion Post #193, 295 School St.

Our Neighbor’s Kitchen Dinner

April 9 and 23, 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.

Our Neighbor’s Kitchen Dinner

April 16, 5:15 p.m. at Immaculate Heart of Mary Church. Served in the Parish Hall. This week the menu is chicken casserole with noodles, dinner roll and dessert. Free-will donation \$2 per person, \$5 per family; no one turned away. 52 Spruce Street, Winchendon.

Growing Places Mobile Farmers Market

April 21, 10:30-11:30 a.m. Fresh local vegetables available for purchase using cash, debit/credit or SNAP/HIP benefits! At the Old Murdock Senior Center, 52 Murdock Ave, Winchendon.

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.

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.

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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.

Easter Egg Hunt

April 4, 10:00 a.m.- 12:00 p.m. FREE! Bring the kids to hunt for colorful eggs, meet the Easter Bunny This event is FREE and open to the community—just bring your baskets and your smiles! Questions? Call (978) 297-3155 or email scunningham@winchendon-ma.gov. Sponsored by Winchendon Parks & Recreation. At G.A.R. Park, 52 Murdock Ave, Winchendon.

Purple Up! For Military Kids with the American Legion Family

April 15, 6:30-7:30 p.m. Join us as we celebrate the month of the Military Child with a fun-filled evening for the entire family! Games & Prizes, Crafts & Activities, Snacks & Refreshments. And T-shirts! Adults and Kids (L, XL) \$20 each, Kids (Sm, Med) \$15 each. Order your t-shirts by contacting Kristin Stanley 781-999-0033 or Monique at 978-792-6773. At Winchendon American Legion Post #193, 295 School St.

Crafty Kiddos: Open Craft Time

April 23, 2:00-3:30 p.m. Calling all crafty kids! Join us for a fun creative time where the only limit is your imagination! We provide various craft supplies for you to create your next masterpiece. At Beals Memorial Library, 50 Pleasant St, Winchendon.

For Teens

Teen Drop-in at The HUB

Fridays, 4:00-6:00 p.m. Looking for a safe, welcoming place to hang out after school? In partnership with The Sunshine Café, we’re offering free bowling plus a rotating lineup of activities designed just for teens. Whether you’re competitive, creative, or just want to chill with friends, there’s something for you every week. 1st Friday, Gaming Night; 2nd Friday, Paint & Sip; 3rd Friday, Movie Night; 4th Friday, Surprise event. At The HUB, 5 Summer Dr, Winchendon.

Teen Cooking Class

April 2, 16 and 30,, 4:00-6:00 p.m. At The HUB, 5 Summer Dr, Winchendon.

Teen GSA Meeting at the Beals

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

Teen Dungeons & Dragons

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

Entertainment

Music with Bob Jordan

April 7, 10:30-11:30 a.m. Come and join us for some folk music with Bob Jordan! At Old Murdock Senior Center, 52 Murdock Ave, Winchendon.

Denis Cormier Concert

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

Rusty Truck Saloon Band

April 10, 8:00-11:00 p.m. Dust off your dancing shoes & come join us for some some live music by these well known amazing musicians! No cover charge & cash bar available. Club opens @ 6pm so come early to get your seat. At The Snowbound Club, 130 Baldwinville Rd, Winchendon.

Springtime English Tea & Celtic Music Concert

April 11, 11:00 a.m.- 1:00 p.m. Tickets \$25 for adults, \$12 for youth age 10-17. Dust off your fascinators and reserve your spot for a traditional English Tea luncheon while enjoying a lively Celtic concert. Limited space available, purchase your tickets by visiting the library by April 6. This is a Friends of the Library fundraiser event and all funds raised will support future programs and events at the Beals Memorial Library For more information contact the library at 978-297-0300 or visit bealslibrary.org/friends.

Classical Guitar Performance with An Tran

April 19, 7:00 p.m. Works by Juan Erena, Olga Amelkina-Vera, Nguyễn Thế An, Khiêm Nguyễn-Duy, Sara d’Ippolito Reichert, Đặng Ngọc Long, and others. Part of the Winchendon Music Festival. At the Murdock-Whitney House, 151 Front St, Winchendon.

Winchendon Music Festival Concert

April 23, 7:00 p.m. Asako Takeuchi, baroque violin;Â Andrew Arceci, viola da gamba; andÂ John Lenti, theorbo performing works by Arcangelo Corelli (1653-1713), Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741), and Francesco Barsanti (c.1690-1775). At the Murdock-Whitney House, 151 Front St, Winchendon.

Friday Night Frequencies at The HUB

April 24., 7:00-9:00 p.m. Whether you’re coming to support local musicians, hang out with friends, or just enjoy a fun Friday night, this event is for you! Free & open to the public, all are welcome! Come out, bring a friend, and keep the music alive in Winchendon! Featured musicians this month: Plunge Pool! Check them out on YouTube: www.youtube.com/@plungepoolband4336 and Facebook: www.facebook.com/PlungePoolBand. Sponsored by Winchendon Parks & Recreation. At The HUB, 5 Summer Dr, Winchendon.

Winchendon Music Festival Chamber Choir & Chamber Ensemble

April 25, 7:00 p.m. Works by Pauline Oliveros, Terry Riley, Andrew Arceci (Missa Brevis, world premiere), and others. Free admission; refreshments will be sold. At UU Church of Winchendon, 126 Central St.

Laugh Your Tail Off Comedy Event

April 25, 7:00-10:00 p.m. Legendary Boston comedian and actor Lenny Clarke headlines along with Jason Merrill. Silent Auction and Raffle items and a cash bar for anything cocktail or non cocktail drinks. All proceeds benefit Ahimsa Haven Animal Rescue. Tickets \$30 and \$40 per person, available at www.eventbrite.com/e/laugh-your-tail-off-comedy-event-featuring-lenny-clarke-jason-merrill-tickets-1974521053624. At the Polish American Citizens Club (PACC), 171 Kendall Pond Road West, Gardner, MA.

Art, Music and Dance

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.

Toy Town Bridge Artists Circle

April 4, 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.

Social Art Circle with GALA

April 7, 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. 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.

Merrily’s Card Making Class with GALA

April 9, 10:30 a.m.- 12:30 p.m. Come on out to the Winchendon Senior Center where we are hosting our Free Card Class with Merrily! To register go to: <https://form.jotform.com/242247912496968>. At the Old Murdock Senior Center, 52 Murdock Ave, Winchendon.

Sound Bites Community Jam

April 10, 6:30-9:30 p.m. We’re coming back with our March 13th Open Mic Community Jam. No bad luck here. Just good music and people. Sign-up list will be available at the HUB at 6:00 p.m. on Friday the 13th. Music starts at 6:30. At The HUB, 5 Summer Dr, Winchendon.

Art Critique with GALA

April 18, 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. The first 15 minutes will be social time, then we will go into sharing our artwork. You may bring snacks to share with the group. Free to all GALA members. New artists, first 2 classes are free. Janet Dupuis will help guide us during our time together. Email Janet 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.

Ukulele Class

Wednesdays, 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.

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

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 Resident Jane LaPointe Named “Person of the Year” by North Quabbin Trails Association



From left, honoree Jane LaPointe, NQTA Founder/Director Bobby Curley, and NQTA Board Chair Linda Styles, a Reiki teacher and healer who runs Lynrose Farm and Wellness Center in Warwick MA
Photo copyright North Quabbin Trails Association

by Inanna Arthen

At the meeting of the North Quabbin Trails Association's Community Coalition Celebration on Saturday, February 28, Winchendon resident Jane LaPointe was given NQTA's first "Person of the Year" award. Ms. LaPointe has been part of NQTA for more than ten years and has served on its Board of Directors for three years. "Through her dedication and leadership, she has played an important role in helping strengthen NQTA's mission of becoming a lasting legacy trail organization for our region," reported the Winchendon CAC.

During the ceremony, Ms. LaPointe was also given a copy of *The Natural Healing Handbook* by John Kennedy Toole, aligning with her passion for learning and sharing the wisdom of nature.

The *Courier* reached out to Ms. LaPointe to learn more about her work with NQTA.

Ms. LaPointe said she'd been given a heads-up about the award in advance. "I hope [the Person of the Year award] does continue. It would be a very good way to recognize the growing number of partners/collaborators who are working together to strengthen the wellbeing of various community members, especially veterans, first

responders, their families, and families/caregivers with members who have disabilities and various health needs," she said.

"I think the most important contribution I've made to NQTA is collaborating with [NQTA Founder/Director] Bobby Curley as a thinking partner and coach, as he expanded his vision for NQTA. I met Bobby back in 2013 when I first moved back to Winchendon. I went to a fall celebration at Red Apple Farm where various vendors had displays. Bobby was there with a collection of trail maps. That's what caught my interest—I was hoping to get back into hiking and exploring nature and here was someone with places I could go—and he also offered a monthly Tuesday Trekkers hiking group. I was in. We just started talking—I learned about his background, why he got into the trail work. Because I have a history of helping people who run organizations consider their long term value and sustainability, we just started talking about where this could go—NQTA, through its stewardship work had made many miles of trails available and accessible.

"So the question was: what to do with it—how to get people using the trails? I am familiar with the healing power of nature—as is Bobby. He's a great connector (or as he says, sales person. He's also a veteran) So he started making connections within the Veteran community, and then within the community of health care, traditional and alternative. As we learned more, I helped him and others see how the various interests, needs, pieces could come together. This continues to unfold, as new partners/collaborators get engaged. It's been very exciting and there's a lot of possibilities unfolding for 2026 and beyond.

"I think my role/accomplishments in this is to help weave all the threads together and to provide a strategic perspective on how to move from opportunities and ideas to realities...how to do this through actions and communication."

Asked what Winchendon can learn from the work NQTA is doing, Ms. LaPointe responded, "Interesting question. A lot of my work and ideas with NQTA have actually been informed by what is happening in Winchendon—the collaborations that inform HEAL and that we continue to try to build and strengthen across the community, particularly as more people and organizations get involved. I'm very excited because I see how this can be amplified this year by the Bridging Ideas & Building Futures Community Conversations underway at the Library and also through the Livable Winchendon initiative that is being launched through the Council on Aging and the CHNA9's Age-Friendly Initiative, which

has broad implications across our town.

"What I hope to see happening across Winchendon is more collaboration focused on shared goals and outcomes for our town and its people. To me, this doesn't mean organizations changing their goals and actions—it means seeing where and how our efforts are serving common ends, and thinking together about how we could amplify the impact of our work, and engage more of our community in these endeavors.

"Actually, there is a lot of synergy between the way I think about NQTA and about my Winchendon community and in the ways I get involved."

Ms. LaPointe added, "If I were to be very literal, what I'd like to see Winchendon add is the health and wellness perspective of access to nature. We've got wonderful natural outdoor resources here. First, make sure people know about them and how to safely access them. Then develop programs and relationships/partnerships with people who can help to deliver programs that get people of all ages out in our natural world—exploring, relaxing, enjoying. A few years ago, I took some programs in "Forest Bathing," a different way to be in nature, with a wonderful focus on just noticing. And then use various avenues to engage with families, children, first responders, and veterans (we've got that new veteran's housing coming to town—an opportunity for partnering).

"I think Parks & Rec may be moving in this direction, which is great! And, anything we can learn from or with NQTA will be good."

Bobby Curley, Ms. LaPointe said, did the initial work in cleaning up the trails at the Winchendon Community Park.

A native born Toy Towner who returned to settle in Winchendon in later life, Ms. LaPointe has devoted many years of service to her community. She is a Trustee of the Beals Memorial Library and a member of the Winchendon CAC Advisory Board. She served on the town Master Plan Committee, the Toy Town Community Partnership, and the Winchendon Community Park Committee, and still serves on the Community Heart & Soul committee and the CCAP Transportation committee. She frequently attends other town board and committee meetings as a member of the public, attends many local events, and is involved with HEAL Winchendon.

The North Quabbin Trails Association is based in Orange, MA, and you can learn more about them at their website, nqta.org. Follow them on Facebook at www.facebook.com/NorthQuabbinTrailsAssociation.

Traditional English Tea to be held at the Beals Memorial Library



The Friends of the Beals Memorial Library will be hosting a traditional English Tea and Celtic Music Concert on April 11. The concert will feature Bill Thomas on Irish pipes and flute and Matt Harris on fiddle.
Photo courtesy of Beals Memorial Library

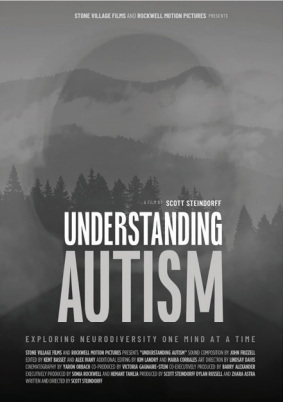
Dust off your fascinator hat and reserve your spot for a traditional English Tea and lively Celtic music concert to be held at the Beals Memorial Library in Winchendon on Saturday, April 11 from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Tickets for the luncheon are \$25.00 for adults and \$12.00 for youth ages 10 to 17. Tickets are going fast and can be purchased at the Library until Monday, April 6, or until the event is sold out. All funds raised will support future programs at the Library.

The Luncheon is hosted by the Friends of the Library and will feature traditional sandwiches, scones with jam and clotted cream, various cookies, and of course, a variety of your favorite English teas. The Friends want everyone to know that men are invited, and they encourage all participants to wear period dress, if possible. The Celtic music concert will feature lively jigs and reels, hornpipes and maybe even a haunting air. Bill Thomas plays Irish uilleann pipes and traditional Irish wooden flute (and penny whistle, upon request). With him is Matt Harris, who plays fiddle.

Bill Thomas has been playing Irish music on flute and uilleann pipes for over fifty years. He started out playing for contra dances in the Monadnock region, and has since played for many dances and sessions from here to the West Coast. Over the past dozen years, Bill has made yearly trips to Ireland where he is a welcome visitor at sessions and festivals in many parts of the country.

The Beals Memorial Library is located at 50 Pleasant Street in Winchendon. For more information call the Library at 978-297-0300 or visit bealslibrary.org/friends.

April Movie Showings at the Beals Library



The Beals Memorial Library in Winchendon will be showing two movies and two documentaries on our BIG screen during the month of April.

The screenings begin on Thursday, April 2 at 6:00 p.m. with the PBS, Independent Lens documentary, *Understanding Autism* in celebration of Autism Acceptance Month. The film follows filmmaker Scott Steindorff as he aims to discover more about his own autism. Speaking to autistic people all across the spectrum, he seeks to reframe the perception of autism by focusing on the identification, diagnosis, and treatment by highlighting the amazing talents and love of neurodiversity. A discussion of the film and its topic will take place after the screening. Not rated. Run time: 58 minutes.

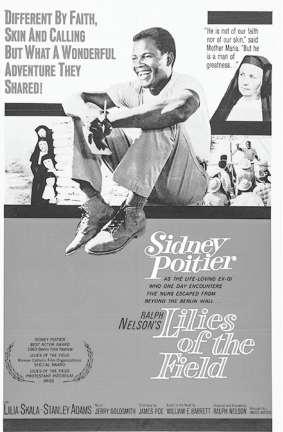
On Thursday, April 16 at 6:00 p.m., the Library will be showing the film *Killers of the Flower Moon*. The movie is a 2023 American epic crime drama directed by Martin Scorsese, based on the 2017 non-fiction book. It stars Leonardo DiCaprio, Robert De Niro, and Lily Gladstone. Set in 1920s Oklahoma, it focuses on a series of murders of Osage members and relations in the Osage Nation after oil was discovered on tribal land. The tribal members had retained mineral rights on their reservation, but a corrupt local political boss sought to steal the wealth. Rated R. Run time: 206 minutes.

The third showing of the month stars Sidney Poitier in *Lilies of the Field*. This 1963 film is the Library’s Classic Movie Matinee for April and will

be screened on Wednesday, April 22 at 3:00 p.m. When traveling handyman Homer Smith (Poitier) stops by a farm in rural Arizona, he is welcomed by a group of Roman Catholic nuns who have emigrated from Germany. Realizing that the farm needs a lot of work, Homer takes on a number of repair projects for the women, who are led by the headstrong Mother Maria. Impressed by Homer’s kindness and strong work ethic, the nuns come to believe that he has been sent by God to help build them a chapel. Not rated. Run time: 94 minutes.

The final film screening of the Month is the PBS documentary, *The Librarians*, on Thursday, April 23 at 6:00 p.m. When lawmakers seek to review a list of books, librarians find themselves on the front lines of a national battle fighting for intellectual freedom and our democracy. Across the U.S., librarians face the impact of uniting against library collection standards that include restrictions on race-related and LGBTQIA+ content. Drawing on historical context, *The Librarians* explores the broader implications for education and public life. A discussion of the film and its topic will take place after the screening. Not rated. Run time: 85 minutes.

The Beals Memorial Library is located at 50 Pleasant Street in Winchendon. All movies at the library are free and open to the public! For more information, contact the library at 978-297-0300 or visit their website at bealslibrary.org.



Eagle Scout Michael Fetzner Given Official Citation by BOS

by Inanna Arthen

At the Board of Selectmen’s meeting on Monday, March 8, the Board presented Eagle Scout Michael Fetzner with an official proclamation recognizing his achievement of the rank of Eagle Scout, and his project for the town installing flagpoles at Monument Park next to Town Hall. Mr. Fetzner came forward as Board Chair Andrew Beavais read the proclamation to the audience. It reads,

“Official Citation

“Be it known that the Town of Winchendon hereby extends its congratulations to Michael Fetzner in recognition of your receipt of the Eagle Scout award, and

be it further known that the Town of Winchendon recognizes your hard work, dedication and commitment to your project in installing flagpoles at Monument Park and your pride, patriotism, can-do outlook and community service that has shaped you into the person deserving of this award.

The Town is honored to present you with this citation, duly signed by the Board of Selectmen.”

Following the presentation, Mr. Fetzner stood with the Board for photos.

To read all about Mr. Fetzner’s Eagle Scout project, which was ceremonially unveiled on Patriots Day, April 19, 2025, see “Eagle Scout Project Graces Legion Park with New Monument and Flagpoles” in the April 24-May 1, 2025 edition of the online *Winchendon Courier*.



from left, BOS member Audrey LaBrie, BOS Chair Andrew Bueavais, Eagle Scout Michael Fetzner, BOS members Tiffany Newton and Melissa Blanchard
Photo copyright Town of Winchendon

Advertise in the Winchendon Courier!

The *Winchendon Courier* Online is uploaded every Thursday night and reaches hundreds of Winchendon readers every week. In December, 2025:

- 1,437 visitors spent more than a minute on the site
- 124 visitors spent an hour or more on the site
- 92 people downloaded the PDF of the tax classification hearing packet from the article about the hearing
- 64 people downloaded the most recent Small Business Shopping Map (updated continuously!)
- 267 people reached the site through a link on Facebook

The monthly print edition of the *Winchendon Courier* has a press run of 500 and an uptake of over 90 percent. (That means 450+ copies in the hands of readers – and many copies are read by more than one person.) 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 –change your ad as often as you want, at no extra charge! (New ad every week? You’re good!)
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- Automatic placement of any business card or double business card ad in the monthly print addition, at no extra charge, for advertisers who place their ad for a full month in the online edition
- Ad sizes available in the print edition range from business card size to full page. We’re flexible! If you have a specific size ad you want to use, ask us what it will cost. Questions about formatting or dimensions? Contact us!

For a rate card and/or a full information packet, contact:
editor@winchendoncourier.net

Ideas & Information

Gardening

Raise Your Garden to New Heights



Raised bed vegetable gardens make planting, weeding and harvesting easier.
Photo courtesy of www.MelindaMyers.com

by Melinda Myers

Elevated and raised bed gardens can expand your planting options and make planting and maintenance easier and more convenient. You'll be able to plant, weed and harvest with minimal bending or even from the luxury of a chair or bench.

Elevated gardens are basically containers on legs. You can find plans to make your own or purchase one from your local garden center or garden supply retailer. Consider one on wheels or add your own for ease of moving. You'll be able to move your garden into the sun or shade as needed each day or out of the way when you entertain.

Set the garden in place first. Once filled with soil, it will be very heavy and difficult to move unless you have added wheels. Those who garden on a balcony should confirm the space will hold the weight of the elevated garden bed once it is filled with moist soil and mature plants.

Including raised beds in your gardens and on or near your patio is another way to increase planting space and easier access. Purchase a prefab raised bed or make your own from a long-lasting material such as interlocking block, fieldstone, plastic lumber or naturally long-lasting wood. Consider the available space, your gardening goals and one that provides a comfortable height for gardening. Select one with corners or edges suited for sitting or narrow sides to allow easy access from a garden bench.

Line the bottom of your raised bed with hardware cloth to reduce the risk of animals burrowing into your garden. Lay the hardware cloth over the ground and bend it up along the inside of the raised bed walls. Add a liner of landscape fabric to keep the soil in place when placing your raised bed on a patio.

A three- or four-foot width makes it easy to reach all parts of the garden for planting, weeding and harvesting. Raising your planting bed at least 8 to 12 inches improves drainage and provides an adequate space for most plants to root and grow. If you want to minimize bending, go higher or add benches to increase your gardening comfort and ease.

Once your raised bed is complete or elevated garden is in place, fill it with quality planting mix. You can calculate the volume of soil that is needed yourself or use one of the many soil calculators available online.

Check the soil moisture regularly as the limited soil mass and increased exposure to wind, heat and sunlight make raised beds dry out more quickly than in-ground gardens. Reduce the need for frequent watering by incorporating a certified organic and sustainable soil amendment, like Wild Valley Farms wool pellets (wildvalleyfarms.com). Research found adding these pellets made from 100% wool waste helps reduce watering by 25% and increases air space in the soil for better plant growth. You'll only need a one-pound bag of these wool pellets to cover about 30 square feet if you add the pellets as you plant or it is enough to amend 12 gallons of soil when mixing thoroughly in your mix, following label directions.

Further boost your gardening success by selecting the best plants suited to the growing conditions and your gardening goals. In no time, you'll be enjoying the flavor and beauty these gardens provide.

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 was commissioned by Wild Valley Farms for her expertise to write this article. Her website is www.MelindaMyers.com.

Financial Focus®

Four stages of raising confident, money-smart kids

Good financial habits are a little like brushing your teeth. When you learn them early, they become second nature, and you carry them with you for life. And while money can feel complicated, especially today, the foundation starts simply.

Parents can begin the conversation with very young children, and young adults can build on those basics as they take on more responsibility. Step by step, these habits create confidence that helps build long-term financial security and a more fulfilling life.

The following are the four key stages of financial growth.

Stage 1: For very young children, the goal is to make money feel simple and manageable. A great place to start is with three jars labeled "Spend," "Save" and "Share." When kids can actually see their money grow or shrink, the idea starts to make sense. Saving also introduces them to goal-setting, and working toward paying for a small toy or outing teaches patience. Most important, you're helping your children see money as a tool they can understand easily and use with confidence.

Stage 2: If you have tweens (children roughly 9 to 12 years old), they're usually ready for slightly bigger financial ideas. This is a great time for them to earn money through chores or small jobs, helping them see the connection between effort and reward and building a sense of ownership. Conversations about needs versus wants also become more meaningful, because kids are now making real choices with money they earned themselves. Your tween may be ready for a simple savings account to watch their savings grow, or a reloadable cash card for spending.

Stage 3: By the time teens reach high school or young adulthood, budgeting becomes essential. This doesn't need to be overly strict or complicated. A simple system that helps them track deposits and withdrawals can make all the difference. Whether they use an app, a paper notebook or a spreadsheet, the real goal is awareness. Teenagers also benefit from learning how credit works. Understanding how to build a healthy credit score and how to use credit wisely protects them from costly mistakes in later life.

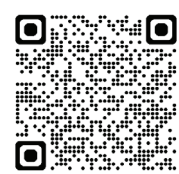
Stage 4: Then come the early working years, when habits shift from learning to building. One of the smartest steps at this stage is paying yourself first. Automatic transfers to savings or retirement accounts help establish stability without extra effort. Even small retirement contributions matter more than most people realize, because time allows compounding to do the heavy lifting. This is also when young adults can start organizing their money into different buckets for rent, automobile payments, emergencies, retirement and everyday spending. These habits help lay the groundwork for financial freedom down the road.

Throughout every stage, the theme is confidence. Each small success creates a sense of control and each good habit makes the next one easier. Over time, these habits turn into a lifetime of financial security and fulfillment. When you start strong and stay consistent, money becomes a tool that helps your children support the lives they want.



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News, events, police logs, obituaries, community directory
and archives of every previous issue back to September, 2019
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School Committee Approves FY 2027 School Budget With Little Public Comment



Supt. King responds to questions about staffing changes in the budget
Photo copyright Town of Winchendon

by Inanna Arthen

On Thursday, March 19, the Winchendon School Committee held a public hearing on the FY 2027 Winchendon Public School District budget, which lasted all of four minutes before going into recess. Only one member of the public, Maureen Ward, came forward to compliment how well the budget report was done. At 6:00 p.m., the Committee re-convened to close the public hearing and hold their regular meeting. The budget presentation, public comment and vote were the primary agenda items.

Director of Finance and Operations Liz Latoria, joining the meeting over Zoom, gave a Powerpoint presentation which was quite brisk. The presentation is available on the school district website under the Business Office tab, at <https://www.winchendonk12.org/page/business-office> for those who would like to read through all the details. The Powerpoint is incorporated into the full “Draft FY27 School Department Budget” packet.

The presentation focused on explanations of how the budget is calculated, starting with how the state calculates what it gives us (Chapter 70 funds) and what the town is mandated to pay (required local contribution). But the presentation did somewhat “bury the lede” and didn’t start with the bottom line totals that voters really want to know first. From page 22 of the budget packet, these are:

- Total budget for FY 2027: \$18,667,547 (increase of \$616,477 or 3.42 percent from FY 2026)
- Total salaries for FY 2027: \$14,549,680 (increase of \$336,556 or 2.37 percent from FY 2026)
- Number of full-time-equivalent (FTE) positions reduced: 4.

Ms. Latoria pointed out that Winchendon’s total enrollment is projected to decrease by 65 students, from 1,286 to 1,221. However, she said, a “key takeaway” is that “The state’s “Cost-per-Student” is rising faster than our enrollment is declining.” In other words, the town is not seeing reduced costs along with reduced enrollment.

Ms. Latoria went through “Indirect Costs” that the school district shares with the town, including administrative, insurance, employee benefits and assessments. These cover roughly one half of the total Required Local Contribution for Winchendon (which is \$7,229,420 for FY 2027, an increase of 5.53 percent). The district also receives \$3,372,546 in Grants and Revolving Accounts.

A chart showing a summary of staffing levels and changes by FTE numbers revealed that one vacant SPED position at Memorial will be taken off the rolls, one Counselor FTE at Memorial will be removed, 4 paraprofessional FTEs will be removed, and a Dean of Students will be added at Memorial. One FTE Maintenance and Facilities will be added, resulting in a net staffing change of -4 FTEs.

The packet includes a careful explanation of budget decisions by building and category. Non-salary and/or non-mandated expenses were level-funded as much as possible. Expenses for the high school and both elementary schools increase by less than 1 percent. Murdock Middle School increases by 5.91 percent. “This change is driven primarily by staffing adjustments, including the movement of two paraprofessionals

positions from Toy Town Elementary to better align staffing resources with student needs at the middle school level,” the report explains. Facilities and Maintenance increases 6.05 percent, and the Athletics budget decreases 3.24 percent.

Following the presentation, the Committee opened the floor to public comment.

Citizen Tina Santos came forward to express concerns about the staffing summary chart and the reduction of 4 FTEs for paraprofessionals. She went on, “Another concern I have is school choice. A lot of kids have the choice to go out of district...throughout the years, it was always a goal of finding out why our kids are leaving, why are they going out of district, etc. It’s always been a goal, but it’s never been set in stone, or we’ve never had somebody set to do it. So perhaps one of these vacant positions could be put into school choice, kind of like a director, so they could look into this.

“We spend a lot of money sending our kids out of district, which I understand. Every parent has a choice. It’s my opinion, if you move to Winchendon and you want a school choice, then I say parents need to pay the difference. But that’s a whole different story. But I feel that school choice, we’re losing out. Our kids are losing out. We spend so much out and our schools have been saying for the last 20-something years, they’ve always talked about school choice, getting kids back and so forth. I think we really need to do a service to these kids and our district and our residents, to focus on the district. We’re cutting, cutting, cutting every time with the budget, that’s not going to entice people to come into town or into our schools. Our schools get a negative rep...So school choice definitely needs to be number one priority...We can’t keep kicking the can down the road.”

Although usually the Committee does not respond directly during public comment periods, Superintendent Charlotte King offered to reply to Ms. Santos’ points. “I think the district and the School Committee strongly agree with the fact that we want to hear from people in their own community, and we want to provide those things that I guess families feel are missing and why they they look elsewhere,” she said. “We are in the middle of a strategic planning process, and part of that process, we did a large number of surveys in the beginning of the school year. One of the questions that we actually were able to reach out to people whose information we still had, also including those students that are homeschooling, because not only are our students dropping off to school choice, they’re also leaving to homeschool. So that’s another area that we were really interested in why that might be.

“So what we did was reach out with a similar survey that we sent parents and families that are in district, but this survey asked, ‘Why did you leave?’ And I don’t have the survey right in front of me, but the results came back saying there were some some families that left for some outlier reasons, but there were quite a few that left for more rigorous academic programming at the high school level, and more competitive sports programs.” Supt. King went on to explain that the staffing changes were all made after very carefully considering the exact needs for each area.

(The *Courier* reported on Supt. King’s presentation of the survey results at some length – see “Supt. King Presents Results of School Survey to School Committee” in the January 29-February 5, 2026 edition of the online *Winchendon Courier* (scroll down). This article also appeared in the March print edition of the *Courier* (page 11).)

Supt. King explained the reason for adding a Dean at Memorial, while cutting a counselor. “We have brought in over the last three years a lot of new curriculum to address the rigor in our classrooms, and that requires a lot of time on the principal’s part to really be the instructional leader of the building. They spend a lot of time not only assisting staff with the implementation of that curriculum, but they need to be in classrooms. They need to be coaching teachers. They need to be providing feedback. They need to be spending a lot of time focused on curriculum, because that is what’s going to give our students that academic rigor that they deserve. So adding a Dean would alleviate the principal from some of the other duties that have to be done in the building. So I think they’re not losing out, because there will still be a counselor in the building. We’re not looking at it as losing a position. We’re just looking at it as one position different.”

No other members of the public came forward to comment. Committee member Karen Kast commented that she didn’t want to see instructional staff lost while administrative staff were added.

Following the discussion, the Committee voted to approve the FY 2027 school district budget as presented.

Winchendon/Templeton Pet Vaccine Clinic on April 11

There will be a pet vaccination clinic for dogs and cats on Saturday, April 11, from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., at 381 Baldwinville Road, Templeton, MA.

Rabies vaccinations will be \$5 each. The distemper/Parvo combo vaccine is free. Animals may be microchipped for \$22.

Dogs must be on a leash and cats must be in carriers for the safety of all.
Not a drop-in--pre-registration for an appointment time is required. Register at www.second-chanceanimals.org/vaccine-clinics/#local-comm-vaccine.

After you submit your registration, we’ll review your pets information. Watch your text or email (depending upon the info you provided) for next steps or your pet’s time slot.

Pets from all towns are welcome. Made possible by Petco Love and the Robinson Broadhurst Foundation.

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Community Notice Board

Town Committee Monthly Meetings by Week All Meetings in Town Hall

week	MON	TUE	WED	THUR
1st	Board of Health 10:00am	Planning Board 6:00pm Parks & Rec Commission 6:30pm		School Committee 6:00pm
2nd	Board of Selectmen 6:30pm	Finance Committee 7:00pm	Economic Development Task Force 5:30pm Agricultural Commission 7:00pm	Conservation Commission 6:00pm
3rd	Winchendon Redevelopment Authority 5:00pm	Planning Board 6:00pm Parks & Rec Commission 6:30pm	Zoning Board of Appeals 7:00pm	School Committee 6:00pm
4th	Board of Selectmen 6:30pm		Economic Development Task Force 5:30pm	

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

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

Toy Town Trolley Now Running Later on Saturdays!

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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.

Winter Parking Ban is in Effect

No On-Street Parking Between 11:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m.

2026 Annual Town Meeting Warrant Open

The Annual Town Meeting Warrant is now open. The deadline for submitting warrant articles to the Town Manager’s office is Tuesday, April 21, 2026 at 12:00 noon. The Town Manager’s office is located on the 4th floor of Winchendon Town Hall, 109 Front Street. Annual Meeting will take place on Monday, May 18, at 7:00 p.m. in Murdock Middle High School, 3 Memorial Drive, Winchendon.

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

Report a Pothole to the DPW

You can report potholes directly to the DPW using this form on the town website:

www.townofwinchendon.com/FormCenter/Public-Works-6/Report-a-Pothole-50

Winchendon Lions Want to Welcome You!

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

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

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

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

“WHERE THERE’S A NEED, THERE IS A LION”

2026 Dog Licenses Available Now

2026 Dog licenses are now available at the Town Clerk’s office in person, or mail check with rabies certificate to Town Clerk, 109 Front St, Dept. 3, Winchendon, MA 01475. You can also put your application in the drop box outside of Town Hall or order online on the Town Clerk’s page of the town website. Cost for a Spayed/Neutered dog is \$10, Non-Spayed/Non-Neutered dog is \$20. Please provide valid rabies certificate.

Toy Town FYIs

Transfer Station Hours

Wednesday 12:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.
Thursday 8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.
Friday 8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.
Saturday 8:00 a.m. 4:00 p.m.
653 River Street
978-297-0395
Sticker price: \$85 (\$25 for additional stickers)
Pay-As-You-Throw bags required
33-gallon, \$5.00 per bag, 16-gallon, \$3.00 per bag as of July 1, 2025
2025-2026 Transfer Station sticker now on sale in Town Hall and at the Transfer Station.

Is Your House Number Clearly Visible from the Street?

The Winchendon Fire Department reminds all residents to make sure their house number is clearly visible for first responders who may need to find you. Numbers should be at least four inches high and facing the street, with lighting if possible. Put numbers on a contrasting background so they will stand out. If your driveway is long, put the number on a mailbox or pole on the street or at the end of driveway, facing in both directions. (Reflective numbers are helpful.) Check your house numbers to make sure foliage has not grown up in front of them without your being aware of it.

Winchendon Town Hall & Transfer Station Now Accepting Credit/Debit Payments

We are excited to announce that the DPW, Treasurer/Collector’s Office and the Transfer Station can all now accept in-person credit and debit card payments. This means next time you need to purchase or pay for:

- Trash bags
- Transfer station stickers
- Excise bills
- Tax bills
- Water & Sewer bills
- And more

You can pay with a credit or debit card! (subject to a convenience fee).

Winchendon News

Resident Presents Concerns About School Finances and Debt Exclusion Request to SC

by Inanna Arthen

At the School Committee Meeting on Thursday, March 12, resident Barbara Zisk came forward during the public comment period to offer some comments “on behalf of residents” along with herself. Ms. Zisk attended the public information session about the MSBA Accelerated Repair program on Wednesday night.

“I wanted to take this opportunity to address a few concerns with the School Committee regarding the proposed \$27 million debt exclusion,” she began. “Over the past few weeks, there have been disagreements, and I believe it is important to address them openly. When I share information with the public, I make every effort to ensure it is factual. Mistakes happen, of course, but disagreement should never lead to disrespect or demeaning behavior towards the voters of Winchendon. Our residents deserve better. It is important to remember that taxpayers fund approximately 55 to 60 percent of the entire school budget. Because of that, it is fair for residents to ask questions and expect transparency.

“Last night, I attended the informational meeting regarding the debt exclusion, and I left disappointed. Reasonable questions are asked: what cost savings are being considered? Is there any willingness to meet the taxpayers halfway? What assurances can be provided that this will be managed responsibly moving forward? “Unfortunately, the response I received was essentially that no plan would be presented before the vote. This is concerning. The voters of Winchendon have already stepped up. We recently passed an override that provided the schools with over \$600,000 above the state requirement, and the town approved \$500,000 to repair the boilers at the high school. Our residents have shown they are willing to support our schools, but support must go both ways.

“One possible option that deserves serious consideration is closing Toy Town Elementary and consolidating students into Memorial School and Murdock Middle High School. Based on the numbers presented, those schools would still remain under capacity by approximately 416 students. Consolidation could potentially free up \$1.5 to \$2 million in operational cost through reductions and administration, utilities, insurance and other expenses, allowing more resources to

go directly into teaching and learning. The Toy Town property could also revert back to the town and potentially return to the tax rolls.

“No one is arguing against safe schools for our students, that is something we all want. These are monetary issues and not about personal egos. It’s about today’s children, tomorrow’s children and the children of the future. However, voters cannot be expected to continually approve additional funding without also seeing meaningful efforts to control cost and work collaboratively with the taxpayers who fund these projects, so that the question remains simple: are you willing to meet the voters halfway and work towards solutions together? Because right now, residents are feeling frustrated and unheard. The people of Winchendon deserve transparency, accountability and a collaborative approach moving forward.”

The protocol for public comment periods is to have no dialogue between the Board or Committee and the members of the public, even to answer questions. In her report to the School Committee a few minutes later, however, Superintendent Charlotte King discussed some information around building capacity and space needs which related to points raised by Ms. Zisk.

“I’d like to move into something that the Committee has been asking for, an analysis of class sizes at the elementary schools, to speak to that talk about condensing and possibly looking at other options,” Supt. King began. “So we pulled some data on the current class sizes for Pre-K. Right now there’s a range, and I’ll explain that the classes range from six students in a class to 14 students. The guidelines in terms of Special Education for classes that are considered ‘substantially separate,’ which are classes that contain students with disabilities and do not contain students without disabilities, have to have a smaller ratio. So those class sizes are very typical for preschool.

“Our preschool classes, we have one substantially separate classroom, and then we have three classrooms that do a morning, half day and an afternoon, half day. And those classes can go up to 15 students. Right now they’re at 14. The reason that they’re at 14 and we still have a preschool waiting list is because we do have to hold spots for students that may come into the program

during the year that have disabilities, so we cannot fill up and turn down a student who may qualify for the program under Special Education.

“From [Kindergarten to grade 2], the class sizes range from 17 to 22. 17 is the lowest one that we have. The range is more in the 21 to 22 range. In grades three to five, they range from 20 to 24. The Middle School core classes, I didn’t analyze the electives, but I just looked at the main core classes. They ranged from 18 to 25.

“High School, which has the lowest enrollment, that’s where we’ve seen the drop off and the declining enrollment. They range quite a bit, from eight to 26 depending on the class. That’s a large range. We have been discussing that at the informational meetings regarding the MSBA project as well, because there are a certain number of electives that students need to take in order to graduate, and some of those electives are smaller, and then obviously some of the core classes end up being larger, so that is an area that we may want to look into as well.

“We gave tours to the Town Manager and our Board of Selectmen Chair last week so that they could see firsthand how the buildings are being utilized, what the spaces look like, and then look at space requirements for students in both general education and Special Education. Today, I was able to give tours to three members of the Finance Committee. They were also interested in what the spaces look like and how they were being utilized in the information sessions. I’ve also said that I will be available to do tours for anybody that’s interested in what our spaces look like. Obviously, we need to schedule ahead of time and make sure that the building principals are aware, but I’m very happy to do that.”

After this, Supt. King segued to a related topic, saying “I know there’s been some discussion around regionalization that’s also been discussed. I think our recommendation that I’d like to put out to the Committee is to consider forming an ad hoc committee that starts to have those discussions. It’s been brought up multiple times, and we’ve had a lot going on that we’ve been dealing with, but I think those initial discussions start with the forming of an ad hoc committee. So I think that’s something we should put on a future agenda.”

Winchendon Ag Comm Member Elected President of Montachusett Agricultural Alliance

At its Annual Meeting on Sunday, March 8, Montachusett Agricultural Alliance (MAA) elected Inanna Arthen, a current member of the Winchendon Agricultural Commission, to serve as its President for the coming year.

MAA was formerly known as Farmers Without Borders. Its purpose is to support and promote farmers, producers, growers and homesteaders in the 27 towns of North Central Massachusetts. MAA recognizes that “farming” and sustainable agriculture mean something different here in New England, and something different in North Central Massachusetts than in areas like the Pioneer Valley in Western MA. As MAA explains,

“We’re interested in agriculture in all of its forms--food, fiber, fats, flowers, and fuel--and how these working landscapes build and support communities.

“We believe quality land managers are the backbone of a viable working landscape that is good for the farmers and their communities. There must be both profit (to support the farmers) and systemic awareness (to support the region’s lands as part of a functioning ecosystem) for local farms to thrive.

“Our farms produce the vegetables, fruits, meats, eggs, milk, and cheeses that we all like to eat, but they also produce hay, honey, maple syrup, soap, flowers, wool, firewood, lumber, woodchips and more. In short--we have the world of agriculture in microcosm.

“New England is unique. We don’t have the acreage for the large farms of the midwest, but we have many smaller entrepreneurs, specialists and niche markets. This brings special challenges.”

Many local producers are intensively working on fewer than five acres,

specializing in products such as milk, honey, eggs, mushrooms or flowers. Nearly every homesteader, producer and farmer in our area diversifies what they do. There is a growing interest in what former MAA President Michael Pineo, a grower in Sterling, named “destination agriculture” where the public is invited to visit the farm and interact directly, with pick-your-own crops, events and activities.

An increasing number of local farmers are producing locally raised meat for sale, including poultry, beef, and pork.

MAA, as a 501c3 tax exempt non-profit organization, is looking at ways to help local farmers and homesteaders compensate for the “economy of scale” by participating in co-operative buying, group rates for trainings and classes, networked promotion, and mutual support.

Winchendon has at least 14 farms currently operational within its borders. Some of them vend only at farmers’ markets; some of them have their own farm stands on their property; one, Noonday Farm, is a non-profit; one focuses on horses and ponies. Thompson Berry Farm grows pick-your-own blueberries. Winchendon’s biggest farms are Smith’s Cheese, Murdock Farm and Sunset View Farm, but with some 42 square miles, Winchendon has room for far more.

To learn more about MAA, visit their website at <https://montachusettagriculturalalliance.com>. You can follow them on Facebook at www.facebook.com/MontachusettAgriculturalAlliance. If you’d like more information you can email montachusetttag@gmail.com. MAA meets on the second Sunday of each month and interested people are welcome to join a meeting.

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