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With Passionate Debate, Confusion and Reconsidered Votes, Annual Town Meeting Approves All Three MSBA School Repair Projects

28 Out of 29 Articles Approved in nearly 4-Hour Long Marathon

by Inanna Arthen

On Monday, May 18, 374 Winchendon voters checked in for Annual Town Meeting at the Murdock High School gymnasium to decide on 29 warrant articles. All articles except one passed. The issues being decided included the required Town Meeting votes on the three school repair projects which had all passed their ballot votes at the Town Election on May 4 by healthy majorities. Because the Town Meeting approval involved borrowing, these articles all needed to pass by a two-thirds majority for their projects to proceed.

The meeting ran for slightly more than three and half hours, and was marked by some confusion and frustration about the voting process. The wireless “clickers” were used for voting, as they have been in Winchendon for more than ten

years. This year, there was some difficulty getting the voting result software and the verbal prompts for voters to cast their votes to synchronize. This led to at least one vote being retaken with a different result, as well as a lot of conferring among the Town Moderator, Town Counsel and the town IT manager up front.

The audio system was set to a higher volume than some past meetings, which sometimes startled speakers. Two volunteers were ready to take cordless microphones to voters in chairs or the bleachers so that people wishing to comment didn’t all have to come down front and line up by a standing mic. A large screen in front displaying the text of the article before voters, the voting results, and anything else needed (such as presentations) was duplicated on large TV screens

at the sides and back of the gym. Live captioning was displayed on a screen to the side of the gym up front, but the screen was not elevated very far off the floor.

This year, for the first time, voting results were displayed as actual numbers instead of only in percentages.

Because voters were still checking in, Town Moderator Glenn LaRochelle called the meeting to order at 7:13 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was taken to the flag hanging from the ceiling directly overhead.

Article 1 was the annual report of the Finance Committee to Town Meeting on the financial state of the town. FinCom Chair Tom Kane began by going over the source of the town’s revenues: 90 percent comes from state aid and local real estate taxes. The increase in state aid is

less than 1 percent this year, and property tax revenue is limited to a 2.5 percent increase by Proposition 2-1/2. On the expenses side, Mr. Kane said, “Fixed costs are the costs that the town pays for services by outside vendors. Health insurance, retirement contributions, school transportation are the three largest line items that we have in the budget. The increases of these three fixed costs alone is equal to the increase of the state aid and real estate tax combined. Other costs that are fixed include Monty Tech tuitions, school choice tuitions, property liability insurance increases, tax increases. Altogether, fixed costs make up about 30 percent of the overall budget. Ten years ago they made up less than 25 percent of the budget.” Mr. Kane said that this

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Held at the Winchendon Community Park at 86 Ingleside Drive, in collaboration with Winchendon Parks & Recreation, the first Sunset Social for 2026 will take place on Saturday, June 13 from 6:00 to 10:00 p.m.

TOWN MEETING
continued from page 1

year the town was using \$634,994 in Free Cash to balance the budget, and the FinCom supported that, “however, it’s not sustainable.” They urged the Town Manager and boards “to initiate discussions on strategies to increase revenue and/or reduce expenses early in the FY 28 budget season.”

Following the report, voters approved accepting the report, 259 in favor and 38 opposed.

Voters approved Article 2, creating a Revolving Fund for the Economic Development Task Force, 271 in favor and 80 opposed; Article 3, authorizing the spending limits for all the various revolving accounts, 245 in favor and 101 opposed; and Article 4, funding the Senior Tax Workoff program for \$11,000, 311 in favor, 43 opposed.

Article 5, \$27,500 in support for the Winchendon Community Action Committee (CAC), an independent non-profit organization, which now includes The HUB community center and bowling alley, was approved with 243 in favor and 33 opposed after some discussion. A voter rose to ask if the amount was the same as last year (yes), and CAC Director Miranda Jennings came forward with a quick summary of some of the many programs and benefits the CAC offers to the town, many of them free of charge.

Article 6 was the town’s FY 2027 budget. The first voter to come forward to comment was Yvonne Senecal, who said, “I move to amend Article 6 by reducing the total appropriation for the general government operating budget of the town for Fiscal Year beginning July 1, 2026 by \$1,400,000 from \$20,770,350 to \$19,370,350 with the intent that this reduction not be applied to the Senior Center or the Beals Memorial Library, thereby protecting the combined funding of \$290,600.” The motion was immediately seconded by voters.

Moderator LaRochelle said, “I’d like to ask for a clarification on which items you would like to cut.” Ms. Senecal responded, “It is not my intention to take the place of any of the town governments that make the decisions on knowing where this money comes from. My goal is to reduce 6.7 percent of the total that’s assessed by the town on our property values and personal property tax. So I would leave it to the Town Manager and to the fiscal departments to decide where the cost would best be made.”

After some conferring, Town Counsel Timothy Zessin said, “In my opinion, only Town

Meeting has the authority to appropriate funds for specific items in the budget. Each item listed on the warrant is a separate appropriation, so in order for the motion to be proper, it has to specify which line items are being proposed to be cut, otherwise the vote is improper in my opinion.”

Board of Selectmen member Audrey LaBrie said that when she first saw the discussion on social media, months ago, about a grassroots movement to pass a \$1.4 million Prop. 2-1/2 override, she had posted asking them “to tell us specifically what they want, what would be cut. When we asked for the override, we provided very specific information about where the money would go, what it would be spent on, what departments would be impacted if it did not pass, and I asked that they present that same information to the voters here at Town Meeting, so they can make an intelligent, knowledgeable discussion and vote as to where this money would come from. There was never any response to my request for that information.”

Voter James Early rose to ask what happened to the payments the town was supposed to be getting per truckload from the W.L. French landfill capping project. Town Manager Bill McKinney said that the payments have been coming in and go into the General Fund (i.e. Free Cash). Voter Rick Lucier came forward to say that voters should have a detailed line item budget like the one made available earlier in the year rather than the department summary budget in the warrant which doesn’t show specific things like salaries that have large changes. Mr. McKinney explained that salary numbers can be deceptive—some of this year’s salaries show two years of contracted increases because the increases were deferred by last year’s override, for example. New hires and changes in a position’s scope can affect the amount, also. The Department of Public Works now has an engineering intern.

Board of Selectmen member Erika Eitland said that the town budget before voters is “a bare bones budget” and asking every department to make more cuts will be difficult. Many expenses are fixed and can’t be cut, leaving a few to take much bigger hits. School Committee member Karen Kast said that all the departments have already made cuts—the police department cut about 10 percent. Voter Rick Ward came forward to ask whether, if the amendment now said to cut 6.7 percent from all departments, did that include the Senior Center and library?

A vote was called on the amendment, and the amendment failed with 61 in favor, 156 opposed.

The Moderator then went through the budget department by department, with voters calling “Hold” for departments they wanted to debate. Most departments got a “Hold.” A voter then rose to ask if voters had actually asked to go through the budget line-by-line, saying they should just vote on the budget. Another voter said some of the departments had big increases and should be looked at. Ms. LaBrie said that the budget process lasts for months and includes multiple meetings and hearings, with documents posted on the town website. “I would hope that the questions you have are specific and pointed, and please don’t ask questions that we’ve answered already three or four or five times during our meetings and our public hearings,” she said.

Voter Peter Greenan rose to say he was “formally requesting that we vote line by line” and asked for a second (although he had not made a motion). Moderator LaRochelle said there was already a motion on the floor, the main motion for the budget, and he was calling the vote on it. Article 6 passed with 133 in favor, 69 opposed, and Moderator LaRochelle called for a motion on Article 7.

There was an outcry, with demands to re-do the vote on Article 6 because people didn’t understand the call to vote. A vote was taken on

whether or not to repeat the main vote, which was approved, 196 in favor, 54 opposed. The vote was taken again, and by the second vote, Article 6 passed with 240 in favor, 120 opposed.

Article 7, the Water Department Enterprise Fund, evoked several minutes of discussion, with questions about letters sent out advising ratepayers of possible lead in their pipes, and questions about the 23 percent increase in water rates. Questions were asked about how the water billing was done, and a voter asked if the 23 percent could be spread out over several years and not be a single large increase all at once. After 13 minutes, a voter called the question, and Article 7 passed with 211 in favor, 103 opposed.

Article 8, the Wastewater Enterprise Fund, passed with 225 in favor, 109 opposed. Article 9, the Transfer Station Enterprise Budget, passed with 255 in favor, 109 opposed. Article 10, the PEG Media Enterprise Fund, passed with 174 in favor, 76 opposed. There was minimal discussion about these three articles, although a voter predicted that businesses using town water and sewer would have to raise prices, and voter Tina Santos said, “I find it funny that if you’re not a water user, sewer user, or transfer station user, the town has to vote for this as a whole, but us little users get stuck with the price or increases.”

Article 11, the School Department FY 2027 budget, passed without any discussion at all, 226 in favor, 121 opposed.

Article 12, the town’s assessment for Montachusett Regional Vocational Technical School, \$646,000, evoked a question from Ms. LaBrie about whether Winchendon’s allotted number of spots in the school was changing. Monty Tech superintendent Tom Brown was present and asked permission to speak, as he is not a Winchendon resident. He explained how the towns are allotted seats, and that basically Winchendon’s quota is not changing. Article 12 passed with 287 in favor, 69 opposed.

Article 13, borrowing \$500,000 to order a new ambulance, passed with 259 in favor, 91 opposed. It required a two-thirds vote. Fire Chief Tom Smith responded to a question by saying that the older ambulance will be kept “as a mechanical spare” to help minimize lost service time.

Article 14, using \$100,000 in Wastewater Enterprise Funds Retained Earnings (i.e. surplus) to pay for a feasibility study on extending the sewer line to the old Glenallen Mills property on Glenallen Street, evoked numerous questions. Members of the FinCom and Capital Planning Committee explained that they didn’t recommend the article because they hadn’t gotten enough information about it in time to make an informed judgment. Board of Selectmen Chair Andrew Beauvais said that things with the property owner had moved forward quickly. The article passed with 232 in favor, 116 opposed.

Article 15, using unspent funds for current projects, passed with 250 in favor, 68 opposed. Article 16, authorizing the Police Department to spend state 911 Grant funds for a new cruiser and HVAC upgrades at the police station, passed with 292 in favor, 46 opposed.

With Town Meeting having run for nearly two hours, the first of the MSBA Accelerated School Repair articles came to the floor. Article 17 asked voters to approve repairs to Murdock Middle High School. Michael Ulichney, the Project Manager assigned by the MSBA, and project architect Jason Knutson from CGKV Architects came forward to give a presentation on all three projects, something they have done at least three times over the past couple of months. After the 15-minute presentation, voters rose with a number of questions and comments, about the repairs and the amount of debt the town would be taking on. Ms. Eitland said, “I

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Winchendon News

Beals Summer Reading Club Kicks Off Eight Weeks of Reading This June with Aims to Break Last Year's Record

by Inanna Arthen

The Beals Memorial Library will launch the 2026 Summer Reading Club on Thursday, June 18 with a Summer Reading Club Kick Off Party featuring the Toe Jam Puppet Band, beginning eight straight weeks of reading and special events that everyone of every age can participate in. The program itself officially runs from June 22 through August 14. The Summer Reading Club has one goal: to get everyone reading more and enjoying it. All kinds of reading count—fiction, non-fiction, memoirs, epic novels, flash-fiction, ebooks, audiobooks, picture books, graphic novels, comics, media tie-ins, romance, sci-fi, magazines, newspapers, Substack posts...if it has written words and you read it (or listen to it read to you by someone), it counts! Participants only log the number of hours they spend on reading, not what they've read. Readers who make their goals are eligible for prizes (and bragging rights). And it's all absolutely FREE and open to the whole community.

This year's Summer Reading Club theme is "Plant a Seed, Read." There will be numerous special events related to this theme, including presentations on land conservation, farming, plant science and beekeeping.

The *Courier* sat down with Beals Memorial Library Assistant Director Alexis Chanthachack and Library Director Manuel King to learn more.

The Summer Reading Club has been an annual event for more than 30 years, Ms. Chanthachack said, "there's been record of it happening as far back as the 50s and the 60s, but we've been doing it for 10 years." Every year there is a new theme, she said. "So, this year's theme is 'Plant a Seed, Read.' So, it has everything to do with gardening, farming, homesteading, even food, because you eat what you cook, you eat what you grow."

Some events require registration because space is limited, but all of them are completely free and open to everyone in the community. Ms. Chanthachack said, "How it works for the whole thing, is that we have registration for the Reading Club program that actually starts on June 16, so

about a week before the actual start date. You can come in to get a program of the events, you can register online or in person, you can register anytime from June 16 until August 14, and you'll receive your reading log, depending on your age group. So, kids, teens, and adults all have different reading logs, and you can read whatever you want. All reading counts." The reading log is for recording the number of hours spent reading.

Reading doesn't have to be a solitary activity. "If you're going to have parents read to the kids, that counts for both of them, so it doesn't just count for the kids, it counts for the adults," Ms. Chanthachack said. "If a child reads to their pet, or if a family is listening to an audio book together, everybody gets credit for that. We don't want to know what you're reading, we trust everybody, we just want everyone to read. Once you fill out your reading log, there are certain milestones that you hit, and you can come in and get a prize. So each age group has prizes designated to that age, and actually this year our B Tab, our Teen Advisory Board, they're actually picking all the teen prizes this year, so it's teen picked, and then we consult with some of the teachers at Memorial School and Kristen from the CFCE to pick the kid prizes, so we know what the kids want, and then for the adult prizes we partner with the [Friends of the Library]. This year they're doing raffle baskets instead of gift cards."

Even after readers hit their goal and get a prize, Ms. Chanthachack said, they are encouraged to keep on going. "Last year we started a running total of how much Winchendon can read, so last year we read over 10,000 hours in eight weeks, and we're trying to beat that number. Each top reader for each age group—preschool, elementary, teens, and adults—we have a scoreboard that we keep up with, and each of the top readers will also win a prize at the end of the summer. It's a friendly competition to see who can read the most, and as a group effort to see how much Winchendon can read in an eight week program." Last year two of the fiercest competitors were a pair of preschoolers who came in every week with their reading logs. One of them managed to edge out the other by just a couple of hours, Ms. Chanthachack said. The library staff competed against the library Trustees last year, and the staff won by a large margin. This year the staff is competing against a joint team of both the Trustees and the Friends of the Library.

The Kick Off Party on June 18 will be outdoors, and will include an activity of decorating rocks for an outdoor rock garden. At 2:30 p.m. the Toe Jam Puppet Band will come in. "They are fun, they are a riot," Ms. Chanthachack said. "All the kids end up getting up and starting to dance. Last time they were here, they actually got Manuel to get on stage and sing a song."

Other events through the summer include making real butter, and learning about the science



Beals Assistant Library Director Alexis Chanthachack (with Hardcover the Dragon) and Director Manuel King ready to announce the 2026 Summer Reading Club.

Photo by Inanna Arthen

behind that. There will be a Produce Paint Party using natural pigments found in food to paint bookmarks. Animal Craze Petting Zoo will visit on July 9. Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust will come to talk about properties in Winchendon that have been conserved and how they benefit the town. Local farmers and food producers will give a panel about what they do and the benefits of eating locally produced food. There will be a presentation about "Victory Gardens" and what they meant during both World Wars. Tweens and teens can learn "dorm room cooking"—how to make tasty food with nothing but, say, a microwave and a coffee mug. There will also be "an international snack taste test" session (are Smarties really better than M&Ms?). Melissa the Mad Scientist will demonstrate some plant science experiments, astronomer Jim Zebrowski will talk about how plants grow in space and how that might help people on Earth, and there will be a presentation on beekeeping.

Along with all this, the Theatre Squad will return for a five-day theatre "camp" July 13-17, in which students will create their own play and perform it for an audience on the final day. The CFCE Storywalk will meet every Tuesday with books on the Summer Reading Club theme (participants can count these for their reading hours).

A full schedule of events, along with everything you need to know, will be available at the library in a four-page brochure.

Memorial and Toy Town elementary schools will be collaborating with the library, Ms. Chanthachack said, and students who participate in the Summer Reading Club will get school credit, with a special shout-out and a prize when school starts in the fall. Some of the teachers may come to the library during the summer to do storytimes.

The Summer Reading Club is being run by Beals Memorial Library in partnership with The Friends of the Beals Library, the Winchendon CFCE, the Winchendon Cultural Council and the Winchendon Public Schools. Events will be held at the Beals, 50 Pleasant Street, Winchendon. For more information, see the webpage at www.bealslibrary.org/summer, email bealsmemoriallibrary@gmail.com, call 978-297-0300, or visit the library in person (any time!). You can follow the library on Facebook at facebook.com/BealsLibrary and on Instagram at [@bealslibrary](https://instagram.com/bealslibrary).

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Winchendon News

TOWN MEETING
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think it’s an important point that you’re making about debt, and I think one thing that’s really important, though, is that when we think about projects in town, we can either be proactive or we can be reactive, and I find that this is an opportunity where we have the data, that the studies have been done, and we know that if we invest now, we could be saving literally \$20 million in the future, because MSBA is giving us that money. Also to just be mindful of, is that MSBA can give up to 80 percent of a project. We are getting 77.53 percent. That is unheard of across the state. Like, we have won the lottery when it comes to a school building.”

There were questions about regionalization, and whether we would not be able to sell or repurpose a building for ten years if we repaired it now as a school. School Committee Chair Michael Barbaro said that the buildings just had to be used in some way for education, and reminded voters that the town had traded the old Marvin School with The Winchendon School for the Community Park. Mr. Ulichney explained that no one of the buildings was in any worse shape than the rest, that costs would be overseen strictly by the MSBA, and that the materials used were under a cost limit (meaning that slate roofs for the schools, for example, were not on the table). The project expenses will be audited every month. After almost 40 minutes of presentation and discussion, the motion was officially read. Article 17 passed by two-thirds with 211 in favor, 93 opposed.

Article 18, to repair Memorial Elementary, passed by two-thirds with 229 in favor and 106 opposed. However, Article 19, to repair Toy Town Elementary, received a vote of 207 in favor, 113 opposed—a very healthy majority, but technically short of two-thirds, and 15 fewer total votes than were cast for Article 18.

Moderator LaRochele started to move on to Article 20, but Ms. Jennings came forward to urgently plea for the vote on Article 19 to be retaken. “I am a mother of two children in this district, and a proud employee of this town, and a very proud citizen of this town. And we pride ourselves in working together, we are shooting ourselves in the foot if we don’t vote on this tonight, and pay an extra \$14 on average a month. Would people pay that for our children? This is for our children. All of us, at one point, were children.

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I hope we had adults that looked out for us just as we are going to look out for our children. If we don’t do this tonight, we are going to pay four or five times the amount, our children are going to have to pay four or five times

the amount for their education. We are constantly talking about improving education in this town, and this is one of the best ways to do it, including regionalization, if we want to do that, because nobody’s going to regionalize with a district that doesn’t invest in their school buildings. So, I would strongly encourage you to reconsider that amount, because I know it’s a lot, and trust me, I work every day with people who are on very tight budgets. We will work together and find a way to help you if you cannot afford that. We have the resources in this town to help each other.”

This led to a fervent discussion about repairing Toy Town, investing in the town, avoiding empty buildings and the legality of calling a new vote. It was pointed out that this Town Meeting had already called to repeat a vote. Moderator LaRochele called a vote to reconsider the motion, and it was approved with 209 in favor, 97 opposed. The vote on Article 19 was called again, and this time it received the required two-thirds, with 214 in favor, 92 opposed.

Article 20, to transfer \$200,000 into the Stabilization Fund, passed with 176 in favor and 41 opposed. Article 21, to transfer \$100,000 into the OPEB Trust Fund, passed with 173 in favor and 42 opposed. Article 22, to transfer \$50,000 into the Separation Benefits account, passed with 174 in favor, 39 opposed. Article 23, to fund \$400,000 of the Snow and Ice account overages for FY26, passed with 169 in favor, 33 opposed. Article 24, to approve \$160,000, which will be reimbursed by the MSBA now that the school projects have been approved, for the project designs, was passed with 171 in favor and 35 opposed. Article 25, to clear a FEMA deficit in the amount of \$50,000 before the state just takes it next year, passed with 176 in favor and 36 opposed.

The smooth flow toward adjournment hit a roadblock with Article 26, which asked voters to approve returning \$568,705 in inadvertently overlooked and unused Circuit Breaker reimbursement money from the state for Special Education to the schools from the town’s General Fund (i.e. Free Cash, where unused and overlooked money goes by default). This article evoked more passionate debate. The amount was just about all that was left in Free Cash after all the preceding articles that had passed, so returning it to the school district would zero out Free Cash. Primarily because of this, the FinCom and Board of Selectmen had voted not to recommend the article, as did the Chair of the School Committee. Several voters rose to defend the article, saying it was the schools’ money to begin with. Others rose to say the town needed to keep funds in Free Cash. The vote was called, and Article 26 failed, with 57 in favor, 150 opposed. It was the only article that did not pass.

The next two articles were both passed over. Article 27, to authorize the Board of Selectmen to negotiate on acquiring land for the Blair Square redesign, was deemed not ready for a vote, Mr. Beauvais said. Article 28, the Citizens’ Petition to ask if voters were in favor of a \$1.4 million override, was passed over by motion of its sponsors.

The final article, Article 29, was a Citizens’ Petition that simply asked the Board of Selectmen to “take property based action” on certain (rather vague) violations found with properties in town. The sponsor said he had a 13-slide presentation to show, but given the late hour, he wouldn’t ask for that. The discussion turned into a shouting match across the entire width of the gymnasium between the sponsor and a voter who identified himself as a rental property owner. The actual basis of the article remained unclear, but all it really asked was that the boards enforce the laws already on the books. Voters approved it with 110 in favor and 71 opposed.

Moderator LaRochele called for a motion to adjourn at about 10:53 p.m. The entire video of Town Meeting may be viewed on WinchendonTV at <https://winchendon.cablecast.tv/internetchannel/show/389?site=1>

Town of Winchendon, Parks & Recreation Launch Printed Newsletters

by Inanna Arthen

There are two new newsletters available to Winchendon residents—both of them full color, 8-1/2 x 11 inch multi-page ‘zines that are issued on a monthly basis.

The Winchendon Parks & Rec Event Newsletter, issue #01, April 2026, has made its quiet debut in various public places in town, including the Town Hall auditorium. It includes a full schedule of 2026 events, lists of sponsors, contact information and a “Visionary Sponsor Spotlight.”

The Town of Winchendon has launched the Town of Winchendon Department Updates newsletter, with a very similar format. It may be read electronically on the Town of Winchendon Facebook page as well as being available in Town Hall. This newsletter summarizes news, projects and updates from each of the town departments on a monthly basis, along with “Kudos” call-outs and employee anniversaries. It is being produced for the town by Beals Memorial Library Assistant Director Alexis Chanthachack.

These newcomers join the printed Winchendon Senior Center at Old Murdock newsletter which has the same format, is 8 pages long and is available to read electronically, as well. The Senior Center newsletter has been produced for a number of months.

As so-called “social media” becomes increasingly useless as a means of communication or promotion, it’s interesting to see paper newsletters coming back into style!

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Winchendon News

DPW Brings Proposal for Replacing Sewer Main from Hyde Park to River Street to BOS



from left, Tighe & Bond team member Elizabeth Olson, DPW Director Patrick Wood, Tighe & Bond Project Manager Cassandra LaRochelle, Tighe & Bond team member Jess DeJesus at the April 27 BOS meeting

Photo copyright Town of Winchendon

by Inanna Arthen

At their meeting on Monday, April 27, the Board of Selectmen heard a presentation by Department of Public Works Director Patrick Wood and team members from the engineering firm Tighe & Bond about serious issues with the cross-country sewer line running from the area of Hyde Park Drive toward the treatment plant on River Street, and proposals for correcting the problems. The discussion continued at the BOS meeting on May 11.

At the April 27 meeting, Mr. Wood began by explaining that Tighe & Bond had begun a study of the town's sewer system about two years ago. "The study started out with a really comprehensive infiltration and inflow study for our sewer. What that basically means is that we have groundwater coming into our sewer, usually through loose joints, holes, catch basins, we should say, sewer manholes, and it takes up the sewer capacity. That's one negative, but the other negative is that we're actually paying for this, for treating groundwater. So it has a monetary cost and physical cost to it...this was identified as one of the major contributors, talking about the Hyde Park-River Street cross country sewer system, and we've asked Tighe & Bond to come up with some possible alternatives to how we could eliminate that."

Tighe & Bond Project Manager Cassandra LaRochelle and Tighe & Bond team members Elizabeth Olson and Jess DeJesus joined Mr. Wood to give the presentation.

Ms. LaRochelle stated that the current phase of the project will be funded through a Rural Development Fund grant through the state.

However, there are potential cost impacts to sewer system users.

Ms. LaRochelle explained that besides wastewater from homes, other inflow gets into the pipes through cracks or joint defects in the pipes, or from heavy rainfall into catch basins. This extra inflow ends up getting treated at the plant. "So there's about 3,000 feet of 6 to 10 inch asbestos and clay sewer mains that travel cross country from the Hyde Park area down to Front Street and then down steep slopes to River Street, where there's the interceptor that actually takes all of the town's flows to the treatment plant. The northern part of the area of that cross country is largely wetlands. It's pretty swampy up there. And as I mentioned, there's very steep slopes on the southern end where it goes from Front to River. And throughout the whole alignment there, the sewer pipes go through the woods and on some portions on private property," she explained. This is the problem area being looked at. She showed some actual photos of the inside of the pipes with water spurting into the pipe through cracks, or roots that had grown into the pipe. "We saw almost 35,000 gallons per day of infiltration, and that's only what we were able to inspect," she said.

Mr. Wood said, "Historically, we've been responding to this area for sewer backups. And just the terrain makes it difficult to fix anything, not to mention that there are wetlands, so anything that we would want to do to get in there would require some permitting, even if it was just temporary. The CCTV information that we were able to gather a few years ago was incomplete because the slopes of those pipes are just too steep, and there's so many structures in between, it's kind of an unknown as well. So eliminating this really would help the amount of calls that we would get for the sewer backups, not just environmentally, but also for our workforce as well. So it's been challenging over the years just this section alone." Ms. DeJesus explained that the project has multiple phases; this is the study phase and then there will be a series of design phases if the town proceeds with the project.

Ms. Olson then began introducing the five alternative solutions. The second least expensive would be replacing the existing asbestos pipe with new, 12-inch PVC pipe, along with replacing manhole covers. This would have a 75-year design life and reduce the infiltration. It would require digging through wetlands, clearing vegetation, construction noise for residents, and a temporary bypass while the new pipe is put in.

The second alternative is putting a liner into the existing pipe, which is sealed in with epoxy resin. It doesn't require digging and is faster to install. It has less impacts to wetlands. The disadvantage is that some pipes may not be in a condition where lining them will work so in those places it might be necessary to dig down for spot repairs. It also doesn't address sewer capacity, and residents who are experiencing frequent

sewer backups might still have a persistent problem with those. The issues around the line being difficult to access and maintain will remain.

Ms. DeJesus went on with options three through five. "Alternatives three and four would involve abandoning the cross country sewer and transporting the wastewater from the property served by that sewer via different means," she said. "So these two alternatives are about how to handle that wastewater without the cross country sewer. So alternative three involves abandoning that sewer, capping it on both sides, not using it anymore, and transporting that wastewater through two pump stations with force mains. So we've been calling these the Front Street pump station and the Hyde Park pump station based on their location." Some properties with direct connections to the abandoned line will need to have new connections to other points. Some of the lines could rely on a gravity flow, since they're going downhill. The pumps would operate with electricity so there would be a power cost to the system.

The advantages of option three are reliable service and a system that is easily accessible for maintenance. It also addresses the capacity limitation and allows for the system to expand, without requiring a bypass, and it impacts wetlands far less. It would eliminate the sewer backup problems. The disadvantages are largely in the installation and construction, plus it's the second most costly alternative.

The fourth and most expensive alternative also has considerable impact on residents. Ms. DeJesus explained, "This would involve abandoning the cross country sewer in place and redirecting that flow via low pressure sewers instead of via gravity. So this would involve small diameter pipes installed along the roads and grinder pumps installed at each home and business that is serviced by this area...your lateral would come out and be going to the gravity sewer. So this would redirect that flow into this small sump that contains a grinder pump. As the level would increase, that would trigger the pump to turn on that then macerates the wastewater and sends it out that discharge pipe that is a small diameter, low pressure pipe. So all of the pumps within the system operating are what's pushing the wastewater along, basically small force mains to send the flow upstream. You can see this also involves a level of electrical work within the property, there's a control panel that would need to be installed." Alternative four doesn't have any advantages over alternative three. It's often used where gravity sewers won't work. It's expensive, and it means residents have a big new piece of equipment to operate and maintain.

Alternative five is simply to do nothing at all.

After some more discussion of the pros and cons of alternatives one, two and three, Ms. LaRochelle explained how the project would

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Winchendon News

SEWER
continued from page 5

proceed if the town chose one of the options. They would be looking at a variety of possible funding sources, including the state Clean Water Fund, the EPA and Mass Works. The lifespan of alternative three, with the pump stations, would be 30 to 50 years, possibly longer, Ms. DeJesus said.

The Board decided to consider the information and return to the topic at their meeting on Monday, May 11. At the BOS meeting on Monday, May 11, Mr. Wood came before the board to discuss the options. Mr. Wood said, "I think what we really wanted to stress was that option number three was our preferred alternative, which would include two new sewer pump stations, one was going to be on River Street" and the other at Front Street and Hyde Park. He went on, "What we would like to do is to have Tighe & Bond continue their design efforts up through 50 percent design which is being covered under a grant, and that will get us to the point where we have a pretty solid understanding of what the existing conditions are and what is feasible. Assuming that this option is going to be feasible, we'll also have a really good opinion of probable cost that we can take and start looking at what other grants and funding is available, and when we could actually get this slated for construction somewhere down the line."

Board Chair Andrew Beauvais had some questions about the types of grants that could be applied for going forward, and whether there might be conflicts with the Glenallen Street sewer extension that is being considered. Mr. Beauvais also asked how the estimated cost of \$4.6 million for option three was arrived at so early in the process. Ms. DeJesus, who was joining the meeting remotely, explained that they were making a conservative estimate (that means overestimating to allow for the worser case scenarios in terms

of what might be encountered in construction) based on what they knew so far and what could be under the surface (a lot of ledge, for example).

Board member Melissa Blanchard brought up the veterans' housing which will be tying into the system in that area, and whether there will be enough capacity. Mr. Wood said that capacity will be considered in this design phase.

The Board was basically in agreement that options one, four and five (replacing the pipe, requiring individual pumps at every user's location and doing nothing) were off the table, leaving two and three (line the existing pipe or abandon it and put in pump stations). There was discussion about getting public input and holding a public hearing, with Tighe & Bond present to answer technical questions. Board member Erika Eitland argued that it was important to get the process moving as soon as possible, since they were dropping option four that involved a direct cost to each user.

The Board voted "to approve alternative three to move forward to the 50 percent completion of construction documents by Tighe & Bond and overseen by Department of Public Works."

For those who would like to review all the details of the project, the presentations and other documents are on the DPW's web page at www.townofwinchendon.com/616/Hyde-Park-to-River-Street-Cross-Country-.

The presentation and discussion at the April 27 Board meeting may be viewed on WinchendonTV at winchendon.cablecast.tv/internetchannel/show/378?site=1. The discussion starts at 0:19:48 in the video.

The discussion at the May 11 Board meeting may be viewed on WinchendonTV at winchendon.cablecast.tv/internetchannel/show/386?site=1. The discussion starts at 1:17:00 in the video.

Town-Wide Cleanup a "Mountain" of Success



Volunteers Jordyn Lynds and Tina Duran brought in a truckload from a 3/4 mile stretch of Baldwinville Road
Photo courtesy of Yvonne Senecal



BOH members Monique Connor, Barbara Zisk, Yvonne Senecal and Field Agent James Abarre spearheaded the event
Photo courtesy of Yvonne Senecal



The town dumpster on its way to full capacity
Photo courtesy of Yvonne Senecal

by Jill Nicholson Sackett

Dampness did not deter our volunteer residents as Winchendon held its town-wide trash cleanup on Saturday, May 2. The annual event was sponsored and run by Winchendon's Board of Health (BOH). BOH Chair Yvonne Senecal with other BOH members staffed the event.

Participants reported to "base operations" at Town Hall's Pleasant Street entrance, where they signed in and indicated the area(s) they planned to clean. BOH staff offered everyone gloves, heavy-duty garbage bags, trash "picker" tools, orange vests and hearty thanks. Doughnuts, hot coffee and water were also on hand to fuel the work. About 40 people signed up to help, including two students from Murdock Public Schools performing community service hours.

This year the collection hours were extended

to 8:00 a.m.- 2:00 p.m. which helped volunteers maneuver around periods of wet weather. As in past years, the yields were...impressive. Several volunteers reported covering less distance due to the sheer amount of trash. There was the usual proliferation of tires, fast food packaging, beverage containers and countless nips. More unusual items included a fishing pole, scrap metal, a boogie board, and broken toys. The oddest item turned in was the carcass of an old snowmobile that the Monomac Spring Lake Association found rotting on the shoreline of the lake. The day ended with a full dumpster.

BOH Chair Yvonne Senecal gratefully remarked, "We take great pride in our town and the success of this event shows the depth of community involvement. [We] commend those that participated and really got their hands dirty."

The BOH hopes to schedule another such clean-up before Winchendon's Fall Festival and will try to include electronic recycling.

Of course, keeping our neighborhoods clean is not a once-yearly endeavor. We all can do our part throughout the year. One only need check out the intersection of Central and Maple Streets to see that something as small as a cigarette butt quickly adds up. The Winchendon Transfer Station accepts many bulky items. Residents without an annual sticker can "pay as you go" to visit and dispose items such as mattresses, scrap metal, appliances, paint, batteries, tires and more. For more information about the Winchendon Transfer Station, hours and fees, visit: <https://www.townofwinchendon.com/264/Transfer-Station> and click on the "Recycle Guide."

Veterans Quilt Project Seeking Donations of Quilting Fabric

The Winchendon Council on Aging, in partnership with Hugs of Love New England and the Winchendon American Legion Auxiliary has launched the Veterans Quilt Project, to honor our veterans with handmade quilts. They are seeking donations of 100% cotton quilting fabric. Donations will go directly toward creating quilts for veterans in our community.

Donations of fabric can be dropped off at the Winchendon Senior Center, 52 Murdock Ave, Monday through Thursday from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.



Photo by Inanna Arthen

Edward Jones Holds Grand Re-Opening in Remodeled Space

Jordyn Lynds and Cailte Kelley of Edward Jones in Winchendon held their Ribbon Cutting & Grand Re-Opening on Friday, May 8 at their newly remodeled office space at 113 Central Street. The office was packed with well-wishers who shared snacks, enjoyed complimentary ice cream from the Lickity Splitz ice cream truck, and signed the frames of Jordyn's and Cailte's certificates. The new space had been occupied by Gracie's Thrift Store and prior to that, was a bank—getting the bank vault out took some serious effort! In the photo, Jordyn Lynds wields the giant scissors while Cailte Kelley stands next to her, on the right.

Winchendon News

DPW Director Updates BOS on Mabardy Landfill and Ongoing Projects

by Inanna Arthen

At the Board of Selectmen’s meeting on Monday, April 27, Department of Public Works Director Patrick Wood gave the Board a number of updates about various projects around the town, some of which residents had recently been asking about.

“Activities at the Mabardy landfill have picked up again,” Mr. Wood said, beginning with a topic that several residents had expressed concern about. “You’ll remember that last year, I would say September-ish was when they stopped having full time trucks coming in to bring the COMM-97 materials in. It petered out until probably mid-October, and they shut down for the winter. It’s good timing, because winter came in kind of early anyway, and then just recently, within the last couple weeks, they started up operations. I was out there about two weeks ago and took a look at the site to see what it looked like after all the snow was melted. Typical erosion control issues. They’re already on top of it. They’re installing new silt fence all around the perimeter next week, I think it is.

“I’ve asked [W.L. French] for an updated schedule, and I can just kind of read off of what I’ve gotten from an email and paraphrase it a little bit, they are expecting another 10,000 tons of COMM-97 to be imported, and that’s going to be used to get their final grades for the landfill. The exact quantity is unknown, and they won’t know that until they’re able to – they’re going to have to dig an anchor trench that ties the capping system into the existing grades, so it won’t change too much, but they don’t have an exact number because of that yet. He does expect that the trucking to be a little bit more sporadic than it was last year, and definitely lower in traffic volume than in previous years.”

W.L. French also will be importing around 200 tons of clean sand as part of the capping system, they told Mr. Wood. “Recently, there was a permit modification request to DEP. The modification addressed some technical specifications to the sand drainage layer under the cap and the final coverage systems that’s going to be installed, and also to mitigate the ponding that was near the Allens’ property that we saw in previous years. Once that permit modification is approved – and it’s with DEP, they’ve reviewed it and they’ve issued some technical questions back together, and they’ll be working on that – they can begin installing the cap, and their goal is to get the cap installed and finished this fall.”

Mr. Wood went on to discuss road paving for this year. “We’re going to be doing reclamation and paving on Independence Drive and Welch Road. That should be coming up in mid-May, and then later on, the fall of this year, we’ll be paving Baldwinville Road from Hale Street to Town Farm Road reclaimed and paved as well. Later the same fall, we’d like to have them come back and do a mill and fill on Central Street, where we already have those trenches dug for the water main. And then next year, in the fall of 2027, we’ll be looking at Baldwinville Road from Town Farm Road to Mill Glen and Alger Road from Route 2 to Hitchcock.”

Addressing the question of how the department chooses which roads to pave, Mr. Wood said, “There’s a lot of factors that go into it. Road condition, obviously, is the primary driver. We assess the road conditions. We look for cracking, potholes, base failure, drainage issues, and just the overall ride quality of the road. Roads that are deteriorating to a point where maintenance is no longer cost effective, it jumps to the top of the list, but that’s so many roads in town, obviously we can’t have everything just jump to the top of the list. So the other things that we have to look at is some preventative maintenance. Those that haven’t reached that point where they just totally gone, what you can do is you save a lot of money in the future by doing preventative maintenance now. So for instance, Central Street, where I just mentioned doing mill and fill, that road is not horrible, but there’s been so much trenching, so much patchwork that in five years, that road may have to be reclaimed, and it will cost us as much money to reclaim that than it will if we just do a mill and fill this year.

“So spending the money up front on a major road like that and increasing the comfortability of the drive is well worth it. There’s also traffic and usage. Higher volume roads or roads that have key connections and emergency routes, public facilities are prioritized. Obviously, we do coordinate these projects with other utility projects. We coordinate water, sewer and drainage work. So if we know a road is scheduled for some utility work, we obviously are going to delay the paving until that work is done and we allow the trench to settle. And then finally, of course, budget constraints. So we have, unfortunately, just a number of roads that want to be paved every year, but we have to prioritize them because of our funding. All of the funding that we have for the roads come primarily and solely from Chapter 90 money, and that money, luckily, has been more significant in the past couple years, but we can’t rely on that every year.”

Mr. Wood said he could talk about the EV charging stations at Grout Park, because those had come up in a previous discussion. “It took a little while to nail down the history behind that, because they did get installed, I want to say 2019 I think is when they got installed. Obviously, most of us weren’t in this capacity when they were installed, but I did contact Charge Point Charging Stations, the manufacturers, in the operation of

maintenance, and they had said that in 2024 both the charging stations became deactivated. There was no notes about why. I would assume that the warranty and the subscription probably lapsed at that point, and they had only one contact in their system, which was the previous Town Manager. So they probably had reached out a number of times without any success, but since calling them now, I’ve updated them with my contact. I’ve also added Bill to the contact...and they will get us an idea of how much it’s going to cost to reactivate them and fix one of them, because one of them is kind of damaged and smashed a little bit you’ve probably noticed.”

Board member Audrey Labrie expressed some annoyance that the company couldn’t be bothered to look up Winchendon and find the current contact to let the town know about the issues. She also asked if there was information about how much the charging stations were used before they were deactivated. She asked if the public or the town paid for the electricity, and whether stations were even needed when people who bought EVs charged them at home.

Board member Erika Eitland said, “Having EV chargers that are not residential is, I think, a part of an economic development sort of piece, if we want people to come here, do they have a charge to get back home? They may not come here if they don’t see any charger within an X amount of radius. But wouldn’t it be nice if, hey, we’ve got this great bike trail, leave your car charging and then come to that point. So I think the numbers definitely matter here. But I also would say that just because we’re not serving residents, we have to also think about who are we trying to bring into this community.”

After some discussion about the chargers and whether they were practical for the town, and who the company should have contacted, Mr. Wood continued.

“The final update that I have prepared is for Blair Square,” he said. “We have been working on this Blair Square design since 2021 and we’ve been contracted through TEC, the engineering company. Since then, they’ve gotten us through the 25 percent design, the public hearing, and we are currently under contract with them to get us up through 75 percent design and environmental permitting. The next step that actually would probably even be wrapped up this summer, would be to go forward with the 100 percent design and a P, S and E slash pre-construction bid set. So that’s the whole package right there that would probably get us right up through Fiscal Year 2028.

“So we were originally slated for construction in 2029, A few years ago. It’s a TIP [Transportation Improvement Program] project and a lot of towns go through it. In our regional planning organization, MRPC [Montachusett Regional Planning Commission], they help organize when these projects are going to go out to bid, when they’re going to have the funding for them, they’re seeing such a high increase in construction costs that actually all the projects are getting pushed out a year. So they just let us know that we’re most likely looking at Fiscal Year 2030 to do the construction. I don’t want to slow down the design efforts, because I know historically that there have been a lot of towns that when it’s their turn for the construction, they’re not 100 percent ready for one reason or another. And if we can stay on top of it, we could probably get slid into 2029. There’s no urgency to get this done. But we’ve been working on it for a while. I think we’d all like to see this one cross the finish line.”

Mr. Wood confirmed that the planned design is not a rotary. Ms. LaBrie asked if the designs took into account the change in traffic flow from Front Street being blocked to through traffic by School Square. “They are aware of that,” Mr. Wood said. “I don’t know when the traffic data was collected that they used to generate the 25 percent design. I’d suspect that whenever that was done, I don’t think there would be a significant change in traffic patterns or volume since then, otherwise, engineers probably would have wanted to come back out to do it again and MassDOT does a full review of all the plans. They would have picked up on that and requested that.”

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Winchendon News

Winchendon Winds Opens Season with “Happy 250th Birthday, America!”



Winchendon Winds Concert Band
Photo by Joe Sackett

by Jill Nicholson Sackett

Come celebrate America’s 250th birthday with Winchendon Winds! “Win Winds,” a 40-piece professional concert band, begins a four-concert series in June in the acoustically-sensitive sanctuary of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Winchendon, 126 Central Street. Conductor Dr. Lindsay Bronnenkant, UMass Amherst Music Faculty, returns for her third year with the seasoned group.

The series kicks off Sunday, June 7, at 2:00 p.m. with a special concert in recognition of America’s semisesquicentennial birthday. The program features a variety of well-known patriotic music. Of note is the work “America,” a.k.a. “My Country Tis of Thee.” This tune was co-opted from Britain’s national anthem “God Save the King” and served as the unofficial national anthem of the United States for nearly 100 years until the Star-Spangled Banner officially took the title. Win Winds will perform Charles Ives’ “Variations on America” which rolls out both whimsical and dramatic treatments of the beloved tune. Audiences will also hear highlights from the musical “1776” and a stirring rendition of “America the Beautiful.”

Of special note will be the appearance of an 18th century-style octet comprised of flute, oboe, two clarinets, two French horns, bassoon and drummer. The octet, founded by Win Winds bassoonist John Strang, is patterned after the band from Colonel John Crane’s Continental Army artillery regiment that was active during the Revolutionary War. The players wear hand-tailored replicas of the revolutionary war uniforms worn in that time.



Revolutionary War octet
Photo courtesy of John Strang

These uniforms are white “smallclothes” (breeches, shirt, waistcoat), red coats with dark blue facings, white stockings and black bicorne hats with gold trim. The octet will perform “Yankee Doodle Dandy” and other popular tunes of the time.

Both the octet and the full band will collaborate on the famous 18th century hymn “Chester.” If there had been a “Greatest Hits of the American Revolution,” “Chester” would have topped the charts. As Mr. Strang notes: “The hymn ‘Chester’ was a native work—it was famously sung by New England soldiers and other patriots during the Revolution. Moreover, the lyrics are distinctively New England, and give the audience a sense of the authentic sentiments of Massachusetts patriots 250 years ago.” The octet will play “Chester” while Win Winds players sing the words...audience participation encouraged! Finally, Win Winds will perform William Schuman’s “Chester Overture,” which gives the historic hymn the grand treatment it deserves.

The following three Sundays in June all carry different concert themes and promise a variety of marches, Broadway favorites, and traditional concert band literature.

Winchendon Winds concerts are free, thanks to generous support from ten area Local Cultural Councils, the Robinson-Broadhurst Foundation, and various businesses and individuals. The concerts are family-friendly and young musicians are especially welcome. Refreshments will be sold on the lawn before the concert and at intermission.

Voters at Town Election Say Yes to All Three School Projects, Shake Up School Committee

by Inanna Arthen

On Monday, May 4, between 8:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m., Winchendon voters went to the polls at the Old Murdock Senior Center to cast their ballots in two contested races for town boards and three separate debt exclusion questions for repairs to Winchendon School District buildings. According to the official results posted by the Town Clerk’s Office on Thursday, May 7, 614 voters checked in, a turnout of 7.4 percent (according to the most recent voter registration information available from the Secretary of the Commonwealth’s office, which says Winchendon had 8,262 registered voters as of February 1, 2025).

Town Manager Bill McKinney was at the polls for some of the day to greet voters and answer any questions. Some of the candidates also spent time during the day greeting voters, most of them outside the Senior Center.

The official results posted by the Town Clerk’s Office are as follows.

For Board of Selectmen, incumbent Melissa S. Blanchard received 289 votes and won the seat. Challenger Barbara J. Zisk received 271 votes. 49 ballots were left blank and 5 listed write-in names.

For School Committee, two seats were open and four candidates ran for them. Alissa M. Campbell received the highest number of votes at 386. Yvonne M. Senecal received 244 votes, giving her the second seat on the Committee. Michael K. Gaynor, in his second run for a School Committee seat, was disappointed with 237 votes, and Karen E. Kast-McBride, the only incumbent on the ballot, and who has served on the School Committee for six years, received 160 votes. There were 198 blanks (which could mean a voter only chose one candidate instead of two, or that they voted for no one)

and 3 write-ins.

There were three seats open on the Board of Health. Monique T. Connor, Barbara J. Zisk and Paula Anne Whitaker were all incumbents for their seats on the Board of Health and ran unopposed. Three write-in candidates received more than one vote each for Board of Health: Tina Santos (5), Lionel Cloutier (4) and Sharon LaRoche (3).

Nancy Lee Romanowski ran unopposed for a seat on the Housing Authority.

All three of the debt exclusion votes were approved by strong majorities. Each school building’s debt exclusion was a separate question.

- Question One, for Toy Town Elementary School, received 342 votes in favor (55.7 percent), 263 opposed (42.8 percent) and 9 blanks.
- Question Two, for Memorial Elementary School, received 352 votes in favor (57.3 percent), 252 opposed (41.0 percent) and 10 blanks.
- Question Three, for Murdock Middle High School, received 348 votes in favor (56.7 percent), 257 opposed (41.9 percent) and 9 blanks.

The Courier called the office of the state Secretary of the Commonwealth and the Winchendon Town Clerk’s office to ask when updated voter registration numbers would be available. The Town Clerk explained that Winchendon voter registrations are entered directly into the state’s database, and the town uses that database to check in voters. The Secretary’s office told the Courier that 2026 voter registration numbers will be published after the deadline for registration for the national primary elections in the fall. This is their standard practice for alternating years when there are federal elections, they explained.

The Courier Needs You!

This special print edition of *The Winchendon Courier*, which includes the center “Community Connector” calendar section, has been made possible by a grant to the town from the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT). This same grant has also helped to launch Winchendon’s new “microtransit system” and update the town website. But as grants do, it has reached the end of its term.

Now the printed newspaper needs to fly on its own—and we can, with support from the community and from you, its readers. We’re almost there! The *Courier* needs business people and organizations who will advertise regularly, and sponsors who know that a local newspaper is one of the best things a community can have. Hundreds of Winchendon residents see every edition, both digital and online. If you’d like to find out more about sponsoring the *Courier* or becoming an advertiser, please contact the publisher at editor@winchenconcourier.net.



Community Connector

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

Winchendon Community Park

86 Ingleside Dr

The HUB

5 Summer Dr

Saturday, June 6

Founders Day
Featuring:
New Release
The Quarry
Whiskey Johnson
FREE ENTRY PLUS DRONE SHOW
JUNE 6TH 2-9PM

Friday June 12

Adam Ezra Group
Rock Band
86 Ingleside Rd, Winchendon, MA
FRIDAY, JUNE 12TH, 2026
7:00-9:00PM

Saturday, June 13

Salsa & Sangria
SATURDAY JUNE 13TH
DOORS OPEN 6PM UNTIL 10PM
Winchendon Community Park
86 INGLESIDE RD, WINCHENDON, MA
TICKET \$5
LIVE SALSA BAND - MANOLO MAIRENA & SALSA BAND
LOCAL BEER - HANDMADE SANGRIA - FARM FRESH FOOD
WWW.FARMINGISLIFE.ORG

Thursday June 25

BINGO
At the Bowling Alley
5 Summer Drive, Winchendon
4TH THURSDAY OF THE MONTH
7:00 PM - 9:00 PM
Beer & Wine For Purchase

Friday June 26

FREE COMMUNITY OPEN MIC & PICNIC IN THE PARK!
Best part... the event is FREE!
Winchendon Community Park
ALL AGES WELCOME! 86 Ingleside Drive

Sign Up For the Parks & Rec Email List!

DON'T MISS OUR NEXT BIG EVENT!
BE THE FIRST TO KNOW ABOUT UPCOMING EVENTS & RECEIVE SPECIAL DISCOUNTS
SCAN ME
FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL!
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@WINCHENDONAMPHITHEATER
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Saturday June 27

Food Truck Festival + Midway games!
with **BATTLE OF THE BANDS**
SATURDAY, JUNE 27TH
12:00PM-7:00PM
G.A.R. PARK WINCHENDON MA

Need a Ride?

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

Sponsorship Opportunities

Building Community. Creating Memories. Together.
2026 Winchendon Parks & Recreation
PARTNER WITH WINCHENDON PARKS AND RECREATION FOR COMMUNITY SUCCESS.
YOUR PARTNERSHIP TRANSFORMS WINCHENDON PARKS AND RECREATION EVENTS.
ENHANCE COMMUNITY BY SPONSORING EVENTS AT THE WINCHENDON AMPHITHEATER.
Join Us - Scan Here to See Our Events!
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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

Sunday, June 14
Flag Day

Friday, June 19
Juneteenth

Sunday, June 21
Fathers Day

Look for the NEW Parks & Recreation NEWSLETTER!

Get a Season Pass for the entire 2026 season!

2026 Season PASS
Unlimited fun with our Season Pass! Enjoy every event, every thrill, and every moment—no limits, all season long!
WINCHENDON PARKS AND REC
https://www.townofwinchendon.com/parks-recreation
@Winchendoncommunitypark @Winchendonamphitheater @winchparksandrec

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

Check Out the 2026 Parks & Rec Events Brochure!

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	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 Founders Day June 6th 2PM-9PM Tickets: FREE Join us for a full day live music & drone show as we celebrate the 4th anniversary of our amphitheater. Adam Ezra Group June 12th 7PM-9PM Tickets: Early Bird \$25 Regular \$30 A grassroots fan favorite known for selling out theaters across the Northeast. Sunset Social- Salsa & Sangria June 13th 6PM-10PM Tickets: \$5 Join us for a vibrant summer evening of music, dancing, and community at Salsa & Sangria. Open Mic Night & Picnic June 20th 4PM-8PM Tickets: FREE Gather outdoors for an evening of live local talent.	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.
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JUNE

TUESDAY JUNE 2

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 Club

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 JUNE 3

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.

Craft & Chat

6:30-8:00 p.m. Craft and Chat is a space for adults of all ages to come and spend time relaxing while crocheting and chatting. Bring your crochet supplies and whether you want to learn or work on ongoing projects, we would love for you to join us! At Old Murdock Senior Center, 52 Murdock Ave, Winchendon.

THURSDAY JUNE 4

Our Neighbor’s Kitchen Dinner

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

FRIDAY JUNE 5

Tony’s Toxic Trivia Night

6:30-9:30 p.m. Custom team based/pub style trivia games w/ hosting and interactive media/music, tailored to occasion and or interests. Bring your family and friends. Test your knowledge and win prizes! At The HUB, 5 Summer Dr, Winchendon. Annual Teen Lock-in at the Beals 7:00 p.m.- 7:00 a.m. At Beals Memorial Library, 50 Pleasant St, Winchendon.

SATURDAY JUNE 6

Founders Day

2:00-9:00 p.m. Join us for a full day of fun, music, and community as we celebrate the 4th year of the Robinson Broadhurst Foundation Performing Arts Amphitheater! Entertainment, food, vendors, games, live music by The Quarry, New Release and Whiskey Johnson. BONUS: Winchendon’s FIRST drone show! Accepting Vendor Applications: www.eventeny.com/events/founders-day-2026-27227. At Winchendon Community Park, 86 Ingleside Dr.

SUNDAY JUNE 7

Winchendon Winds Concert

2:00 p.m. This 40-piece professional wind ensemble under the direction of Dr. Lindsay Bronnenkant (UMass Music Faculty) presents “Happy 250th Birthday, America!” Concert selections will include patriotic favorites and special appearance of a uniformed, revolutionary war-era wind band. Free admission, refreshments sold. At UU Church of Winchendon, 126 Central St.

MONDAY JUNE 8

History of Toys in Toy Town with Local Historian Guy Corbosiero

6:30 p.m. Come find out why Winchendon is called Toy Town by learning about the fascinating history of the toy boom of the 1900s and how we became the largest toy manufacturer in the country! Select toys will be on display during this presentation. This event is in partnership with the Winchendon History and Cultural Center and is a part of the Winchendon History Lecture Series. At Beals Memorial Library, 50 Pleasant St, Winchendon.

WEDNESDAY JUNE 10

An Evening with the Friends: Puzzle Race!

6:00 p.m. The Friends of the Beals Memorial Library invite the community to their annual meeting. Come enjoy an update on Friends activities, learn about the upcoming events, and how you can support the library. At 6:30 p.m.: How fast can you finish a puzzle? Find out at our puzzle race! Teams of 2-4 people will race to see who can assemble a 500-piece puzzle first. Think a 500-piece puzzle is too easy? We challenge you to try a 1000-piece puzzle. To register for the puzzle race contact the library at 978-297-0300. This event is for all ages! At Beals Memorial Library, 50 Pleasant St, Winchendon.

THURSDAY JUNE 11

Merrily’s Free Card Making Class

10:30 a.m.- 12:30 p.m. This is a free class offered by GALA. Make your own greeting card using found objects and your creativity! Merrily will guide you to make a one-of-a-kind creation. Held in the Community room. Register at: <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.

Beals Movie Night

6:00 p.m. Showing tonight: *Wuthering Heights*. At Beals Memorial Library, 50 Pleasant St, Winchendon.

Our Neighbor’s Kitchen Dinner

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

FRIDAY JUNE 12

Sound Bites Community Jam

12:00-3:15 p.m. Open Mic! Sign up list is available at The HUB at 30 minutes before the music starts. Music starts at 12:30. For more information contact Sound Bites Events, www.soundbitesevents.com. At The HUB, 5 Summer Dr, Winchendon.

Adam Ezra Group Rock Band

7:00-9:00 p.m. Tickets \$25. Blending Americana, folk, and roots music with a powerful sense of purpose, Adam Ezra Group has built one of the most loyal fan communities in modern independent music. Known for their deeply personal performances and grassroots approach, the band has been selling out theaters across the Northeast—without ever losing sight of where they came from. Get tickets at www.eventeny.com/events/adam-ezra-group-27912. Sponsored by Winchendon Parks & Recreation. At Winchendon Community Park, 86 Ingleside Dr.

Alcohol Ink Class with GALA

6:00-8:00 p.m. \$45 per person. At the Old Murdock Senior Center, 52 Murdock Ave, Winchendon.

SATURDAY JUNE 13

Child Loss Support Group

10:00-11:00 a.m. For parents, grandparents and siblings of a child that has died. This is a non-professional support group not affiliated with any religion. If you are in need of support or know others who would benefit from this group, please invite them to come. If you have any questions, please contact Carla Wood 978 297-2217 or Phyllis Cochran 978 297-1193. At United Parish, 39 Front St, Winchendon.

Sunset Social: Salsa & Sangria

6:00-10:00 p.m. Tickets \$5. Kids under 12 free. Join us for a vibrant summer evening of music, dancing, and community. Whether you’re an experienced dancer or just want to soak in the atmosphere, this is a relaxed, welcoming night out for all ages. Salsa dance lesson, live performance, DJ music and dancing, farm-fresh food & snacks, Sangria & tropical cocktails. Get tickets at www.eventeny.com/events/sunset-socials-salsa-sangria-2026-27897/. Sponsored by Winchendon Parks & Recreation. At Winchendon Community Park, 86 Ingleside Dr.

SUNDAY JUNE 14

Winchendon Winds Concert

2:00 p.m. This 40-piece professional wind ensemble under the direction of Dr. Lindsay Bronnenkant (UMass Music Faculty) presents “Over the Hills and Through the Woods.” Concert selections will include marches and songs of journey. Free admission, refreshments sold. At UU Church of Winchendon, 126 Central St.

TUESDAY JUNE 16

Growing Places 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 Club

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.

Community Conversation: Let’s Talk About the Library’s Bathroom

6:00 p.m. Join us for a conversation about our plans to make the tiny upstairs bathroom ADA compliant. At Beals Memorial Library, 50 Pleasant St, Winchendon.

WEDNESDAY JUNE 17

Classic Movie Matinee at the Beals

3:00-5:00 p.m. Showing today: *3:10 to Yuma*. At Beals Memorial Library, 50 Pleasant St, Winchendon.

Craft & Chat

6:30-8:00 p.m. Craft and Chat is a space for adults of all ages to come and spend time relaxing while crocheting and chatting. Bring your crochet supplies and whether you want to learn or work on ongoing projects, we would love for you to join us! At Old Murdock Senior Center, 52 Murdock Ave, Winchendon.

THURSDAY JUNE 18

Summer Reading Club Kick Off Party

2:00 p.m. Join us for a fun afternoon to celebrate the start of our annual Summer Reading Program! Meet up with friends new and old, decorate a rock for our rock garden, and dance along with the Toe Jam Puppet Band. At Beals Memorial Library, 50 Pleasant St, Winchendon.

FRIDAY JUNE 19

The HUB Patio Grand Opening

5:00 p.m. With Annie Wallflower & Julian Wagner and the Rusty Truck Saloon Band. This special event is made possible compliments of T-Mobile through a very generous grant, along with support from the Massachusetts Cultural Council and the Winchendon Cultural Council. We are looking forward to an evening focused on community, music, connection, and bringing people together as we officially celebrate the opening of the new patio space. More info coming soon! At The HUB, 5 Summer Dr, Winchendon..

Strawberry Festival

5:00-8:00 p.m. BBQ dinner, \$25 per person in advance, order tickets at docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSduAbWqTAiGFMtt3CkMKrny-jUKKaIz1jISG3_wW0m4Q3PHXQ/viewform. Live music with Kilroy. Strawberry-themed treats, food, raffles, entertainment. Runs through the weekend. At Immaculate Heart of Mary church, 52 Spruce St, Winchendon.

SATURDAY JUNE 20

Summer Lawn Fair

9:00 a.m.- 2:00 p.m. An annual tradition since 1867. Stroll our church grounds full of crafts, retail and yard sale items, concessions, raffles and even a free cycle table! Rain (indoors) or shine. At UU Church of Winchendon, 126 Central St.

Strawberry Festival

9:00 a.m.- 8:00 p.m.. Food, vendors, raffles, bucket golf, Polish dancers, country line dancing, Bingo, corn hole, music with Ryan MacKenzie and Rindge Road Rockers. Runs through the weekend. At Immaculate Heart of Mary church, 52 Spruce St, Winchendon.

Summer Solstice Celebration

11:30 a.m.- 4:00 p.m. Inflatables, face painting, games, vendors, live music, parade, kids and adults Fun Runs. For more info, and application forms for the parade, vendor tables and food concessions, see <https://www.theclarkymca.org/programs/special-events> or call 978-297-9622. At and around Clark Memorial YMCA, 155 Central St, Winchendon.

Bands, BBQ & Brews

1:00-7:00 p.m. Gates open @ 1pm. Music by Nick Staples 1-3pm & New Release 3-7pm. Brew Tastings: \$20 with portion of the proceeds to benefit local animal shelter. Louie’s famous chicken bbq \$15. Tickets available in advance for both. (BBQ tickets only available in advance) Great Music, Food & BBQ...Come join the fun! At The Snowbound Club, 130 Baldwinville Rd, Winchendon.

SUNDAY JUNE 21

Strawberry Festival

9:00 a.m.- 12:00 p.m. Vendors, Father’s Day breakfast, raffles and prize winners announced. Runs through the weekend. At Immaculate Heart of Mary church, 52 Spruce St, Winchendon.

Winchendon Winds Concert

2:00 p.m. This 40-piece professional wind ensemble under the direction of Dr. Lindsay Bronnenkant (UMass Music Faculty) presents “Ahoy!” Concert selections will take us to the “high seas.” Free admission, refreshments sold. At UU Church of Winchendon, 126 Central St.

TUESDAY JUNE 23

Cookbook Book Club

6:00-7:00 p.m. At Beals Memorial Library, 50 Pleasant St, Winchendon.

2026



WEDNESDAY JUNE 24

Mystery & Thriller Lovers Book Club
4:00 p.m. At Beals Memorial Library, 50 Pleasant St, Winchendon.

THURSDAY JUNE 25

Summer Reading Club - Buttermaking for Kids
2:00 p.m. Join us in a fun hands-on activity making your own butter, and learn about the science behind the process. Limited space, registration required. Register at www.bealslibrary.org/summer, call 978-297-0300 or visit the library. At Beals Memorial Library, 50 Pleasant St, Winchendon.

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

Community Game Night at the Beals
5:30-7:30 p.m. Play one of our games or bring your favorite to share! This event is open to everyone in the community. At Beals Memorial Library, 50 Pleasant St, Winchendon.

Bingo at The HUB
7:00-9:00 p.m. Join the Winchendon Parks and Recreation for Bingo at the HUB! At The HUB, 5 Summer Dr, Winchendon.

FRIDAY JUNE 26

Community Open Mic & Picnic in the Park
2:00-8:00 p.m. FREE! This all-ages community event invites neighbors, friends, and families to gather outdoors for an evening of live local talent, including music, comedy, storytelling, and more. Whether you’re stepping up to the mic or enjoying the performances from the lawn, this is a great chance to connect, unwind, and celebrate community creativity. Bring a picnic, blanket, or lawn chair and enjoy the beautiful park setting while supporting local performers. Performers of all experience levels are welcome—sign-ups will be available on site. Sponsored by Winchendon Parks & Recreation. At Winchendon Community Park, 86 Ingleside Dr.

Friday Night Frequencies at The HUB
6:00-9:00 p.m. Featuring some of our favorite local artists and bands. Fun starts at 6:30. FOOD AND BEVERAGE, BEER, WINE & SELTZERS ALL AVAILABLE FROM THE SUNSHINE CAFE! At The HUB, 5 Summer Dr, Winchendon.

SATURDAY JUNE 27

Food Truck Festival and Battle of the Bands 2026
12:00-7:00 p.m. Free! Spend the day eating your way through the trucks, then cheer on your favorite band as they compete for the win! Huge lineup of food trucks, local bands competing, sweet treats, cold drinks, local vendors. For vendor applications or to sign up as a volunteer, go to www.eventeny.com/events/food-truck-festival-and-battle-of-the-bands-2026-26975/. Sponsored by Winchendon Parks & Rec. At G.A.R. Park, 52 Murdock Ave, Winchendon.

SUNDAY JUNE 28

Winchendon Winds Concert
2:00 p.m. This 40-piece professional wind ensemble under the direction of Dr. Lindsay Bronnenkant (UMass Music Faculty) presents “Characters”—their final concert of the season. Concert selections will depict different characters, some well-known, some not. Free admission, refreshments sold. At UU Church of Winchendon, 126 Central St.

TUESDAY JUNE 30

Teen Dungeons & Dragons Club
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.

Summer Reading Club - Produce Paint Party
5:30 p.m. Tweens and teens age 11 to 18 are invited to learn about the powerful pigments in our food, and paint a beautiful bookmark to take home. Limited space, registration required. Register at www.bealslibrary.org/summer, call 978-297-0300 or visit the library. At Beals Memorial Library, 50 Pleasant St, Winchendon.

RECURRING WEEKLY EVENTS

MONDAY through FRIDAY

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

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 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.

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

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

FRIDAYS

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.

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

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

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.

Winchendon Farmers Market
10:00 a.m.- 1:00 p.m. Crafts, fresh farm produce, baked goods. In front of The HUB, 5 Summer Drive, Winchendon. Rain or shine! In inclement weather, the Market will move inside The HUB, which is open on Saturdays.

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.

Recreation

Pickleball - Open Courts

Mon-Fri, 9:30 a.m.- 1:00 p.m. At the Old Murdock Senior Center, 52 Murdock Ave., Winchendon. 978-297-3155.

Open Bowling for the Public

Fridays & Saturdays, 10:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. FOR DETAILS and TO RSVP VISIT: <https://www.the-hub.org/community-bowling>. At The HUB, 5 Summer Dr, Winchendon.

Yoga With Chantal from Shadow Academy Wellness

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

Tony's Toxic Trivia Night

June 5, 6:30-9:30 p.m. Custom team based/pub style trivia games w/ hosting and interactive media/music, tailored to occasion and or interests. Bring your family and friends. Test your knowledge and win prizes! At The HUB, 5 Summer Dr, Winchendon. Annual Teen Lock-in at the Beals 7:00 p.m.- 7:00 a.m. At Beals Memorial Library, 50 Pleasant St, Winchendon.

Food and Meals

Our Neighbor's Kitchen Dinner

June 11 and 25, 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

June 4, 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- This week the menu is Italian sub sandwiches, macaroni salad and dessert. Free-will donation \$2 per person, \$5 per family; no one turned away. 52 Spruce Street, Winchendon.

Growing Places Mobile Farmers Market

June 16, 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.

Winchendon Farmers Market

Saturdays, 10:00 a.m.- 1:00 p.m. STARTS MAY 16. Crafts, fresh farm produce, baked goods. In front of The HUB, 5 Summer Drive, Winchendon. Rain or shine! In inclement weather, the Market will move inside The HUB, which is open on Saturdays.

For Kids

Summer Reading Club - Buttermaking for Kids

June 25, 2:00 p.m. Join us in a fun hands-on activity making your own butter, and learn about the science behind the process. Limited space, registration required. Register at www.bealslibrary.org/summer, call 978-297-0300 or visit the library. At Beals Memorial Library, 50 Pleasant St, Winchendon.

Summer Reading Club - Produce Paint Party

June 30, 5:30 p.m. Tweens and teens age 11 to 18 are invited to learn about the powerful pigments in our food, and paint a beautiful bookmark to take home. Limited space, registration required. Register at www.bealslibrary.org/summer, call 978-297-0300 or visit the library. At Beals Memorial Library, 50 Pleasant St, Winchendon.

Lego Club for Kids at the Beals

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

Family Friendly Story Hour at the Chapel

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

CFCE Preschool Playgroup at the Beals

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

Story Time at the Beals

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

Cub Scout Meetings

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

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

Entertainment

Founders Day

June 6, 2:00-9:00 p.m. Join us for a full day of fun, music, and community as we celebrate the 4th year of the Robinson Broadhurst Foundation Performing Arts Amphitheater! Entertainment, food, vendors, games, live music by The Quarry, New Release and Whiskey Johnson. BONUS: Winchendon's FIRST drone show! Accepting Vendor Applications: www.eventeny.com/events/founders-day-2026-27227. At Winchendon Community Park, 86 Ingleside Dr.

Winchendon Winds Concert

June 7, 2:00 p.m. This 40-piece professional wind ensemble under the direction of Dr. Lindsay Bronnenkant (UMass Music Faculty) presents “Happy 250th Birthday, America!” Concert selections will include patriotic favorites and special appearance of a uniformed, revolutionary war-era wind band. Free admission, refreshments sold. At UU Church of Winchendon, 126 Central St.

History of Toys in Toy Town with Local Historian Guy Corbosiero

June 8, 6:30 p.m. Come find out why Winchendon is called Toy Town by learning about the fascinating history of the toy boom of the 1900s and how we became the largest toy manufacturer in the country! Select toys will be on display during this presentation. This event is in partnership with the Winchendon History and Cultural Center and is a part of the Winchendon History Lecture Series. At Beals Memorial Library, 50 Pleasant St, Winchendon.

Denis Cormier Concert

June 11, 10:45 a.m.- 12:15 p.m. At the Old Murdock Senior Center, 52 Murdock Ave, Winchendon.

Beals Movie Night

June 11, 6:00 p.m. Showing tonight: *Wuthering Heights*. At Beals Memorial Library, 50 Pleasant St, Winchendon.

Winchendon Winds Concert

June 14, 2:00 p.m. This 40-piece professional wind ensemble under the direction of Dr. Lindsay Bronnenkant (UMass Music Faculty) presents “Over the Hills and Through the Woods.” Concert selections will include marches and songs of journey. Free admission, refreshments sold. At UU Church of Winchendon, 126 Central St.

Classic Movie Matinee at the Beals

June 17, 3:00-5:00 p.m. Showing today: *3:10 to Yuma*. At Beals Memorial Library, 50 Pleasant St, Winchendon.

Bands, BBQ & Brews

June 20, 1:00-7:00 p.m. Gates open @ 1pm. Music by Nick Staples 1-3pm & New Release 3-7pm. Brew Tastings: \$20 with portion of the proceeds to benefit local animal shelter. Louie's famous chicken bbq \$15. Tickets available in advance for both. (BBQ tickets only available in advance) Great Music, Food & BBQ...Come join the fun! At The Snowbound Club, 130 Baldwinville Rd, Winchendon.

Winchendon Winds Concert

June 21, 2:00 p.m. This 40-piece professional wind ensemble under the direction of Dr. Lindsay Bronnenkant (UMass Music Faculty) presents “Ahoy!” Concert selections will take us to the “high seas.” Free admission, refreshments sold. At UU Church of Winchendon, 126 Central St.

Food Truck Festival and Battle of the Bands 2026

June 27, 12:00-7:00 p.m. Free! Spend the day eating your way through the trucks, then cheer on your favorite band as they compete for the win! Huge lineup of food trucks, local bands competing, sweet treats, cold drinks, local vendors. For vendor applications or to sign up as a volunteer, go to www.eventeny.com/events/food-truck-festival-and-battle-of-the-bands-2026-26975/. Sponsored by Winchendon Parks & Rec. At G.A.R. Park, 52 Murdock Ave, Winchendon.

Winchendon Winds Concert

June 28, 2:00 p.m. This 40-piece professional wind ensemble under the direction of Dr. Lindsay Bronnenkant (UMass Music Faculty) presents “Characters”—their final concert of the season. Concert selections will depict different characters, some well-known, some not. Free admission, refreshments sold. At UU Church of Winchendon, 126 Central St.

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.

Social Art Circle with GALA

June 2, 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.

Craft & Chat

June 3 and 17, 6:30-8:00 p.m. Craft and Chat is a space for adults of all ages to come and spend time relaxing while crocheting and chatting. Bring your crochet supplies and whether you want to learn or work on ongoing projects, we would love for you to join us! At Old Murdock Senior Center, 52 Murdock Ave, Winchendon.

Sound Bites Community Jam

June 12, 12:00-3:15 p.m. Open Mic! Sign up list is available at The HUB at 30 minutes before the music starts. Music starts at 12:30. For more information contact Sound Bites Events, www.soundbitesevents.com. At The HUB, 5 Summer Dr, Winchendon.

Alcohol Ink Class with GALA

June 12, 6:00-8:00 p.m. \$45 per person. At the Old Murdock Senior Center, 52 Murdock Ave, Winchendon.

Merrily's Card Making Class with GALA

June 11, 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.

Community Open Mic & Picnic in the Park

June 26, 2:00-8:00 p.m. FREE! This all-ages community event invites neighbors, friends, and families to gather outdoors for an evening of live local talent, including music, comedy, storytelling, and more. Whether you're stepping up to the mic or enjoying the performances from the lawn, this is a great chance to connect, unwind, and celebrate community creativity. Bring a picnic, blanket, or lawn chair and enjoy the beautiful park setting while supporting local performers. Performers of all experience levels are welcome—sign-ups will be available on site. Sponsored by Winchendon Parks & Recreation. At Winchendon Community Park, 86 Ingleside Dr.

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.

For Teens

Teen Gender & Sexuality Alliance at the Beals

June 3, 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

June 2, 16 and 30, 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.

Winchendon News

School Committee Chair and Superintendent Respond to Multifaceted Challenges to MSBA Projects at FinCom Hearing



Superintendent Charlotte King and School Committee Chair Mike Barbaro answer questions from the FinCom

Photo copyright Town of Winchendon

by Inanna Arthen

On Wednesday, April 29, the Finance Committee held its customary public hearing on the Annual Town Meeting warrant articles, before the Committee voted on their recommendations for each article. The longest discussions during the hearing concerned Articles 17, 18 and 19, which each ask voters to approve an individual Proposition 2-1/2 debt exclusion for the town's portion of the costs of repairs to one school building. All three buildings have been accepted into the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) Accelerated Repair Program, but each is a separate project. The MSBA will reimburse the town for 77.58 percent of costs. Only the buildings approved by voters will proceed with repairs.

At the time of the hearing, the Town Election had not yet been held. As with all Proposition 2-1/2 override questions, these need to be approved at a ballot vote and a Town Meeting vote. At the Town Election on Monday, May 4, all three questions passed by a majority of at least 55 percent. The ballot votes only require a simply majority, but because a debt exclusion involves borrowing money, the Town Meeting votes must pass by a two-thirds majority.

When the hearing reached Article 17, citizen Dr. Maureen Ward came forward to challenge the article on multiple points. Speaking for six solid minutes, she began by saying, "The town must sign a compliance agreement stipulating they will meet the conditions for receiving any partial reimbursement from the state. Three of those stipulations concerning me are, one, that the building will be utilized as a school for 20 years. My question is, does Toy Town have 20 years left as a school or and will our enrollment continue to drop?" She then continued to argue at length, using square footage given in the original architects' plans of the buildings and dividing that by number of students enrolled, that every building is "under-utilized." Memorial, by her calculations, is at 64 percent capacity, Murdock Middle School at 62 percent, Murdock High School is 46 percent and Toy Town at 54 percent. "So if you take your district wide capacity, we're at 56.5 percent. I would say that defines underutilized, given the capacity of the four schools," she concluded. (Murdock Middle High School is considered to be one school for MSBA purposes.) She speculated that the state might refuse to meet its agreement to reimburse if they judged the buildings underutilized.

Dr. Ward continued to say that the district "is not considering consolidation. If we were to consolidate the four schools into three, our capacity district wide would be 76 percent, much more reasonable. If we are to stop procrastinating and actually look seriously at regionalization, even just for the senior high kids 11 and 12, we would be at 68 percent capacity." She also asked why the district wasn't going simply for "repair" instead of a full replacement of the roofs, as the MSBA program was a "repair or replace" program. Dr. Ward went on to say that "We were stung on the feasibility study for the roofs. We were told that the total cost was only \$200,000 but don't worry, the state's going to pick it up, so just pass the article. The state did pick up the \$200,000 but that's not what the study cost. It was \$360,000 so that free roofing cost the taxpayers \$160,000."

Dr. Ward suggested that the town can re-submit their application to the MSBA and should stagger the costs, not do all three buildings at a time. She also suggested closing Toy Town, "sell the property, put it back on the tax rolls and make some money for the town."

Superintendent Charlotte King and School Committee Chair Mike Barbaro came forward to respond to the questions raised. Supt. King said, "I believe what the study that Dr. Gosselin did last year took into account the Special Education programming, which requires more square footage per classroom than—I don't know what the original documentation said about capacity...I don't know if it matches the capacity that the current Department of Elementary and Secondary Education require of us now. I imagine it's different, because the buildings were built so long ago."

FinCom member Mike Giovannucci said that all these measurements

had to be correct "because if we make a mistake, the state's not going to forgive us for it. They're just not going to pay the bill." [It is unclear whether this is correct, or whether "underutilization" would be an issue at all.]

Mr. Barbaro responded, "The school projects were put forth by the former superintendent and Brian Croteau, prior to Marc Gosselin taking over. They walked through the buildings. They did the assessment of what the building needs are. Memorial School was built in the early 70s. That roof has not been replaced. It's far exceeded its lifespan...They're leaking."

"The High School, which [Dr. Ward] was talking about, has been patched multiple times. It's leaking in multiple places, along the pyramid or the clock tower, whatever you want to call it, but along the flashing, all these things are causing problems internally to the building. And again, that was built in 1996, it's now reached its 30 year life."

"Toy Town was done, again, in the 90s. It was repaired. The roof there has reached its end of life. What happens is, like everywhere else, like your home, at some point these roofs need to be replaced. We have an opportunity from the state, a generous opportunity of 77.58 percent. Our next door neighbor town in Templeton is replacing one roof, and they're only getting 55 percent."

"Additionally, these buildings, Memorial and Toy Town, are being brought up to ADA compliance, which is being funded by this project. It was not funded prior. When the building gets over 30 percent of its cost [to repair], they require [ADA] upgrades. Prior to the last couple of years, the town would have been responsible for all these upgrades to bring the buildings into ADA compliance. We no longer have to worry about that. That is being done by the state."

The fire station would have cost taxpayers \$20 million, Mr. Barbaro said, but all three school buildings are estimated to be \$4.5 million. He went on to describe the work done to explore the conditions of the three roofs, by cutting holes to see what was happening underneath the surface. "We are looking at replacing the roof, re-insulating, making the buildings more energy efficient, but also part of the state's requirement has become 30 percent solar ready. Both Murdock and Memorial. Both roofs are active, can be used for solar roof later on, more than 30 percent, which in the future, if we decide to do that, we can alleviate some future costs. Toy Town, because of the way it's designed, has to have part of the roof reinforced to match the 30 percent. We are also getting an elevator at Toy Town paid for at 77.58 percent by the state."

At the current capacity of 22 to 23 students per classroom, every classroom in every building is being utilized, Mr. Barbaro said. Moving students among buildings is not a solution when all three roofs are at risk of catastrophic failure.

"Now, the question about Toy Town," he went on. "Toy Town is has been upgraded over the past few years in multiple ways. After COVID, we upgraded the ventilation system. That was done through a state grant. The High School had an updated ventilation system through ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) funds. We put new boilers in Toy Town. We've also upgraded electrical, water fountains, water lines. The schools are being brought up to grade in multiple ways. We've been investing in our schools quietly and all the time. We've used our staff. We've used Monty Tech, Monty Tech did the sidewalks. Monty Tech did our light conversions to LED, a few years ago, to do cost savings. There's been constant upgrades going on to the schools, but they've been very quiet, and not a lot of funds have been expended."

He added, "As far as addressing consolidation, it's our younger classrooms is where our most effective learning is going on, and the results are bearing that out, as you can see on multiple test scores."

Supt. King said, "We also added a kindergarten class past year at Memorial, and we have a wait list at the Preschool level, so we would be looking to expand at the Preschool level as well. And I know some of you came on tours to look at how the space was utilized. And I think Memorial is a very unique interior building, and I think it's important to note that it doesn't have walls that go up to the ceiling. For anybody that hasn't been there or been there in a while, it's a very unique learning environment. And I just caution everyone to think about putting more classrooms in there and what that would look like, because it creates a significant noise level. They're sort of like those padded office partitions that separate the classrooms, they don't have doors and they don't go up to the ceiling. So it certainly gives us some unique challenges in terms of giving students a suitable education there. We have to be very mindful about how many classrooms we would cram in there."

Mr. Barbaro continued, "We use our other classrooms for specials, like music, we have art, and then we have our Special Ed classrooms, which are uniquely set up for our children that have disabilities and they have their own needs. And so these require a lot of space for us. We're saying that we won't ever look into consolidation. That's not the point. The point is, right now, we have a need to fix the schools."

"Under the agreement, yes, we have to have schools for 20 years. That

Winchendon News

MSBA PROJECTS
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is true. But in the event that we don't want to use the school, we can lease the school out. CAPS collaborative could use the school. If we decide to sell the property, as long as we sell it for the amount of money that's owed, that pays the note off. So there are options for us. And let me be clear, we are looking into regionalization, but regionalization does not happen in the small classrooms. It happens at the middle and the high school anywhere in the state. That's where the most consolidation of those are, and we don't even have a partner, or no one who's actually looking to partner with us."

If voters decided not to repair Toy Town, and then the town had to fix the roof, the \$11 million cost would entirely be on the town, and ADA compliant updates would be required, as well. "I don't want that burden on the taxpayers. I want to grab as much state money as I can," Mr. Barbaro said. He added, "[The MSBA program is] an accelerated repair program. They've already accepted us into the program. If we had a capacity problem, they would have brought it to our attention already. We're past that stage. They're looking to us to fund it. The project will begin next summer. The bids would go out in September, and we would be moving forward, and they would be completed by the fall of the following year, 2027.

"So we're asking the taxpayers and both boards to to work together to make the town a better place. Also, when we regionalize, we're partnering with somebody. We're not getting adopted, and they're not going to regionalize with a town that doesn't maintain its buildings. That's something to think about. When you talk about regionalization, they're going to want to make sure our buildings are sound. They're not going to take us on and say, Oh, here you go. By the way, the roofs leak, and it's \$10 million add to your new fund."

The discussion digressed into the topic of regionalization, which is not currently on the table. Mr. Barbaro pointed out that Narragansett Regional school district is "busting at the seams" and built a new elementary school fairly recently. Mr. Giovannucci returned to the question of whether the town can trust the state to keep up its side of the agreement, and not find an excuse not to pay the reimbursement.

Mr. Barbaro said, "When we did the cost estimate, there's money over what they anticipate, right? They have money in there for contingencies, in case something does go wrong. The architects and the firm have completed some jobs very similar to what ours are, and they came in under budget. The money we're asking for is the maximum amount of money. I don't want to spend that money. If and when these bids come in, you will have the final numbers, and any dollar savings, that comes off the overall cost of the buildings."

FinCom member Monique Connor said that Mr. Barbaro wasn't answering the question. Supt. King said, "Yes, the reimbursement rate is guaranteed. They're not going to find any reason to deny it. The only reason would be further down the line if we were to close a building." She said firmly that capacity was not an issue, because the MSBA has all the numbers that Dr. Ward referenced, and full access to all the district information in the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) website. Mr. Barbaro reiterated that if capacity was any concern, MSBA would have brought it up before now. This vote by the town is the very last step in the process.

FinCom members then raised questions about the warrant articles not having dollar amounts. Dollar amounts will be given when the motions are read on Town Meeting floor. There was further discussion about some FinCom members not feeling they had been fully informed about the process. Ms. Connor asked, "Why weren't these roofs, which is basically maintenance, put into Capital Planning and rotated. That's what should have

been done." Supt. King said that it might have been the sheer cost to replace even one roof.

FinCom member Diane Coulter said, "Has anybody looked into consolidation?"

Supt. King said, "I believe it first came up in conversations at a School Committee meeting last year, which is why I think Dr. Gosselin did that study of what our classroom capacity looked like and what our square footage per student looked like. So we had some initial conversations about it. At the moment, we just don't feel at the elementary school level, that it's feasible based on the class sizes that we have, and the fact that our numbers at the lower levels seem to be growing. Our drop off is at the high school level. Sizes maintain a pretty constant number until eighth grade, and then they drop off at the high school for a number of reasons.

"We have done surveys and studies to get to the root cause of this. It seems to be student school choice out. They go to homeschool for a number of reasons, but basically our job, or my job and the district leadership team, are looking at ways to put a stop to that, to keep kids in our district. What can we do? We want to bring kids back from homeschooling. We've just brought a couple of kids back. We want to create in-district programming for our students with special needs, because we're sending a number of students out for these long rides to places that are not in their community, and obviously we would like to develop in-district programming.

"So yes, the drop off is at the high school, and there's a couple of things to consider. First of all, we want to bring kids back. We don't want to be complacent with that. And we also want to consider the fact that, yes, there may be a small number of students in some of the classes, particularly electives, but we have students moving on to post-grad experiences, college, military, we can't affect their transcript by just cutting all those classes. So yes, you might walk through the high school and see a class with five students, but you might see a class with 26 students. When we when we ran the numbers for these MSBA meetings we've been having, that's what we found. So it's tricky, because we don't want to affect a child's future, obviously."

FinCom Chair Tom Kane said, "I got a chance to visit Memorial and Toy Town. I guess they have a unique perspective at Memorial and what struck me is that you can't use capacity numbers that were developed when the buildings were built in today's programming. The programs have changed dramatically. The space that the programs used 40 years ago where we had 25-30 kids in a class. Every class had 25-30 kids.

"When I had a chance to go through there I could see programs that were designed to address the challenges that we have in this community, and certainly other communities too, to provide services for kids early on, wrap-around services. That takes space. So the numbers of kids that were in Memorial when I was there, as I looked at when I did my walk-through, I realized that there's just no way we could provide the programs that we provide kids today in the same spaces that we used where we might have had 500 kids 40 years ago. So I think that the issue of square footage isn't the issue. It's the programs that are in the school that's important."

For more information, see "Tri-Board Meeting Hears Detailed Presentation on School Repair Project" in the February 12-19, 2026 edition of the Winchendon Courier. (This article was also in the March, 2026 edition of the print Winchendon Courier, pages 4-6.)

The Winchendon School District's information page about the MSBA projects is <https://www.winchendonk12.org/o/wps/page/msba-accelerated-repair-program>.

The last information session, which includes in-depth explanations by the project architects, may be viewed on WinchendonTV at <https://winchendon.cablecast.tv/internetchannel/show/381?site=1>

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The *Winchendon Courier* Online is uploaded every Thursday night and reaches hundreds of Winchendon readers every week. In April, 2026:

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- 228 visitors spent an hour or more on the site
- 32 people downloaded the PDF of the Garden Club Scholarship application
- 59 people downloaded the most recent Small Business Shopping Map (updated continuously!)
- 396 people reached the site through a link on Facebook and 81 through a link on the town website
- The *Courier's* Facebook page has over 1,700 followers

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:

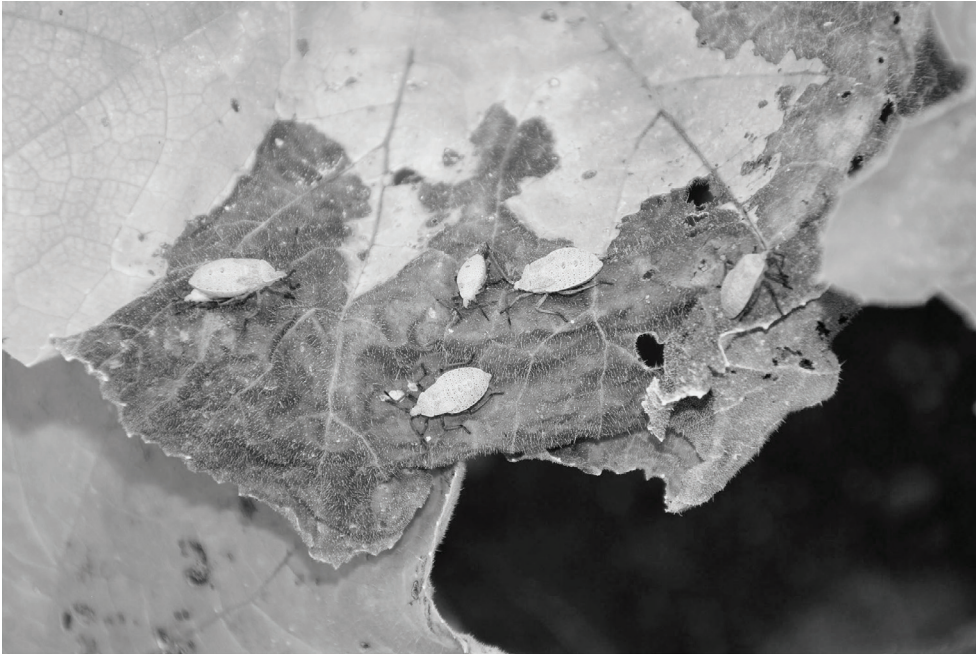
- **Free** ad design services for our paying advertisers, if desired – change your ad as often as you want, at no extra charge!
- Discounted annual rate for advertisers who commit to a full year of weekly ads
- Automatic placement of any business card or double business card ad in the monthly print addition, 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

Eco-Friendly Ways to Manage Squash Bugs



Squash bugs feeding on a plant, resulting in leaf spotting.
Photo courtesy of MelindaMyers.com

by Melinda Myers

When growing pumpkins, squash, gourds and melons watch for the squash bug. Their feeding damage can cause leaf spotting, damage to the fruit and in severe cases wilting of the plant.

This insect overwinters as an adult in sheltered locations under plant debris, rocks and around buildings. The 1/2" to 3/4" gray or dark brown adults emerge in spring and begin feeding, mating and laying eggs on plant members of the squash family.

Both adults and immature nymphs move quickly and shelter under the leaves during the day. Female squash bugs lay up to 200 eggs in clusters on the underside of leaves. Look for the eggs, often where the veins meet forming a V, and crush them to help manage this pest. There may be eggs, nymphs and adults on the plants at the same time so watch for and be prepared to manage all stages as needed.

Keep plants healthy as older, sturdier plants are more tolerant of their feeding. Consider growing these plants on trellises where the plant tends to be less susceptible to this pest.

Manage weeds, remove plant debris and avoid straw mulch that can provide hiding spots for squash bugs.

Trap these insects by placing boards on the ground near the plants. These insects will congregate under the boards overnight. In the morning lift the boards, collect the insects and drop them into a can of soapy water.

Grow blue Hubbard squash as a trap plant for both squash bugs and squash vine borers. Plant this squash three to four weeks prior to other members of the squash family and at the perimeter of the garden at least several feet away. Both insects prefer the blue Hubbard squash, focusing their feeding on this plant instead of desirable plants. Do continue to monitor the other squash plants as well.

Placing floating row covers over seeds and transplants at planting can help reduce the risk of both squash bugs and squash vine borer. Loosely cover the planting area and secure the row cover edges to keep these pests out. Use this method where these insects were not previously a problem. Remove the cover as soon as female flowers appear for pollination and fruit formation to occur.

Rotating plantings, if space allows, is an excellent way to reduce the risk of these and other insect pests and diseases. Crop rotation involves growing a series of unrelated crops in the same area over several years. Clean up the garden in fall by removing weeds and plant debris that can provide winter homes for this pest.

Monitor this insect and employ the appropriate eco-friendly management strategies to help ensure an abundant harvest. These efforts will be rewarded with plenty of produce to enjoy and share with others.

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

Financial Focus®

Sustainable investing means investing with purpose

When you think about investing, you probably want your money to grow. But maybe you also want it to make a positive difference in the world while you continue pursuing your financial goals. That's the foundation of sustainable investing – an approach that considers environmental, social and governance (ESG) factors alongside traditional financial analysis.

Sustainable investing allows you to support better business practices through your investment choices. It looks at how companies address issues ranging from climate change to worker well-being to corporate ethics. At its core, it's about aligning investments with personal values while still focusing on long-term financial outcomes.

Here are the three main areas of sustainable investing:

- Environmental considerations include how companies respond to climate change, use natural resources and manage pollution.
- Social factors address workforce well-being, product safety and efforts to reduce social inequities.
- Governance focuses on corporate behavior, ethics policies and financial transparency.

You may wonder whether investing sustainably means sacrificing returns. Research suggests it doesn't. New York University's Stern Center for Sustainable Business reviewed more than 1,000 studies from 2015-20 and found that incorporating ESG factors does not inherently diminish returns, and in many cases is associated with improved financial performance. As with any investment approach, it's important to focus on high-quality investments that help support more consistent long-term returns.

Sustainable investing can take several forms:

- ESG-intentional strategies spread out your investments and have clear goals for choosing companies that follow strong environmental, social and governance practices.
- Sustainable thematic strategies focus on specific issues, such as clean energy or water conservation.
- Impact investments go a step further, targeting measurable environmental or social outcomes. Because they prioritize more narrow, specific objectives, they may carry higher volatility and potentially lower returns.

One concern you may hear about is "greenwashing," which happens when companies or funds exaggerate their environmental efforts. To help prevent this, the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission created a rule in 2023 that requires any fund with "ESG" in its name to keep at least 80% of its assets in ESG-aligned investments.

Another challenge is data consistency. Today, 99% of S&P 500 companies report ESG metrics, according to the Center for Audit Quality, but different rating providers still use different methods. Looking at relative rankings can help you compare companies and mutual funds in a more consistent way.

Deciding whether to include sustainable investments in your portfolio really depends on your values and financial goals. You can build a well-diversified portfolio with or without them. A qualified financial advisor can help you understand whether adding sustainable investments fits your overall strategy and makes sense for your situation.

As more companies disclose ESG data and more funds offer sustainable options, investors have increasing opportunities to align their portfolios with their values – without sacrificing their financial objectives



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News, events, police logs, obituaries, community directory
and archives of every previous issue back to September, 2019
winchendoncourier.net

Read it on your phone!
Uploaded every Thursday night

Winchendon News

Murdock Middle High School’s 2nd Annual Arts Fest Expands to Toy Town



Art Teacher Katie Walsh and student artist Jude Woodrum pose in front of his ceramic work
Photo by Jill Sackett

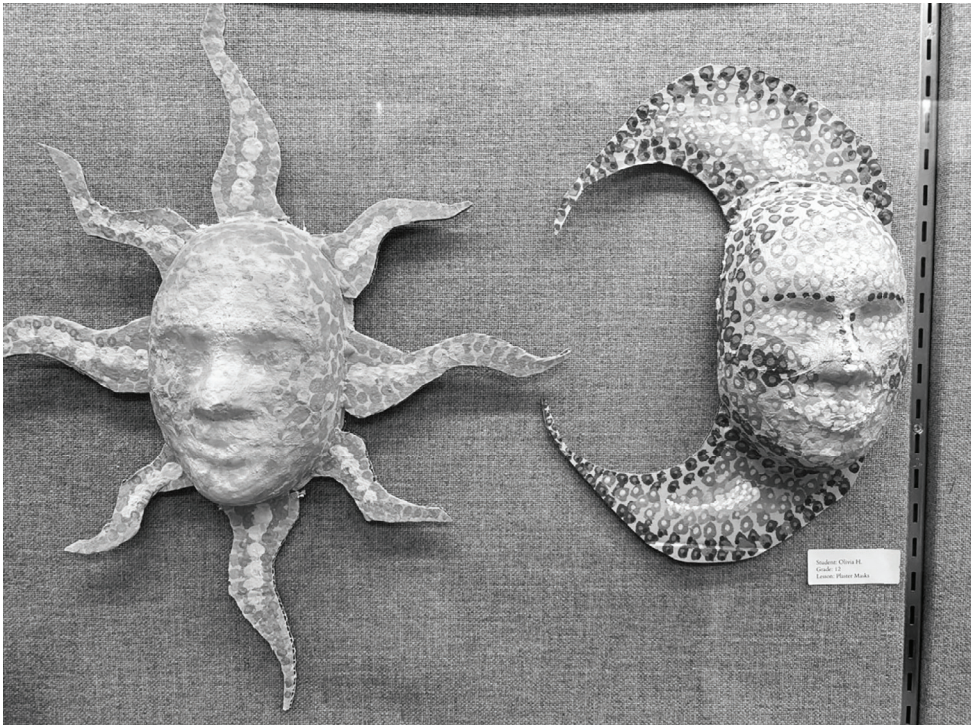
by Jill Nicholson Sackett

More students...more inclusion...and a chance to see the Murdock Public School system’s music program from beginner through senior musicians. After a successful debut last year, the Murdock Middle High School reprised its Arts Festival on May 13, 2026. The ambitious event was led by Murdock Art Teacher Katie Walsh, Murdock Music Teacher Mia Stenberg, and Toy Town Music Teacher Zach Frederick.



The Festival kicked off with an art exhibit set up throughout the second floor of the high school. An impressive variety of student art, ranging from paintings, sketches, paper-mache and ceramics lined the hallways. Ms. Walsh was on hand to answer questions and direct visitors. She enthusiastically noted “Having an artistic voice is so important. Sometimes at this age students aren’t as eager to use their verbal voice—this gives them another way to show their creativity.” Perhaps unique to Murdock, a good deal of art was painted directly on the hallway walls in mural fashion. Some murals were dedicated to different graduating classes, giving students an opportunity to leave behind a bit of artistic legacy. The end result was a network of very colorful and engaging corridors.

Another display featured the Winchendon Banner Project. Students in Illustration and Design, in collaboration with HEAL Winchendon, created banner art to beautify the streets of Winchendon. Students were asked to reflect on what they appreciate most about our town, and their hopes and



Plaster Masks by Senior Olivia H.
Photo by Jill Sackett

dreams for its future. Their bold designs used a variety of media, and a number will be chosen for banner fabrication. Keep an eye out later this year for the appearance of these new, eye-catching banners.

The Festival wrapped up with a music concert held in the auditorium, which was filled to capacity with parents and students alike. Mr. Frederick kicked things off with the 22-member 4th grade band. The youngsters played classic beginner band pieces such as “London Bridge” and “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star.” The 26-member 5th grade band then took the stage. Their more advanced pieces included Beethoven’s “Ode to Joy” and “When the Saints Go Marching In.” These young musicians form the bedrock music program that will hopefully grow in numbers as they matriculate to middle and high school.

Ms. Stenberg then took the stage for music featuring the middle and high school students. The 12-member middle school band played the theme from “Star Wars,” a slow movement from Beethoven’s 7th Symphony, and finished with “Mechanical Monsters,” full of special sound effects. The 7-member high school band took us back to Star Wars with the “Cantina Band,” followed by “Ritual Dance.” They then jazzed it up with Michael Jackson’s “Beat It,” and closed with “Chariots of Fire.”

The middle and high school choirs carried the second half of the concert. The eight middle schoolers sang the whimsical “If I Were a Cat” and the traditional tune “Chumbara.” The 16-member high school choir sang the contemplative “When I Close My Eyes,” the soothing “Seal Lullaby” and a rendition of “Agnus Dei.” They closed with Sam Cooke’s “A Change is Gonna Come.” The choirs combined forces to perform two final numbers: “I See the Light: from the popular musical “Tangled,” and Katy Perry’s “Roar.”

Throughout the evening different student musicians took turns at the microphone, introducing and providing a short background on each piece. Thus, our young people got to practice a little public speaking along with making music.

All in all, it was a fitting showcase for the Murdock Public Schools art and music program, and it was encouraging to see the community turn out in support of these budding young artists.



Mr. Frederick and the 4th Graders Play to a Packed Auditorium.
Photo by Jill Sackett



Ms. Stenberg Conducts the High School Choir
Photo by Jill Sackett

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.

Winchendon Business People - Fill Out the Survey About Your Experiences and Challenges!

The Town of Winchendon Economic Development Task Force is working to strengthen Winchendon’s local economy—and your input matters! If you’re a business owner, we want to hear your thoughts on what’s working, what’s missing, and where we should focus moving forward. Take the survey at the link below today!

<https://forms.gle/bfZfWqfPEdmbFgCR9>

Farmers, Homesteaders, Crafters: Vending Spots Still Open for the 2026 Winchendon Farmers Market!

If you are a farmer, producer, homesteader or crafter and would like to have a table at the Winchendon Farmers Market, there’s still space available! The 2026 season will begin on May 16, and the Market sets up every Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at G.A.R. Park next to the Old Murdock Senior Center (52 Murdock Ave). The Market is rain or shine—in inclement weather it moves inside the Senior Center. The application form to sign up is at <https://www.winchendonfarmersmarket.org>.

Fill out the Beals Memorial Library’s Community Survey!

Online survey or printable PDF at www.bealslibrary.org/survey

Also available at the library and various places around town.

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”

2025 Town Reports Now Available

The 2025 Town Reports are available to residents at the Town Clerk’s office, Winchendon Town Hall, 109 Front Street.

Toy Town FYIs

Transfer Station Hours

Wednesday 12:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Thursday 8:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m. (June 1 to September 30)

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.

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

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/



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Winchendon News

Candidates Answer Questions and Explain Their Views at Winchendon Candidates' Night Forum



From left, Candidates for School Committee Karen Kast, Alyssa Campbell, Michael Gaynor and Yvonne Senecal, Candidate for Board of Health and Board of Selectmen Barbara Zisk, and candidate for Board of Health Monique Connor

Photo copyright Town of Winchendon

by Inanna Arthen

On Tuesday, April 28, Beals Memorial Library sponsored a Candidates' Night forum for the candidates running for town offices in Winchendon's Town Election. All candidates were invited to participate, but some had conflicts or chose not to take part. The forum, which took place in the Winchendon Town Hall 2nd floor auditorium, was livecast and recorded by WinchendonTV and the full video is available to view on WinchendonTV. (<https://winchendon.cablecast.tv/internetchannel/show/379?site=1>)

The forum was moderated by Paul Hackett of Cornerstone Church and the HEAL Collaborative. Dr. Maureen Ward served as "timekeeper" for the candidates' answers. About 25 residents attended in person as audience members. Mr. Hackett had a prepared list of questions to ask. When all those questions had been answered, audience members were invited to come forward and ask questions, for as long as time allowed.

Participating candidates were: Karen Kast (School Committee), Alyssa Campbell (School Committee), Michael Gaynor (School Committee), Yvonne Senecal (School Committee), Barbara Zisk (Board of Selectmen and Board of Health), and Monique Connor (Board of Health).

The candidates were first invited to introduce themselves and give an opening statement, with Karen Kast beginning.

Ms. Kast said, "I have sat on the Winchendon School Committee for six years now, but prior to that I have overall forty years of experience in education. I started advocating for students at the age of 15 as a student, and throughout the forty years, I have held multiple positions where I have been both a parent on the other side of the table, advocating for both my students and multiple students throughout multiple districts. I am a trained special education advocate and certified through the Federation for Children with Special Needs. I am also a certified trainer for the Federation for Children with Special Needs." The district has made improvements, but there are still more it could make, and she wants to continue her work with the Committee.

Ms. Campbell said, "I am a lifelong resident of Winchendon with a brief little stay away when my husband was in the military and I worked in DC. I have been teaching for about ten years. I subbed here in Winchendon for about five or six years. My children were here in the district, and now I teach high school in Fitchburg. I teach some of the most challenging students in our district, and it's my absolute privilege to teach them every day. And I believe that the students are the priority in any organization, specifically the School Committee, and that is why I'm running."

Mr. Gaynor said, "My education background is I have a bachelor's degree in political science from Boston University, a Master of Public Administration from the University of Pittsburgh, a Master of Business Administration from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst and my master's in education, with a secondary concentration in history, is from the University of Massachusetts, Boston. I've been a teacher now for approximately 18 years. I've taught pretty

much every subject and most grade levels—elementary, first and second grade, as well as middle school, sixth, seventh and eighth, and then secondary history, nine through 12. I've taught every subject that you can think of, subjects as diverse as psychology to biology to math, seventh grade math, and then also algebra and geometry at the high school level. I've also taught science. I've also taught social studies and history, world history and US history. So I have a wealth of knowledge when it comes to the different curriculums. Currently, I'm a special education teacher like Alyssa. I also teach in the Fitchburg public schools." He added, "I moved to this town about five years ago, and I really believe that we can do great things in the Winchendon Public Schools, but we need to invest in our schools. I really feel like I have a lot of experience and education that I can bring to the table."

Ms. Senecal said, "I have lived here for forty-plus years. I am a retired registered nurse with a 50 year career in pretty much every phase of healthcare, most of it has acute health care. I'm running for School Committee because I think our kids deserve better. We need to dramatically improve educational outcomes while staying fiercely responsible with taxpayer dollars. I don't see that happening. I see our schools struggling, students struggling, and I see money being frivolously spent, and that really concerns me as a resident and a taxpayer and a parent. I would like to see the dollars stay with the students in the classroom and not go to other things...it's important that our students grow up and be lifelong learners and productive adults."

Ms. Zisk said, "I'm a lifelong resident of Winchendon. I care about our community. I've spent time paying attention, attending meetings, listen to residents and seeing people feel unheard. I want to be a voice for the residents. I've attended many meetings. I make my voice heard. I ask questions. I'm not afraid to ask the hard questions. I like to bring forward more transparency, and work hard to help move Winchendon forward. I am a small business owner. I have family here. What is the future of Winchendon for our children, our grandchildren? That's what I'm focused on...it's about you, the taxpayers, and being transparent, honest and having that open communication."

Ms. Connor said, "I am a lifelong resident, and I was an EMT for the town of Winchendon many years. I also worked at Heywood hospital. I worked at the Winchendon Health Center, so a lot of people I know from there, and I'm just going to continue making sure that the health of our community is at the forefront. There are some things that we want to change, but people also have to understand that there's laws that we have to follow as well."

The next question was addressed to all the candidates, Mr. Hackett said: "What are your top two or three priorities if elected? And how would you balance those priorities with the financial realities currently facing the town and its residents?"

Ms. Campbell answered first, saying, "I think the most important thing is that the money that

we are spending on our schools is going to the right place, that it is being being thought fully and carefully distributed, and that we are doing the best for our future and our future students... Everyone feels the financial constraints in their household...Unfortunately, things still need to be paid for, our students still need to get an education. Our buildings still need to be updated. If we own our own homes, we have to do that upkeep ourselves. We don't let our roof go, we don't let our windows go, we have to update them, and that goes to the buildings and the curriculum and all the things that go with the school." Money comes first, after the students and faculty, she said. "If you don't address the buildings and the brand, then you are unsuccessful."

Mr. Gaynor spoke about the financial constraints. "We need to move forward as a community and vote to pass this funding for the MSBA reimbursement, which is 78 percent," he said. Otherwise, the buildings will deteriorate more. "Instead of pressing for an override and just focusing on cutting taxes, let's invest in our schools." He added, "We need to recruit and retain the most best qualified faculty and staff that we can. We want people to make a career here in Winchendon. We don't want to see so much turnover with our teachers and also with our administrators." Federal funding is being cut, and the community needs to step up and invest in our children, because they're our future leaders.

Ms. Senecal said she believed in consolidating the schools and regionalizing. "Every single dollar must go to the classroom, period, our students, our teachers, are working hard, it's time to give them the support to work smarter." She said that money has been wasted, and her second priority is to "fight over those dollars and cents so that we can spend judiciously and wisely."

Ms. Zisk said, "I'd like to look at lowering taxes and improving finances. We need to start there. I think that needs to be looked at hard and long. Start with responsible budgeting, control and unnecessary spending, planning ahead, looking for efficiencies, pursuing grants, encouraging smart economic development that broadens the tax base. Make sure the taxpayers dollars are being used wisely, long term financial stability, not short short term fixes." Ms. Connor said that with Board of Health, "the finances are at a bare minimum." The only salaried employee is the health agent. On the town side, she said, "I feel a lot more structure should be done with the budget, with the schools. Why are these buildings in disrepair? Why weren't they taken care of?"

Ms. Kast wrapped up, saying, "My first priority is, has been, and always will be, students, period." This is the mandate for school committees is Mass General Law, she stated. "The second priority is to make sure that our budget is always balanced, and that we make sure that we spend every dollar wisely. And I know that it's hard when we look at the amount of money that is spent on the school budget, but what a lot of people don't understand is that we get about 85

Winchendon News

CANDIDATES

continued from page 18

percent of our school dollars from the state, and... only \$3 million actually comes from the town of Winchendon for our budget in Winchendon Public Schools. All the rest come from the state, federal and grants, so we want to spend that money as wisely as possible."

Mr. Hackett's next question was for Board of Health candidates. "Following the recent fire at the former Alaska Freezer factory, there's a renewed interest in the number of abandoned factories in town, as well as the contaminants which may exist on those properties. How would you approach this issue as a Board of Selectmen or Board of Health member?"

Ms. Zisk said, "As for the abandoned buildings, we need to take a hard look and we need to figure out how we can regenerate those buildings. What can we use them for? The fire that had happened, that's a tough subject, because we have buildings that as long as the property owners own them and they're up kept on their taxes, there's not a whole lot that the town can do." She said that the community needs to see what it can do to clean up situations. She wants to work with the boards and the Town Manager on the issue.

Ms. Connor said that this issue was also an issue everywhere else. Buildings "past their prime" need to be looked at. Solutions, even clean-ups, can be very expensive for the town. But resolving the issues would be good for the town financially.

Mr. Hackett's next question was for School Committee candidates. "As you know, school enrollment has declined by more than 450 students over the past several years, from about 1,280 to a little over 1,100 today. How would you address challenges like regionalization, school building consolidation and student overflow, and what do you see as the root causes?"

Mike Gaynor began by saying he was open minded and willing to talk about regionalization. However, he said, regionalizing can take away the independence and autonomy of a school district. "We need to look at ways to solve the problems that we're having here internally, and invest in our schools," he said. Consolidation of buildings runs into the issue that there are legal requirements for space in classrooms, especially for Special Education students. It's important for students to feel safe in their classrooms and schools, and not have to worry about the roofs and windows. "I believe that if you truly love a district and believe in that district, you don't school choice your kids, you keep them in your local school district," he said.

Ms. Senecal said there are a lot of reasons families choose out—better education, perceived "negative influences," but an underperforming district is paramount. She is in favor of regionalization, she said, and of consolidating students into Memorial and Murdock. With regionalization, costs such as maintenance and administration are shared. "I think there's benefits that have not been explored," she said.

Ms. Kast said that the regionalization question has been going on for a long time, and enrollment has been declining everywhere since the 1960s. Winchendon is not a "failing" district, she stated—the district's report card on the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) website shows that. A major program is that the district doesn't have the money for art programs or AP programs that help students become D1 prospects.

Ms. Campbell wrapped up, explaining that she school-choiced her children for personal family reasons and not because she had issues with Winchendon. She works full time for another district, and it made sense for them. As far as Winchendon, she said, they could look at building up some of the programs Ms. Kast mentioned, and bringing in more programs for the trades. Not every student who wants to go to

Monty Tech can get in. "I don't think there is a magic solution here, and I think regionalization comes with costs that we are looking at that we don't realize, and it's not an easy fix. Also, we lose our identity. The Murdock Devils and the community here is really important."

The next question was also for the School Committee candidates. "You guys have discussed a lot of plans to improve academic achievement and address some learning gaps. So give me some specifics, more details around how you would do that. How would you measure that the approach that you're suggesting is actually working?"

Ms. Senecal began, saying, "If you expect kids to only do the minimum, they're going to do the minimum. And I think it's important to expect high standards, to have high standards for our children, and I think then you get more of what you expect." She sees the state MCAS testing as the best way to measure the students' progress. "I would disagree that we are still in remediation with the state, and we are still an underperformance district," she said, saying that the upper grades are not improving in MCAS scores. "I think that working with the teaching staff and finding out from them what they think works, and letting teachers teach and letting parents parent," is best, she said, and schools should be "parenting" kids.

Ms. Kast said that the School Committee has limited powers to decide how curriculums are taught and there are laws and regulations affecting how assessments are made, so the question as asked isn't really relevant.

Ms. Campbell said, "I would be a millionaire if I could figure that out." She said that she sets high expectations in her classrooms, but students are different now, they can just sit in class and not do anything they're directed to to—just do nothing. "The students we have in front of us are not the students that these curriculums were made for five and 10 years ago. And we have to address the social, emotional learning of the students, and we have to address the world that the kids are living in right now and the new normal that they live in in order to be able to reach them, because these kids are not buying in. And teachers are exhausted," she said. She didn't know an easy fix except to keep on trying new things.

Mr. Gaynor disagreed with Ms. Senecal, saying that Winchendon schools are not in remediation and are not underperforming in comparison with the entire state. "Our dual enrollment program is number one in the state, where students continue classes at Mount Wachusett Community College and earn college credits while they're in high school," he said, and 5th grade MCAS scores show "significant improvement." He feels that early literacy programs are "vitally important", mentioned several programs by name. He also said that social emotional learning programs are "critically important." He added, "We need to understand how best to support our students in their needs, folks, the most important thing we do is keep our students safe. Without safety, they can't be teaching and learning."

Mr. Hackett asked Ms. Zisk, "Can you explain how what you believe is a difference between the Board of Selectmen's role and the Town Manager's role?" Ms. Zisk's concise reply was, "The Board of Selectmen oversees the town. The Town Manager is in charge of day to day activities."

Mr. Hackett then asked the Board of Health candidates the same question, but for the Board of Health versus the health agent.

Ms. Connor said that the health inspector does the leg work, going out with the building inspector to look at properties, while the Board of Health handles permits for things such as food trucks, buildings, restaurants, tobacco and so on. "Ultimately we will decide whether they get their permit or their Title V so that's kind of the difference between them," she said.

Ms. Zisk spoke at length about personally going out with the health agent on Title V inspections and how the Board and the health agent work "side by side". "I think that's something that has changed within the last year or so, because we really are working together and positively, and I don't feel like it's a fight when I come to a meeting and I really enjoy it, and I really enjoy working with Jim, who is our health agent, and learning about what goes on with the inspections, with the Title V, and I've talked a lot with the building inspector."

Mr. Hackett then asked the School Committee candidates, "Can you give me your understanding between the School Committee's role versus a Superintendent's role?"

Ms. Kast began, saying, "The School Committee's role is to set policy and procedure, to oversee the budget and set the budget, to hire the Superintendent. We actually have final say on hiring of a few other positions. In addition to that, we work with the Superintendent, and...we also oversee the curriculum. We approve each of our school's handbooks, and we actually are responsible for knowing all of the laws and regulations and multiple other things." She added that the Superintendent is responsible for the day-to-day work. She turned policies into procedures. She oversees hiring principals but not teachers. "She sets some of the goals for the schools in general, and comes back to us. She starts the budget process every year and brings it to us as a proposal," Ms Kast concluded.

Ms. Campbell said that Ms. Kast had answered very well, adding, "the most important thing is that both the Superintendent and the School Committee can cohesively work together, that they're both strong in each of their own roles, so that the town can get the best out of both. And then if they're both working at capacity and working together, if the School Committee is working with each other, effectively, and with the Superintendent then things go smoothly."

Mr. Gaynor agreed with the previous answers but added that the School Committee needs to collaborate actively with everyone, and be involved. The Committee should visit the schools, know the faculty and administrators, see the classes in action, understand what the business manager is doing. Committee members should also have skills in things like strategic planning. They are the "governing body" for the schools. They need to choose a Superintendent that will stay with the district and not have a lot of administration turnover.

Ms. Senecal agree with the previous speakers but added that the School Committee and Superintendent shouldn't be too cozy, and shouldn't be unwilling to challenge each other when appropriate. "You're sometimes coming from different places, and sometimes that positional challenge can be very productive," she said.

Mr. Hackett's last prepared question, for all the candidates, was about the upcoming debt exclusion vote for the three MSBA school projects. "I want you to tell me what factors you would consider when you have to evaluate large capital projects, like the school roof replacements, and how would you approach a decision like this that affects the taxpayers as well as things that need to be done in the town?"

Ms. Zisk began, saying, "We want to look at not placing an unnecessary burden on the taxpayers. Large projects require careful planning, accurate cost estimates and transparency from the start. I think that's where we've had a little bit of a problem with some large projects that have gone on in our town, is you've been faced with, you have a project in front of you, you get told it's going to cost this much amount, and then in the end, it goes above and beyond, and that ends up on the backs of the taxpayers. When residents see additional costs, it raises concerns and

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underscores the need for stronger oversight.”

Ms. Connor agreed, but said, “unfortunately, every town is going to have—it’s just like your home, so you don’t have the money, you don’t do the project you want to do, or you find another way to do it.” She added, “we need to prioritize, and we also need to think of the future” and when something like a Proposition 2-1/2 override comes up, the townspeople need to be making the decision together.

Ms. Kast emphasized that the school roofs were at or beyond their normal forecast lifespan, so it wasn’t a question of their not having been maintained. “They were well-maintained,” she said. She went on, “When we are looking at any kind of maintenance project, I don’t care if it’s for \$100 or a high cost project, I first, my first question is, is it necessary? Like, do we need to do it right now, and is it something that puts safety at risk for whether it’s for our students or for the people of this town?...in regard to the ballot questions, we have safety issues and we have dripping roofs and other issues. So the ballot questions are a safety issue for our students. And so then come the finances and how we can pay for them.”

Ms. Campbell said spending money was always a hard question because everyone brought their own background and way of life to the decisions. She agreed that they have to look at safety. “I’ve gone to a couple meetings, and I’ve listened to the projects, and I’ve looked at the cost, but from what I understand, I would much rather make a decision not today. Thank god, I don’t have to do that right now. But I’d like to be informed fully, and I’d like to look at the costs to our town, if we choose it. What happens if we wait and then we don’t have that reimbursement or that safety net, and we have to incur all of that cost with a closed building, or, God forbid someone gets hurt. So I think it’s really important to check all of the boxes and to look at all of the scenarios. Money is scary, and nobody wants to be the one up here saying, Yes, we should spend more money. And that’s not what I’m saying. I’m saying we have to look at all of the scenarios and do what’s best for our town.”

Mr. Gaynor said, “The problem with government is that it’s not proactive and preventive, but it’s rather reactive and responsive, and that’s at all levels, the municipal level, your cities and towns and counties, at the state level and at the federal level. Why do we have to wait for a roof to collapse and, God forbid, injure or even kill one of our children. We need to invest in our schools. We need to repair these roofs. You can say, it’s going to increase my taxes. But in five years, or 10 years, the roofs are going to have to be repaired anyhow. And you have, right now, 78 percent of \$20 million, \$13 million, is going to be reimbursed from this from the state. The other \$7 million, is that really going to come from the taxpayers? They’re going to do municipal bonds financing, right? I myself am voting on all three of the ballot questions because I believe in repairing the schools and making the schools last. So I believe in capital improvement programs and projects I and I think that is fiscal responsibility, transparency and accountability, and ultimately our fiduciary responsibility as a school committee, and as voters in this town.”

Ms. Senecal said it’s a tough question, and it’s hard to put on the backs of voters on top of the \$1.9 million override last year. “I am not for this whole project. I think I see certainly merit in doing the Murdock building. I see merit in doing the Memorial School. I do not see the merit in using any money to improve Toy Town. I think that school has passed its life span, and I think that consolidation is the response to that.” She

added, “We are a poor community, and we have a high percentage of people on fixed income, and so now you’re looking at another tax increase on top of the one we already had, and you have a lot of people who are going to say, well, do I take my heart medication today or do I have lunch?” But, she concluded, “It’s a tough call, and I think in the ballot box we’re each going to have to make that decision for ourselves.”

Audience member Darlene Rossi came forward to ask the School Committee candidates about the COVID policies that were put in place during the pandemic (March 2020-early 2021) and if they would have done things differently, in hindsight, or would do things differently in a similar future situation.

Ms. Kast said that she had moved to Winchendon in February of 2020 and was elected to the School Committee via a write-in campaign that year. “So I cut my teeth in the Winchendon School Committee during that whole thing,” she said. “But all of that was pretty by the State Department of Education, so we didn’t have a lot of say in that. There were a few things we had to vote on, masks in the schools. That’s really the only thing that we got to make a decision on.” She herself was home with COVID during the votes. How each School Committee member voted would be a matter of public record and can be looked up in the minutes, Ms. Kast told Ms. Rossi. Ms. Campbell said that since she hadn’t been on the Committee at that time, she really couldn’t give an opinion.

Mr. Gaynor said, “COVID really did have a significant impact on our students. We’re seeing the educational gaps now. For example, I teach a reading development phonics class with sixth grade students, 11, 12, years old, and they were the students that were impacted by COVID. They were home right when they should have been in first grade, second grade learning how to read, so I can see the gaps. Now I have students that are borderline illiterate that cannot read at that age, and it’s a travesty. Nonetheless, COVID is real, folks. You can be a COVID denier if you want, but it was just as bad as the 1917 flu pandemic. 1.3 million Americans died of COVID. 7 million people worldwide died. I myself received eight vaccinations because I have co-morbidities.

“But there had to have been a better way to deal with the COVID pandemic. And I don’t think the state or the federal government, for that matter, were really prepared for this. And one thing we did learn from all of this is...our kids need to be in school. They can’t be home schooled with a robot or an Android, a computer “Plato” as their educator. They need to be with their peers. They need to be in schools. That’s why the social-emotional learning piece is so important. We saw that when students weren’t socializing with their peers and learning with their peers, they failed.”

Ms. Senecal said, “As a registered nurse, I was working in the emergency room through the height of COVID and I got to tell you, I saw no benefits to masking. The masks that people were forced to wear were ineffective at best and damaging at worst, especially when you’re trying to mask children or psychotic patients. And I think there was a whole lot of misinformation and and scaremongering and awful things that went down during COVID, and people did die, but usually they died from the treatment, not necessarily from COVID. I am not a COVID denier. I think that it was a legitimate issue, but...if we had another pandemic, I would look at things differently, because I think that common sense just took a vacation. The six feet was random, the masks were random. None of that was effective by any kind of scientific method...I think that the service that was done to our children during COVID for no good reason is is unmanageable. I can’t even express how frustrating that makes me.” She would definitely do things differently,

she said.

Ms. Campbell said that anyone listening to reach out to her for clarification on anything she had said this evening. “I’m very passionate about Winchendon. I am passionate about the schools and our students and our faculty, and I want to bring my expertise, my school knowledge, to the School Committee, and to help in any way that I can. But I’m never going to answer a question unless I am fully prepared to do so. I’m going to only answer with facts. I’m passionate, but it’s got me in trouble before. So it’s not because I’m trying to skirt it’s because I’m trying to get my ducks in a row and make sure I’m giving a thoughtful and honest answer. So if anybody has questions or is questioning any of my motives, please reach out and ask, because I’m very transparent and probably an over-sharer.”

Mr. Gaynor said, “I just want to put out there that there’s no incentive or personal interest for me to run for the School Committee. I do this for the residents and for your children, for our children. I myself have a passion for education. I have all my life. I’ve always felt that my role was to serve the public. I served my country honorably for eight years in the US Army Reserves as a combat medic, but I feel like there has been some mixed messages out there on social media, although social media is an important platform. And for anyone that does have further questions, for me, you can reach out at mikegaynor4wsc@gmail.com. So I feel like I have a lot to offer, a breadth of experience, a wealth of education. And I feel like I can make a tremendous difference in our students’ lives. I consider myself a visionary, a leader and a change agent, not just a day to day manager.”

Ms. Senecal said, “I mainly want the kids to get the quality education that they deserve. I am concerned about where we’ve been. I’m concerned about where we’re going, and I just want to make sure that we leave no stone unturned in giving their kids a quality education. I think their future is so important...I think that we need to see some improvement, and I am also a change maker, and also from the outside, which I think gives a different perspective.”

Ms. Zisk said, “I care about Winchendon. I care about the community. I care about the people. I care about the future that we are headed and what we are building together. I have many people, several times a week, reach out to me and ask me questions. I attend many meetings as they know and they reach out. And some people are not comfortable attending meetings and presenting their questions, so oftentimes they’ll reach out to me. Could you bring this question forward for me? I’m a voice for Winchendon. I’m a voice for the community. I’m a voice for you, all of you, the taxpayers, every single one of you, and that’s important. Communication is important, and I think transparency is important. And I firmly believe that if anybody has any questions, any thoughts, any suggestions, any ideas, feel free to I’d love to have discussions. If I don’t have an answer, I will find the answer. I will reach out to the people that have the answers to help you.”

Ms. Connor said, “So with the Board of Health, although we have many state laws and regulations that we have to abide by, I want to be able to have that and be able to make things better. Are there things, as far as healthwise go, that we should be taking care of? Maybe, but we’re working on it. Sometimes we’re restricted to laws and regulations. So how do we make things better? Communication is another thing. I want communication out there. More more communication. We do have a Facebook page. So I want to be able to post health issues, things that concern us on there to get the word out.”

All of the candidates thanked everyone who had attended during their remarks.

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