Not Even COVID-19 Stops the Easter Bunny

By Michelle Sanford
Staff Reporter

During a remote April 7 meeting, the Mendon Select Board reviewed the latest draft warrant for the Annual Town Meeting with Town Counsel present.

Just prior to the discussion, Town Administrator Kim Newman briefly discussed the date of the Annual Town Meeting, which was rescheduled to June 1 due to Covid-19 concerns. However, Newman stated there is a chance that the June 1 date will again have to change depending on how things play out regarding the virus. “We’ll only move the date again if we have to,” she said.

The draft warrant that evening showed a total of 33 articles, however, during the review, the Select Board voted to withdraw a number of articles that weren’t deemed necessary and therefore could be pushed off until the fall Special Town Meeting.

The majority of the articles removed were bylaw changes. Select Board member Lawney Tino reiterated that his hope was to keep the Annual Town Meeting warrant to mostly financial articles if possible.

One of those financial articles concerns an override for the Mendon Upton Regional School District. The total amount of the override for Mendon had not been finalized yet. A number of Community Preservation Committee sponsored articles will remain on the warrant that include funding requests for various projects. One such article is seeking $10,000 of CPA funding for engineering costs needed for projects at the Town Beach to be completed over several years, including addressing drainage/stormwater run-off issues, fixing certain landscaping problems, repairing retaining walls, cleaning up the playground area and purchasing some equipment. The engineering study will help develop a plan to address the work.

The next article on the warrant is also seeking CPA funding to install gutters on the town’s historic records room building totaling approximately $1,000. “Water is pouring into the foundation,” explained Dan Byer, who sits on the Historical Commission.

A number of other articles will be voted on including the new fiscal year budget, which as of April 9, still had to be vetted by the Finance Committee and a public hearing held. Another financial article is requesting funding to purchase or lease a fire pumper truck.

Chief Bill Kessler explained there is a small chance the Department could be awarded grant funding for the truck that would finance much of the costs. “Our share will be five percent of the truck if we get the grant,” he said. If the grant is not awarded, Kessler stated he was fine with pushing the purchase off until November when free cash is certified. Standard articles on the warrant that are voted on each year will include approving revolving fund spending limits, funding for the Assessor’s cyclical inspection and the update valuation and approving spending chapter 90 funding.

After the Board reviewed each article, they agreed to execute the warrant pending the approved amendments and Town Counsel’s approval.

Mendon Nearing Finalized Warrant

By Michelle Sanford
Staff Reporter

Reschedule Town Meeting

Due to COVID-19 concerns, the Upton Board of Selectmen unanimously voted to suspend the May Annual Town Meeting and the Annual Town Election and are now trying to reschedule new dates; likely in June. The decision to move the election and meeting came during an April 7 remote meeting.

During the meeting, the Board also reviewed the latest draft of the Annual Town Meeting warrant which contained roughly 32 articles at that point.

As the draft document was reviewed, the Board debated several articles including Article 9 to raise and appropriate $562,380 to supplement Chapter 90 funding for road improvements and projects.

Selectman Chair Stephen Matellini suggested putting off the article for a vote in November when free cash could be used instead to fund it. “With the override question, this is another raise and appropriate article. The two together would have a substantial impact I feel on our tax rate moving forward,” he explained.

However, both Selectmen Maureen D Winnell and Brett Simas believed it should be voted on during the upcoming meeting. “I’d like to put this article forward. This is for our infrastructure of the town. We’ve been on a program that has benefited the town very much,” said D Winnell.

Simas agreed. “I’m definitely mindful of the costs of the override. This has been a pretty standard expense the town has incurred that’s gone through town meeting without discussion. I think everybody is comfortable investing in this. I don’t see any benefit to putting it off until November,” he said.

The following article, Article 10, concerned funding for road and sidewalk repair and the Selectmen had moved that to committee to be completed over several years, including addressing drainage/stormwater run-off issues, fixing certain landscaping problems, repairing retaining walls, cleaning up the playground area and purchasing some equipment. The engineering study will help develop a plan to address the work.

The next article on the warrant is also seeking CPA funding to install gutters on the town’s historic records room building totaling approximately $1,000. “Water is pouring into the foundation,” explained Dan Byer, who sits on the Historical Commission.

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Upton Selectmen to Reschedule Annual Town Meeting

By Michelle Sanford
Staff Reporter

Not Even COVID-19 could stop the Easter Bunny from visiting the area. Here the bunny (aka Francoise Elise) complete with a mask did a drive by...
Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce

AREA: The Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce will be holding the following events. For more information or to register visit BlackstoneValley.org, email administrator@blackstonevalley.org, call 508-234-9090 or stop by the chamber offices, 670 Linwood Ave. Bldg A, Suite 5, Whitinsville. Quality Transitions Virtual Human Resource Coaching Seminar on Monday, April 20 and 27 at 1 p.m. Writing Effective Job Descriptions on Tuesday, April 28 at 8 a.m. Grow with Google Livestream Event National Small Business Week on Wednesday, May 6 at 12 noon.

Upton, Mendon Town Crier

and More

Google Livestream Event National Small Business Week on Wednesday, May 6 at 12 noon.

Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce

in April for on-line Sexual Assault Awareness Month activities. Together, everyone can create communities free from violence and exploitation. Please keep safe and healthy.

New Hope Has Gone Virtual

Anyone who is in a domestic or sexual violent relationship, please know New Hope is still here for you. Following Massachusetts Governor Charlie Baker's order for non-essential businesses to close because of the coronavirus pandemic, the New Hope physical offices were closed in late March. However, the organization is still providing life-saving supports to survivors of domestic and sexual violence survivors. The staff members have worked diligently to develop remote processes and procedures to continue to support those in need. All the while, prioritizing the health and safety of survivors and staff. The 24/7 Hotline (800-323-4673 HOPE) is still operating; counseling, advocacy and education is happening via telephone or through a secure virtual site. While methods may look different, survivors are still being offered the same level of professionalism and compassion. So, reach out, via phone, web site (New-Hope.org), social media and soon through a web chat function linked to the web site. Stay tuned in April for on-line sexual Assault Awareness Month activities. Together, everyone can create communities free from violence and exploitation. Please keep safe and healthy.

Caring for Emotional Health During COVID-19

Counselors at both the Mendon Senior Center and Upton Center urge seniors and all residents to take care of their emotional health during this stressful time. Fear, anxiety, isolation, sleep problems, stress and loneliness can all affect a person's emotional and physical well-being. To deal with the stresses from the current pandemic, Wellness Support Group moderator, Gail Bourassa, LLMHC, suggests the following coping strategies:

- Look for good/beautiful/funny things every day.
- Consciously take deep breaths. This process reassures the brain that all is well.
- Grosor, moan, scream, cry, laugh, etc. There is evidence that making a non-verbal sound releases considerable stress and often brings a smile. Just try it and see what happens.
- Stretch, do shoulder shrugs or just shake it out. Give the muscles that hold stress a break.
- A way to calm oneself quickly is by certain hand gestures. People fiddle with items or tuck hands when they are upset. Pressure on the palms is a calming gesture; one reason why religions around the world have a prayer position for hands. Instead of making a fist or idly fidgeting, which increase stress, try holding onto to something like a worry stone or stress ball, press hands on the flat of the legs for a second, dooiple, knit, etc.
- Distraction helps. Turn off the news and watch an entertaining show, play a game, enjoy a hobby, listen to music, read a book, take a walk or do a few exercises; they can all transport us to another place.
- Anyone who needs help to stay emotionally balanced can call the Upton Center at 508-529-4558 or the Mendon Senior Center at 508-634-6175.
- More help is available by calling 2-1-1 and choosing the CALL2TALK option. The Samaritans are available 24/7 by calling or texting their helpline at 877-870-508-529-4558 or the Mendon Senior Center at 508-634-6175.
- Another national hotline providing immediate assistance for anyone experiencing emotional turmoil due to a disaster such as COVID-19 is The Disaster Distress Helpline, 1-800-985-5990.
- This toll-free, multilingual, and confidential crisis support service is available to all residents of the United States and its territories 24/7, 365 days a year.

No Isolating for Scammers

Unfortunately, scammers have not practiced self-isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic. Instead they are trying to take advantage of everyone experiencing this crisis.

Local officials warn residents to be wary of scams. Do not give any personal information over the phone such as a Social Security number, banking information, credits card numbers or the like in response to an unsolicited call. Be wary of phoning scams requesting information or selling information pertaining to the coronavirus. Do not respond to unsolicited text messages offering deals, discounts or free services as a result of COVID-19. Ignore charities that ask for banking or personal information and offers of tests, cures, vaccines and treatments for the coronavirus. Only a doctor can order a COVID-19 test. Report suspicious testing offers to the Massachusetts Senior Medicare Patrol Program, 800-892-0890 or MA5MP.org.

The source for trusted COVID-19 information in Massachusetts is Mass.gov/covid19 and the websites for Mendon (MendonMA.gov) and Upton (UptonMA.gov).

Better Milk

Enjoy

Door to Door Home Delivery

With the Highest Quality Products

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The Unitarian Church in Mendon is one of the many Historical Landmarks in the Blackstone Heritage Corridor that photographers can take a picture of to enter the 2021 Calendar Photo Contest. Jane Bigda photo

4242. There is no limit to the number of entries, but each photo must be accompanied by a signed entry form. The contest deadline is August 14. Winners announced in September.
I Hate Change

I hate change.
I know that seems like a strong statement, but I really do. I like tradition and status-quo. I like when the same thing happens day after day, week after week, year after year.

When eating out at favorite restaurants, I always order the same meal on the menu. The one time I didn't was disappointed, so why would I order anything else?

I don't like to venture too far out of my comfort zone for choosing things like clothing or hair styles, because what if I look ridiculous and it can't be undone?

Standing in the same place while I watch the annual Memorial Day and Opening Baseball/Softball Day parades in our communities is a must, knowing that is the best spot to take pictures.

But one thing that I have realized during this time of COVID-19 is that change happens no matter how much you fight it. That it doesn't have to be something to be scared of. It should be something to embrace.

Yes, we all may not have been able to eat Easter dinner with our extended family this year, but I am sure many of us have learned how to have a virtual meal with them through Zoom.

Those of us who were never a "take-a-walk-through-the-neighborhood" type of individuals, have come to meet some of the nicest people (from 6 away!) that you wouldn't have met otherwise.

That even trying new foods while trying to support local restaurants through take-out is not only tolerable, but that maybe you found your new favorite meal.

Change is hard in the best of circumstances, but maybe the best of qualities can be mastered in the worst of times.

And although my tolerance to change may have gotten a little better over the past few weeks, one change that will still be tough for me is that I will be soon signing off as a reporter for The Town Crier.

I have truly enjoyed the past plus years covering the school related and feature events happening in Mendon, Upton, and Milford. The people that I have met have inspired me with their stories and have, without a doubt, made me a better person.

It will be bittersweet for me to read the words of another reporter as he/she covers a school budget issue or writes about a football game. I will not cry, but I will miss the people that I have come to know, work with, and have made me happy.

And although I may not have met everyone I would have liked to meet like I do on my commute to work, I am much more organized in what I buy. Local stores are working very hard to keep clean and make sure customers keep their distance. A visit to Wright's Dairy was one example of a small business doing a great job.

My son, who had to cut short his year stay in Paris, made it much cheaper.

Contacting friends and family, who I don't hear from often, by text, phone or email.

Not getting to visit with my grandchildren. As April winds down, I hope my good list gets longer and the bad much shorter very soon.

So far the spring of 2020 has been dreadful. At the very least, COVID-19 has disrupted our lives. For those, who have lost loved ones, been ill or are seeing their livelihood destroyed, it has been terrible. While not making light of anyone’s situation, I thought I’d do an assessment of my new coronavirus reality: Like tallying up the pros and cons for a decision, I thought I’d tally up the good and bad.

The Good
• Celebrating a birthday during the pandemic. Glad I am here to mark another year.
• Living on a busy street, I appreciate the decrease in traffic. The quiet has been a bonus.
• My house has never been cleaner. My daily wipe downs, vacuuming and tidying make me seem like an exemplary 1950s housewife.
• Our spring yard work is way ahead of schedule. With nothing to do on the weekends, my husband and I have cleared planting beds, trimmed back shrubs and planned our vegetable garden.
• With limited shopping options and my blitzkrieg approach, I am much more organized in what I buy. Local stores are working very hard to keep clean and make sure customers keep their distance.
• A rescheduled flight to Illinois to visit Mom (I hope) in June is much cheaper.

The Bad
• Not getting to visit with my grandchildren.
• What you fight it. That it doesn’t have to be something to be scared of.
• Cancelling an April in Paris trip to visit our son.
• New empty shelves that appear on every shopping trip. First it was sanitizing supplies and medicine, then paper goods and poultry. Now it is flour and yeast. What will it be next week?
• Cancelling a visit to my Mom in Illinois for Mother’s Day and our daughter calling off a trip home from Denver.
• Cancelling an April in Paris trip to visit our son.
• Worrying about every cough and ache, because demographically I am in a higher risk group and testing is still limited.
• Watching the news.
• Not getting to visit with my grandchildren. As April winds down, I hope my good list gets longer and the bad much shorter very soon.

Opinion

LETTERS letters may be edited for length and clarity and will be published on a space-available basis. Maximum 150 words. Must include signature, address & telephone number.

Opinions expressed are solely those of the writers. Town Crier Publications will not be responsible for inaccuracies. No Political Endorsements, please!

COVID-19

Precautions for the U.S. Mail

To the Editor:

During these challenging times, postal employees are working hard to ensure residents stay connected with their world through the mail. Whether it’s medications, a package, a paycheck, benefits or pension check, a bill or letter from a family member, postal workers understand that every piece of mail is important. While service like this is nothing new to us, we need our communities’ help with social distancing.

For everyone’s safety, our employees are following the social distancing precautions recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and local health officials. We are asking people not to approach our carriers to accept delivery. Let the carrier leave the mailbox before collecting the mail. With schools not in session, children should also be encouraged to not approach a postal vehicle or carrier.

If a delivery requires a signature, carriers will knock on the door rather than touching the bell. They will maintain a safe distance, and instead of asking for a signature on their mobile device, they’ll ask for the resident’s name. The carrier will leave the mail or package in a safe place for retrieval.

We are proud of the role all our employees play in processing, transporting, and delivering mail and packages for the American public. The CDC, World Health Organization, as well as the Surgeon General indicate there is currently no evidence that COVID-19 is being spread through the mail.

With social distancing, we can keep the mail moving while keeping our employees, and the public, safe.

Mike Rakes
District Manager
U.S. Postal Service – Greater Boston District

MONTHLY COMMUNITY MEALS

The March 30 list of confirmed, free, nourishing meals offered monthly to all in the local community

Last Wednesday
4:30-6 p.m. Dinner, Trinity Episcopal Church, 17 Congress St., Milford. 508-473-8464 or office@trinitychurchmilford.org. April meals are scheduled but subject to change based on Covid-19 directives.

Last Thursday
4:30-6 p.m. Dinner, Trinity Episcopal Church, 17 Congress St., Milford, sponsored by First Methodist Church of Milford volunteers. 508-473-8464 or office@trinitychurchmilford.org. April meals are scheduled but subject to change based on Covid-19 directives.

Last Friday
4:30-6 p.m. Dinner, Trinity Episcopal Church, 17 Congress St., Milford. Sponsored by the Hopedale Churches (Unitarian, Sacred Heart and Union Evangelical). 508-473-8464 office@trinitychurchmilford.org. April Meals are scheduled but subject to change based on Covid-19 directives.
The Massachusetts Registry of Motor Vehicles (RMV) changes in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Plate Registrations
All passenger plate registrations that have expired in March or will expire in April have been extended. Registrations that expired in March are extended until June 30. Registration renewals can continue to be performed online at Mass.Gov/RMV. No in-person renewals are allowed at this time.

Inspection Stickers
Annual motor vehicle safety and emissions inspection stickers that expire March 31 and April 30 have been extended 60 days and all motorcycle inspection stickers originally set to expire on May 31 that expire March 1 through April 30 have had a 60-day extension applied to their credential. The exception is customers whose card run out of the state of the same expiration date on their driver’s license, ID card, or Learner’s Permit. Customers eligible for these extensions should want to visit an RMV Service Center to renew until after the State of Emergency has concluded.

CDL Medical Certificates (Med Certs) that have expired or will expire March 1 through April 30 are extended to June 30.

Suspension of In-vehicle Service Centers
Commercial Transactions
The Milford and Wilmington RMV Service Centers will remain open to exclusively perform walk-in commercial transactions for CDLs and permits (CLPs), and CDL road tests continue to be administered.

60 Day Extensions
All Class D, Class M and Class DM driver’s licenses, ID cards, Learners’ Permits, and commercial driver’s licenses and permits (CDLs / CLPs) with an expiration date between March 1 and April 30, 2020, have had a 60-day extension applied to their credential. The exception is customers whose card run out of the state of the same expiration date on their driver’s license, ID card, or Learner’s Permit. Customers eligible for these extensions should want to visit an RMV Service Center to renew until after the State of Emergency has concluded.

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60 Day Extensions
All Class D, Class M and Class DM driver’s licenses, ID cards, Learners’ Permits, and commercial driver’s licenses and permits (CDLs / CLPs) with an expiration date between March 1 and April 30, 2020, have had a 60-day extension applied to their credential. The exception is customers whose card run out of the state of the same expiration date on their driver’s license, ID card, or Learner’s Permit. Customers eligible for these extensions should want to visit an RMV Service Center to renew until after the State of Emergency has concluded.

CDL Medical Certificates (Med Certs) that have expired or will expire March 1 through April 30 are extended to June 30.

Suspension of In-vehicle Service Centers
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Latest COVID-19 Updates from Milford Regional Medical Center

Milford Regional Medical Center (MRMC) continues to respond to changes with the coronavirus outbreak by adjusting services as needed.

Drive Thru Testing

Drive thru COVID-19 testing is available, once again, at Milford Regional Medical Center (MRMC) for Milford Regional Physician Group patients, Tri-River Family Health Center patients, Edward M. Kennedy Community Health Center patients and Milford Regional physicians and employees. Patients should contact their primary care provider to determine if they meet Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) criteria for testing. Patients that meet DPH criteria must have a physician order to have the test; an appointment will be scheduled. The testing center is at the MRMC main entrance, 14 Prospect St., Milford. Milford Regional encourages symptomatic patients that do not qualify for testing to self-quarantine at home until they have had no fever for 72 hours and symptoms have improved and at least seven days have passed since symptom onset. Patients should monitor their symptoms and take their temperature daily. Anyone who develops any worsening of symptoms such as increasing shortness of breath, chest tightness, lethargy, periods of confusion, or worsening fever, should contact their primary care provider or go to the emergency department for evaluation immediately. X-Ray, Mammography and Ultrasound

Effective Monday, April 6, MRMC’s diagnostic imaging services at both Milford Regional in Franklin and Milford Regional in the Blackstone Valley. All emergency studies are performed at the hospital. Imaging services at the Women’s Pavilion, located on the fourth floor of the Hill Building, will only be open on Thursdays for emergency cases.

Urgent Care Sites

Milford Regionals Franklin (1280 West Central St.) and Northbridge 1100 Commerce Dr. Urgent Care sites are now designated strictly for patients exhibiting respiratory illnesses, such as fever, cough, mild shortness of breath, wheezing, sore throat, muscle aches, or lost sense of taste or smell. The hospital’s Hopkinton Urgent Care site is temporarily closed. Patients with other urgent health issues should access the Milford Urgent Care site, 129 South Main St., Milford.

Labs

Temporary lab closures include 229 East Main St. Milford, 117 Water St., Milford (inside McGrath Medical Associates); and 74 Main St., Medway (inside Family Medicine Associates) plus the Milford Regional Urgent Care in Hopkinton lab and radiology services. Two lab locations open for healthy, non-COVID-19 symptomatic patients for all routine, non-respiratory illness related lab work, are 17 Umbrian Rd. (Rt. 16), Mendon and 215 West St., Milford. The labs within Franklin, Milford and Northbridge Urgent care sites are open as is the Hill Health Center lab at the hospital. Although all lab orders will be honored at each site, healthy, non-COVID-19 symptomatic patients are asked to use the Mendon or 215 West St., Milford locations to help control the spread of coronavirus. To stay up to date on the Medical Center’s response to COVID-19, visit MilfordRegional.org.
Submitted by Elise Bodgan
Blackstone Valley Tech

During this global COVID-19 pandemic, local hospitals are experiencing a shortage of supplies and have expressed concerns about running out of personal protective equipment (PPE) when the virus peaks in Massachusetts. The Blackstone Valley Vocational Regional School District, in partnership with other technical high schools, are answering the call. Valley Tech gave a substantial donation of PPE to Milford Regional Medical Center in March and is now working on a new project to create needed face shields.

After the District received requests to manufacture face shields, administration and staff planned and coordinated how to utilize the school’s inventory of 3D printers. A total of 12 were safely collected and relocated by staff members who practiced required social distancing through a spaced process, entered the school at their scheduled time slot, to avoid interaction with each other. They accessed their shop laboratories and transitioned the equipment to their home-based workspace. This synchronized arrangement enabled personnel to honor the preferred working conditions advised during the coronavirus pandemic and put the very skills that they teach their students, to work for the community hospitals.

Volunteering to run the sophisticated 3D printers is Drafting & Design Technology Instructors, James Aukstikalnis, and Timothy Oliveira with Engineering & Robotics instructor, Sean Lyons. Instructors, and Dr. Matthew Connors, Vocational Director. They’ve been running them from their homes, around the clock to produce face shields and other PPE components for a donation.

“We are part of a coordinated effort not only among our staff but throughout the 3D printing community. In this with Mark Lyons, Senior Education Strategist at AET Labs, who reached out to the schools to see if there was interest in creating the shields. We are producing the parts then coordinating a pick-up time with Lyons, who then coordinates the donation to the various hospitals.”

“We are the not only the school that jumped at the opportunity to help,” said Aukstikalnis. “But we are proud to do our part, helping when we can, and joining others across the Commonwealth who have stepped up to the plate, offering donations of medical supplies and 3D printing essential parts”

“Being able to actively and creatively respond to the shortage of supplies with 3D printing speaks to our mission,” said Dr. Michael F. Fitzpatrick. “We are proud of our BVT students, who have volunteered to work in conduit with our staff and Senators Moore and Fattman. Ironically, the District originally acquired major equipment upgrades with the help of our Senators and State Representatives Murray, Soter, Muradian, Frost, and McKenna, now finds itself perfectly utilizing those resources beyond the classroom.”

“We will continue our 3D printing efforts as long as resources allow us to help address the shortage of supplies for medical staff and healthcare providers on the front lines,” said Dr. Connors. “I am happy to report that over the last few days, we were able to print 100 face shields to be sent to hospitals and medical facilities across the Commonwealth.”

BVT Using 3D Printers to Create Face Shields

Jewelry Fundraisers Supports Trail Projects
ONLINE—Between now and May 16, when jewelry purchases online at TouchStoneCrystal.com will receive a visit from a census taker. Visits will be scheduled and conducted following guidelines that result from the coronavirus.

“Responding to the 2020 Census is easy, safe and important, and its key to shaping the future of your community,” Census Bureau Director Steven Dillingham said. “The 2020 Census will determine the number of seats each state has in the U.S. House of Representatives, and influences how hundreds of billions of dollars in public funds are allocated for critical public services like emergency response, schools, hospitals, roads and bridges over the next 10 years.”

The Census Bureau has created an interactive response rates map at 2020census.gov/response-rates so America can keep track of how they’re doing.

According to the map dated April 10, Mendon self-response rate was 64.1 percent with 63.9 being done on the Internet. Upton has a self-response rate of 64.2 percent with 63.5 being done on the Internet. Both towns are exceeding the state self-response rate of 48.8 percent.

For more information, visit My2020census.gov and be counted today.

Peter Cottontail with a Few Friends

The Easter Bunny stopped by PAWS in Mendon for a photo with some furry friends. Due to the coronavirus and resulting social distancing, PAWS Bed & Biscuit, is unable to have an Easter picture event this year or take picture requests. Over the next two weeks, their friend, the Easter Bunny may drop in for a few random appearances to take photos with the daycare and boarding guests. Since PAWS is working with the bunny’s schedule, changing weather and the cooperation of visiting guests, requests cannot be scheduled. Daniel and Megan Antonellis, the owners of PAWS, said the Easter Bunny visits are their way to give back to the community and bring a little brightness and joy during this socially difficult time.

PAWS Bed & Biscuit, a doggie daycare, boarding, grooming and training facility, is located at 97 Millville Rd, Mendon. For more information, visit Pawshedandbiscuit.com or call 508-478-6390.

Go Online and Be Counted; the 2020 Census is Underway

The U.S. Census counts every person in the country every 10 years. The information gathered through the census is used to decide how much each community gets in state and federal money for things like public health, transportation, education and assistance for senior citizens. The census is quick, easy, and important, and all answers are confidential. The 2020 Census got underway when 140 million households received invitations to respond in mid-March. The invitation included an overview of the census, a description of language assistance in English plus 12 non-English languages and a census ID number linked to their address. For the first time, nearly everyone will be invited to respond online, by phone or by mail. A sample of the 2020 Census questionnaire is available on 2020census.gov.

The invitation mailings were addressed to “Resident” at the household address and do not include an individual’s name. All households received one reminder letter in late March and those who had not responded received a postcard by early April. This week all nonresponding households will receive a paper questionnaire. Any household that does not respond by early May will receive a visit from a census taker. Visits will be scheduled and conducted following guidelines that result from the coronavirus.

“Responding to the 2020 Census is easy, safe and important, and its key to shaping the future of your community,” Census Bureau Director Steven Dillingham said. “The 2020 Census will determine the number of seats each state has in the U.S. House of Representatives, and influences how hundreds of billions of dollars in public funds are allocated for critical public services like emergency response, schools, hospitals, roads and bridges over the next 10 years.”

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For more information, visit My2020census.gov and be counted today.
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WE ARE OPEN and SERVING OUR COMMUNITY during this difficult time.
We have limited staff.
We are taking all precautions to keep you and our employees safe.
Call us for Septic Pumping Title 5’s, 24 Hr Emergency Support.
(Provide detailed information.)

~ Stay Safe!

**Home Improvement**

Submitted by WPC Pest and Termite Control

Everyone has a lot on their minds and pest control, should be one of them. It’s springtime and time to start thinking about protecting families and property from a variety of pests.

Pest Control Operators (Exterminators) are protectors of public health, food and property, who take their roles in safeguarding the quality of life very seriously. Pest control is an essential service.

WPC Pest and Termite Control has developed a thorough inspection and treatment strategy that will protect families inside without the Technician entering the building or interacting with residents. WPC is now offering disinfecting and sanitizing of anything a person might touch including a vehicle, inside a home or office, playground equipment, keyboards and phones.

“Springtime pests can quickly become headaches, especially when it comes to unappetizing food from ant infestations in the kitchen, mice in the house and costly property damage from termites,” said Jim Mazzucchelli, WPC Pest and Termite Control owner. “That’s why it’s worth taking the extra precautions necessary for spring pest prevention. By simply following some quick pest proofing tips when spring cleaning, homeowners can better enjoy the warmer weather.”

To best pest proof the home, WPC Pest and Termite Control recommends homeowners follow these tips:

- When de-cluttering and storing items, use durable, sealed containers that pests can’t easily infest or chew through instead of cardboard boxes or plastic bags.
- Remove all of the items from cabinets and pantry: Go through the items, discarding stale spices and other dated items such as flour and grains. These baking ingredients attract pantry pests, including several types of beetles, Indian meal moths and ants.
- Immediately wipe up any crumbs or spills from countertops, tables, floors and shelves.
- Keep fresh fruit on the counter? Check it often for signs of over-ripening or decay, which can attract fruit flies.
- Run the garbage disposal regularly.
- Don’t let dirty dishes pile up and stand in the sink.
- Don’t leave pet food and water bowls sit out for long periods of time.
- Take notice of any built-up moisture and eliminate these sites, including leaking pipes and clogged drains.
- Get the outside of your home protected by a professional Pest Control Operator.
- If you suspect you have any activity, get a free home inspection and treatment by contacting a licensed pest professional to identify any problems and recommend a course of treatment.

For more information about spring pests, or sanitizing, visit NoBugsNoPests.com or call 844-435-2211
Upton remains in a local state of emergency with the state Department of Public Health reporting five residents have tested positive for COVID-19. All town buildings are closed and all offices not providing essential services are operating remotely. Residents may call or email the appropriate office with questions during normal business hours. A listing of phone number and email addresses is needed to access online services, may be purchased at Honey Farms, Liquor Plus, and Country Club Sooper. Bulk stickers can be purchased either on-line or through the mail.

The Upton Town Library is providing a variety of online services for residents. Visit Uptonlibrary.org for a complete listing. Residents without a library card, which is needed to access online services, may email Matthew Bachtold, Library director, mbachtol@cwmars.org, with your name, street address, phone number and email.

Any items currently checked out will have their due date extended until the library reopens. No fines will accrue.

Town Clerk
Questions about voting, town census, marriage licenses; and dog licenses should be directed to Town Clerk Kelly McElreath by visiting the Town Clerk’s page at UptonMA.gov, emailing kmcelreath@uptonma.gov or calling 508-529-3566.

Town Alerts and Information
Residents are encouraged to stay informed about information due to the pandemic changes quickly. Upton has created a special coronavirus webpage and twitter account for the latest information – UptonMA.gov/COVID-19 and Twitter @uptontown. Updates will be issued via email through Town News and the Town’s social media channels. To receive the emails, subscribe at UptonMA.gov/subscribe. Also Smart911 emergency notifications are being sent out as needed. Make sure you are subscribed by visiting Smart911 Emergency Notification.
By Michelle Sanford
Staff Reporter

Upton Center Establishes Neighbor to Neighbor Program to Help its Residents Through Pandemic

During an April 7 meeting, the Upton Board of Selectmen voted unanimously to suspend the dates of the Annual Town Election and the Annual Town Meeting until new dates can be determined; they are anticipating sometime in June. Due to the Covid-19 virus, the Board agreed it was best to reschedule the Election and Town Meeting for the health and welfare of residents.

Regardless, Upton’s Annual Town Election ballot is set and will include one contested race, three open seats, and an override question for the schools. The one contested race is for the three-year Board of Selectmen’s seat. Incumbent Stephen Matellian is being challenged by resident David Ross. Other seats are uncontested and include David Looper for one-year Moderator’s seat, Philip DeZutter for Mendon Upton Regional School District Committee for three years, James Earle for Assessor of Taxes for three years, Edward Philips for Cemetery Commission for one year, Richard Bazdjerian for Board of Health for three years, Richard Gasoortan for Recreation Commission for three years, Thomas Davidson for Planning Board for five years, James Broschu for Board of Commissioners of Trust Funds for three years, Robert Fleming for Board of Commissioners of Trust Funds for two years, Rena Richard for Housing Authority for five years, Richard Kennedy for Housing Authority for four years, Linda Jones for Housing Authority for three years, and Charlotte Carr and Debra Amorrelli for two Library Trustees for three years. There will be three seats with no candidates and include Finance Committee for three years, Cemetery Commission for three years, and Library Trustee for three years.

There will also be an override question to fund the schools totaling $1,229,135; $1,171,697 for the Mendon Upton Regional School District and $57,438 for Blackstone Valley Tech.

Currently, the Town Hall is closed to the public. However, residents with questions on their voter registration status are encouraged to call the Town Clerk’s office at 508-529-3365 or KMcElreath@uptonma.gov.

For information contact the Grafton Upton Universalist Society office admin@uusu.org or at 508-839-2927.

By Michelle Sanford
Staff Reporter

One Race, Three Vacancies, and an Override on Upton’s Ballot

New Election Date to be Determined

Upton Town Library Programs for Children On-Line

Upton Town Library Children’s Librarian Lee Ann Murphy has a series of Storytimes and activities available online. Visit Upton Library for the link under Mrs. Murphy’s Storytime Songs. 10 programs are available, most are for preschoolers but there is also a tween/teen craft activity. New programs are posted each Friday on the Upton Town Library’s YouTube channel.

Upton Establishes Neighbor to Neighbor Program to Help its Residents Through Pandemic

By Michelle Sanford
Staff Reporter

Through a coordinated effort among town officials and a number of other Upton organizations, a new assistance program called Neighbor to Neighbor has been established to help residents who have been affected financially and emotionally as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. Neighbor to Neighbor is a confidential program that will be administered by the Upton Center staff to provide resources and necessary funds for a wide range of needs including wellness calls, grocery and prescription deliveries, as well as assistance with housing, food, utilities, and medical expenses for individuals and their families who live in Upton. It is a collaborative effort among the Selectmen, the Upton Center, along with volunteers from the Upton Men’s Club, the Bloomer Girls, United Parish, and St. Gabriel’s the Archangel.

The program was started as a result of the stay at home order from the Governor Charlie Baker, which meant a number of people have either lost their jobs, been laid off, had their work hours reduced or are suffering from the emotional stress and anxiety related to the pandemic.

During an April 1 meeting, the Board of Selectmen gave its blessing to the new program and agreed further thought is do to a grocery shop online through Peapod or Instacart.

Local food pantries are continuing to provide food to those in need of some additional help right now. Please call ahead to check on operating hours. They include, United Parish, 1 Church St., Upton, 508-529-3192; St. Gabriel’s the Archangel, 151 Mendon St., Upton, 508-529-1430; The Blessing Burn by appointment only, 202 Main St., Milford, 508-482-0010; and the Daily Bread, 21 Exchange St., Milford, 508-478-4225. The Daily Bread delivers to homebound residents, however, a doctor’s note must be provided for this service.

Still, for those who must go out, the Upton Center’s van continues to offer limited shopping trips to the Shaw’s, CVS, or Walmart loop in Northbridge. Following social distancing guidelines, the number of passengers permitted on the van will be reduced. The next scheduled trips are April 21 and April 27 at 9 a.m. The Upton Center is asking residents to register for rides at least two days ahead and choose one store for drop off/pick up. Some scheduled times for shopping trips may change due van service needed for necessary medical appointments.

Looking for something new and interesting to do while at home? Mather Telephone topics provides free, interesting telephone calls to Upton residents in our community, “explained Town Manager Derek Bredaisi during the April 1 meeting. “We thought that if we leveraged those resources and work together and then come together under one umbrella program.”

Interested residents will speak with trained specialist who will connect them with a wide range of social services, including emotional health or medical referrals, as well as provide information about programs at the local, state, or federal level.

“There are already resources out there that can help us fill those needs. This program is going to be a connector and will serve as another resource. If we don’t have another agency providing a service, we will fill that gap,” Bredaisi explained of the Neighbor to Neighbor program.

Residents can find more information and a questionnaire to answer at UptonMA.gov or contact Janice Nowicki, Director of Elder and Social Services at 508-529-4558 or email at N2N@uptonma.gov. “All information is confidential,” reiterated Nowicki.

“We’re all in support of helping the residents during a pandemic of this magnitude,” said Selectman Chair Stephen Matellian. “This will be some welcome relief for people.”

By Michelle Sanford
Staff Reporter

The amended bylaw would allow common driveways only by common driveways only by special permit from the Planning Board.

“I support the article,” said Dwinell. “There’s a lot of good reasons for it.” Dwinell said she too wanted the bylaw change.

“I’m not in favor of common driveways.”

In other news that evening, the Board agreed to take $18,000 out of the town’s welfare trust fund to support the town’s new Neighbor to Neighbor program, which aims to help Upton residents through the emotional stresses and financial difficulties resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic.

That Selectmen agreed they would add additional monies to the fund if need be. For more information on the Neighbor to Neighbor program, view UptonMA.gov.
Reminder that Mendon’s Election Rescheduled to June

By Michelle Sanford
Staff Reporter

In March, Mendon’s Select Board made the decision to move the town’s Annual Election to June 9. The move to change the election date comes after the Governor declared a state of emergency and as Massachusetts continues to deal with an increase in Covid-19 cases.

In March, state legislators passed a bill allowing communities to postpone or change the dates of local elections that were originally scheduled prior to May 30. The bill also permits residents to mail in ballots during early voting and through absentee voting for town elections. There is no early voting or absentee voting in person right now. Residents may go to the town’s website, MendonMA.Gov to apply by the June 8 deadline at noon. All ballots must be returned by close of polls on June 9.

Mendon’s ballot will include two races and an override question for the Mendon Upton Regional School District. In addition, there are two offices that have no candidates.

David Atkinson is challenging incumbent Lawney Tinio for the Select Board’s three-year seat and Matthew O’Brien is challenging incumbent Jay Byer for the one-year Moderator’s seat.

The remaining candidates on the ballot are unchallenged and include Alan Tetreault for the three-year Highway Surveyor’s seat, Alan Greenberg for the three-year Board of Health’s seat, Dan Byer for the three-year seat for Park Commissioner, Allant Kent for the three-year seat for Water Commissioner, Sean Nicholson for the three-year seat on the Mendon Upton Regional School Committee, Barry Jadzalora for the five-year seat on the Planning Board, and Ellen Agro and Wayne Phipps for two Library Trustee seats for three years.

There are no candidates for the three-year Assessor’s seat or the five-year Housing Authority seat on the ballot. An override question for the Mendon Upton Regional School District is also expected to be on the ballot. However, the final amount for Mendon’s portion of the override has not been finalized yet. With the new June 9 election date, other dates have changed as well. Now, the last day to register to vote in the Annual Town Election is Friday, May 29 by 8 p.m. The last day to register to vote at the Annual Town Meeting, which is currently scheduled for June 1, is Tuesday, May 12 by 8 p.m. The Town Clerk’s office is closed to the public until further notice, however, residents may register to vote online at sec.state.ma.us.

Anyone with questions on their registration status or mail in ballots should contact the Town Clerk’s office before registration deadlines at 508-473-1085 or email townclerk@mendonma.gov.

Love Books? Love Ice Cream?

Anyone who loves books and loves ice cream is invited to participate in the JJs & Taft Public Library Ice Cream Raffle. Just log onto the Taft Public Library’s Facebook page, find the “What Are You Reading This Week” post for the current week and post a comment about your latest and greatest read. A photo of the book and a short book review are also welcome.

Anyone posting will be entered into the weekly raffle for a $25 gift card to JJs Ice Cream Shoppe in Upton. JJs is currently offering home delivery. To qualify the post needs to be done by 3:45 p.m. on Thursday. The winner is drawn at 4 p.m. and the name posted on the library’s Facebook page. All ages are invited to participate, but please, only one post per person per week. If the post is made for a child please make that known. A household can only receive one gift card.

Mendon Town Calendar

Due to the Covid-19 Virus, Mendon’s Municipal buildings are closed until further notice. Residents are encouraged to check the town’s Web site at MendonMA.gov concerning the latest status on posted meetings, including cancellations or other special instructions on agendas for virtual or call in meetings. For additional information needed, contact the appropriate board or official by phone or email.

Tuesday, April 21
Select Board, Remote Meeting, 6:30 p.m.

Thursday, April 23
Conservation Commission, 7 p.m.
Mendon Assessors Procedures During the Epidemic

Submitted by Mendon Principal Assessor, Jean Berthold

The Mendon Board of Assessors would like to take this opportunity to express their deepest gratitude to the healthcare providers and first responders who have selflessly given of their time and efforts to assist others in this time of crisis. We would also like to thank all of those individuals who remain at their worksites so that the essential needs of others are met.

During this unprecedented time, some things must proceed in order that town services can be funded. Unfortunately, that means taxes need to be assessed and collected.

The Assessors assessing deadline of June 30 has not been extended so we must attempt to collect our data as best as possible in a timely manner without interfering with the health and welfare of all involved.

Therefore, during the months of May and June, if you have a pending building permit, whether or not the improvement is complete, you will be contacted by our office. For permits involving exterior work, representatives of our office will visit your location to measure and gather exterior information. We will not enter the premises or expect you to meet with us personally. The gathering of interior information will be handled via mail, email or fax. Our office will reach out to you by means of an information request mailing that you will need to complete as accurately as possible, mail, email or fax back to our office as soon as possible. If we do not receive your response in a timely manner, we will be forced to estimate the value of the improvements. This promotes inaccuracies that can result in overvaluations.

We would like to thank everyone in advance for their cooperation and hope that you and your families are well and safe. If you have any inquiries or concerns, please contact Principal Assessor Jean Berthold at 508-475-2738 or email jberthold@mendonma.gov.

Mendon Tax Bills Due May 4

Mendon Real Estate and Personal Property taxes are due and payable Monday, May 4. Due to COVID-19, Town Hall is currently closed to the public but there are many ways to make a payment.

The bill along with a check, placed in an envelope can be dropped-off in the secure mailbox located next to the front door of Town Hall, 20 Main St. The mailbox is checked daily, Monday through Thursday, during regular business hours. Do not place cash in the drop-box.

Bills along with a check may be mailed to P.O. Box 11, Mendon, MA 01756. All checks should be made out to the Town of Mendon.

The third method is the online payment center found on the town’s website, MendonMA.gov. A link can be found on the website home page under Resources or on the Treasurer/Collector page. Paying online is quick and easy; the cost is 25 cents per transaction. When paying online, the taxpayer has until the close of day, prior to midnight, to make the payment.

As an added reminder all current excise taxes can be paid online as well. For more information, please call the Collector’s office at 508-475-6410 during normal business hours.

Mendon Lions Club Scholarship Application Extended

The Mendon Lions Club is extending the date for applications related to their scholarship program. Mailed applications will now be accepted up to June 1. Applications can be mailed to Mendon Lions, P. O. Box 218, Mendon, 01756. The scholarship packages include paperwork that is completed by Student Offices and Guidance Departments. This may present a problem for some because of the uncertainty when schools will reopen. As a result, applications will be accepted with or without this information being completed. The Mendon Lions wish all the best to senior students this year knowing it’s a difficult time for students and their families.

COVID-19 Updates for Mendon

Due to COVID-19, all public buildings in Mendon will remain closed to the public until further notice. Residents with questions or concerns may contact the appropriate office by phone or email. Visit MendonMA.gov/contacts-directory for a complete listing of phone numbers and emails for town offices.

Meetings of town boards and committees will continue with remote participation. The following updates are current as of April 13.

COVID-19

According to data released by the Massachusetts Department of Health, as of April 2, Mendon had one positive test result for COVID-19. No further information is available. All residents are urged to continue social distancing, proper handwashing, covering the face and mouth when sneezing and coughing and if sick, to stay home.

Information about the number of cases of COVID-19 by county are released daily and may be found at MASS.gov/info-details/covid-19-updates-and-information.

Bills

As Town Hall is closed, residents are urged to use the drop-box by the front entrance for payments, completed census forms, dog licensing and applications. Checks should be used for any payments. Payments may also be mailed into P.O. Box 11, Mendon, MA 01756, or handled online by visiting MendonMA.gov and clicking on the Online Payment link in the menu on the left side of the page. Online payments are accepted for all tax bills, dog licensing and park registrations.

Annual Town Election and Meeting

In accordance with a state act allowing a change in Annual Town Election and Annual Town Meeting dates due to the COVID-19 emergency response, the Select Board voted to postpone the Mendon Annual Town Election from May 12 to June 9 and the Annual Town Meeting from May 1 at 7 p.m. to June 1 at 7 p.m. Both the election and town meeting are held at Miscoe Hill School, North Ave.

Building Department

While the Building Department/Permitting Offices are closed to the public, payments and paperwork may be left in the drop-box outside the office. The office is located in the former Taft Public Library Building. Online permitting is now available at MendonMA.gov/ viewpoint.

Trash Service

Normal trash services will continue in Mendon. Residents are asked to maintain social distancing with the trash truck drivers and to follow town guidelines in packaging and placing their trash on the curb so the collection can proceed efficiently.

Trash stickers can be obtained by mail. Send a self-addressed, stamped envelope along with a check in the amount for the number of stickers ordered to the Board of Health Office, 18 Main St., Mendon 01756. Stickers are $2 each.

Suspended until further notice is the Massachusetts Simple Recycling utilizing the pink bags, the Recycling Center at the Mendon Highway Barn and the bulk item pickup except for white goods. For more information, contact the Board of Health, 508-634-2656.

Alerts

Residents are reminded to visit MendonMA.gov for the latest COVID-19 updates. To receive email alerts, visit the town website and click on the Subscribe to News link on the menu on the left side of the page. Phone alerts are available by the Mendon Police Department’s CodeRED community notification system to send important alerts and time-sensitive messages to residents. Registration information is available at MendonMA.gov.
Remote Learning, Transportation and Calendar Discussed by School Committee

By Melissa Orr
Staff Reporter/Columnist

In their second virtual meeting since COVID-19 caused school buildings to close and people to stay in isolation in their homes, the Mendon Upton Regional School Committee discussed online remote learning, transportation and the school calendar.

Superintendent of Schools Dr. Joseph Maruszczak gave an update to the Committee during the April 6 Zoom meeting on the remote learning plan which had gone into effect earlier in the day. The online distance learning program is a way to promote student learning options when school is not in session.

Each school was given a schedule for students and families to follow which has opportunities for online sessions with teachers and independent work. MURSD will be following many districts in the state and county and only give Pass/Fail grades for the last two terms of the year. More information on the distance learning program can be found on their website MURSD.org/mursextended.

Talks turned to transportation after several community members had asked in a previous School Committee Meeting via Zoom if bus drivers were being paid while schools are closed. Director of Finance and Operations Lay Byer reiterated that per Massachusetts General Law, school districts can’t pay for services if they haven’t received them but that under these unusual circumstances, districts are looking for ways to work with contractors who will be greatly affected.

“[It was suggested] by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Finance Department that we negotiate an amendment [to the MURSD transportation provider Tellstone & Son contract],” said Byer. “We are trying to figure out a way to pay them something, certainly not 100 percent, but maybe something that keeps them solvent.”

Byer commented that companies such as Tellstone would have a hard time surviving in business if they don’t receive four months of income.

“They still have lease payments on busses and insurance,” he said. “We are going into the spring which is their money-making time with field trips and sports, etc.”

With transportation companies across the country facing similar problems, Byer cautioned that it is in the best interest of the district to try and work with Tellstone to find a solution.

“If Tellstone were to go out of business, we wouldn’t have a bus company when we go back to school,” he said.

The School Committee also discussed the existing school calendar and whether or not “online school” should continue during the summer. “I think the break will be welcomed by most stakeholders,” Maruszczak said. “We have gotten a lot of feedback about people being fatigued. I think the break will be welcomed by most stakeholders.”

Maruszczak said that the district plans to use the time to survey parents and students about the online learning and get “valuable feedback” on how to proceed for not only the current order of May 4 but if school is closed for the remainder of the school year.

The Challenges of Being a Working Parent and a Teacher

By Melissa Orr
Staff Reporter/Columnist

Parents nationwide have added one more job to their resume during the past few weeks – teacher.

With schools closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, families have had to adapt to the “hybrid” – distance learning. But how do families with young children and two parents now working from home handle the extra load?

“It was chaotic,” said Beth Deverix, a mom of two Clough Elementary students about the first week of balancing her workload and helping with her children’s schoolwork.

Deverix, a Naviance Health Care Coordinator, and her husband Scott, a Lead Sales Principal for Hussmann Corporation, both work full time and now are challenged with assisting their 3rd grade daughter Emma and 1st grade daughter Abby navigate Zoom lessons, ensuring assignments are completed, and helping them to log in to online enrichment classes.

“Thank God we have high speed internet,” said Deverix, “there is heavy internet usage in our house right now.”

Because students could potentially be distance learning through the end of the school year, Deverix said she had to talk with her employer about balancing her work with meeting her children’s needs.

“We have come up with a better schedule now. It’s now organized chaos,” she laughed. For Upton residents, Ami Mehr, who works in the Life Sciences industry, and her husband Brian, who works in Biotech, distance learning means adding three to four hours to their already long day.

“After we put the kids to bed, I go and print out schoolwork and put it into folders so it is all organized for the next day,” said Mehr, whose two sons attend the Fay School in Framingham.

Along with helping their 2nd grade Benjamin with his schoolwork, the Mehr’s also are keeping their 2-year-old son Zachary entertained and engaged in his own preschool curriculum while trying to work.

“Everyone is doing it; it is a take that keeps things running,” said Mehr, who has noticed a shift for families in her industry going through similar circumstances.

“It has become the new normal to have children around during Zoom meetings,” said Mehr. “I started out finding myself having to apologize, but now it has just become accepted behavior.”

Parents may come out of this period of distance learning having a new appreciation for teachers, said Becky Swasey, an Academic Assistant Principal at Keefe Technical School, Framingham.

“I think people are going to have more respect for the profession,” she said. “It is much harder to be a teacher than ever before. They not only have to teach, but also have to cope with students’ Social Emotional Learning.”

Swasey and her husband Ryan, a systems administrator, have two sons at Clough – Ben in 4th grade and Sam in 1st, and can understand the struggles of both parents and teachers.

“I can see where everyone is coming from,” said Swasey. “Our schedules are insane because there doesn’t seem to be an ‘off’ time.”

Swasey and her husband have taken the “divide and conquer” approach with their sons, with each helping one student with their schoolwork throughout the day.

“I am homeschooling from 8 to 11 a.m. every day, then jumping on work calls,” said Swasey. “I work easily until 5 to 6 p.m. every night. It’s a very long day.”

As an educator and parent, Swasey notes another challenge for families saying, “Parents with elementary students have an even bigger challenge because they don’t have that level of independence. This has been very much a hands-on experience.”
Nipmuc Students Urged to Keep Fit Amid Delay
By Chris Villani
Sports Reporter/Columnist
Nipmuc baseball head coach teacher Steve Dellaloverre said he is staying “cautiously optimistic” that the Warriors will be able to play baseball this spring. Between that and his role as a physical education teacher, he has been doing his best to keep students moving as schools have been closed during the pandemic. “I just encourage them to be active in any way they can,” Dellaloverre said. “You get into this quarantine and it’s really easy to sit down and do nothing. I want them to take advantage of the nice days and be outside if they can.” Dellaloverre acknowledged that he and his players have it in their minds that the season may not happen at all, even with a penciled-in start date of May 4. When the start date was pushed back from April, it left Dellaloverre saying there is at least “a shot” of playing some baseball this spring. His players, he said, are aware of the “gravity” of what has been going on and have realistic expectations about whether they might be able to play this spring. But going into a bad situation with their eyes wide open has not made it any easier. “For the seniors, it’s just one more thing that’s been taken away from them,” Dellaloverre said. “It’s tough to have those conversations with the kids and see how down they are about the whole situation, but I give them credit for being able to handle it and go through it the best they can.” One challenge the Nipmuc coach has had to deal with is the fact that not everyone has the same access to equipment or space to work out and practice. One of his players has a set up with a batting tee and the chance to take some swings, but that is not the case for everyone. And that is not the only set of circumstances that might be different. “Some might have equipment, some don’t, some might have family members that are a tick,” Dellaloverre said. “So you have to be really mindful.” Asked how to program physical education remotely, Dellaloverre said “tricky is the best way to put it.” “My colleague and I are trying to navigate that the best we can,” he said. “We teach a subject that is all about being active and moving and there are ways to do it. We have the kids some good resources and there are apps where we can monitor what the kids are doing.”

Gould Going to “Dream School” At UNH
By Chris Villani
Sports Reporter/Columnist
Nate Gould said he “didn’t have to think about it” when offered the chance to continue his football career with the University of New Hampshire (UNH). The Nipmuc senior called UNH his “dream school” and hopes to make an impact on the football field as a wide receiver and in the classroom as a business major. “The academics there are very good and the business school is awesome,” Gould said. “They have a winning tradition and I love the environment.” Gould said he plans to study in international business and playing football at the University of New Hampshire in the fall. Contributed photo

Nipmuc’s Joyce Joins Bowdoin Track Team
By Chris Villani
Sports Reporter/Columnist
Nipmuc senior Jared Joyce has a wide array of academic interests, so when he found a top-notch school with a good sense of community that also allowed him to join the track and field team, he knew Bowdoin was the best fit for him. Joyce was recruited to run the 400-meter dash, an event in which he has seen significant improvement and has stood out during his time with the Warriors’ track and field program. “That has been my go-to event throughout high school,” he said. Joyce suffered an injury during his sophomore year and did not get to compete towards the end of the season, but he worked hard over the summer to get healthy and get into top shape for the following year. “I worked through the fall and winter and saw my spring track season really come together,” he said. “I started to have personal records and went from not really being anything special to being recruited by some pretty big schools for the 400.” Joyce finished 12th in the state in the event last spring, breaking the Nipmuc school record in the event at 50.1 seconds. His senior season has been interrupted by the coronavirus, but he said he is still focused on making sure he joins his college track program in the best position possible to compete at the highest level. “There are some other good 400-meter athletes they have recruited over the past two years,” Joyce said. “So my role is just to keep working to help make a push over the next two years to win an All-American honor in the 440.” In addition to the chance to compete in track and field, Bowdoin gives Joyce the chance to pursue a number of non-athletic academic interests. He said he is interested in business with an eye towards venture capitalism or private equity and possibly pursuing academia at some point in life. He wants to double major in philosophy and math and plans on taking economic, computer science and psychology classes as well. All that said, he adds “I have an open mind” and things are subject to change. One constant for Joyce has been his mother, Erin, cheering him on at every race from the exact same spot at the 200-meter mark. “She has been super supportive,” Joyce said. “It’s heartwarming to have her at the 200-meter line, knowing she will be screaming as loud as she can.”

Nipmuc’s Joyce will be running the 400-meter dash for Bowdoin College in Maine next year following graduation. N.J. Sandstrom photo
The 2002 Nipmuc Baseball team which won the second straight state championship for the school has been inducted into the Nipmuc Hall of Fame. Shown in the photo, 1-vr-arc: Konrad King, Koling Keith, Scottie, Mark Polskie Ryan Rooney, Captains Billy Sheehan, Cliff Ferrone, Mike Teachout, Jim Douglas, Assistant Coach Steve DellalRovere, John Belcastro and Kristen Menssen. Standing-Assistant Coach Pat Allen, Managers Brenna McShane and Caitlin McInnis, Captains Tommy Sheehan, Andrew Felpet, Brian Grady, Ted Ancher, Colin Carr, Mike DeSantos, Brent Ferrone, Ian Locklin, Jeff Galipeau, Cole Osburn and Head Coach Bill McInnis. Contributed photo

By Chris Villani
Sports Reporter/Columnist

The formula that helped the 2002 Nipmuc baseball team to a second straight state championship was not complicated. "Good defense, timely hitting and great pitching," said the team's head coach, Bill McInnis.

All that, and a penguin. It's well known in Nipmuc lore that Mike Teachout, the baseball team's MVP, found a plastic penguin after a slow start to the 2001 season and placed it on the dugout while the 2002 team was in its winning streak and eventually led the 2001 team to a state title.

The seniors graduated but, McInnis pointed out, "the penguin stayed." The next year, the Warriors rolled to a 21-4 record and a second straight championship. "They way they approached the game, it wasn't for them, they just wanted that game and they went along so well," McInnis said. "I don't think people really can appreciate the pressure when it starts getting interesting and you're going deep into the Central Mass. tournament." That spring, Nipmuc was buoyed by the one-two pitching punch of Jeff Galipeau and Ted Ancher. Steve Dell'AlRovere, an assistant with the 2002 team, said the pitchers were polar opposites with Galipeau shutting down teams as a hard-throwing righty and Ancher keeping them off balance as the crafty lefty. Captains Billy and Tommy Sheehan provided leadership for the down teams as a hard-throwing righty and Ancher keeping them off balance as the crafty lefty. Captains Billy and Tommy Sheehan provided leadership for the Warriors as they worked through the district tournament. Nipmuc beat Ayer and Douglas, the latter a 1-0 final, before coming out 3-8 in the title game.

After a 9-4 win over Gateway in the state semifinal, Nipmuc and Norton were tied at two before Cliff Ferrone delivered the game-winning home run.

McInnis said the seeds of the Nipmuc baseball dynasty were sown in the 2000 season, when the Warriors advanced deep into the district tournament. Nipmuc went on to win a trio of state titles, in 2001, 2002 and 2005, and the culture of the program had truly changed.

"It was a pretty remarkable couple year stretch," Dell'AlRovere said. "They surprised a lot of people with how successful they were. It was one of those teams that showed up to the ballpark and found ways to win."

"It was easy to coach," McInnis said. "It was all about doing the best you can as an individual for the sake of your team and your program and these guys took off.

By Chris Villani
Sports Reporter/Columnist

It was easy to coach, " McInnis said. "It was all about doing the best you can as an individual for the sake of your team and your program and these guys took off with it."

MIAA Adopts Spring Tourney Schedule that Scraps States

By Chris Villani
Sports Reporter/Columnist

The Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association on Monday adopted a spring sports schedule that sought to maximize the number of possible regular season games by ending the tournament schedule with district competition, forgoing a state tournament.

During a virtual meeting, the Board of Directors pushed ahead with a plan based on students returning to school on campus May 4, the earliest possible date amid the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Gov. Charlie Baker has not yet said what that date would be pushed back any later in the spring, but told reporters on Monday that a decision on whether to reopen schools would be made in the coming weeks.

The MIAA has been fluid with its scheduling throughout the uncertain winter and spring. After canceling some state tournaments at the end of the winter season, the governing body for high school sports in the state has opted for a shortened regular-season schedule starting with practices May 4 and continuing through June 28 at the latest. Teams would play through a sectional tournament and would not advance to the states as they would in a normal season. This would allow an extra week for regular season games for all teams, including those who do not qualify for the postseason. The cutoff date for the regular season would be June 12, with the teams to be seeded in the majority of spring sports the following day. The MIAA also voted to have the cutoff date for golf be June 11 with sectional tournaments beginning June 15. The cutoff date for track and field is June 21, with the pentathlon slated for June 15 and the sectional meets on the 27th and 28th of that month.

The MIAA also decided to scrap the individual tennis event and have only a team tennis tournament instead and cancel the "Super 8" tournament for the spring season. As of Monday afternoon, nearly 27,000 people in Massachusetts had tested positive for the virus and the death toll had risen to 844.
Adopting Maverick, a pandemic puppy, is an unexpected bonus of the coronavirus for reporter Chris Villani and his fiancée. Chris Villani photo

The term “pandemic puppy” has made its way around social media and there have been reports of more people seeking out a companion for this time when we are forced to be home far more than we may want to be.

But my favorite thing about Maverick so far, other than his penchant for midday naps and a full night’s sleep, is that he is unknowingly embodies the feeling many of us have during these trying times and shows us a good way to cope. He’s constantly nervous and unsure of himself. But all he can do, all he knows how to do, is take it one day and one moment at a time and put his trust and affection in the hands of those who love him.

A puppy is more than just a distraction from the difficulties of a sad time. It’s a years’ long commitment to care for another life. But in calming Maverick’s anxieties and fears about his strange new surroundings, it’s easy to let our own slip away, even temporarily.

The first days and weeks with a puppy are the hardest. And, as a community, these next days and weeks will be incredibly difficult on a far more serious scale. I hope as many people as possible get through it safe and healthy, and I hope we do right by Maverick. Because, without even trying, he’s given us the smiles and joy we’ve sorely needed.