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Fin Com eyes several budgets

By Ellenor Downer
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BARRE – The Barre Finance Committee met with representatives from the Historical Commission, Assessors and Woods Memorial Library on Tuesday, Feb. 27.

Lucy Allen of the Historical Commission said last year the Commission did not need a budget, but this year they would like it back. The amount would be \$1,200, the level funded budget from Fiscal Year 2023. She said last year, the Commission thought they could get a grant, but it did not happen.

She said they would like to place “Entering a Historical District signage at the Barre, Barre Plains and South Barre Commons.. She said a lot of people treasure the commons and as people know more about community history, they show a sense of pride.

Another item was a self-guided tour of the Barre Common. The tour would have a map containing bar codes to access tour information and local sites via their cell phone. The final request was to replace the lost signage for Quork Walker, a former slave who lived in Barre. His brother has a cemetery in Ware River Watershed land owned by the Department of Conservation and Recreation off Gilbert Road. The Commission would like to add a Black History Trail. Allen said the DCR reached out to the Historical Commission to work with them on town history within the Ware River Watershed land.

Assessors

Jesse Warren, Administrative Assessor, presented the Fiscal Year 2025 budget for the Board of Assessors. He said all the contractual Vision software had increases in cost. The other increase was in office supplies, mainly for ink. The Assessor’s budget for FY 25 was a 2.5% increase over FY 24 for software and office supplies.

Warren said a salary increase for the Administrative Assessor was also in the proposed budget. He said he completed classes for accreditation and now has that. He looked at comparable salaries in other communities and his salary was on the low end. The Board of Assessors would like to increase the salary to be competitive with other communities.

The Administrative Assessor in Paxton works 26 hours at \$46,700. In Athol, the position is 37 hours at \$84,000 and in Gardner it is 40 hours at \$76,000. Town Administrator Tammy Martin said the state average is \$65,000 to \$72,000. She also said \$65,000 is one of the lowest full-time positions and Warren has certification, which is “hard to come by right now.”

Warren and the Town Administrator are working to achieve higher new growth, which calculates into the town’s 2 ½ levy capacity. A Finance Committee asked what new growth looked like for this year. Warren said in the past new growth has added about \$100,000 to the levy. He said the amount was not available at the time, but there is a subdivision in the works waiting for State approval. When completed it would add about \$600,000 to new growth. The Town Administrator said she hoped to see added new growth.

Joseph Hood, Woods Memorial Library Director and David

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Purple for Prevention Week

Chris Herren
speaks at school
and community
assemblies

By Paula Ouimette
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BARRE – For Quabbin Regional High School alumni Cody Handrahan, stepping back into his high school gym and standing in front of an assembly of students and staff; was a feeling almost beyond words.

“It’s an honor and a privilege to be back here,” Handrahan said at an assembly last Thursday evening, held in commemoration of Purple for Prevention Week.

Handrahan attended the high school in 2008-2009, but never graduated. As a young teen, he smoked and drank a lot to fit in with his peers.

“Very quickly, that changed,” he said, when he became addicted to opioids at just 15 years old.

Handrahan had the opportunity to work with Q-DRUG (Quabbin Drug Response Unifying Group) when it first started, and had its members’ support when he hit rock bottom and told his mother he would take his life.

“They stuck by my side,” he said.

Q-DRUG’s founder Nehr Jenkins thanked Handrahan for sharing his story, adding that she is “so proud of him.”

Jenkins then introduced former Boston Celtics point guard Chris Herren, who had spent the day at the school speaking with students in middle and high school as part of Purple for Prevention Week.

Herren first came to the school district in 2013, sharing his story from his days playing basketball in his driveway as a kid, to going pro, and losing everything he had to addiction.

“I’ll never be like that guy,” Herren recalled thinking to himself as a teenager when he sat through an assembly similar to

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Chris Herren gives a fist bump to a student as he walked through an assembly held for middle and high school students for Q-DRUG’s Purple for Prevention Week.

Turley Photos by Mary Whitelaw



Chris Herren autographs a basketball.



Former NBA player Chris Herren stands with Q-DRUG members Nehr Jenkins (left) and Mary Whitelaw (right).

Listening Wellness Center welcomes new executive director

By Paula Ouimette
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BARRE – After celebrating its 20-year anniversary four years ago, Listening Wellness Center is ready to turn the page on its next chapter with a new executive director at its helm.

Barre resident Beatriz Arroyo has recently filled the role, following the departure of longtime Executive Director Laura Dusha Nelson.

Arroyo and her boyfriend moved to Barre with her sister, purchasing their dream home near the idyllic common. With the first year spent making the old house into a home, Arroyo decided it was time to look for a new career path.

Having followed Listening Wellness Center on Facebook since she moved to town, Arroyo decided to take a chance and apply for the executive director position.

“Something kind of nudged me to just send it. I sent it in, and they contacted me for an interview. I felt really good about it,” Arroyo said. “It’s really a dream.”

Now, she has a job she can walk to and from every day, taking in the beauty of her neighborhood.

“You can tell that people love it [Barre] and that makes me love it too,” she said.

Originally from south Florida, Arroyo attended Florida Gulf

University in Fort Meyers, Florida, where she studied sociology. Following graduation, she moved back home and took a part-time job at Whole Foods.

“That was supposed to be a little hiatus and ended up turning into a career,” Arroyo said.

Food is something that ties in closely to wellness, Arroyo said, and it becomes a shared experience for people from all cultures and backgrounds.

“Food is the unifier for all people,” she said.

Arroyo had planned to stay with Whole Foods for her career, but following a change in ownership the culture of the company shifted.

It’s the culture of Listening Wellness Center that made Arroyo want to apply for the executive director position, something that is very important to her.

“I wanted to do something really meaningful to me, and impactful,” Arroyo said. “Everything kind of lined up.”

Arroyo is ready to immerse herself in Listening Wellness Center’s programming, especially the cooking, yoga and children’s classes. She is also ready for the community building that encompasses this role and the center in general.

“We’re gearing up for our spring program for the kids and the community. That’s the stuff that I’m really excited about,” Arroyo said. “I want more pro-



Submitted Photo

Barre resident Beatriz Arroyo has been named Listening Wellness Center’s newest executive director.

grams and access to the community. Barre is such a great community.”

Listening Wellness Center is looking to offer cooking classes for people that are older, teaching them how to cook for one or two

people. Other ideas include cooking classes for college students living on their own for the first time.

Juicing and smoothie-making would be another topic, along with finding fun ways to incorpo-

USDA grant would cover 35% of new cruiser cost

By Paula Ouimette
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HARDWICK – Capital Planning Committee Chair Mark Korzec updated the Select Board about the feasibility of purchasing a new vehicle for the Police Department.

At the March 11 meeting, Korzec said the U.S. Department of Agriculture has offered a Community Facilities grant for \$23,450, which would leave a balance of around \$43,557 that the town would be responsible for. He said the Finance Committee has reviewed funding for the vehicle.

“Our suggestion was to get a four- or five-year loan and pay it back from Capital Stabilization,” Korzec said. There is currently \$50,000 in that account, and the Capital Planning Committee plans to add \$50,000 to it each year.

“In four years, when that would be paid off, we’d have plenty of money for the other capital purchases that were coming up,” he said.

Town Administrator Nicole Parker said the Community Facilities grant is for a “shovel-ready” project that is not construction and covers 35% of the cost. She said the funding will be gone as of Sept. 30, and the town’s portion has to be paid in full.

In order to meet the parameters of the grant, Parker said the town would need to have the title of the vehicle, and if they paid with a loan, they wouldn’t receive that title for several years.

Lieutenant Kevin Landine said this cruiser will replace a 2016 vehicle with 130,000 miles on it.

“We know the town is struggling,” Landine said. “We would not be asking for it if we didn’t need it.”

Korzec said the replacement vehicle has been a recognized need on the capital planning list.

The cost of the vehicle could be

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rate vegetables into your diet.

These classes would be about “meeting people where they’re at,” then adding more diverse culinary classes.

Arroyo has been listening to feedback from the community and beyond, to meet the center’s growing needs.

“We’ve had a lot of requests from the community for more yoga, and yoga options,” Arroyo said of the center’s yoga program. Listening Wellness Center has numerous yoga instructors leading a variety of classes for all skill levels and abilities.

She’s also been in touch with a nonprofit veterans yoga movement based out of California, to organize at least one veterans yoga event.

“Their instructors are either veterans who have gone through the training, or yoga instructors who have been through trauma informed veterans training,” Arroyo said. “I’m hoping that it kind of opens up a door for them.”

Mental health is also just as important to wellness as physical health, Arroyo said, as is “flexing our social muscles.”

“Humans need activities to bond and build our social networking in the community,” she said. “Physical and mental health are singular...[community events] bring in all different types of people and make bridges that

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Marshall Ames lets go of a free throw.



Turley photos by David Henry www.sweetdogphotos.com
Lian Lopez-Baez makes his way down the court.

Senators continue in state tournament



Morgan Softic drives into the paint.



Lucas Isrow starts a play for the Senators.

Pioneers lose state tourney opener to Panthers

By Tim Peterson
Sports Correspondent

PALMER—The Palmer Panthers won a preliminary round home game in the Division 5 state boys basketball tournament for the second time in the past three years.

Led by senior Andrew Menard and freshman Taydem Haley, who combined for 48 points, the 23rd-seeded Panthers advanced into the round of 32 with a 79-51 victory over the 42nd-seeded Pathfinder Tech Pioneers on Feb. 27.

“It’s really good for these guys, especially the two seniors, to have a home win in the states,” said Palmer head coach Missy Rocker said. “As soon as we found out that we would be facing Pathfinder, the kids were very excited about playing against their friends.”

Two years ago, Palmer defeated the Hampden Charter School East, 61-40, in a preliminary home game before losing at Hopkins Academy in the round of 32.

This year’s postseason journey also came to an end for the Panthers in the round of 32 following a 68-49 road loss to the 10th-seeded Douglas Tigers two nights later.

Palmer finished their season with an 11-10 overall record.

Menard, who scored 13 of his 22 points against the Pioneers during the second half, and Shawn Troche are the two seniors listed on the Panthers varsity roster.

“Andrew and I have been playing on the same basketball teams since we were little kids,” said Troche, who chipped in with seven points. “It feels amazing to win a state tournament game in our final home game. We lost in the round of 32 two years ago and we’re hoping to get to the round of 16 this year.”

Haley, who’s a tri-captain captain with the two seniors, played in his first state tournament game against Pathfinder Tech. He netted 18 of his career-high 26 points after halftime.

“Winning a game in the state



Turley photos by David Henry www.sweetdogphotos.com
Richie Gula shoots for the Pioneers.

tournament feels really good,” Haley said. “There was a lot of pressure on us, but we worked very hard as a team.”

Troche was very impressed with Haley’s outstanding performance.

“Taydem is only a freshman, but he scored 26 points, which is amazing,” he said. “He always plays every game with a lot of confidence.”

Pathfinder Tech, who has made three appearances in the state tournament since the postseason format was changed in 2021, finished their season with an 11-10 overall record.

“Even though the final score was worse than the first time that we played Palmer, I thought it was a much more competitive game tonight,” said Pathfinder head coach Zac Button. “We battled them to the end.”

The seven seniors listed on the Pioneers varsity roster are Hunter Griswold, Adrien Moskovitz, Branden Hnitecki, Luke Magnus,

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Hunter Griswold passes on the run.



Adrien Moskovitz passes on the run.

St. Patrick’s Road Race set for this Saturday afternoon

By Gregory A. Scibelli
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HOLYOKE – The weekend of St. Patrick’s Day is synonymous with the popular parade in the streets of downtown Holyoke. But equally tradition is the 10K St. Patrick’s Day Road Race.

The road race was disappointingly cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and again in 2021 when COVID-19 rates rose due to the vaccine not being as widely available at the time.

But last year, the race returned to the joy people throughout the region and beyond and Holyoke once again became a hub of activity beginning with “Race Day.”

And the sights and scenes of St. Patrick’s Day weekend were also back in the Paper City the past two years as the downtown area around Maple and High Streets were lined with patrons. Bars and restaurants were filled with people going in and out, the Mummies gave their performance, and children and others were able to participate in the Kids Walk and Fun Run prior to the “main event” taking place at 1 p.m.

This year’s race, the 47th running of the tradition, will take place



Photos by Gregory A. Scibelli
The first wave of harriers are off in the 2023 St. Patrick’s Road Race in Holyoke.

this Saturday, March 16. Once again, many will be looking to add their name to the list of winners of the 10K.

In 2023, it was the ideal day for Jenna Gigliotti, an Amherst woman who won the 10K Road Race for the second consecutive year. She crossed the finish line at 35:29.

This year’s male and overall winner was Michael Norberg, who also is from Amherst. He finished

with a time 30:50. He was more than 30 seconds ahead of the second-place finisher, Bradley Mish, of Hadley.

There were more than 5,000 participants in this year’s event, which is part of a big weekend in Holyoke, going along with the parade that took place on Sunday. It also is viewed as a practice course for runners participating in more races later in the year, including the

Boston Marathon. There are harriers who will run 6.2-mile course multiple times to simulate 26.2-mile marathon distance, including participating in the main race.

Of the more than 5,000 harriers signed up, 3,813 registered finishes.

Benjamin Lasky, of Ludlow, was a top local finisher, coming in 14th at 33:41. Lasky has been a top 10

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Quabbin alum Nassir participates in MASCAC championships

WESTFIELD – Abdi Nassir, a graduate of Quabbin Regional High School, has been a regular participant this winter on Westfield State University’s Track and Field team after spending the fall as part of the cross country team.

Most recently, Nassir took

part in the conference championship meet, placing fifth in the one-mile run. He completed a mile in less than five minutes at 4:45. He went on to participate in the 3,000 meter run, a distance of just under two miles. He placed third in that event with a time of 9:37.

Registration now open for Quabbin Valley baseball

The Quabbin Valley Over-28 Baseball League is looking to infuse new talent into its league for the 2024 season.


Registration for the 2024 season is now open and any interested players can go to www.quabbinvalleybaseball.org to get registered, or to seek more information or make inquiries about the league. The league website will also be updated over the next month with information about the upcoming season.

There are many open roster spots available in the league for the 2024 season, which is ten-

tatively scheduled to begin on Sunday, April 21. The league plays most Sunday from late April through late August with playoffs following that. The league plays a 15-game schedule and typically fields six teams each year. Games are usually played at 10 a.m. with fields in Easthampton and South Hadley normally used.

The Quabbin Valley league is an all-abilities league and all are welcome to join. Eligibility is players who are age 28 and

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