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Voters approve transfers at STM

By Paula Ouimette
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NORTH BROOKFIELD – At a special town meeting held on Dec. 4, voters approved the transfer of \$50,000 from Stabilization to Capital Stabilization to help cover the cost of capital projects.

Capital Improvement Planning Chair Jamie Gilman said the town has restarted the Capital Improvement Plan and there is currently \$104,000 in the Capital Stabilization fund. The Capital Improvement Plan will identify capital needs across various departments in the town in the coming years.

“When there is a need for a capital replacement, that’s all there is,” he said of the current balance.

Residents talked about the need to build the Stabilization fund, in the face of budget constraints. Some mentioned that the town has had to take money out of Stabilization in order to balance the budget, and has been able to replenish it with Free Cash.

Town Accountant Shiela LeBlanc said, “As a community, we have to stop living off our Stabilization...If we can’t fund what people need in a budget, then how are we going to make these capital purchases?”

Currently, the Stabilization balance is \$1,388,596.85, LeBlanc said.

LeBlanc stressed the need to include the cost of maintenance for a capital purchase in a department’s budget prior to getting approval for it.

“It has to be part of their budget, has to be part of the purchase before we take it to town meeting,” she said.

Capital Improvement Planning member Brandon Avery said the town does not have any borrowing capacity and has no extra source of income. He said the town has “been lucky” in years past with receiving extra income, including \$500,000 from Green Gold, around \$500,000 from COVID-19 funds and approximately \$1.4 million from American Rescue Plan Act funds.

“Those funds are gone and they’re not coming back,” he said. “We need to get to a point where we can save a little money for the future. If we don’t, we’re going to be in serious trouble when something comes up that we really need, we’re going to be between a rock and a hard place.”

Avery said the departments have to live within their budgets without dipping into Stabilization. He said the transfer will help the departments with capital needs.

The motion to approve the transfer passed by a two-third majority vote.

Fire Department hoses

Voters also approved the transfer of \$7,180 from Fire Assistant Chief’s Salary to Fire Supplies to replace the Fire Department’s hoses, which failed a recent inspection. Fire Chief Darin Anderson said any hose older than 1987 is considered “no good” and some of the department’s hoses date back to the 1970s.

He said eight nozzles also failed the inspection.

“We are trying to replace hose,” Anderson said. “We had cata-

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Kids design wrapping paper at library



Several children arrived at the Woods Memorial Library to craft their own wrapping paper.

By Ryan Drago
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BARRE – The Woods Memorial Library hosted a fun kids activity where they got to design their own wrapping paper.

There is still time to shop for gifts and wrapping them takes time. The library wanted to offer an activity that adds some extra holiday to their gifts by wrapping them with their own

wrapping paper.

The library provided all the blank wrapping paper and decorative tools. Getting busy with her own wrapping paper was Youth Services Librarian Kayla Phillips along with Assistant Youth Services Librarian Kate Murray. The librarians always wanted to have this activity done at the library and thought the kids could enjoy decorating the same colorful wrapping paper they’re used to unwrapping on Christmas morning.

“These presents are going to look beautiful,” Phillips stated as the kids got to work immediately after getting big pieces of wrapping paper. Phillips did give a brief announcement mentioning the magic word “glitter” being available for kids to add to their wrapping paper. It may be an announcement for kids, but for the parents it

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Vivian drew Santa Claus on her wrapping paper.



Kayla Phillips designed her own wrapping paper with markers, stamps and Christmas themes.

New Braintree resident celebrated 100th birthday

By Paula Ouimette
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NEW BRAINTREE – This past Sunday, the town’s oldest resident and Boston Post Cane holder Stephanie Benoit celebrated her 100th birthday at home, surrounded by family and friends.

Born on Dec. 15, 1924, in Florence, New Jersey, Benoit served in the U.S. Marine Corps during World War II, from the age of 20 until the war ended.

During her time in the military, Benoit wrote letters to many young men serving overseas, including Norman Benoit, who went on to become her husband on April 12, 1947.

The couple started their lives in New Braintree moving from the Benoit Farm to the Gleason House, then to Daley’s Blacksmith Shop then to the “Old Cold House” before building their forever home on Hardwick Road, where Benoit still lives today.

The couple had 10 children, Christine, Norman Jr., Christopher, David, Paul, Justin, Gregory, Timothy, Jason and Christian.

Benoit’s four surviving children, Paul Benoit of Hardwick, Jason Benoit of New Braintree, Justin and Gregory all celebrated their mother’s centennial birthday along with extended family members, who took time to reflect on some of her many remarkable achievements.

In 1970, Benoit was the first woman to serve on the Board of Selectmen in town, and the second to hold that position in the commonwealth. A proud Republican, Benoit was eager to see who won the Presidential Election this year.

“She was heavily involved in local politics,” Paul said. This included successful-



Submitted Photo

Stephanie Benoit of New Braintree celebrated her 100th birthday with family and friends on Dec. 15.

ly fighting against the placement of a prison in town, on property that is now the State Police Academy. She also rallied against illegal dumping and groundwater pollution.

Last year, she received an award from the town’s Board of Selectmen, recognizing her “outstanding contributions and selflessness in the face of political adversity.”

“She also designed the town flag,” Jason said.

Benoit is known for her poetry and artistic talent, with many of her bucolic oil paintings displayed in her home and throughout the town, including at the New Braintree Historical Society Museum.

“She tried to preserve local buildings around town,” Paul said of her paintings.

Benoit was also a film star, having lent her voice to

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Select Board hears comments regarding Zekos Auctions

By Ryan Drago
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HARDWICK – The Select Board began their Dec. 9 meeting with visitor’s comments regarding Zekos Group and the public auction of three municipal-owned properties.

Zekos Group is a professional team of real estate auction experts that focus solely on providing consultation, strategic analysis and exemplary auction services to municipalities and government agencies.

A multi property auction has been ordered for the three prop-

erties, which could have a historical value to the town. The auction will be held on a date to be determined, according to the Zekos Group website.

The buildings consist of a school house on 58 Ruggles Hill Road, the former Calvin Paige Building on Barre Road, both located off the common, and the former school building at 179 Main St. in Gilbertville.

During the visitor’s comments of the Select Board meeting, several residents and members of various town departments shared some concern. According to members of the Historical Commission these three build-

ings are deemed historic and are part of the character of the town’s historic district.

One of the residents asked if there is a procurement policy for the auction group to go through prior to selling these properties.

Town Administrator Justine Caggiano said, “we don’t have to go through the process of procurement”.

The residents who spoke before the Select Board are aware that Zekos Group has sold a lot of properties, but not buildings with historical value.

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Horse and sleigh wait for snow



Turley photo by Ellenor Downer

The horse with a sleigh is a yearly Christmas decoration parked near the garland draped Harding Allen Bandstand. This year a cut Christmas tree is included in the sleigh.



SPORTS

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Panthers open 2024-2025 season

BARRE – Last week, Quabbin Regional High School basketball transitioned from the end of their preseason quickly to their first regular season game. The Panthers started out by taking on Palmer High School in a preseason scrimmage last Tuesday evening. After two more days of practice, the Panthers would open their regular season on Friday, Dec. 13 and defeated Narragansett 44-31. Quabbin, now 1-0, had three games this week before the Christmas break. Next weekend, the Panthers will take part in the Gardner Holiday tournament.



Quabbin's is looking for a return trip to the state tournament this year.



The Quabbin High School girls basketball team continued its work to prepare for the season.



It was Quabbin's final scrimmage before starting the season.



The Panthers opened their regular season with a win last Friday.



The Panthers faced Palmer in a scrimmage last week.

Panthers start season with multi-meet event

BARRE – The Quabbin Regional High School wrestling team is looking for another successful campaign in the 2024-2025 season. The Panthers have a number of dual meets as well as tournament events this year. Quabbin started out its season by wrestling in multiple meets at Saint John's High School. The Panthers saw Holliston, Algonquin, as well as host Saint John.

The Panthers remained on the road earlier this week, facing North Middlesex in a regular dual meet. The Panthers will head to Marshfield this weekend, and then participate in the Phil Tomkiel Holiday Tournament at Agawam High School on Friday, Dec. 27.

Pioneers wrestle at Knight-Hawk



Dominic Jarry looks to avoid a takedown.

Turley photos by Gregory A. Scibelli

HOLYOKE - Last Saturday, the Pathfinder wrestling team opened the season by participating in the Knight-Hawk Classic hosted by Holyoke High School. The Pioneers scored 49 points and placed 17th out of 19 teams that were at the event. Dominic Jarry was Pathfinder's top finisher, placing third in the 175-pound bracket.



Jake Parker-Gregory looks for a takedown in a 215-pound match.



Gustavo Vega locks up in an early round match.

Pioneers don't have answer for Duggan

By Tim Peterson
Sports Correspondent

PALMER— First-year Pathfinder Tech boys' varsity basketball coach Ethan Ortyl is hoping to win a lot of games during his coaching career. He had to wait a little bit longer before celebrating his first career victory.

The Pioneers suffered an 80-18 non-league home loss to powerhouse Duggan Academy in the season opening game, last Thursday night.

"This game was a good test for us against one of the best teams that we're going to play all season," said Ortyl, who replaced Zac Button as the Pioneers varsity coach. "The players continued to play hard in tonight's game, and they care about each other. We're going to bounce back and keep battling in every game that we play this season. I just love this group of players."

It was also the first varsity start for all five of the Pioneers starters. Those five players are junior Dustyn Cook, junior Dayne Shanley, junior Aiden Girard, sophomore Cayden Bousquet, and freshman Cassian Kowalik.

"We've only had four practices, which doesn't include tryouts,



Grayson Griswold sends up a three-point attempt.

before tonight's game. The players are still learning a new system and I'm still learning what they're capable of doing," Ortyl added. "We're going to work hard at practice before our next game against



Dustyn Cook goes low to avoid a defender.

Pioneer Valley Christian Academy on Monday night. There are a lot of things that we need to work on. Everyone just needs to keep improving, including myself."

Girard (3 points) and senior

Matthew Vanasse (2 points) are the Pioneers co-captains.

Duggan, who posted an 18-2 regular season record a year ago, also didn't have very much trouble dispatching the Pioneers in



Cassian Kowalik tries to avoid having his shot blocked.

their previous two meetings on the hardwood.

With the help of several turnovers, the Jayhawks were able to build a 27-0 lead at the end of the opening quarter in last Thursday's



Dayne Shanley takes a mid-range shot.

game, and they never looked back. Junior Isaiah Rodriguez scored 19 of his game-high 23 points for the visitors from Springfield during the first eight minutes of

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