The Beauty and Importance of Native Plants

The Monarch Butterfly caterpillar is on a native butterfly milkweed and needs native milkweed plants to survive. Native caterpillars are also superfoods for many of our Massachusetts bird species. The invasive non-native butterfly bush that is so popular only supports larval development of one species and pales in comparison to flowering native plants that support hundreds of species. Anne Mazar photo

Nipmuc Chorus Posts Online Concert

A pre-COVID-19 photo of the combined Nipmuc Choruses from the Winter Concert. Forty-eight of the 60 members in the chorus recently took part in a virtual concert online as the finale of their 2019-2020 school year. Nipmuc photo

School Budget Recertified at $37 Million; Overrides Still Needed

Overrides – Mendon $271,820, Upton $200,000

By Melissa Orff
Staff Reporter/Columnist

Citing a concern for the economic crisis in the communities of Mendon and Upton due to COVID-19, the Mendon Upton Regional School Committee re-certified their FY21 school budget during a May 5 virtual meeting. The new $37,153,486 FY21 budget is a reduction of $1,827,627 from the $38,961,160 budget that was certified on March 9 at the Open Budget Hearing. “I think with all of the uncertainty and some of the constraints that we are dealing with right now, this is the most prudent course of action moving forward,” said Superintendent of Schools Dr. Joseph Maruszczak. With a previous budget ask of over $38.9 million for next year, the two towns were looking at close to $2.5 million in overrides. The new budget reduces assessment to Mendon to $10,197,621 a decrease of $773,214, and Upton of $12,223,378, a decrease of $969,436. The re-certified budget, which is now only a 1.97 percent increase from FY20 (current year), is an increase of School Budget
RMV Cautions Customers of Unofficial Third-Party Websites

The Massachusetts Registry of Motor Vehicles (RMV) is cautioning customers to use only Mass.Gov/RMV when they are trying to renew a license or registration or process any business transactions online. Customers may inadvertently come across unofficial third-party websites or “mimic sites” that advertise similar services but have no affiliation with the RMV.

“Customers need to ensure that they are using the official Massachusetts Registry of Motor Vehicles website Mass.Gov/RMV to conduct their business transactions,” said Acting Registrar of Motor Vehicles Jamey Tesler. “Customers should avoid using any unofficial third-party websites that are offering RMV services to ensure that their personal and financial information is protected.”

Customers can use the helpful hints listed below to determine whether the website they are using is the official site for the Massachusetts Registry of Motor Vehicles:

- Massachusetts uses the abbreviation “RMV.” Any website using the phrase “Department of Motor Vehicles” or “DMV” should be avoided.
- Make sure the Commonwealth seal is located somewhere on the page. This will help ensure that it is an official government website. If it cannot be found, customers should leave the site immediately.
- Always read the fine print and look for key phrases such as “for-profit” or “privately owned” at the top or bottom of the third-party websites which may note that they are not affiliated with the Commonwealth.
- The Registry will never charge a customer to check the status of a license, registration, or title. If the site requires payment to access this information, it is an unsecured mimic site.
- At Mass.Gov/RMV, a customer will never be charged to access Registry forms and information, but unofficial third-party sites may charge for this service. Their information is also not guaranteed to be accurate.
- The Registry never charges for address changes. If a customer uses a mimic site, the change cannot be guaranteed to have actually gone through.
- Any information on these third-party websites may not be accurate, and any details or payments that customers submit may not be secure.

The RMV is not responsible for the content or actions taken by these sites. For more information on the dangers of third-party services, visit the Mass.Gov/RMV.

Customers with additional questions can contact the Office of Consumer Affairs and Business Protection at (800) 392-3636. They can also visit Mass.Gov/ConsumerAdvice.

Changes to Milford Regional Urgent Care Locations

Services at several of Milford Regional’s urgent care sites will be adjusted starting Monday, May 4, to meet patient needs as the public health crisis continues.

The changes impact services at the Hopkinton, Northbridge and Franklin locations.

Milford Regional Urgent Care, 1200 West Central St. (Rte. 140), Franklin. This location has reverted back to an urgent care facility seeing patients for all health issues not related to COVID-19. Patients in need of diagnostic imaging services with symptoms of or exposure to COVID-19 will be directed to Hopkinton.

Milford Regional in The Blackstone Valley, 100 Commerce Dr., Northbridge. The urgent care location is closed. A respiratory clinic has been opened at 200 Commerce Way in the area previously used as OB/GYN and pediatric offices. This clinic treats patients exhibiting respiratory illnesses, such as fever, cough, mild shortness of breath, wheezing, sore throat, muscle aches, or lost sense of taste or smell. However, patients without those symptoms will also be welcomed if they choose.

Milford Regional Urgent Care, 1,200 West Central St., Milford. This location remains open as an urgent care facility for all health services not related to COVID-19.

The Imaging Center at Milford Regional Medical Center is closed on the weekends. Symptomatic patients or those exposed to COVID-19 should go to the urgent care location in Hopkinton for those services.

Milford Regional encourages everyone to visit MilfordRegional.org to stay up-to-date on the Medical Center’s response to COVID-19.
**Beekeeping, A Lifelong Hobby**

By Chris Villani
Staff Reporter/Columnist

Upton resident Ewan McCulloch says his goal is to try two new things each year. Five years ago, he decided to learn how to play the French horn and how to keep bees. The French horn lasted three months, but the beekeeping has grown into a full blown passion.

“It’s a fascinating process, looking after these creatures,” McCulloch said. “I have three hives in my backyard. The bees can flourish, we get some honey and we do good for pollination in this area.”

McCulloch researched beekeeping when he first became interested in it and found a local “bee school” He signed up for the program, which only cost around $40, and was surprised to find more than 400 other bee enthusiasts had also signed up. “We had two auditoriums filled with the widest spectrum of socioeconomic groups,” he said.

The Worcester County Beekeepers Association, founded in 1900, is the oldest U.S. beekeeper organization. McCulloch said there are dozens of other beekeepers in the area who tend to their hives. Each hive, at the height of the summer, has around 75,000 bees living inside. There is a single queen, female worker bees who make up more than 95 percent of the bee population, and a handful of male drones.

McCulloch has been able to bottle the honey his hives produce and use it as a fundraising tool for the Pan-Mass Challenge, the annual two-day bike ride that supports the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute. It was through the Worcester association that McCulloch met Ken Warchol, a sixth generation beekeeper living in Northbridge. Warchol’s family started keeping bees in the 1840s. His first experience with bees was when he was three. He was near the beehive and, with his mother and father watching from inside, started collecting bees in a jar.

“My dad said he will learn a lesson,” Warchol said. “I squeezed one a little too hard and I got stung and came into the house crying.” Warchol had a hive of his own by age five and has been keeping bees for 70 years. He has over 100 hives in numerous area towns, including at the Red Rock restaurant, which uses his honey in some of their dishes. His daughters, Keri and Lindsay, have hives of their own, the family’s seventh beekeeping generation.

“I have always found it so relaxing,” he said. “You have a bad day at work and you go to the beehive and forget about everything. You watch the housecleaning bees polishing the wax cells and the queen laying the eggs, it’s just so fascinating.” His wife Deborah of 48 years has also married into the beekeeping tradition. “My father warned her before we got married, he said ‘he’s a beekeeper you know,’” Warchol said, laughing. “She knew what she was getting into.”

Ed. Note: In the next Town Crier, learn about beekeepers’ efforts to protect honeybees and how bees benefit the world.
Oh this Virus, Oh this Virus
I’ve been surfing the web more than usual during the COVID-19 public health emergency, and found some great parodies of songs to talk about the pandemic.

Heck, I said, I can write one of those. But, rather than taking a song from the past few decades, I dug back into my American folk music roots. If you remember My Darling Clementine, sing along.

Oh this virus, oh this virus, Named corona COVID-19. Now we are all stuck inside, Perhaps forever, quarantined.

The bat from the Wuhan market Carried the virus far and wide. Most of us had no protection, So a lot of people died.

Oh this virus, oh this virus, Named corona COVID-19. Now we are all stuck inside, Perhaps forever, quarantined.

Governor Baker, he’s no faker, He shut everything right down. It can get you out and drive around, It looks just like a ghost town.

Oh this virus, oh this virus, Named corona COVID-19. Now we are all stuck inside, Perhaps forever, quarantined.

We’re “essential” or non-essential,” A lot to talk about our jobs. We don’t shave, can’t get our hair cut, We’re turning into fat độs.

Oh this virus, oh this virus, Named corona COVID-19. Now we are all stuck inside, Perhaps forever, quarantined.

Don’t lose hope now, this will end soon. Perhaps forever, quarantined. Named corona COVID-19.

My Darling
rather than taking a song from the past few songs to talk about the pandemic.

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

LETTERS letters may be edited for length and clarity and will be published on a space available basis. Maximum 300 words. Must include your name, address & telephone number.

Time for Electronic Voting at Upton’s Town Meeting
To the Editor,
Selectmen, you have established at least a tentative date for the Upton Annual Town Meeting I would like to suggest that you use the recently suggested electronic voting system. I believe one of the options given to you was a trial run of the system.

It is unlikely you will be getting 300-400 people crammed into the auditorium under the existing COVID-19 pandemic. My personal thought is that you rent a large tent(s), a public address system if you lack one, and proceed accordingly. Nothing can get lost by giving this system a “live-fire” test.

It is time to put aside political prejudices and differences of opinion and agendas and take action that will benefit the community as a whole. Our Constitution is based on the idea of We the People. Of recent times that seems to be fading rapidly.

Let us now reclaim our rights, our public responsibilities and work together as one community. Upton, Massachusetts. You couldn’t pick a better time to help ourselves.

Jerry Owczarzak
Upton

The Mendon Upton Town Crier was established over 25 years ago. We are the good news newspaper. We know our readers and advertisers.

Advertising with us means supporting a community and recognizing the strength of a smalltown USA.
**Mendon Town Clerk Encouraging Mail-in Voting; Override Amount Reduced Significantly**

By Michelle Sanford  
Staff Reporter

Mendon’s Town Clerk Ellen Agro is encouraging residents to opt for mail in voting for the June 9 Town Election; a date she anticipates will not change at this point.

Mendon’s Town Election was originally scheduled to take place on May 12, but due to the Covid-19 virus, the date was rescheduled for June 9.

State legislators passed a bill permitting communities to postpone or change the dates of local elections that were originally scheduled prior to May 30. The bill also permits residents to take part in the election by voting by mail through either absentee or early voting procedures; something that Agro supports to reduce virus exposure.

For those who still plan to vote in person at Misscee Hill School, protocols will be in place.

During a May 1 remote meeting, Agro presented the Select Board a draft contingency plan for poll workers and residents to follow in an effort to keep everyone safe.

Some of the guidelines discussed in the draft included requiring election workers to wear masks and face shields and voters to wear a mask or another type of facial covering before entering the school. The plan also calls for voting booths to be placed six feet apart with a maximum of six voters to be allowed at one time. In addition, each voter will be given a new marking pen and a place to discard them for sanitizing.

The Select Board wanted to review the plan before approving it and Agro planned to have the Board of Health vet it as well before it’s finalized.

Mendon’s election ballot will include two races and an override question for the Mendon Upton Regional School District. David Atkinson is challenging incumbent Lawney Tins for the Select Board’s three-year seat and 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 seat; Dan Byer for the three year seat for Park Commissioner; Allan Kent for the three year seat for Water Commissioner; and Sean Nicholson for the three year seat on the Mendon Upton Regional School Committee.

Byer laddared 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 seat or the five-year Housing Authority seat.

Also, on the ballot will be a Proposition 2 1/2 override question for the Mendon Upton Regional School District totaling $271,820. Initially, Mendon’s override amount was $1,045,033. However, at a May 5 meeting, the School Committee voted to recalculate the fiscal year 2021 budget to a significantly lower figure. Due to the Regional District’s school closings as a result of the Covid-19 virus, the District is projected to save on transportation, supplies, heating, snow and ice removal, maintenance overtime, and workmen’s comp. In addition, four new positions initially proposed will be eliminated and cost of living increases will be reduced.

If the override passes, the tax impact on a Mendon home valued at $425,000 is expected to be around $118 per year; that tax cost includes the three percent CPA surcharge.

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

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**Mendon News**

**COVID-19 Updates for Mendon**

**Town Buildings**

All public buildings in Mendon will remain closed to the public until further notice. Residents may contact the appropriate office by phone or visit. Visit MendonMA.gov/contacts-directory for a complete listing of phone numbers and emails.

**Roads**

Real estate and personal property bills are due on Tuesday, June 1. Residents can use the drop-box by the Town Hall front entrance for payments, completed census forms, dog licensing and applications. Checks should be used for payments. Payments may be mailed to P.O. Box 11, Mendon, MA 01656, or online at online at MendonMA.gov and clicking on the Online Payment Link.

**Annual Town Election and Annual Town Meeting**

Mendon's Annual Town Election is Tuesday, June 9 and the Annual Town Meeting is June 1 at 7 p.m. Both are held at Misscee 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 located in the former Taft Public Library Building. Online permitting is now available at MendonMA.gov/viewport.

**Trash Service**

Normal trash services continue in Mendon. Trash stickers can be purchased at Miscoe Hill School, protocols will be put in place. The Massachusetts Simple Recycling utilizing the pink bags has resumed. Contact the Board of Health, 508-434-2666, for information.

**Taft Public Library**

The Taft Public Library building is closed. For a listing of online services visit TaftPublicLibrary.org.

**Senior Center and Food Pantry**

While the Mendon Senior Center is closed, please call 508-478-6175 or email coal mendonma.gov for assistance Food Pantry orders now being accepted and pickup times arranged.

**Parks Department**

The Memorial Park Playground, Tennis and Basketball Courts are closed and all facility use permits are suspended. The fields are open for individual/home use only. All summer programming is planned to operate as scheduled and registrations are still open at MendonMA.gov/parks. All summer events are also still planned. Parks offices are closed to the public and all business will be conducted remotely. Decisions regarding summer programs will be made in June. Open Space.

All trails are open space properties are open for individual and family use. Users should observe social distancing and have a face mask ready to wear if needed. Vigilant on MendonMA.gov/trails for more info.

**Alerts**

Residents are reminded to visit MendonMA.gov for the latest COVID-19 updates.

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**Obituary**

Hazel Iola Sadler  
UPTON-Hazel Iola Sadler, born December 30, 1924, passed away on the night of her daughter, Lynette, in Phoenix, on April 17, 2020. Hazel was a lifetime resident of Upton until January 2020. She suffered in failing health for the past three years due to a variety of health conditions.

Hazel was married to the late James W. Sadler of Upton and resided for 54 years in her home, Glenview at 1096 Main Street, the daughter of Guy Colcord and Ruth Person. Besides Lynette J. Sadler, she leaves a son, James S. Sadler of Granby and two granddaughters, Michelle and Elaine Sadler of Florida, eight great-grandchildren, a brother Donald Person of Upton; three sisters, Elsie Cary, of Harpswell, Maine, Edna Colcord of Wilbraham, and Thelma Reed, Mansfield. She was predeceased by her husband, James S. Sadler, brother Richard Person, and a grandson.

Hazel worked in several jobs throughout her life. She was employed as the secretary to the General Manager of the Kartigauer Hat Shop (formerly Merrimac Hat) in West Upton. She worked as the first general office manager for the Tupperware Corporation when it was established in the 1950s. Her last job was as a bookkeeper aide at the United Parishes when the kindergarten was opened in the late 1950s for 14 years and 13 years for the Memorial Elementary School when the public kindergarten was established.

Hazel was a kind loving person, known for her beautiful smile and her outgoing personality. She welcomed everyone and she was a friend to all she met. Many of her adult kindergarten students still think very fondly of “Miss Haz.”

Hazel had many hobbies such as skiing, reading and creating many, many greeting cards that she sent to her family and friends. A future memorial service will be held in her loving memory at the United Parish of Upton after the health crisis is over. She will be greatly missed. Mom, Rest in Peace. God Bless you.

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**The Advertiser’s Club Directory**

These are the businesses that contract to advertise in The Upton and Mendon Town Crier at least 12 times a year. They have agreed to a minimum discount, feature article about their business (minimum 1/16 page) and listing in this directory.

Businesses  
Ames Animal Hospital  
Barlow’s  
Bakin’s Bakery  
Barnes Kaye & Associates  
Barnes’ BBQ  
Barrett’s Nursery & Landscaping  
Belknap & Sons  
Bendel’s  
Baker’s Furniture  
Becker’s Heating & Cooling  
Beggett’s  
Berglund’s  
Bright Insurance Agency  
Brown & Black Landscaping  
Bowie’s  
Bensons  
Brown’s Upholstery Shop  
Byer for the three year seat for Park Committee; Barry Iadarola for the five year seat on the Planning Board; and Ellen Agro for Wayne Phipps for two Library Trustee seats for three years. There are no candidates for the three-year seat or the five-year Housing Authority seat.

Also, on the ballot will be a Proposition 2 1/2 override question for the Mendon Upton Regional School District totaling $271,820. Initially, Mendon’s override amount was $1,045,033. However, at a May 5 meeting, the School Committee voted to recalculate the fiscal year 2021 budget to a significantly lower figure. Due to the Regional District’s school closings as a result of the Covid-19 virus, the District is projected to save on transportation, supplies, heating, snow and ice removal, maintenance overtime, and workmen’s comp. In addition, four new positions initially proposed will be eliminated and cost of living increases will be reduced.

If the override passes, the tax impact on a Mendon home valued at $425,000 is expected to be around $118 per year; that tax cost includes the three percent CPA surcharge.

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

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**Civic Update**

There are many good reasons to mail in your vote. Choose the option that is best for you. To learn more about mail-in voting, visit mendonma.gov/mailing-vote.

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By Michelle Sanford  
Staff Reporter

The Mendon Senior Center is closed, while the building is being deep cleaned. For a listing of online services visit TaftPublicLibrary.org.

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**Town Election Mail in Voting Procedures**

To reduce the risk of Covid-19 exposure, new laws were recently passed by the Commonwealth that permit voters two alternatives to in-person voting at the polls for elections.

The laws allow for any resident to vote by absentee or early voting by mail only. Links to for the applications are available on the Town Clerk’s web page. MendonMA.gov. Voters who have not already registered to vote in the June 9 Annual Town Election by absentee or mail-in ballot must ensure their application is received at the Mendon Town Clerk before noon on Monday, June 8. Completed applications can be mailed to the Town Clerk at 20 Main St., Mendon, MA 01656; emailed to TownClerk@mendonma.gov, or dropped off in the Town Hall’s drop box outside the building’s front door.

Completed ballots must be returned by the close of polls at 8 p.m. on June 9. Ballots can be mailed to: Mendon Town Clerk, PO. Box 10, Mendon, MA 01656; emailed to TownClerk@mendonma.gov, or dropped off in the Town Hall’s drop box outside the building’s front door.

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**MAY 15, 2020**  
**Upton, Mendon Town Crier**
Covid-19 Delays Mendon’s New Police Station Opening

By Michelle Sanford
Staff Reporter

Mendon residents will need to wait a bit longer before the doors of the new police headquarters are open. As a result of the Covid-19 virus, interior construction of the new building has stopped. In early March, the Police Station Building Committee was discussing a possible Memorial Day ceremony to dedicate the new station in honor of former Mendon Police Chief Mathew Mantoni. However, those plans soon came to halt. On March 11, Governor Baker declared a state of emergency amid the Covid-19 outbreak and eventually enacted a stay at home advisory. Later that month, the state put out guidelines stating if construction projects wanted to continue, certain protocols must be adhered to such as taking temperatures of workers, wiping down surfaces, wearing personal protective gear, and practicing social distancing. “They gave you a week before you had to have everything in place,” explained Committee Secretary Don Morin. Because Mendon currently has an operational police station, the Select Board felt the interior construction of the station could be postponed until the Governor begins lifting restrictions.

“Every project is different depending on the scope of the project, but a lot of the interior work on our building can’t be done effectively when having to social distance,” said Building Committee Chair Joe Cronin. April 1 was the last day work on the interior of the police station took place. Still, because it’s easier to practice social distancing outside, site work on the exterior has continued but has also been delayed at times because of rain. Currently there is some back and forth among Mendon’s Town Counsel and the general contractor’s legal counsel concerning who is responsible for Covid-19 related costs that are related to the site work being completed. Ownership of those costs will be determined at a later date. Morin and Cronin confirmed there are 23 calendar days of work left on the building with an additional two weeks needed to close out the project. The Committee is anxiously waiting to hear if the Governor’s May 18 stay at home advisory will be lifted on that date in the hopes that construction can start up again. For now, members continue to meet on Wednesday evenings remotely.

Eventually, the current police station will be demolished. When the new police station is complete, Mendon will have a 9,200 square foot building that repurposed and renovated the former Main St. fire station with an expansion in the back and will be ADA compliant. The opening of Mendon’s new Police Station will be delayed. Police Station Building Committee photo

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. Applications are available at MendonmMa.gov/Board-of-Health/Scholarships.

Mendon Board of Health Scholarships

The Mendon Board of Health, in partnership with E. L. Harvey and Sons, is offering two $500 scholarships to graduating Mendon high school seniors who are furthering their education at an accredited institution of learning and demonstrate acts of good citizenship and/or community service. Applications are available at MendonmMa.gov/Board-of-Health/news/2020-scholarship. The application must be completed and returned to the Mendon Board of Health Office, 18 Main St. by 3 p.m. on June 1.

YOU'RE SAFE WITH US...
Don’t Delay Emergency Care

Emergencies and other illnesses do not simply stop due to the Coronavirus outbreak. We are extremely concerned that patients are avoiding the emergency department out of fear of being infected with the virus. This delay in care is leading to worse outcomes with many patients postponing the care they need. There is a misperception that emergency departments are so overwhelmed with COVID-19 patients that they cannot provide safe care. This is absolutely NOT the case in the emergency department at Milford Regional.

We have made a concerted effort to ensure that all patients are safe from the moment they enter the Medical Center. To underscore this commitment, Milford Regional has just received its fourth consecutive distinction as one of the safest hospitals in the country. Your safety is our top priority.

For a special video message from our Medical Director of Emergency Services, please visit milfordregional.org/safe-with-us
Mendon Voters to Face $20.4 Million Budget

By Michelle Sanford
Staff Reporter

The Mendon Finance Committee will recommend a $20.4 million budget to voters during the June Annual Town Meeting. The date of the annual meeting is tentatively scheduled for June 1 at Miscoe Hill School beginning at 7 p.m., however, that date is likely to be postponed. Any date change will be posted on MendonMA.gov.

According to Finance Committee Chair Mike Merolli, the budget process this year was fairly straightforward even though the group had to meet remotely due to COVID-19 restrictions.

In Article 4, voters will be asked to approve the $20,449,288 recommended budget for Fiscal Year 2021, a 4 percent increase over the $20,210,327 of FY20. Some of the drivers for the increase include the schools’ budget requests, a rise in health insurance, and funding a new ambulance.

A draft budget shows the recommended combined total for the MURBD and Blackstone Valley Tech at $11,429,441, an overall two percent increase over $11,261,636. If approved, the Regional School District’s new recommended budget request from Mendon totals $10,329,085 an increase of $237,490 from last year. The Regional School District is seeking an override of $271,820, which would have a tax impact of $118 per year on a $425,000 home.

The Police Department’s new fiscal year budget remains the same with the percent increase in health insurance. In addition, the department requests a four percent increase in salaries totaling $777,197 versus last year’s $749,172. The Fire Department’s overall recommended budget totals $968,611.

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Select Board Debates Raise for Building Inspector

By Michelle Sanford
Staff Reporter

The Mendon Select Board voted two to one to give Building Inspector Tim Aicardi a salary increase adding up to approximately $4,000 more annually. The vote took place during a May 1 remote meeting and provided some debate among the Board as well as several town employees.

Aicardi received his certification to become a Building Commissioner several years ago. At that time, he was told he would receive the appropriate raise, however due to budget constraints, he never did.

During the discussion at the May 1 meeting, Select Board member Mark Reil voted against the increase. Reil felt the timing of it was fiscally irresponsible given the difficult financial situation the town is facing due to the impending override vote and economic downturn resulting from the COVID-19 virus. Reil stated the decision on the raise should be made at another time.

However, Select Board Chair Chris Burke and Select Board member Lawney Tinio disagreed. “This has been going on for several years; it’s not something that has just crept up. I think this is essential and it’s in the budget,” said Burke.

Burke added the town investigated four or five other communities and what they are paying their Building Commissioners, noting Mendon’s pay rate is comparatively on the lower side.

Several town employees chimed in on the measure including Assistant Treasurer/Collector Tom Merolli who asked the Select Board if the raise is being given, even with the town’s Web site for the latest information concerning precautions to be taken during the meeting as well as to confirm the date. In total, there are 25 articles on Mendon’s warrant; ten of which are being brought forward by the Community Preservation Committee.

Article 18, is seeking $10,000 of Community Preservation Act (CPA) funding for engineering costs needed for projects at the Town Beach that will address drainage/stormwater run-off issues, fixing certain landscaping problems, retaining retaining walls, cleaning up the planting area, and purchasing equipment.

“Most likely this will be a several-year project funded jointly through CPA and Parks,” explained Parks Director Dan Byer. “The engineering study will help us develop a plan to address the work.”

Article 19 is seeking $1,000 from CPA funding for the installation of gutters on the Records Room building. The gutters are needed to help keep water away from the foundation of the historical building.

Article 22 is seeking $10,000 of CPA funds for the installation of a pollinator garden on the Muddy Brook conservation area. These gardens are planted to attract pollinators such as bees, butterflies, and hummingbirds.

The following article, Article 23, is requesting $10,000 for public water supply permitting needed for affordable homes to be located at 52 Providence St.

Related to the police station is Article 12 to fund the fiscal year 2021 police station debt exclusion totaling $133,855. And finally, Article 13 is to fund the Fino property debt exclusion for fiscal year 2021 totaling $95,400.
Do Not Flush!

WIPES, PAPER TOWELS, PERSONAL HYGIENE PRODUCTS!

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 H Emergency Support, (Please detail problem.)

~ Stay Safe!

J.C. Parmenter INC.
508.435-3381 HOPKINTON
JCParmenterSeptic.com

We’re All In This Together!

Because of what is going on in our small corner of the world, please know that MO&I is taking all the necessary precautions to keep you the customer, and the special employees who make up the team at MO&P, safe. Whether it is a delivery of oil or propane or an in home service call or a trip to the office for any of the quality products we sell, we are making sure we maintain the minimum distance of 6; entering homes through basements when available and offering “no touch” billing. We are also wearing gloves and facial protection as well. We have both offices disinfected twice a week and provide every vehicle and employee with anti-bacterial wipes, paper towels, food items. And with more than 700 types of ant species in the United States, it’s not surprising that ants can quickly become a source of frustration and concern for homeowners.

“Most ants thrive in warm and moist conditions, which help to eliminate moisture or standing water near or inside the home,” said Jim Mazzuchelli, Owner of WPC Pest Control. “In some cases, the only way to completely remediate an ant infestation is to call a professional who can locate and remove the identified species.”

The National Pest Management Association (NPMA) reminds homeowners to be on the lookout for one of the most prevalent pest—ants.

“Many local homeowners that the first step to remediation is to properly identify the pest,” said Jim Mazzuchelli, Owner of WPC Pest Control. “Identifying the species of ant helps the homeowner to eradicate the problem rather than treating the symptoms.”

According to the National Pest Management Association (NPMA), “Ants are considered a ‘nuisance’ pest because they can be a common sight in the home, triggering frustration and concern for the homeowner.”

“Ants are a common pest problem that many homeowners face. Ants can cause damage to homeowners’ homes and property,” said Jim Mazzuchelli, Owner of WPC Pest Control. “Ants can also be a potential health hazard, as they can contaminate food and spread disease.”

“The sights, smells and activities of the season, they also must contend for their comfort and to protect the pest control from ants,” said Jim Mazzuchelli, Owner of WPC Pest Control. “Professional pest control services are recommended to assist homeowners in controlling and eliminating ant infestations.”

Thank you for your support of our small business. We are your neighbor, your friend, and are just as concerned as you are to get this virus under control and hopefully eradicated.

We will be there for you, no matter what the situation.
Please stay safe, healthy and call us with any questions or comments.

Jeffrey Mushnick
President

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Getting Rid of Ants, The Most Common Home Invader

Submitted by Jim Mazzuchelli, WPC Pest Control

While homeowners across the country enjoy the warm sights, smells and activities of the season, they also must contend with increased pest activity. This season, WPC Pest Control advises homeowners to be on the lookout for one of the most prevalent pests: ants.

Often considered the number one nuisance pest, ants pose a significant health and property risk as they destroy wood, contaminate food items. And with more than 700 types of ant species in the United States, it’s not surprising that ants can quickly become a source of frustration and concern for homeowners.

“Most ants thrive in warm and moist conditions, which help to eliminate moisture or standing water near or inside the home,” said Jim Mazzuchelli, Owner of WPC Pest Control. “In some cases, the only way to completely remediate an ant infestation is to call a professional who can locate and remove the identified species.”

The National Pest Management Association (NPMA) reminds homeowners that the first step to remediation is to properly identify which ant species is present in the home.

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THANK YOU for your support of our small business. We are your neighbor, your friend, and are just as concerned as you are to get this virus under control and hopefully eradicated.

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The Most Common Home Invader

Some of the most common home invaders include:
- Odorous House Ants. These ants get their name from the unpleasant odor they give off when crushed, often described as smelling like a rotten coconut. They typically nest in wall voids and crevices and prefer sweet foods.
- Pharaoh Ants. Pharaoh ants prefer sweets, but also consume grease and even shoe polish. They live in extremely large colonies and keep warm near artificial heating sources like baseboard heaters and ovens.
- Carpenter Ants. This species hollows out nests in both dry and moist wood, though they prefer the latter. They can be particularly hard to remove since their nests can be more difficult to locate.
- Fire Ants. Fire ants can cause severe allergic reactions in addition to structural damage caused by chewing through the insulation around electrical wiring.

Homeowners who suspect an ant infestation should contact a licensed pest professional who can identify ant species and recommend a course of treatment. To learn more about ants, please visit NoBugsNoPests.com.

Submitted by Jim Mazzuchelli, WPC Pest Control

The National Pest Management Association (NPMA) reminds us, “Most ants thrive in warm and moist conditions, which is why it’s best to eliminate moisture or standing water near or inside the home,” says Jim Mazzuchelli, Owner of WPC Pest Control. “In some cases, the only solution is to install a moisture barrier.”

While homeowners across the country enjoy the warm weather and long days, this is also the time when ants become a bigger problem. “This is why it’s best to control ants early,” says Mazzuchelli. “Ants are often the first pests to arrive at your home.”

In the United States, it’s not surprising that ants can quickly become a source of disgust, especially when they are found in places like bathrooms, kitchens, and basements. “Ants are often considered the number one nuisance pest,” says Mazzuchelli. “And they can be a real problem, especially when they enter your home.”

While it may seem simple, preventing ants from entering your home can be a challenge. “The best way to prevent ants is to keep your home clean,” says Mazzuchelli. “Ants are attracted to sweet foods, so it’s important to keep your kitchen clean and free of food scraps.”

However, even with the best efforts to prevent ants from entering your home, it’s important to be prepared. “If you suspect an ant infestation, contact a licensed pest professional immediately,” says Mazzuchelli. “Ants can cause significant damage to your home, and it’s important to address the issue as soon as possible.”

To learn more about ants and how to prevent them from entering your home, please visit NoBugsNoPests.com. For more information, contact Jim Mazzuchelli, Owner of WPC Pest Control, at (508) 478-3166.

Submit your own text and images to be included in the Weekly Consumer Guide.
Selectmen change Override to Transfer

By Michelle Sanford
Staff Reporter

A May 7 remote meeting among the Upton Board of Selectmen and the Finance Committee ended with the Selectmen unanimously voting to eliminate a Proposition 2 ½ override for the schools and instead bring an article before voters to transfer the funding from stabilization.

Several weeks ago, Mendon and Upton were facing a Proposition 2 ½ override totaling more than $2.5 million for the schools. However, that figure was reduced significantly when the School Committee voted to recertify its budget and instead request an increase of $718,727.

Due to the schools’ closures as a result of the Covid-19 virus, the schools are expected to save significantly on transportation, maintenance, supplies, and workmen’s comp. In addition, four new positions initially proposed will be eliminated and cost of living increases will be reduced, among other reductions.

Upton’s portion of the override was initially expected to be $1,229,135; $1,171,697 for the Mendon Upton Regional School District and $57,438 for Blackstone Valley Tech. However, now with the MURSD’s recertified budget, the town’s new override figure came approximately to $620,000; $202,004 for MURSD and $57,438 for BVT.

During the May 7 meeting, members of the Board of Selectmen and the Finance Committee debated the best way to fund the $260,000. According to Town Manager Derek Brindisi, there were several options.

One being to move forward with the override. Another option would utilize the town’s reserves, including the stabilization account which has just over $2 million and free cash which has $770,000; $380,000 has been appropriated for the upcoming town meeting.

The last, and most concerning option to Brindisi would be to find the money in the town’s operating budget, likely resulting in cuts.

The Town Manager explained the Governor could possibly enact 9C cuts to the state’s 2021 budget, which permit the Governor to make budget cuts midway through the budget cycle. These decreases would inevitably trickle down to municipalities resulting in possible reductions in Chapter 90 funding, unrestricted general government aid, and school funding.

Prior to taking a vote, Finance Committee member Jonathan Calianos suggested taking some funding out of the supplemental roads fund that is voted on annually at town meeting. Calianos felt with the uncertainty of the economy, “We might need stabilization a lot more down the road next year than we do today,” he said.

The annual town meeting warrant currently has an article for supplemental road funding totaling $962,080. There is also approximately $72,000 left over in that account from last year.

After discussing the various options more, the Selectmen and the Finance Committee unanimously voted that the best option was to take the funding out of stabilization, which will need to be passed by a 2/3 vote at town meeting. If it fails, town officials could re-mote the article to have the funding taken out of free cash.

Real Estate and Personal Property Bills

Upton real estate and personal property taxes are due, Monday, June 1. Deposit payments by check only in the secure black plastic mailbox in the Upton Town Hall parking lot on the Warren St. side of the building. Mailed payments are honored on the date deposited. Or pay online, UptonMA.gov/home/pages/online-payments.

Upton News

By Michelle Sanford
Staff Reporter

On May 5, the Upton Board of Selectmen voted to hold the Town Election on June 16 and the Annual Town Meeting on June 23.

Due to Massachusetts’ COVID-19 advisors, municipalities are choosing to reschedule their May elections and town meetings to June. During the May 7 meeting, Selectman Derek Brindisi noted he is not certain how the Governor’s order not allowing 10 or more people to congregate in one place will affect the town meeting. Brindisi said the order exempts municipal legislative bodies from adhering to that order but wasn’t certain if the exemption pertained to town meetings. “Until we get clarity on that, I think that poses a challenge as far as what we can do next,” he said. Regardless, Brindisi confirmed protective measures such as masks and six-foot distancing will need to be in place.

Town Clerk Kelly McElreath explained the Town Election can be held in a more controlled environment in order to practice social distancing. Protective measures will put in place for voters heading to the polls and election workers. Still, McElreath is encouraging residents to take advantage of mail-in voting through early voting and absentee measures to help reduce exposure to the virus. (See sidebar).

The June 23 Annual Town Meeting poses different challenges regarding social distancing. For 2020 town meetings, the state is looking into legislation which allows only ten percent of a town’s quorum to be present at the meeting. In Upton, 40 residents are deemed a quorum, which means under the proposed legislation only four voters would have to attend the meeting. Selectmen stated they are hoping for a larger turnout than that.

A recent decision concerning the schools’ override could also impact turnout. On May 7, Selectmen voted unanimously not to bring an override ballot question forward for the Mendon Upton Regional School District and Blackstone Valley Tech. Instead, an article will be placed on the warrant to transfer approximately $260,000 from stabilization to fund the schools. “I would expect a significantly lower turnout without an override vote,” said Brindisi of the town meeting.

Still, town officials understand they must be prepared for a large crowd and are determining how to fit voters into one room while practicing social distancing. One suggestion is to hold town meeting in the Nipmuc gym instead of the auditorium to provide more space for social distancing. Brindisi said he will analyze all spaces in the high school before a decision is made.

Upton Town Election June 16; Mail in Voting Available

By Michelle Sanford
Staff Reporter

June 16 is the new date of Upton’s Town Election, which will be held at the Nipmuc Regional High School. Polls will be open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m.

In order to reduce the risk of COVID-19 exposure, Town Clerk Kelly McElreath plans to put various protective measures in place for voters and election workers, that will likely include wearing face masks and practicing social distancing. McElreath stated mail-in voting is available through absentee and early voting procedures. (See sidebar.)

The ballot has only one race for a three-year term as Selectmen, incumbent Stephen Matellian, who is finishing his first term and was formerly on the Finance Committee, is being challenged by David Ross, who sits on the Economic Development Committee and was a Finance Committee member and Grafton Selectman.

Other seats are uncontested and include David Looper for the 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 Phillips for Cemetery Commission for one year, Richard Desjardins for Board of Health for three years, Richard Gazoorian 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 Amorelli for two Library Trustees for three years.

Three seats have no candidates – Finance Committee for three years, Cemetery Commission for three years, and Library Trustee for three years.

There will not be an override question on the ballot for the schools. The Selectmen voted instead to present an Annual Town Meeting article to transfer approximately $260,000 out of stabilization.

Upton Town Election Mail in Voting Procedures

To reduce the risk of Covid-19 exposure, new laws were recently passed by the Commonwealth that permit voters two alternatives to in-person voting at the polls for elections – absentee or early voting by mail.

Links to access the mail-in or absentee voting applications are available by clicking 2020 Calendar for Annual Town Meeting. – Election on the Town Clerk’s Web page at UptonMA.gov.

Voters who want to vote in the June 19 Annual Town Election by absentee or mail-in ballot must ensure their application is received by Upton Town Clerk before noon on Monday, June 15. Completed applications can be mailed to Upton Town Clerk, 1 Main St., PO Box 11, Upton 01568, emailed to kmcElreath@uptonma.gov or deposited in the black drop box in the Town Hall parking lot.

Completed ballots must be returned by the close of polls at 8 p.m. on June 16 by mail to the Town Clerk’s office or placed in the Town Hall drop box by 5 p.m. on June 16. Please email or call the Town Clerk office 508-529-3565 with any questions.
**Upton News**

**Upton Selectmen Intent on Honoring Veterans for Memorial Day**

By Michelle Sanford  
Staff Reporter

Being particularly vulnerable to the Covid-19 virus, face masks have been an essential piece of protective gear for the senior population. And, with thousands of virus cases still being diagnosed in the state each week and Governor Charlie Baker's mandate requiring all residents to wear masks in public places, the face coverings are more essential to seniors than ever.

Thanks to several generous residents who have volunteered their sewing skills and time, the Upton Center has been able to provide the face masks to elderly residents as well as their Meals on Wheels volunteers who are continuing to bring food to clients.

The Upton Board of Health also donated some masks. “We’ve been making calls asking seniors if they need masks and many of them do,” said Upton Center Department Specialist Bernadette Denson. Denson added there are seniors who are continuing to utilize the Center’s van for medical appointments, prescription pick-ups, and limited shopping trips. “Anyone on the van has to wear a mask, so we’ve supplied some of those riders with masks too,” she said.

Although the Upton Center has received many donations of the cloth masks, there continues to be a need for them. As of May 8, there were just a few left to distribute to elderly residents. “They’re being utilized for grocery shopping and other activities, with some also canceling their July 4 events,” said Upton Manager Derek Brindisi. 

Brindisi stated he’d spoken to other town managers on the subject who’ve stated their communities have canceled Memorial Day activities, with some also canceling their July 4 events.

Still, Brindisi said it was important to somehow still honor those who have served. “One thought he had was to collaborate with the VFW and read off the names of the veterans from Upton. The recording he said could then be posted on the local cable government channel. Selectman Maureen Dwinnell suggested the Board of Selectmen could be the ones to read the names of the veterans. Selectman Chair Stephen Matellian echoed those same sentiments noting the importance of the day and how it typically brings together the community to recognize its veterans. “When you think of our town and us as a community and you think when is the town really bustling with energy and really feeling that sense of patriotism toward those who have served our country,” he said. “It sounds like Derek has a good idea with reading the names.”

Brindisi said a decision would need to be made quickly on what was going to be done and planned to collaborate with the VFW within the next few days.

**Face Masks and Food Donations needed**

By Michelle Sanford  
Staff Reporter

“Anyone on the van has to wear a mask, so we’ve definitely needed to restock our shelves,” said Denson. “A lot of people who don’t normally use the food pantry are now finding the need to.”

Items needed include juice, peanut butter, cracker packs, granola bars, cereals, canned meats, canned fruit, raisin packs, powdered milk, nuts, canned vegetables, sugar free pudding mix, macaroni and cheese, spaghetti sauce, tissues, paper towels, toilet paper, and hand soap. One thing not needed is pasta.

Although the Upton Center is closed to the public, staff is continuing to work to provide as many services and resources as possible. Recently, the town established the Neighbor to Neighbor program, a confidential program 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 families and individuals of all ages who live in Upton.

Anyone with questions should call the Upton Center at 508-529-4558.

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**Upton, Mendon Town Crier**

MAY 15, 2020
Celebrating the Nipmuc Class of 2020

By Melissa Orff
Staff Reporter/Columnist

The Nipmuc Regional High School Class of 2020 is trying hard to salvage some of their senior year ceremonies after being derailed by a world-wide pandemic. Due to COVID-19, school has been cancelled for the reminder of the year, leaving many seniors left wondering what that meant for their prom, senior trips, and graduation.

The Nipmuc Class of 2020 looked to their peers, administrators, and the community to help make this a special time regardless.

“Our hearts go out to our seniors knowing that this is not at all how they imagined the end of their high school career,” said Nipmuc Co-Principal Mary Anne Moran.

“With that said, we’ve been grateful for the way the Nipmuc community has rallied around our seniors.”

The Class of 2020 Class Officers have been working on plans with Co-Principals John Clements and Moran and Class Advisors Meredith Hefer and Allison Towne.

“When we first heard the news that we weren’t going back we were all really disappointed,” said senior and Class Officers’ Executive Vice President Taylor Johnson. “But our class trusted back we were all really disappointed,” said senior and Class Advisors Meredith Hefez and Allison Towne.

“With the recertified budget, we can start planning for a safe and successful end,” said Co-Principal John Clements.

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Budget, Grants and School Choice Updates Presented to School Committee

By Melissa Orff
Staff Reporter/Columnist

The Mendon Upton Regional School Committee held a brief Zoom meeting on May 11 to discuss budgets, recent grant awards, and school choice numbers.

Just the week before, the School Committee had recertified their FY21 budget out of concern for the economic health of the two communities.

The new $37,133,486 FY21 budget is a reduction of $1,827,627 from the original March 9 certified budget of $39,361,160.

The recertified budget will mean an operational assessment increase of $521,820 (5.39 percent) to Mendon and $562,261 (4.29 percent) to Upton. Although original conversations with the towns yielded discussions of overrides of $271,820 for Mendon and $200,000 for Upton, Superintendent of Schools Dr. Joseph Maruszczak told the Committee during their May 11 meeting that Upton has decided to fund the entire amount without an override.

“For there to be a balance in the increase between the two towns, it is super critical that the modest Mendon override is successful,” he said.

Maruszczak reiterated there were still many unknowns when it comes to the variability of the state budget, and that the school district could be looking at developing a month to month budget going into the summer.

Maruszczak also announced the district has received a $29,604 local equipment and technology grant from the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security from the Executive Office of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts for the second time in two years. Last year, the grant was used to upgrade the cameras and security systems at Miscoe Hill School. This year, the money will be used to upgrade the cameras and security systems at Memorial Elementary School.

“This will mean we will have substantially upgraded camera and security system at all four schools,” said Maruszczak, who commended Business and Finance Director Jay Bier for securing the grant.

Maruszczak also commended Food Services Director Diane Mucci for securing a $1,200 grant from the New England Dairy which is being used to provide meals and support infrastructure for the cafeteria during the COVID-19 crisis.

Over the past two weeks alone, Maruszczak said Mucci and her staff have provided close to 200 week-long food care packages, each including seven healthy breakfasts and lunches. These care packages are available to all families in Mendon and Upton, those who qualify for free and reduced lunch plus any family with food needs.

Although normally finalized in May, Maruszczak reported that School Choice numbers are still in flux due to factors resulting from the pandemic.

Currently, there is a tentative, small number of school choice openings at Clough Elementary Kindergarten (4), Clough Spanish Immersion Kindergarten (5), Miscoe Hill Grade 5 (2) and Grade 6 (2). There are no school choice openings right now at Memorial and Nipmuc Regional High School. An updated report on school choice openings will be presented in August.

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Mo-Fri:
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Valley Tech Nutritionist Receives National Recognition

Nourishing Blackstone Valley Regional Vocational Technical High School student is a priority for Martha Pellegrino, the school’s Nutrition Educator. Passionate about food, nutrition, and the health and well-being of the school community, her contributions are receiving national attention from the non-profit, School Nutrition Association (SNA), as the recipient of their National Employee of the Year Award.

This award recognizes the valuable contributions of a school nutrition employee who has exhibited a commendable commitment to both their school meal program and the students they serve. These recipients have influenced the quality of school meals through customer service, an interest in young people, cooperation, work attendance, creativity, participation in professional development, and their willingness to go above and beyond the call of duty. While the nominating process began before widespread COVID-19 school closures, SNA and BVT recognize the efforts of school nutrition employees as frontline heroes, ensuring students continue to have access to healthy meals.

Pellegrino prioritizes food safety and the health of her students by providing them with nutrition counseling. She also serves as a liaison for parents, nurses, school counselors, and food service staff who coordinate students’ dietary needs. Pellegrino offers alternative forms of physical and nutrition education, working with students to teach them how to prepare healthy meals and snacks. She guides students in their food choices, using daily lunch menus to explain the nutrient analysis, and seeks their menu suggestions to ensure meals are well received. She has created a wellness blog as a free resource for students, parents, and the community, providing information on nutrition, fitness, and other health-related topics. Pellegrino also co-chairs the Wellness Committee at BVT.

Collaborating with her district director, she plans and executes the annual Wellness Fair, writes grants to cover costs of new equipment and initiatives such as the funding for mobile food carts and the breakfast cart program, as well as exploring new avenues to engage students. Pellegrino oversees the daily activity of the school food service program, from compliance to participation, and monitors regulatory changes that can impact operations. Taking pride in the BVT program, during her off time, she applied for the USDA Healthier US School Challenge Silver Award, which Valley Tech won, for the last three months including a $74,000 savings in supplies, a $90,000 savings in heating costs, a $36,000 in athletic transportation due to no spring sports, and most significantly, a $400-500,000 savings in the special and regular education transportation line items due to no buses running during this time.

The new budget also eliminates the 4 new positions that the district was hoping to add, level funds all of the supply accounts, removes an athletic transportation due to no spring sports, and most significantly, a $400-500,000 savings in the special and regular education transportation line items due to no buses running during this time.

The original budget $38.9 million budget was one of level services—keeping programs and services in place—as well as adding two new School Psychologists, a Library/Media Center Specialist at Nipmuc and an additional Elementary Special Education Team Chair. The decrease was due to two factors, said Maruszczak. The first is the amount of savings that the district realized this year with the unexpected closure of school for the last three months including a $74,000 savings in supplies, a $90,000 savings in heating costs, a $36,000 in athletic transportation due to no spring sports, and most significantly, a $400-500,000 savings in the special and regular education transportation line items due to no buses running during this time.

This award recognizes the valuable contributions of a school nutrition employee who has exhibited a remarkable commitment to both their school meal program and the students they serve. These recipients have influenced the quality of school meals through customer service, an interest in young people, cooperation, work attendance, creativity, participation in professional development, and their willingness to go above and beyond the call of duty. While the nominating process began before widespread COVID-19 school closures, SNA and BVT recognize the efforts of school nutrition employees as frontline heroes, ensuring students continue to have access to healthy meals.
Boone Heading to England for School & Soccer

By Chris Villani  
Sports Reporter/Columnist

Blackstone Valley Tech senior Michael Boone is heading across the pond for college and to continue playing soccer at a high level to attend the University of Northumbria in northern England.

The process that led him to the United Kingdom started a couple of years ago when he looked into an English soccer program. He has since visited the country twice and after a trip to the Newcastle campus last fall, decided it was where he wanted to spend his college career.

“It’s definitely a new experience and I’m nervous but also extremely excited,” Boone said.

Boone is planning to earn a degree in business and will play for the I2I Soccer Academy. There are multiple teams that play in Newcastle, so Boone said he is not sure exactly where he will fit in on the roster. But he knows that soccer, or football, is much different in England.

“One of the reasons I chose Newcastle is because it’s known for how seriously the people there take the sport,” he said. “The whole city revolves around soccer. It will be amazing to live and play in an environment like that.”

The game itself is different in the U.K., Boone said. When he visited last summer, he had the chance to compete against some of the teams he will see with I2I and the game was more physical and faster.

“It’s going to take some getting used to,” he said. “The hardest thing is how everything is much more intense over there and everything is a split second faster. You have to be tougher.”

Adjusting to English culture is also going to be a challenge. Everything from picking up new slang, different foods, and the magnitude of soccer will be something new for Boone, but he said it’s something he is excited to take on.

His parents are also excited, he said, and maybe a little nervous as Boone prepares to live abroad.

“They went out in the fall to experience it themselves and they really helped me make the tough decisions and go through the process of applying,” he said.

All that remains is for Boone to go through the visa process and learn exactly when he will be making the trip. School is planned for September, but the COVID-19 pandemic could still alter some of those plans.

Even amid uncertain times, Boone is not thinking twice about the decision to go to school and play soccer in another country, saying “This was a once in a lifetime opportunity I couldn’t pass up.”

Nipmuc Hall of Fame Spotlight: Paula Johnson

By Chris Villani  
Sports Reporter/Columnist

Nipmuc Regional High School graduate Paula Johnson has a deep love for her alma mater and her hometown of Mendon. And for the three-sport star who is program’s all-time leading scorer in basketball, that love was fostered through the support of her coaches and family.

“Nipmuc was my home away from home. The support of my coaches and my teammates was so important to me,” Johnson said. “I couldn’t have done it without them.”

In Mendon, being such a small town, what I love about it is you grow up with the same coaches who were really committed to their programs and the school and the kids,” Johnson said. “I knew Jim Grant or Ron Rhode or Mike Clements had my back. They didn’t coach for just a year or two, these were people who were committed to our community and they had a big impact on me.”

Johnson, who graduated in 1988, is a member of Nipmuc’s inaugural Hall of Fame class. It’s a recognition she said “humbles” her, especially when she looked at the breadth of inductees spanning different eras and sports. A three-time Dual Valley Conference all-star on both basketball and softball, Johnson set the scoring record with 1,194 career points playing before there was a three-point line in high school basketball.

During her junior year, she averaged 27 points per game, the leading scorer in the district for all players, male or female. She also broke the Nipmuc record for assists and was dominant on the softball diamond, hitting .545 during her junior year and earning DVC Player of the Year honors.

But what stood out to Johnson the most was having the support of her family. She emotionally recalled that her mother and late father never missed a game. She also had the chance to play with her older sister, Sharon, for three years. “It was great to be able to go to school and have all the classes with her and be able to play on the same teams after school,” Johnson said.

Now an educator in the Medway public school system, Johnson lives in Mendon with her wife Nancy and four children, Ethan, Alea, Taylor and Kendyl.

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Now an educator in the Medway public school system, Johnson lives in Mendon with her wife Nancy and four children, Ethan, Alea, Taylor and Kendyl.

“When my daughters play, I work really hard to not miss a game,” Johnson said. “My mom set a high standard, that’s what you do.”

Johnson lives just steps from her mother and sister and is an assistant coach for the Nipmuc girls’ basketball team, staying connected with the small town and the school she loves.

“I used to think that there was supposed to be something bigger out there but for me I’ve discovered that this is what it’s all about,” she said. “The connection with people, and the commitment and contributions to community are really what it’s all about.”
2020 Legion Baseball Season Canceled

By Chris Villani
Sports Reporter/Columnist

The 2020 American Legion baseball season has been canceled nationwide due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Massachusetts teams were told Monday, marking just the second time since 1926 that there would not be legion baseball over the summer.

"It's heartbreaking," said Milford Manager Steve DiVitto. "We want to play; we want to be on the field because we want to have some sense of normalcy and I think a lot of us who were involved in legion baseball and around the town were vexing the legion as the thing to give us a sense of normalcy heading into the summer."

"This is a sad day indeed for American Legion Baseball in Massachusetts," said state chairman Dick Pastor in an email to teams. "Let's hope life returns to normal in time for 2021." DiVitto said he feels especially bad for players who were slated to be competing in legion baseball for the final time and will not be able to.

"This has been a part of my life since I was growing up," he added. "To think a summer may go by and there is the potential for no season at all, it's a tough thing to try and grasp."

Seven players with Mendon or Upton ties played for Post 59 last summer. DiVitto said there are discussions being had about fielding a team and playing as an "independent" league without any sponsorship from the American Legion. He has spoken with other teams in Milford's zone and some of the neighboring zones about what that type of a season might entail. South Dakota has already signaled an "independent" league without any sponsorship from the American Legion.

"We are away from even being able to think about this based on the governor's reopening plans, but we are going to work with our club, our zone, and other zones to see whether, if we reopen and there is a window sometime this summer, we could do something so the kid can get out on the field."

Many potential hurdles would need to be cleared, including getting the green light from the state and figuring out what safety protocols need to be put in place. Waivers from the towns and families would be needed, as well as insurance to make sure players are covered when they participate.

"It's going to be a long process in a short amount of time, but we are not closed to the idea," DiVitto said. "It's going to be something that is unprecedented, but we all already know this is an unprecedented situation."

Nipmuc Offers Online Tips for College Sports Hopefuls

By Chris Villani
Sports Reporter/Columnist

A group of former Nipmuc student athletes who took their games to the college level joined a coach and an administrator for an online forum last week to provide advice for Warriors' athletes hoping to be recruited and finding themselves losing time with their sport due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The videoconference forum, hosted by Nipmuc Athletic Director Chris Schmidt, featured St. Albans soccer player Jackson Bukun, MIT basketball player Kyle Gallagher, and Kevin Hack, a track athlete at Assumption College. MIT lacrosse coach Anne Versprille and Ferrum College Athletic Director John Sutyak rounded out the panel.

The hour-plus discussion and question and answer period covered an array of topics, among them the challenges of being noticed when sports have been halted on a global scale.

"It's important to know everyone is in the same situation, you are not falling behind anyone," Versprille said. "Recruiting is going to look a little bit different, I'm sure we don't be back to playing sports in June when a lot of tournaments and camps happen."

Bukun added that sending old film to coaches, keep grades up, and being a good person are other ways to show a coach how well an athlete might fit with a college program.

Gallagher said that going to camps is something that helped her build relationships with coaches, though many of those have been scrapped due to the virus.

"This is a business at the end of the day, so once we get back to a more normal state you know the places that run these camps and clinics are going to want to make their money, so there will be opportunities," Sutyak said. "We need to fill beds and need bodies on campus. I think, optimistically, there will be opportunities.

Even during normal times, the recruiting process can be stressful and challenging.

"The hardest part about being recruited is definitely getting noticed," Bukun said, adding that he chose the Division II level because he wanted the chance to make their money, so there will be opportunities, "We need to fill beds and need bodies on campus."

The one that I was told was the Division II level because he wanted the chance to play as a freshman. "The reason I am playing soccer is because I love it and wanted to play for the next four years."

Hack reminded up and coming athletes to enjoy the process, even though it can be a difficult one. Losing out on sports seasons should call into focus the need to save the moments on the field or the court.

"Don't take what you have for granted," Hack said. "Every moment is one you've worked for; the journey is just as important as the end goal."


**Sports Flash**

By Chris Villani

**Navigating the New Unwritten Rules of Golf**

Golf is a game built around etiquette. You don't step on the line of someone else's putt. You're supposed to quiet when another player is standing over the ball and getting ready to swing. And then there are the half-hearted canned lines we all spew when a player we just met on the first tee hits a shot that doesn't go quite right.

"Get up, get up!"

"Tough break."

"You know, I'm surprised too, I really thought the ball could go through that tree."

But golfing during a pandemic is a little different. When a buddy of mine and I decided to tee it up for the first time since courses reopened, we had other etiquette questions on our minds.

"Do we wear a mask?"

"What if someone we are playing with wears a mask? Should we put one on then?"

I had a birdie putt (humble brag) on a hole and a playing partner I had not met prior to the round blasted an impressive bunker shot from about 50 yards out to within eight feet and directly in the line of my putt. Without thinking, and wanting to keep things moving, I marked his ball and moved it for him. But now, that helpful gesture is a COVID-19 faux pas.

"You know, I'm surprised too, I really thought the ball could go through that tree."

"Finally beating them and winning one for BVT, that was probably the biggest highlight for me, " he said.

"I went down last year and toured it and I really liked the campus, " Allegrezza said. "It wasn't too big, it was a good size for me and everyone seemed really positive and loved being there."

Allegrezza looked into the business finance program and ultimately decided that was what he wanted to study, saying a business degree would give him a "good head start" as he looks ahead to his career. He has also been in touch with the soccer team coaching staff.

"I've been trying to get ready for it and running as much as I can," he said. "I try to spend some time working on skills and practicing my juggling and control."

Allegrezza will head south after a strong career at Valley Tech, anchored by the support of his parents Beth and Greg. He said they have been in his corner throughout his athletic career, and saw a number of achievements while Allegrezza was in a BVT uniform.

The highlight, he said, came last fall in the district title game when BVT knocked off Nipmuc to claim the championship.

"Finally beating them and winning one for BVT, that was probably the biggest highlight for me," he said.

"You know, I'm surprised too, I really thought the ball could go through that tree."

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