

BARRE GAZETTE

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Fin Com reviews Police Department budget

By Ellenor Downer
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BARRE – Police Chief James Sabourin presented his Fiscal Year 2025 budget to the Finance Committee on April 9.

The FY 25 proposed budget added the purchase of the yearly police cruiser to the operating budget, a change from previous years. In the past, the cruiser purchase was a separate article and funded from free cash. Last year, the chief said the cruiser came from American Rescue Plan Act funds. He said including the cruiser in the operating budget since it was an annual cost was considered a better accounting practice.

Since this was the first year funding the cruiser through the operating budget, the 16.24% increase was due mainly to that and salary increases. The new union contract with full-time police officers was recently ratified. The contract was for three years with a salary increase of 3% the first year and 3.5% the following years. The process took over a year and the chief included the additional cost for salaries in the budget. The budget also included Cost of Living Adjustment for non-union employees and part-time officers.

Chief Sabourin said cruisers are on a six year replacement cycle with the oldest being replaced yearly. He said last year he spent \$9,000 in maintenance on the oldest vehicle. The current cost for a cruiser was \$79,000 and was an increase of \$7,000 from \$72,000 in FY 24.

This yearly purchase also reduced maintenance costs because the new vehicles have a two year warrantee. He said the town did not have a town mechanic so oil changes were sourced to private garages, another expense.

He explained to the Finance Committee he used the oldest vehicle for court cases and road details rather than patrolling the town's many miles of roads. He said mileage on a cruiser might be 150,000 at the end of the six years but hours of use was also a factor in the cruiser's longevity and reliability.

Another increase to the budget was the special event coverage as detail work increased from \$51 to \$60 per hour. Events like the Memorial Day and Christmas parade were funded through this item. The Chief said details for the 250th anniversary celebration taking place this year would be coming from another town budget rather than the Police Department budget.

Police Chief Sabourin said he was working with the Town Administrator Tammy Martin on getting solar panels at the Public Safety Building. He also planned to include two plugs for electric vehicles as part of the solar project. He said hybrid vehicles were not as sturdy as the gas ones and there were no four-wheel drive electric vehicles.

In answer to a question from a Finance Committee member about transferring equipment from the replaced cruiser to the new one, he said some of it was put in the new cruiser. However, the bar lights, which have a lot of new technology involved, were not transferred. He said radios, gun

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Turley Photos by Mary Whitelaw

Members of the Quabbin Regional High School Student Council and The Horticulture Club helped clean up South Street in Barre from the Common to the High School.

Quabbin students clean-up for Earth Day



Quabbin Regional High School students participated in a town-wide cleanup this past Saturday.



Students enjoying a treat made especially for Earth Day by Curious Cravings Bakery.

Barre Senior Center welcomes new director

By Ryan Drago
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BARRE – Barre Senior Center welcomed newly appointed Director Betty-Jo O'Brien of West Warren.

O'Brien was appointed to the role on April 15 and brings a lot of knowledge and an extensive background to the director's job. Prior to being the director of the senior center O'Brien was the town assessor of Warren for a year but soon an opportunity came at a good time.

O'Brien is a veteran of the U.S. Air Force and has worked in caregiving and veteran affairs. O'Brien has also worked as an ambassador for the American Cancer Society.

O'Brien received her certificate in social work and also a master's degree in business administration with a concentration in project management. O'Brien worked in property management for 25 years.

O'Brien is excited about her new journey as the director of the senior center and envisions a positive future for the center and their senior residents.

"Making a positive impact," O'Brien said. "Helping seniors is my passion and I want to work collaboratively with the community."

O'Brien hopes to work on offering more resources and programming at the senior center as she eases into the new role and a series of important tasks.

O'Brien describes the Barre Senior Center as a "nice, warm and friendly place." As the direc-



Turley Photos by Ryan Drago

Betty-Jo O'Brien joined some of the seniors during the meet and greet at Barre Senior Center held last week.

tor, O'Brien will be working on planning events, administrative responsibilities and budgeting.

In addition, O'Brien wants to continue offering education, training and strategic planning at the senior center. The center currently has kitchen staff, two senior work off staff and an outreach coordinator.

O'Brien wants to get more volunteer opportunities involved at the senior center and have more connections made between community members. According to O'Brien her favorite part of the job is working with the seniors and learn more from them.

It is an opportunity for O'Brien to learn their history and life experiences through conversations and collaborations.

O'Brien's first job in elder care was when she was in high school. Over time, she would work in different senior facilities and nursing



Betty-Jo O'Brien is the newly appointed director of Barre-Hardwick Senior Center.

homes. Her background in caregiving also comes from taking care of her son, Kevin O'Brien, who also served in the U.S. Air Force.

At the meet and greet held last week, seniors of Barre and Hardwick joined O'Brien and the staff of Barre Senior Center. The residents welcomed O'Brien and

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Board OKs cemetery contract and fee schedule

By Paula Ouimette
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HARDWICK – Cemetery Commissioner Paula Roberts said she sent out the scope of cemetery services to three local landscapers and received one response from Lori Crevier, who has had the bid for the last three years.

At the Select Board's April 22 meeting, Roberts said Crevier's bid for fiscal year 2025 is \$24,900.

"Everything else that we do, is from the funds that we charge to the families who are burying their loved ones at the cemetery."

– Paula Roberts,
Cemetery Commission

Roberts also provided an updated cemetery fee schedule to the board, explaining that the fees provides the primary support for the Cemetery Commission's budget, outside of landscaping and electrical, which are funded through the town's budget.

"Everything else that we do, is from the funds that we charge to the families who are burying their loved ones at the cemetery," she said.

Roberts said the increased fees will help cover the needs of the commission, including the care, labor and upkeep of the cemetery.

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Historical Commission reviews Mary Lane alternatives

By Ryan Drago
Staff Writer
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WARE – The Historical Commission went over alternative uses for the Mary Lane Hospital property.

At the April 22 meeting, the commission discussed what was going on with the property as of now and what they have done to reach a solution.

Since their last meeting, 33 letters were sent out to acute healthcare organizations. The plan is to find out if any of these organizations may be interested in developing the property and providing a medical service to the town.

The commission also reached out to Way Finders out of Springfield.

Way Finders works to strengthen housing stability and economic mobility, and to build thriving neighborhoods in communities throughout western Massachusetts, including the Church Street School Senior Housing apartment complex.

The commission had learned that Way Finders has worked with Baystate Health in the past. The commission hopes Way Finders will reach out and observe the property. One of the main needs the town wants is a healthcare service and Way Finders is one of the initial sources that could make it happen.

"The town is very focused on having healthcare," Historical Commission Chair Lynn Lak said.

The question Lak had for her fellow commission members, is should the commission look at

other options, not just healthcare.

The demolition delay on the Mary Lane Hospital property will end in October and there are about five and a half months left in the delay. Therefore, the commission is looking at other outlets.

One of the outlets being considered for the space is breweries. The land has plenty of space for other uses including breweries. However, the commission wants to discuss as a team if an outlet like a brewery is a use the town would want to have.

Commission member Claudia Kadra said she sent out 18 letters to all urgent cares that may be interested in expanding and placing a spot in Ware. Other than urgent care the other closest connection to a healthcare service would be through Way Finders.

Town Manager Stuart Beckley commented via Zoom and mentioned all zoning options for the property are being reviewed. In other words, alternative uses are there but what are the public's thoughts about certain alternatives.

"Is a brewery a desirable use," Beckley asked.

The zoning list of all appropriate uses for the Mary Lane Hospital property include suburban and residential uses, including a museum, daycare, community center, nursing, utilities, equestrian stable, laboratory, research, brewery, winery, funeral services, bed and breakfasts and several more.

Beckley suggested that this meeting would be a great time for

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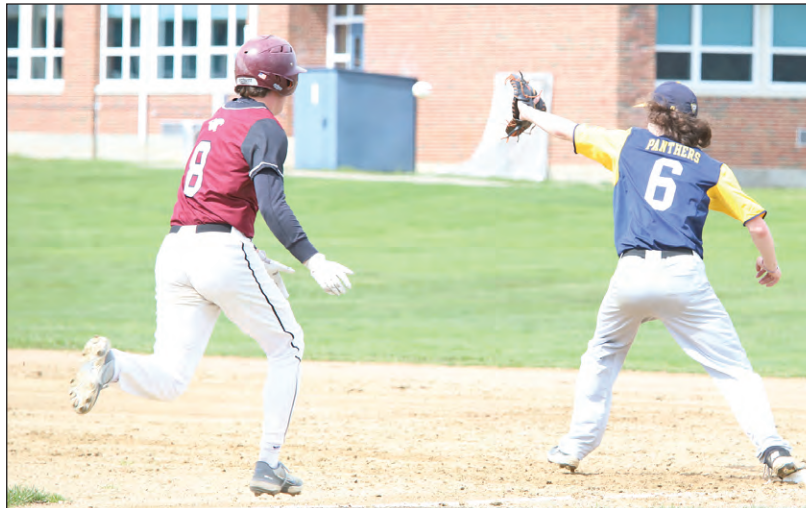
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Quaboag upends Quabbin baseball

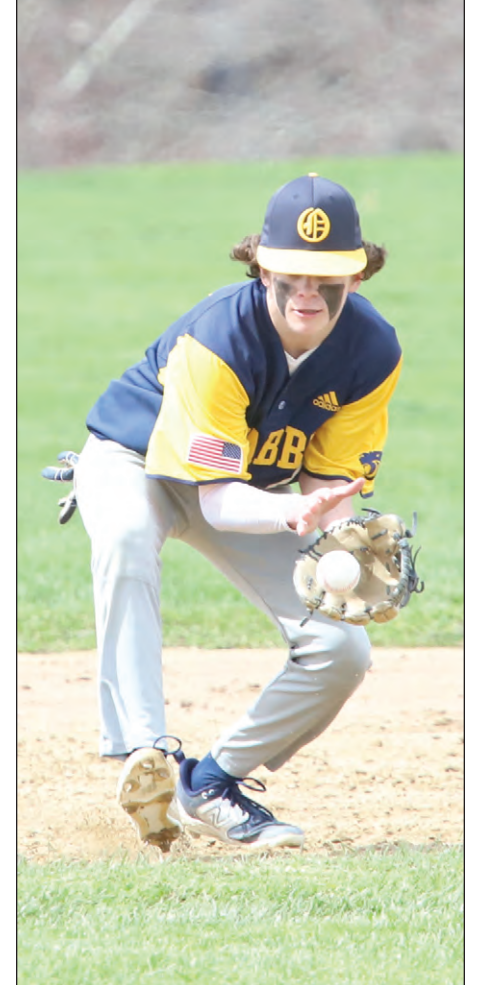
BARRE – Last Friday afternoon, Quaboag defeated Quabbin Regional 13-0. The Cougars were able to take advantage of a couple of miscues by the Panthers in the early innings. The Panthers offense was able to put some runners on base, but struggled to bring them around in the matchup. The Panthers are 1-3 and next face Gardner on Monday, April 29 at 3:45 p.m. Quabbin improved to 3-1 on the season and is in action on Friday afternoon, hosting Doulgas High School at 3:30 p.m.



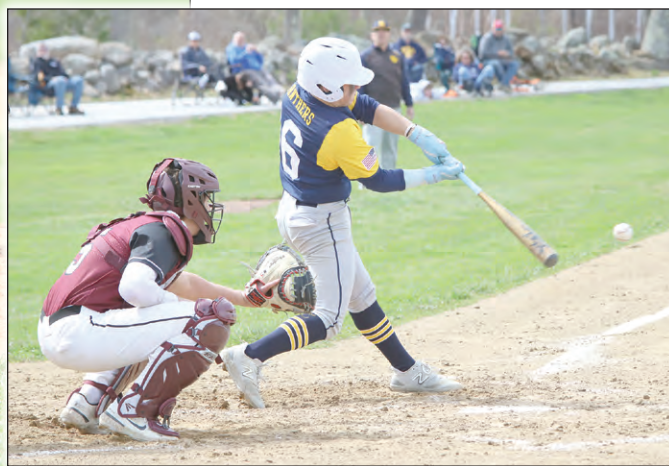
Adam Adams works to the plate against Quaboag last Friday.



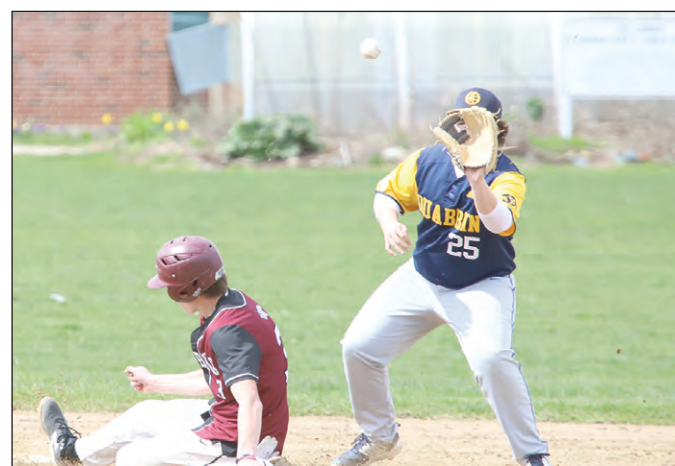
Martin Stoddard catches the out at first base.



Aiden LaPointe fields a ground ball on the bounce.



Martin Stoddard swings and connects on a pitch for the Panthers.



Sam Morgan catches the ball at second base.



Chloe Dennis hustles down the line after making contact.

Panthers take care of Cougars

BARRE – Last Friday afternoon, Quabbin Regional softball defeated visiting Quaboag 18-3. The Quabbin offense got things going early, taking advantage of a couple of walks as well as a couple of miscues in the field break the game open. Quaboag would grab a few consecutive hits to get some runs on the board. But Quabbin broke away and eventually would put the game away. Quabbin got its first win of the season against three losses while Quaboag went to 0-4 on the season.



Kai Schuster swings and connects on a base hit.



Ana Dunn crosses home plate.

Rain hampers Pioneers early games

PALMER – Through three weeks of the spring season, Pathfinder softball has managed to fit just two games in their schedule thanks to a lot of rainouts combined with poor field conditions.

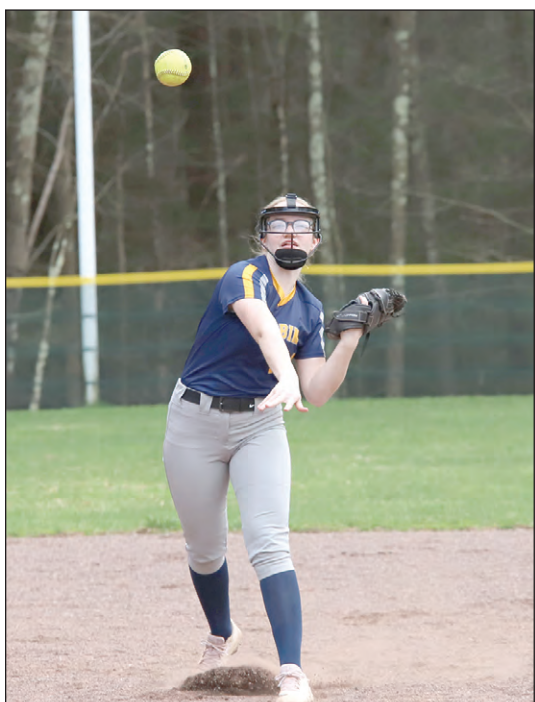
Pathfinder's only games so far were on April 9 and 11. The Pioneers would defeat Belchertown 13-5 while losing to Pope Francis 7-3.

Finally, earlier this week, the Pioneers were back in action, as they handily defeated Putnam 14-2 in six innings. Greenly Lagimoniere had three hits and three RBI. Lianna Carrasquillo had two hits and two RBI, and Kendra Burke allowed two runs on eight hits, walked one, and struck out 14 for the win.

The Pioneers next face Belchertown for the second time this season on Monday, April 29.



Pitcher Kendra Burke extends and send an offering to the plate.



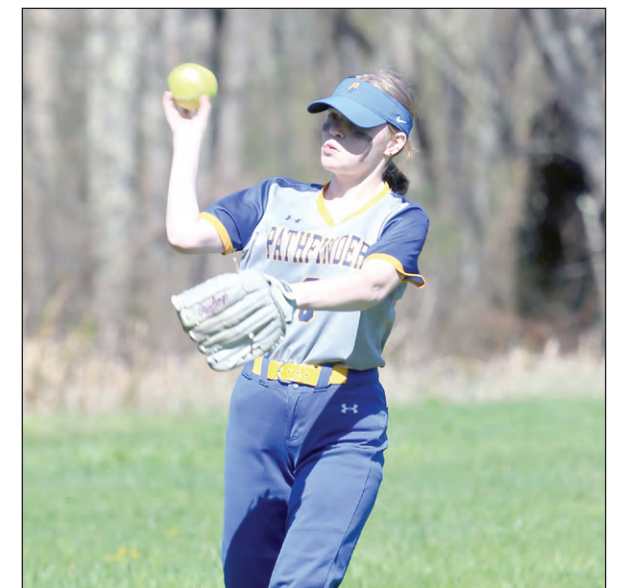
Mady Breault sends a pitch to the plate.



Jordan Blanchard fires to first for an out.



Brianna Beynor underhands a throw to first.



Sam Prouty sends a throw back to the infield.



Shortstop Emma Chevalier sends a throw to first.



Lianna Carrasquillo fields a ground ball to third.