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U.S. AIR FORCE BAND performs for town's 275th

By Paula Ouimette
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NEW BRAINTREE – The Historical Commission and the 275th Anniversary Committee hosted the renowned U.S. Air Force Heritage of America Band for a special 4th of July

performance of “American Ascent: 250 years of Nation and Sky” this past Sunday. The 1st Hardwick Independent Battery fired its cannons during several of the musical selections, including the “1812 Overture”.

The green between Memorial Drive and the common was filled with hun-

dreds of spectators, while the band performed the inaugural concert under the newly built pavilion. This pavilion was built by volunteers to commemorate the town's 275th anniversary.

Master of Ceremonies

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Turley Photo by Paula Ouimette
Staff Sergeant Daniel Gelman, Staff Sergeant Jarrett Kocan and Technical Sergeant Brian Bean were soloists for the song, “Bugler's Holiday” during the U.S. Air Force Heritage of America Band's performance for New Braintree's 275th anniversary celebration held on July 5.

Select Board discusses IT contract

By Zacharias Fragkiadakis
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HARDWICK – The Select Board met Monday to discuss a new information technology contract with Anevry.

Town Administrator Justine Caggiano said the request for proposal was for IT services starting in fiscal year 2027, or July 1, and would replace the current provider, CMGeeks.

At the June 22 meeting, Caggiano said with the current provider, it is difficult to get people to the municipal building to solve IT problems, and Select Board Clerk Zack Spencer said it took the provider three days to set up his Select Board email, and did it incorrectly. He said the provider treated him unprofessionally when he confronted them about it.

There were some concerns with the new contract proposal brought up by Select Board Vice-Chair William Tinker, including significant price increases after the first year of the contract.

Tinker said over the three years of the agreement, the cost would rise 54%. He said that cost is excessive given the town's budget.

Caggiano said the second and third year can be negotiated, and the idea at the present is to agree to a one year deal as a trial.

Tinker said there were other issues with Anevry, such as them having no obligation to cooperate if the town moves to a new provider until the town pays a termination fee of \$15,000. Caggiano said that language had been taken out of the contract, but Tinker said he had not seen it.

Another concern brought up was a late fee imposed by Anevry, where if the town is 30 days late in a payment, their services could be terminated without notice.

Tinker said another problem was the contract allows Anevry permanent right to town space during the duration of the original contract, even if services are terminated early. He said that takes away the town's control to part of their building.

Tinker said another concern was the town only has five days to object to any service, and if they fail to send a detailed report, Anevry would deem the service acceptable.

Caggiano said she recommended the board sign the contract at the meeting.

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Select Board honors late Fire Chief Black

By Paula Ouimette
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NORTH BROOKFIELD – The Board of Selectmen held a moment of silence to recognize the passing of retired Fire Chief James Black.

Black dedicated 50 years of service to the department before retiring in 2010. He began with the department as a firefighter, making his way up the ranks to chief in 1984.

“Throughout his long and distinguished career, Chief Black earned the respect of his fellow firefighters, our community, which he faithfully served,” Selectmen Peter Orsi read from a statement at the May 19 meeting.

Orsi said 50 years is “unheard of” in the fire service.

“A lot of people had a lot of respect for him,” he said.

Financial items

The board approved a transfer request in the amount of \$60,000 from the Highway Department from the Salaries line item to the Vehicle Supplies. This money will be used to bring all fleet vehicles up to mechanical safety and meet inspection codes.

Board of Selectmen Chair Jamie Gilman said there was additional money in the Salaries line item due to vacancies on the department.

The board also approved

the transfer of \$10,000 from the Salaries line item to the Road Materials line item to purchase processed gravel for work on Boynton, Downey and Murphy roads.

The board also approved a request from the Board of Health to transfer \$800 from Recycling Center Monitor Salaries to Electricity due to the rising cost of utilities. There was additional money in the salaries line item due to vacancies.

The board approved the Sewer Department's request to transfer \$.25 from DSL Line to Debt to cover the difference of a miscalculation for new sewer debt.

The Finance Committee previously recommended the transfer requests.

Reserve Fund requests

The board approved the following Reserve Fund requests: Zoning Board of Appeals, \$290.52 to cover additional costs of special permit hearings; and the Fire Department, \$8,564.04 for vehicle repairs.

The board also approved a request to rescind a previously approved Reserve Fund transfer to the Police Department for computer purchases in the amount of \$1,336.63.

Spending requests

The board approved spending requests from the Council on Aging in the amount of \$375 from the gift account for a workshop for seniors with Bemis Nursery on June 23; and the

McCormick presents test scores, ideas for future

By Zacharias Fragkiadakis
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NORTH BROOKFIELD – The School Committee held a regular meeting last Monday where Timothy McCormick, the superintendent of North Brookfield Public Schools gave a presentation on test scores and ideas from the school community on the future of the district.

At the June 15 meeting, McCormick presented results from a Measures of Academic Progress test that was administered at all levels, but the results for the high school were not yet

available. McCormick said the MAP test is designed to examine student growth and achievements, and look at progress regardless of grade level.

He said the academic team designed a four step process for the review of scores including describing, reflecting, interpreting and prioritizing. Some of the strengths based on the results were grade four math, which scored in the 81st percentile, grade five math, which scored in the 68th percentile and grade five reading, which scored in the 65th percentile, according to McCormick's presentation.

There were also two

examples of students in cohorts A and B that improved significantly, the student in cohort A gaining 43 percentile points over three years, and the student in cohort B gaining 53 points in that same time.

There were also some areas to focus on highlighted in the presentation, including grade six reading, which averaged in the 43rd percentile, grade six math which averaged between the 41st and 43rd percentile, grade eight reading which averaged in the 28th percentile and grade eight math which averaged between the 39th and 42nd percentile.

McCormick said the inter-

pretation from this data is there is strength in the elementary school and a gap in the middle grades, meaning there is a need to fine-tune instruction in those grades. Some next steps include targeting middle school reading, expanding student teacher conferences and aligning the MAP tests with MCAS.

School Committee member Nancy Waldron asked what could be driving the lower results in the middle school, and McCormick said they have implemented a new program called high quality instructional material, and

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A star-spangled CELEBRATION

NORTH BROOKFIELD – The Parks and Recreation Committee and friends hosted a well-attended 4th of July celebration on the common this past Saturday, complete with music, games, activities, food and a bonfire.

This event celebrated the nation's 250th anniversary of independence.

The Otters and DJ Tabby LeBlanc provided the musical entertainment, and festivalgoers were able to keep cool in the dunk tank and chill zone.

Various businesses and town organizations set up booths, and a food and ice cream trucks were also on hand. There were free crafts, temporary tattoos, face painting, an egg hunt and more.



Turley Photo by Camren Robertson

Sue Lewandowski and Sheila Orsi ran the Community Heart & Soul tent at North Brookfield's 4th of July celebration held this past Saturday on the common.

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SPORTS

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Post 241 walks off against Aldenville

By Tim Peterson
Sports Correspondent

THORNDIKE — Had Monson Post 241 short-stop Matt Santos come up with the game-winning hit against Aldenville (Chicopee) Post 337 at historic Legion Field, it probably wouldn't have meant as much to him as doing it a couple miles away at St. Joe's Ballpark in Thorndike.

The second meeting of the regular season between the two Senior Legion teams was still scoreless, entering the bottom of the seventh. With two outs and the bases loaded, Santos turned on a fastball and ripped it past the third baseman into left field, giving Monson a thrilling 1-0 walk-off victory last Wednesday night.

"The pitcher threw me a fastball. I knew I needed to get a base hit and win the game," Santos said. "It's just a great feeling. This is also the first time that I've ever won a game on this field."

Santos, who recently received his high school diploma, was an outstanding three-sport athlete at Palmer High School. He was the 2026 recipient of the



Kyle Kaczuwka takes a swing at an outside pitch.

Karl Oliveira Memorial Tri-County Baseball Scholarship Award.

Oliveira, who passed away in 2021, spent many summers playing baseball at St. Joe's Ballpark for the St. Joseph's Saints in the prestigious Tri-

County Baseball League. "Matt is a great kid and he's the perfect candidate to receive this year's scholarship award," said Monson manager Steve Tripp. "Karl and I were teammates on the varsity baseball team at Palmer

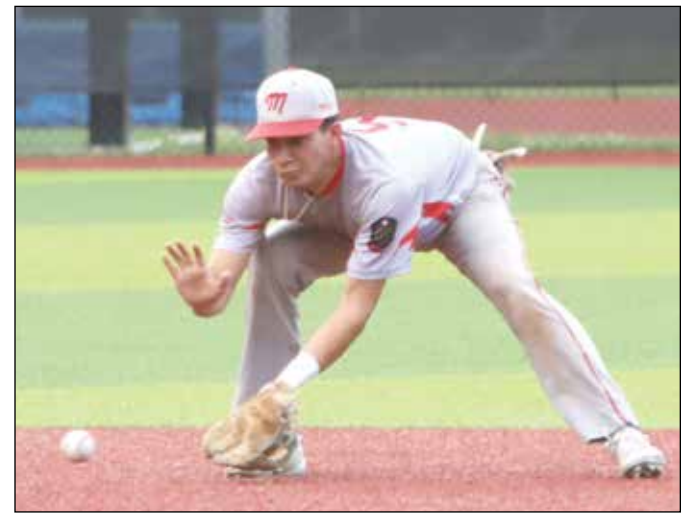
High School. This field was his shrine. Karl probably played 1,000 games here and this is a very memorable night."

The Monson Legion baseball team normally plays their

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Brayden Mega signals to the batter as he leads off second base.



Matthew Santos fields a clean grounder.



Jackson Gould hustles up the field.

Pioneers, Black Rock battle to 1-1 draw

By Tim Peterson
Sports Correspondent

LUDLOW—Just when it appeared that the Western Mass. Pioneers were set to close out a 1-0 shutout victory against Black Rock FC, a late lapse gave the visitors from Nashua, New Hampshire an opportunity to score the tying goal.

Black Rock FC converted a corner kick goal during the seventh minute of stoppage time and last Friday night's

USL League 2 match-up held at Lusitano Stadium ended in a 1-1 draw.

The result all but ended the Pioneers' postseason hopes, eliminating them from the USL League Two playoffs for the first time since joining the league in 2019.

"I really don't know what happened at the end of tonight's game," said Pioneers head coach Federico Molinari. "Almost everything has gone wrong for us this season."

It was the third consecutive tie between the two teams, who played a scoreless tie in the first meeting of the season on June 3. The two squads also played a 1-1 draw at Lusitano Stadium a year ago.

The Pioneers entered the final week of the 2026 regular season sitting in third place in the Northeast Division table with a 7-2-3 (24 points) overall record.

The Western Mass. squad were scheduled to play at AC Connecticut on Tuesday night before hosting the first place and undefeated Vermont Green FC, who have already clinched a playoff berth, in the regular season finale on Friday night.

NEFC (10-2-0), who joined the league a year ago, is sitting in second place with 30 points. They only need a tie against either last place Boston City FC or the Albany Rush to officially lock up a playoff spot for the first time. NEFC defeated the Pioneers, 4-2, at Lusitano Stadium on May 23.

Black Rock FC (5-3-3, 18 points) has the chance to tie for third place if they can win their final three matches and the Pioneers lose a match.

Each soccer team earns three points for a victory and one point for a draw.

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Santiago Blasco Gomez tries to keep the ball from going out.

Bankers in control following Fourth of July holiday

HOLYOKE — PeoplesBank is in control of the Tri-County Baseball League once again, as the longtime playoff champions and multi-time regular season champions stand at an impressive 11-1-1 so far this season. The Bankers have 23 points for the league lead with their main rivals, St. Joseph's, tugging behind with 22 points. Teddy Bear Pools holds third place at 17 points, while Turners Falls, the Spartans, and BankESB round out the standings, all with less than 10 points. Last Monday, PeoplesBank played to their only tie of the season as they battled to a 2-2 draw with the Spartans. The game was called due to darkness at South Hadley High School. Action resumed earlier this week with games scheduled on Wednesday, July 8.



Jackson LaValley winds and fires for PeoplesBank.



Cam Rivest, of Agawam, swings and connects.



Brian Hungerford tries to keep a throw from getting to the outfield.