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'Ireland to America' program presented at Town House



Submitted Photos by Julie Bullock

Roger Tincknell is a performer who presented his program "Ireland to America" at the Town House in Hardwick this past weekend.

By Ryan Drago
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HARDWICK – The Paige Memorial Library welcomed musician and performer Roger Tincknell to the Town House this past weekend.

The program was called "Ireland to America", where guests could sing, clap, dance and witness the multi-instrumentalist who provides music programs for all ages.

This program was supported in part by a grant from the Hardwick-New

Braintree Cultural Council, a local agency, which is supported by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency. This event was also supported by the Friends of Paige Memorial Library.

The Town House had a great turnout as Tincknell of Shutesbury brought multiple instruments to play in celebration of traditional Irish music and culture. Tincknell would perform ballads, sing-alongs and work songs.

"This is one of the biggest

See IRELAND, page 7



There were children participating in Roger Tincknell's performance at the Hardwick Town House.

Town Administrator to resign June 1

By Ellenor Downer
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BARRE – The Select Board received the resignation of Town Administrator Tammy Martin at their Monday, March 17 meeting.

She tendered her resignation effective June 1. Select Board Chair Maureen Marshall thanked her for all the work she did for the town especially on the playground. She said, she hoped Martin would come back for the High Plains playground dedication.

When the Chair asked for a motion, Select Board Member Mark Regienus said he did not want to do it. They accepted the Town Administrator's resignation with "deep regret." Select Board Chair Marshall said the town would begin the process of finding an interim Town Administrator and the search for a Town Administrator.

CDBG hearing

Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission planner Joe Ferguson and project manager John O'Leary conducted a public hearing on the town's proposed application for a Community Development Block Grant for Fir Street in South Barre. Ferguson said a preliminary study on Fir Street improvement was done last September and the final would be completed next month.

CDBG projects must meet one of two criteria: providing benefit to low to moderate income areas or reduce urban blight. Project manager, O'Leary said the South Barre site has 51% low to moderate income residents, the result of a recently completed income survey. He also said CDBG required no financial outlay or matching funds from the town. The fee for CMRPC would come from the grant if awarded.

The grant application deadline for this highly competitive grant would be Monday, April 14. Award notification would be late summer or early fall. The grant source is the United States Housing and Urban Development. The program began in the 1970s and has a maximum cap amount of \$850,000. A "ballpark" estimate was \$575,000 for design and construction of Fir Street.

After the closing of the hearing, the two Select Board members present voted to accept the project proposal and approved the submission of the CDBG application. If the town received the grant, a preconstruction hearing would be held before the project begins.

TA Report

Town Administrator Martin said she met with the Senior Center Director

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Board designates assessor Special Municipal Employee

By Ellenor Downer
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OAKHAM – At the request of the Board of Assessors, the Select Board appointed Assessor Diane Peterson a Special Municipal Employee at their Monday, March 3 meeting.

Peterson will be a working assessor to assist during

this revaluation year from March 3 to Dec. 31, 2025. She will be paid \$50 per hour for this extra work with an amount not to exceed \$14,000, the amount in the Assessors Account after the \$24,500 for the outside firm to conduct the revaluation in 2025. The Board approved the designation.

Select Board Vice Chair Donald Haapakoski, who

arrived late, said the other Assessor on the Board, Peter Joyce must also file for Special Municipal Employee designation per State Ethics Commission policy. He would not be receiving extra compensation as a working assessor.

Assessor Peterson said the Board's goal was to finish the revaluations by Sept. 30. All inspectors would have an ID

lanyard and a sign on their vehicle.

Parks and Recreation budget

The Select Board reviewed the Parks and Recreation budget. At present, there were only two members on the Parks and Recreation Committee. They submitted a level funded amount of \$5,000. One of the two members said the

Parks and Recreation planned scaled down activities for next year. They would include installing a skating rink, movie nights, ski club, Memorial Day activities and bring back the holiday light contest.

Building

Commissioner budget Building Commissioner Robert Lanciani participated via zoom. He said with

the new zoning regulations he needed to purchase new code books for the town. The cost was about \$800 for ten different code books. This would be placed as a separate article on the Annual Town Meeting warrant as it was not a yearly expense.

He also proposed fee

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Town looks at budget shortfall and staffing needs

By Paula Ouimette
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NORTH BROOKFIELD – As town departments and boards and committees work to develop the budget for fiscal year 2026, Board of Selectmen Chair Jason Petraitis shared some insight about the town's financial outlook and needs.

Budget and override

Petraitis said all of the departmental budgets have been received, and there is a considerable gap to fill. He said every budget in town has a shortfall.

"Right now, we're well over what we have that can be allocated to everything. So that makes it difficult," he said.

Petraitis said this includes the school district's budget, which is needing an increase greater than what is allowed with Proposition 2 1/2. The proposed FY 26

budget for the school district is about 17% or \$1.2 million greater than the current fiscal year.

"We just don't have it," Petraitis said.

Petraitis said there has been talk of seeking an override to bridge the fiscal gap, but he said he can't put that article on the town meeting warrant in good conscience, due to its potential impact on taxpayers.

"You're looking at what would potentially be a 25% increase in taxes," he said, of which more than half would go toward the school budget alone.

This potential increase in taxes doesn't include sewer betterment rates for the upgraded wastewater treatment project.

"It's really tragic the way this happens. There are things that can be done on the state level but that's nothing I can have control over," he said.

Petraitis said even though the regionalization process with the Quaboag Regional

School District has stopped, he doesn't believe that it's outside of the realm of possibility for the future.

"There's potential for a tuition agreement with Quaboag, but we have to wait for the school committees to do the investigating and find out what that would cost," he said.

Petraitis said in grades nine-12, there are about 50 students in North Brookfield Public Schools, adding that teachers' salaries (not counting benefits) account for over \$1 million of the budget.

He said the lowest paid teachers are making mid-\$50,000 and the highest paid administrators are earning over \$100,000. He said the average taxpayer in town earns \$34,000 a year, and the average household \$80,000.

"I can't possibly ask for an override with those kind of numbers," he said.

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Litany for a Broken World



Turley Photo by Paula Ouimette

Hardwick author Lisa "LJ" Cohen reads from her newest novel, "Litany for a Broken World" at the Stone Church Cultural Center on March 16.

Hardwick author releases ninth science fiction novel

By Paula Ouimette
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HARDWICK – Resident and author Lisa Janice "LJ" Cohen has recently released her ninth novel, the first in a trilogy called "Litany for a Broken World".

Cohen began writing science fiction novels about 20

years ago, having previously worked as a physical therapist for 25 years.

"I wrote this book...or sort of this book, six years ago," she said.

Cohen said she was inspired to write "Litany for a Broken World" after hearing a story about a tent city in Boston on NPR. She decided to set her novel in the world of the unhoused.

"I thought it would be important enough to do that," she said. "As a physical therapist you worked with unhoused patients."

It is also set in the multiverse, where some of the characters are able to travel between universes.

"The walls between the universes are a little bit porous," Cohen explained. "The multiverse is a really interesting concept."

Cohen held a book reading and signing at the Stone Church Cultural Center on March 16, welcoming questions from the audience and sharing her creative process.

She started by thanking those in attendance for their support, and reading the novel's two epigraphs, one by Rabbi Tarfon and the second by William Sloane Coffin, which she heard at the funeral of her husband's coworker.

"It struck me, and I knew I had to use it," Cohen said.

Cohen read several pages of the first chapter of the novel, which introduced the character Jace, "a lone man wandering the streets of a small, post-industrial, pre-spacefaring city." Readers learn that this city is Boston, as Jace comes upon

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SPORTS

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Hall of Fame names senior all-stars

SPRINGFIELD – The Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame announced the team rosters for the 2025 Western Massachusetts Senior High School All-Star Games. On Thursday, March 20, the Hall of Fame will host the 2025 All-Star event on the Jerry Colangelo Court of Dreams at the Hall of Fame. A total of 60 players were selected from different divisions within the region to participate in three games that will showcase the top seniors in their final high school contest.

“We are proud to host the top high school basketball players from Western Massachusetts at our 14th annual All-Star celebration at the Basketball Hall of Fame,” said John L. Doleva, President and CEO of the Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame. “Residents of Western Mass. are encouraged to join us as we honor these exceptional seniors as they play the final game of their high school careers.”

A committee of local coaches and media members who represent each division



Turley photo by Gregory A. Scibelli

Mahar's Jayden Delgado was named to this year's Senior All-Star Game.

See **HALL OF FAME**, page 10



Gardner had a season that ended in the state tournament.

Turley photos by David Henry www.sweetdogphotos.com

Hockey co-op makes state tournament

GARDNER – Quabbin Regional High School participates in one co-op program during the winter months, sending some players to football rival Gardner High School for ice hockey.

This year's team was able to make the state tournament with a 10-8-1 record, securing the No. 24 seed in the Division 4 State Tournament.

The Wildcats faced North Reading in the Round of 32 on Feb. 25 out in Eastern Mass. North Reading, however, had too much offense on its side and defeated the co-op 7-2 in that matchup. Gardner's season ended at 10-9-1.



Aiden Lapointe represented Quabbin on the Gardner co-op hockey team.



Gardner and Quabbin have co-oped in hockey now for several years.



Cullan White also represented the Panthers end of the co-op.

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 2025 season.

Registration for the 2025 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 2025 season, which is tentatively scheduled to begin on Sunday, April 27. The league plays most Sunday from late April through mid-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 over. You must be 30 to be eligible to pitch in the

See **QUABBIN VALLEY**, page 10

Worcester wins close matchup with Southerners

WORCESTER – The Railers have not played seven periods of sudden death overtime the last two nights here, it only feels that way.

Less than 24 hours after Worcester took a wild 6-5 decision from the Norfolk Admirals, the Railers beat the Southerners, 2-1, in an equally tense affair Saturday night. The victory kept them two points ahead of Reading in the North Division playoff race, although the Royals do have two games in hand.

Reading also won Saturday night. It beat Trois-Rivieres, 2-1.

As can happen when teams are playing a third game in three days, this was a goal-tending duel. The winner was Michael Bullion, who stopped 27 of 28 shots. He beat Thomas Milic, who was spectacular in the third period and made 25 saves on 27 shots.

The game ended appropriately.

The Admirals pulled Milic in favor of an extra skater. They won a faceoff with four seconds left in the third period and got the puck to Graham Sward at the left point. He delivered a slap shot from about 55 feet and Bullion, following it all the way, smothered the puck in his gut as the green light went on.

“I got a sight line,” Bullion

said, “so I was watching it the whole time, and I stayed high the whole time, then just went down and ate it.”

Had the shot gone in, it probably would have counted. Bullion made sure there was no replay needed and was happy to hear the buzzer.

“Yeah, that was really nice,” he said.

The Railers got goals from Matt DeMelis and Anthony Callin. They had a 2-0 lead going into the third period but gave up a shorthanded goal to Sean Montgomery at 8:28. That left the Admirals with a lot of time to tie it, or worse.

Worcester's penalty killing was once again a key factor in a victory. The Railers were 4 for 4 while shorthanded (all four penalties were for slashing) and are 20 for 20 in the last six games.

“Right now it is getting guys who are comfortable with each other and super aggressive,” coach Nick Tuzzolino said of the killers. “There are certain penalty kill details you have to follow — good sticks, lots of shot blocks — and your goalie has to be your best penalty killer and Michael was ours tonight.”

DeMelis scored at 9:56 of

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The Lusitano Club of Ludlow returned to their tradition of giving out awards and scholarships to outstanding soccer players in the region

By **Tim Peterson**
Sports Correspondent

LUDLOW- More than 3,400 high school soccer players from throughout Western Massachusetts have been honored at the Lusitano Alumni and Fans (LAF) Awards Banquet during the past 35 years.

Because of the COVID 19 pandemic, the soccer banquet has been a lot smaller, but it's always a very special event.

Six scholarship winners were honored at this year's LAF banquet, which was held at the Gremio Lusitano Club in Ludlow on March 9.

The six award recipients are Thomas Wadas (Ludlow High School), Gabriella Fialho (Pope Francis/Ludlow), Samantha Lowe (Pathfinder Tech), Kylee Gamache (Franklin County Tech), Kennady Marino (East Longmeadow High School), and Burke Warchol (Longmeadow High School).

Wadas, who's ranked seventh in the senior class academically with a 4.5 G.P.A., will be playing college soccer at UMass Amherst. He's also a member of the

Lusitano awards return



Turley photos by David Henry www.sweetdogphotos.com

The scholarship winners show off their awards.

National Honor Society. “I'm going to be playing soccer at UMass, which was my top college choice,” Wadas said. “Staying close to home was really important to me.”

A year ago, UMass lost at third-seeded Denver, 3-0, in the Elite 8 of the NCAA Division 1 tournament. The Minutemen finished with a 13-4-5 overall record.

“UMass had an outstanding season last year,” Wadas said. “I'm just going to try my best to make an impact as a freshman. I'm really looking forward to playing soccer at the next level. The college game is a lot more

physical and quicker.” The UMass men's soccer coach is Fran O'Leary.

Wadas, who's planning to study business in college, was a four year starter for the

Ludlow boys' varsity soccer team, which is coached by Greg Kolodziej.

“Coach Kolodziej made a big impact on my life both on and off the field,” Wadas



See **LUSITANO AWARDS**, page 10

Samantha Lowe represented Pathfinder Tech at this year's event.