

BARRE GAZETTE

USPS 044560

A TURLEY PUBLICATION | www.turley.com

June 4, 2026 | Vol. 191, No. 12 | \$1.00

www.barregazette.turley.com

Conservation Commission holds hearings

By Ellenor Downer
Editor
edowner@turley.com

OAKHAM – Anticipating a large crowd, the Conservation Commission moved the location of the Notice of Intent hearings from the Town Hall to the Oakham Center School.

The first notice of intent hearing was to build a single family house on Robinson Road by Cara Peck of

Holden. The construction of the driveway to the home had to cross the Five Mile River. There is already a crossing over the river. The plan includes the installation of a box culvert over the river and within the buffer zone of wetlands.

All abutters received letters of notification of the hearing. None of them attended.

The Commission received signed permission from the

property owner to conduct a site visit and scheduled it for Monday, June 8 at 5 p.m.

Moraga Storage LLC hearing

Over 60 people came out Tuesday, June 2 for the second notice of intent hearing for Moraga Storage, LLC. Their Notice of Intent was for rebuilding of a road within the buffer zone of wetlands on the 43 acre property, located on 358 Coldbrook

Road.

The owner of the property, Ram Radar of Florida, did not attend, but he had legal representation at the hearing. Greg Hopkins and Brian Penito represented Moraga, the company that intended to build an 180 megawatt Battery Energy Storage System on the site of the former Amherst Oakham Auto Recycling.

Penito showed plans to upgrade an access road

located near the former Amherst Oakham Auto existing buildings. They planned to not touch the paved stretch of road from the entrance on Coldbrook Road onto the property.

Upgrades to the unpaved section included widening to 15 feet and consisted of a crowned gravel road over a layered compacted gravel.

In addition to extensive

See OAKHAM, page 6

Voters OK articles at STM/ATM

By Paula Ouimette
pouimette@turley.com

NEW BRAINTREE – Voters took action on 13 articles at the special and annual town meetings held in Memorial Hall Monday evening.

All of the articles passed with unanimous votes, with the exception of article 12, which had one opposing vote.

Out of district transportation

Article 12 asked voters to approve the transfer of \$70,000 from Stabilization to cover the cost of out of district transportation for two students to Smith Vocational and Agricultural School in Northampton. This amount will be offset by any transportation reimbursements from the state.

The Board of Selectmen said in the past, the town has paid just over \$60,000 for transportation to the school, and that covering the cost is a mandatory expense.

The Quabbin Regional School District is in the process of creating an agricultural program, which could help to keep students seeking this type of education within the school district in the future.

This program would be housed in the New Braintree Grade School.

See NEW BRAINTREE, page 9

Town meeting approves budgets and passes over several articles

By Zacharias Fragkiadakis
Staff Writer
zachf@turley.com

HUBBARDSTON – Town meeting was held Monday at Hubbardston Center School where voters voted on the town budget, school budget and other items.

The town budget presented at town meeting was slightly different from the budget in the packet.

At the June 1 meeting, Town Administrator Sean Fitzgerald said the modified budget for the town budget, which includes salaries and departments, was to raise and appropriate \$4,877,612 from the tax levy, and transfer \$46,471 from free cash.

The budget presented in article 11 of the town meeting warrant was \$4,843,757, which is about \$80,000 less than the amended budget presented at town meeting.

Susan Breagy, a resident, said some line items in the budget were cut, like the senior center. She said the building needs a new roof and they cut the line item for supplies. She also said the director works more than the 15 hours a week she is budgeted for, and asked the boards to reconsider.

Fitzgerald said there were about \$200,000 cut from department head requests to balance the budget.

Kristofer Munroe asked about high variance items, like debt service. Fitzgerald said there was a structural deficit of about \$300,000, which increased debt service for this year by 85%.

He said some of the other high variance items were a result of changing to a zero-base budget, which transferred many funds from one line to a new line. He said the new budget has over 500

lines, up from only about 120.

He said some of the transfers include centralized utilities and the development of a human resources department, along with money allocated in the select board budget to go to the town administrator's budget. When asked about the highway department being cut, Fitzgerald said a lot of it was from the centralizing of utilities.

Fitzgerald also said the town's share of the Quabbin Regional School District budget went up 4.01%, which is down from the originally proposed increase of over 7%, but the town is still absorbing that increase in the budget.

Some residents brought up concerns that there was not a paper copy of the budget

See HUBBARDSTON, page 7

Lady Slippers show their delicate pink blooms



Turley Publications photo by Ellenor Downer

Lady slippers are wild orchids, which grow in damp woodlands and wetland relying on highly specific soil fungi for their seeds to germinate.



Courtesy Photo by Chuck Coppolino

A hearty group of adventurers explored the former Jacob Riis home site on "Crow Hill" and the Barre Heath on the other side of Route 62.

Exploring Crow Hill and Barre Heath

By Lucy Allen

Sitting between the Burnshirt and Canesto Rivers, Crow Hill and the Barre Heath below form a unique environment that has served Native Americans and the descendants of European settlers for centuries.

As Barre Historical Society Historian, I led the group up the lower part of Crow Hill to the former site

of the farm once owned by Jacob Riis, the famed social reformer, journalist and photographer.

Only hulking sections of stone foundations remain now, as this is part of the Ware River Watershed. Nevertheless, the orchard on the hill above the home-site bravely showed its apple blossom while a strong, cold west wind swept down the hill to the shivering group of adventurers.

We reviewed how Jacob and his second wife, a much younger Mary Phillips Riis, purchased the property in 1911 and attempted to turn

the run-down place into a profitable farm. Jacob died in 1914 and is buried nearby in Riverside Cemetery. Mary ran the farm part-time for 22 more years, but developed a new life and career in New York City as a financial advisor to other women.

She became known as the "First Lady of Wall Street." She chose not to be buried in Barre. She died in 1967 at the age of 90.

Crossing Route 62, we then went onto the Barre Heath, which is being restored to its original inland sand plain heathland status by the

Department of Conservation and Recreation. DCR Program Coordinator Nancy Huntington explained the importance of this habitat, which is globally rare.

It is the home to many rare and endangered species. Its underlying sand rather than bedrock came courtesy of glacial activity.

We visited an interesting glacial erratic with cross-like veins of quartz. The rock was left there by the passing glacier and is an "alien" of sorts.

Nancy explained how

See HIKE, page 8

SB calls June 16 STM

By Zacharias Fragkiadakis
Staff Writer
zachf@turley.com

RUTLAND – There will be another override vote in Rutland on June 16.

The Select Board called the meeting after two citizens' petitions gathered the signatures necessary to act on, as Select Board Chair Sheila Dibb said the board must call the meeting given the successful petitions.

At the May 27 meeting, it was revealed that one of the petitions was simply to call a special town meeting, and the other one was a petition for a \$1.125 million public safe-

ty and Department of Public Works override.

Town Clerk Anita Carlson said the numbers break down as \$458,726 for the Fire Department, \$449,496 for the Police Department and \$216,923 for the DPW.

The Select Board will also add another motion to accept the Wachusett Regional School District assessment for Rutland, which according to Town Administrator Heather Butler has been reduced by about \$135,000 for Rutland's share.

According to the board, if the override vote passes at

See RUTLAND, page 7

Hardwick's annual town meeting this Saturday

Staff Report

HARDWICK – The annual town meeting will be held on Saturday, June 6 at 9 a.m. at Hardwick Elementary School, 76 School House Drive, Gilbertville.

Article 1
To see if the town will vote to accept the reports of all officers and committees as printed in the 2025 Annual Report.

Article 2
To see if the town will vote to transfer a sum of money from available funds in the treasury to meet overdrawn and unprovided for

accounts in the prior fiscal years.

Article 3

To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate, transfer from available funds in the treasury, borrow or any combination thereof, a sum of money to meet deficits or unforeseen costs for fiscal year 2026 snow and ice removal.

Article 4

To see if the town will allow the Board of Assessors to appoint one of its members to a full-time position.

See HARDWICK, page 8



SPORTS

A TURLEY PUBLICATION | www.turley.com

SEND US YOUR SPORTS SUBMISSIONS

www.sports.turley.com

Quabbin tennis takes state playoff opener

By Tim Peterson
Sports Correspondent

GARDNER — The Quabbin girls' tennis team has compiled an impressive 47-7 overall record since the start of the 2024 regular season.

During that span, the Lady Panthers have won two state tournament matches. Both of those victories were decided by the doubles team of Elizabeth Matheson and Madelyn Stauder, who are seniors.

Last Tuesday's Division 3 state preliminary round match was tied before Matheson and Stauder pulled out a win at first doubles, which sealed the 30th-seeded Lady Panthers, 3-2, victory over the 35th-seeded Whitinsville Christian School Crusaders at Gardner High School.

"We were in the exact same position in the state tournament two years ago," Matheson said. "We won that match and the experience gave us a lot of confidence in today's match."

As sophomores, Matheson and Stauder managed to win the deciding match in the Division 4 round of 32



Maria Hamm reaches for a backhand return in women's doubles.

match, as the Lady Panthers defeated Randolph High School, 3-2, at Gardner High School.

Quabbin competed in the Division 3 state tournament for the first time this spring.

The Lady Panthers play their regular season home matches at Felton Field in Barre, which only has three courts. The MIAA requires a school to have at least four courts to host a state tour-



Audrey Larson hits a backhand from the baseline in women's singles.

namment match. Quabbin has played its home state tournament matches at Gardner High School, which has four courts.

In this year's preliminary round match, Matheson and



Farrah Wojcik tracks the ball as she hits a return in women's singles.

Stauder posted a 7-6 (7-5), 6-3 win over Whitinsville Christian freshman Arielle Zdanis and junior Alexi Gilchrist.

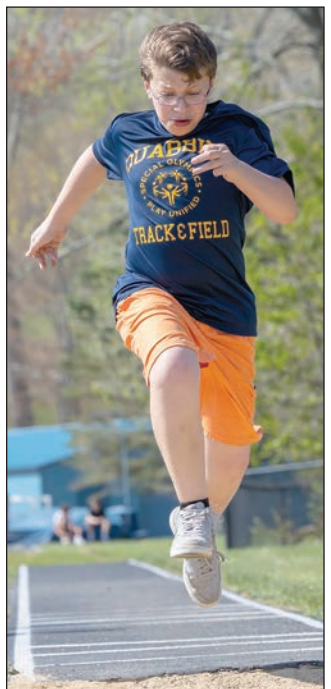
"There was a lot of pressure on us in today's match

because our season would've been over had we lost," Stauder said. "It just felt great after we won the final point."

See TENNIS, page 10

Unified track program continues success

BARRE — For the past several years, Quabbin Regional High School has hosted multiple meets and fielded an excellent Unified track and field team. This year has been no different as the program has continued its success last month. Highlights from more action will be in next week's edition.



Chris Dallair launches himself in the long jump.



From left, Ella Reeves, Honour Michael and Arianna Fargnoli take off in the 800-meter race.



Bailey Burke sends the javelin flying.



Hemily Halaby heaves the shot put.



Arianna Fargnoli takes flight in the long jump.



Emma Thompson stretches out as she hurls the shot put.

Mutiny battles Hartford to scoreless draw

LUDLOW — On Friday, May 22, the New England Mutiny battled the Hartford Athletic to a scoreless tie. The Mutiny is now 1-1-1 on the season. They previously defeated the Worcester Wanderers and had a defeat against the Hudson Valley Crusaders. More on the Mutiny and their new challenges in next week's edition.



Kayleigh Lukasik sends a pass away.



Kendall Bodak sends a free kick away



Se-Hanna Mars fights for the ball



Kurstin Shade looks to shoot in traffic.



Sam Breton clears the ball away.