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OUR 127TH YEAR

Andover Townsman

Issue No. 16

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75 CENTS

Pasta Palooza



ABOVE: The fifth graders entertained their dinner guests with a song after serving them at the High Plain Elementary School 5th Annual Pasta Palooza Thursday night. **AT RIGHT:** Kiera Suh serves a dish of pasta to her father, Ted Suh as Lena Mahoney and her daughter Lauren, a fourth grader look on at the High Plain Elementary School at Pasta Palooza. The Fifth grade students at High Plain Elementary served a pasta dinner with salad and Italian bread to parents, staff and students of every grade.

CARL RUSSO/Staff photos



Pipeline foes raise objections

250 turn out for Kinder Morgan open house

By PAUL TENNANT
Staff Writer

New England needs more natural gas and the 430-mile pipeline Kinder Morgan plans to build will solve that problem, the company says.

Area residents, however, worry about the project's impact on the environment and those whose properties would be crossed by the pipeline object to having the values of their homes reduced.

Kinder Morgan hosted an informational open house Tuesday night at the Wyndham Hotel that drew 250 people, including state and local officials. Two representatives of Athol-Orange Community Television, who intended to videotape people whose properties would be affected by the pipeline, told The Andover Townsman they were told to leave by Andover police officers.

"These people's lives will be destroyed," said Hattie Nestel, who said she has made at least 20 videos of homeowners whose land lies on the pipeline's route. Kinder Morgan rented the room where the open house was held and the hotel management sided with the company, she said.

Marcia Gagliardi, who accompanied Nestel, admitted she stepped between Allen Fore, vice president of public affairs for Kinder Morgan, during an interview and spoke out against the project. Nestel, Gagliardi said, disrupted a meeting organized by the company.

A 188-mile pipeline will bring natural gas from upper New York state to Dracut. Smaller lines will bring the gas to customers in Middlesex and Essex counties.

See PIPELINE, Page 2

Streetlight purchase idea turned back on

Andover considering following the lead of other communities

By BILL KIRK
bkirk@andovertownsman.com

A recent debate over whether to reactivate streetlights that were turned off in 2009 to save money has led one town official to suggest Andover should follow the lead of dozens of other communities and buy its light fixtures from National Grid.

Public Works Director Chris Cronin said he is exploring a program similar to one used in 28 other towns in Massachusetts, including North Andover, that have opted to own their streetlights rather than lease them from the utility.

"I believe that's the wave of the future and the way we're going," he recently told the Board of Selectmen. "It's huge

savings on replacement and costs per kilowatt hour. You have less maintenance (with LEDs) and longer life for the bulbs."

While it may be the "wave of the future" in Andover, it's a program that's been available since 1997 following deregulation of electric utilities.

Two years ago, North Andover Town Manager Andrew Maylor got town authorization to purchase 1,300 streetlights from National Grid for \$83,000. The investment paid off in less than two years, he said, as the town has saved \$50,000 a year, including maintenance costs.

He said cities and towns have been permitted to purchase

See LIGHTS, Page 2

4.6 percent budget hike proposed

Hearings on town manager's plan to start next week

By BILL KIRK
bkirk@andovertownsman.com

In face of rising taxes, citizens petition implores 'enough is enough,' Page 7.

Built around the theme of honoring the past and preparing for the future, Town Manager Reginald "Buzz" Stapeczynski presented his 25th and final budget to the Board of Selectmen last week.

The \$172 million spending plan for fiscal 2106 is up about \$7.5 million from the current year, an increase of 4.6 percent.

Stapeczynski, the town manager since 1990 who is scheduled to retire when his five-year contract expires on June 30, called it a "maintenance budget."

"I presented a realistic budget," he said during a recent interview. "It's tight. There are no service increases in it."

While there may be no service increases, there are

plenty of other increases, something that concerned several selectmen who said they wanted Stapeczynski to bring in a budget that taxed well below the Proposition 2 1/2 limit. (See related story.)

School budget

Stapeczynski proposed what might be termed a bullish budget, with increases in most departments, including schools, where the budget is proposed to rise from about \$70 million to nearly \$72.8 million — a 2.8 percent increase. The School Department had requested a 3.3 percent increase.

The town manager's budget proposal calls for about \$58.4 million for salaries and

benefits for school staff, and around \$14.4 million for other costs, such as transportation and building operations.

School costs make up about 42 percent of the town's total operating budget.

One oddity in the School Department budget is that non-salary spending by the School Committee is proposed to increase from \$43,000 last year to \$184,000 this year.

Paul Szymanski, chief financial officer for the School Department, said the money is needed to fund a new "innovation project manager," who will be paid about \$150,000. He said it would be a contracted position initially, which is why it was placed into a "non-salary" line item in the School Department budget.

In addition to the school spending plan, there are a number of proposed capital improvements for the schools

seeking to be paid for with \$1 million from the general fund and another \$4 million from borrowing.

Those projects include \$250,000 for the high school track replacement, \$455,000 for "major school projects" and \$3.5 million for school site improvements.

Within those requests is a proposal for \$710,000 for textbooks to be paid for out of the capital improvements budget. The funding mechanism raised questions among selectmen at a recent meeting. Szymanski said the schools have put textbook purchase requests in the CIP in the past.

Town departments

Town budgets are proposed to also go up by 2.8 percent, from \$36.3 million last year to \$37.3 million, with minor

See HIKE, Page 7



COURTESY PHOTO

Team Andover placed second out of almost 50 teams in the American Lung Association's annual Fight for Air Climb in Boston earlier this month. The local team included, from left, Todd Collins, Brian Wright, Brian Flanagan, Jeff Gaunt, Thomas Kennedy, Kevin Carney and Christine Wright, plus Bruce Belbin, not pictured.

Running vertical

Firefighters put lungs to test in Fight for Air Climb

By TIM LIMA
tlima@andovertownsman.com

It is often said that success is earned one step at a time. For the eight Andover firefighters who took part in the American Lung Association's Fight for Air Climb in Boston earlier this month, the path to success covered 789 steps.

The objective was simple: Run up the 82 flights of stairs inside BNY Mellon Center's Boston skyscraper's in as little time as possible. The one catch: Complete

the 789 steps dressed in their full firefighting uniform and lugging roughly 50 pounds of gear.

Team Andover not only conquered the course, but recorded the second fastest time of the 47 teams from across the U.S. and Canada that turned out to compete — being edged out of first by their brother firefighters from Portland, Maine.

It was the seventh appearance in the event for Andover fire Lt. Brian Wright, a

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Officials mull buying farmland

20 acres along the Shawsheen being eyed for conservation

By BILL KIRK
bkirk@andovertownsmen.com

Town officials are weighing whether to buy 20 acres of farmland on the Shawsheen River to save it from development.

The property at 1320 South St. is only accessible through Tewksbury and is owned by Jean Tisbert, who lives there with her son, Dan, and his wife.

Tisbert's late husband, Norman, obtained an agricultural tax exemption for the property, known as a 61A, that allowed him to receive a break on his property taxes.

State law allows municipalities the first chance to buy such properties—known as the right of first refusal—once they go up for sale. Tisbert has a purchase-and-sale agreement for \$637,684 with Alvin Teh, a Stoneham developer who may want to build a single-family or multi-family residential project there.

The Board of Selectmen together with the Conservation Commission are expected to reach a decision on the property following a closed-door

discussion scheduled for Monday, Feb. 23.

Last week, selectmen held a public hearing to collect input on whether the town should buy the land or assign its right to a third-party land preservation organization.

Several people at the Feb. 12 meeting, including members of the Tisbert family, said the town should buy the property and preserve it as open space.

"My father passed away two years ago," Dan Tisbert said. "I think he would prefer—since it was a dairy farm—to have it as conservation land. As my father's soul in heaven, there is a heritage in town for the Tisberts. ... There's a lot of history."

Selectmen have 120 days from when they were officially notified of the pending sale on Dec. 23 to exercise their right. But Dan Tisbert urged the selectmen to act soon, saying that every day the transaction is delayed costs his mother money.

John Hess of 145 Chestnut St., said the property was on a list approved by Town Meeting

last year of possible conservation sites that the town should seek to purchase.

If approved, the purchase would be funded by money left over from the failed acquisition of a portion of the former Reichold Chemical property. Although that deal fell through, the Conservation Commission still retains \$800,000 in borrowing authority, which would be enough to purchase the Tisberts' land.

"It is in the town's best interest to buy this property," Hess said, adding that since the land is zoned industrial, it's unclear how the would-be buyer could build homes there. But, he said, any development would likely be built as close as 100 feet to the Shawsheen River, a scenario he called "devastating."

"You should strongly consider buying it," he told selectmen, adding that it is adjacent to other conservation properties as well.

Selectmen also considered assigning the property to a non-profit land preservation organization, such as the Andover

Village Improvement Society, or AVIS.

Hess, speaking as vice president of AVIS, said representatives of the land trust had visited the property, but had been unable to do the kind of "due diligence" needed to determine whether the organization should buy it.

"We haven't made a decision," he said. "It would cost a lot of money to do the due diligence. We are exploring that option."

However, he urged selectmen to retain the possibility of assigning the property to a third party.

"Please don't not assign it," he said.

Anthony Bruno, a real estate agent with Gibson Sotheby's International Realty of Boston representing Teh, said his client has "no specific plan" for the property, but was interested in purchasing it.

"He won't know what he can do with the property until after he goes through the permitting process with the town," Bruno said.

Snow delays Town Park master plan review

By TIM LIMA
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The Planning Board's review of changes to The Park, playstead and municipal complex was postponed last week for the second time due to the weather.

Several of the town's veterans requested that the Feb. 10 discussion be rescheduled in the wake of recent storms because the snow piles and cold temperatures had made travel difficult for them.

The Planning Board agreed to postpone the discussion to Tuesday, Feb. 24, at 7 p.m. in Doherty Middle School's World War I Memorial Auditorium on Bartlet Street.

The discussion had originally been scheduled for Jan. 27, but was moved to Feb. 10 because of time constraints.

Senior Planner Lisa Schwarz, who is overseeing the development of a master plan for the 20.4-acre park across from the Town Offices at the intersection of Bartlet and Chestnut streets, has included the possibility of a child's play area in the plans. The idea has raised concerns with local veterans who believe that The Park—with its four dedicated war memorials—is best left as is.

They have suggested the adjacent playstead located toward the back of The Park would be better suited for a new

recreational spot for children if that's what the town wants.

Schwarz has said that any changes to The Park would be mindful of its war memorials and monuments and would, in fact, attempt to make them better understood, valued and accessed.

The Park now includes a World War I Howitzer cannon captured by American forces, which was placed there in 1932. Several decades later, between 2004 and 2008, three more monuments were dedicated, including a World War II monument in the northeast corner, a Vietnam War monument on The Park's east side and a Korean War monument at the southeast corner.

To review The Park draft master plan, visit www.andoverma.gov/planning.

Horse-riding arena at edge of Harold Parker OK'd

By TIM LIMA
tlima@andovertownsmen.com

A year-round, horse-riding arena and facilities for four horses on a 5.3-acre site near Harold Parker State Forest won the go-ahead from the Planning Board last week.

Vicka Corey of Somerville, a horseback riding instructor currently in North Reading, is seeking to buy the residential property at 55 Harold Parker Road and build an 8,760-square-foot fabric structure for an arena and four sheds for the horses.

The arena, measuring 120 feet long by 73 feet wide, would be built of similar material as what the state now uses for salt sheds and has a life expectancy of about 15 years, according to Bernie Paquin of Dana Perkins, Inc., the civil engineering firm responsible for the site design.

Each shed would be located within a large, fenced-in area, where the horses could roam as they pleased. The sheds would provide shelter for the horses during poor weather conditions.

The horse facilities would

not be visible from the road and, at the recommendation of the building inspector, would be located at least 50 feet from the property line. Paquin added that other horses are kept at nearby properties.

Corey and her husband each have a horse, and the facility would also accommodate two of her clients' horses. While three of the horses have Icelandic names, the fourth is named Zip.

Following its construction, the facility would be used for intimate private riding lessons, and not as a function facility for special events like birthday parties, town Planning Director Paul Materazzo told the Planning Board.

Corey is currently an instructor at the Ponderaia in North Reading, where she has taught horseback riding as her secondary vocation for seven years.

She said that if everything works out and she proceeds with buying the property, she would be open to training new clients. She works independently as a horseback riding

instructor, and is certified in several different areas related to the sport, she said.

The project required the Planning Board's approval because the arena is larger than 2,000 square feet. The board OK'd a Site Plan Certificate with certain conditions, including proper disposal and maintenance of animal waste and a vehicle turnaround area

for easy access by emergency vehicles.

Paquin said that the plans have already earned an order of conditions from the Conservation Commission. The plans were also before the Zoning Board of Appeals, mandated because a commercial use is being proposed within a single residence district.

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Final report card: Town manager review, raise on tap for March

By BILL KIRK

bkirk@andovertownsmen.com

With a little more than four months to go before he retires, Town Manager Buzz Stapczynski's final performance review by the Board of Selectmen remains a work in progress.

Already overdue by more than six months, Stapczynski's annual review is not expected to be made public until early March, which is raising questions with at least one selectman.

"This review clearly should have been done in advance of the new year," Selectman Mary O'Donoghue said. "The timeline for the review came out after he announced his retirement. It's harder to ding someone when it's his last year."

Based on the contract with the town manager, selectmen are supposed to conduct an annual review at the start of each new fiscal year, which is July 1. The review is based on goals and objectives set for the town manager by the board.

The charter states that based on the annual review, the town manager is eligible for a 1.5 percent bonus and a 2.5 percent merit raise. Last year, he was given a 1.5 percent raise but no bonus, resulting in a salary of just over \$152,000.

Stapczynski's pension is ultimately riding on his evaluation. If he receives shining reviews from all five selectmen, he could benefit in the long term by getting a boost in his pension, since it is based on a percentage of the average of a retiree's three highest years of service.

The Retirement Board was unable to provide specifics on Stapczynski's pension since it hasn't been calculated yet, but anyone 65 or over with at least 32 years of service gets 80 percent of their top three years' salaries.

Stapczynski is 68 and

"He's announced his retirement, he could punch his ticket and move on, but he hasn't done that. The poor guy's been running around trying to get rid of the snow. I find that very commendable."

Selectman Paul Salafia

has been town manager in Andover since 1990, or about 25 years. Before that, he was town manager in Wilmington. Assuming his years of service carry over from Wilmington to Andover, he would have the minimum years of service and therefore get the maximum pension and could earn up to \$120,000 a year in retirement.

Selectman Paul Salafia said the town manager's pending retirement had nothing to do with his review.

"It didn't play any part in my review, whether he's going to be there another 10 years or not," he said, adding that the delay doesn't matter either. "It doesn't affect the town if we delay it another month."

Selectmen Chairman Dan Kowalski said he had originally planned for each selectman to submit their reviews by early January. "We had defined a specific date where I asked all members of the board to submit their individual evaluations," he said.

However, Kowalski changed the process slightly, asking each selectman to turn in their reviews to Stapczynski's executive assistant, Wendy Adams, and to then meet with the town manager in one-on-one interviews to discuss the reviews sometime before Feb. 20.

"This is a newly defined process," Kowalski said. "Since I've been on the board, we've never had this structured of a process. I think everyone should be able to meet one-on-one with him."

After that's done, the reviews will be

"aggregated" by Adams into a single document.

On either Feb. 23 or March 2, Kowalski said, selectmen will hold a meeting to go over both the aggregated results and the individual performance assessments. The reviews will all become public at that meeting.

As of last week, reviews had been submitted by selectmen Salafia, O'Donoghue, Alex Vispoli and Kowalski. Selectman Brian Major's performance appraisal was still outstanding.

Once the appraisals are reviewed, Kowalski said, the board may go into executive session to discuss compensation.

O'Donoghue said some of the items that may loom large for her in Stapczynski's annual review include the foundering town yard project, problems with the town's website and overall leadership.

"One of the goals you'd expect from any leader is leadership," she said. "I think that's one of the things we are going to be clearly looking for in a new town manager. Rather than being reactionary."

Salafia, meanwhile, praised Stapczynski for his leadership during the recent series of winter storms.

"He's been out riding around town with (Public Works Director) Chris Cronin looking at piles of snow," he said. "He's announced his retirement, he could punch his ticket and move on, but he hasn't done that. The poor guy's been running around trying to get rid of snow. I find that very commendable."



COURTESY PHOTO

Team Andover poses for a group photo at the American Lung Association's annual Fight for Air Climb in Boston earlier this month. The local team included, from left, Tom Kennedy, Bruce Belbin, Brian Wright, Christine Wright, Jeff Gaunt, Todd Collins and Kevin Carney; plus Brian Flanagan, not pictured.

AIR CLIMB

Continued from Page 1

15-year veteran of the department. He said his fellow firefighters saw the challenge the competition posed when they first decided to sign up.

This year, the 43-year-old Wright was joined by department members Jeff Gaunt, Todd Collins, Bruce Belbin, Kevin Carney, Brian Flanagan and Tom Kennedy, plus new recruit Christine Wright.

The way the competition works is the individual times of the five fastest people on a team are combined to calculate the final score.

The Feb. 7 competition mandated that firefighters wear gear certified by the National Fire Protection Association, including boots, bunker pants and coat, helmet, an oxygen tank and a mask.

Equipment was checked at the beginning and end of the climb, and a microchip similar to ones worn by marathon runners was used to record contestants' times.

"It was pretty hot in there, and the air quality wasn't that great," Wright said.

The Andover team trained for three months for the

competition, climbing stairs from Harvard Stadium and Boston's Bunker Hill to Brickstone Square's 10-story building in Andover.

Kennedy said the event allowed a group of Andover firefighters, both rookie and veteran members of the department, to come together as a unit for a good cause. Team members ranged from Belbin, a 25-year member of the department, to Wright, a new recruit who has yet to complete the Firefighter's Academy.

"It's a big team-building event," Kennedy, 30, said. "It's a good excuse for us to get together and to bond. We

have people who have been around for 25 years, and some who are brand new and just started a couple of months ago.

"It's a good way to get to know each other, have some fun and help people out."

The Fight for Air Climb is one of the American Lung Association's signature fundraisers, bringing in more than \$7 million last year alone through events in more than 65 cities. Funds go toward saving lives by improving lung health and preventing lung disease. For more information, or to donate, visit www.fightforair-climb.org.

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Power line project seeks to upgrade region's electrical grid

By BILL KIRK
bkirk@andovertownsm.com

hosted by National Grid at Old Town Hall.

A proposal by National Grid to build 85-foot tall, high-tension power line towers through Andover will go before the Board of Selectmen next week for an informational hearing.

Last week, about 20 people, mostly residents who live near the existing power line corridor in the far, western corner of town, asked questions and learned about the project at an open house

Company spokeswoman Jackie Barry said the new towers will be built within the utility's 520-foot-wide right-of-way that runs through less than 1 mile of town. The right-of-way already has a number of power line towers.

As part of the project, one set of existing towers will be torn down and replaced by a new set, which will be shifted slightly to make way for the new structures. A sixth set of towers will be erected in the right-of-way to carry the new

■ Visit our website to view a map of the project, www.andovertownsm.com

line — a 345-kilovolt power line that is needed to upgrade the region's electrical grid.

The new towers, which will be steel poles, will carry three power lines and two, smaller shield wires. They are part of a larger project in the Northeast called the "Greater Boston and New Hampshire Solution." It is comprised of three, separate projects — the Merrimack Valley Reliability

Project. That involved the new, overhead 345-kV line running from New Hampshire, starting in Londonderry through Windham, Hudson and Pelham, before entering Massachusetts in Dracut and continuing through Andover and Tewksbury, where it will end at a substation.

The other parts of the overall project include new underground 345-kV lines from Woburn to Wakefield and another from Everett to Woburn.

ISO New England, the manager of the region's power grid, selected National Grid and Eversource Energy as the companies responsible for building the new power lines.

"This is a win-win situation for Massachusetts residents and businesses since our solution will help to ensure the future reliability of the region's electrical grid, while maximizing the project's economic benefits," Rudy Wynter, president of National Grid's Transmission Business, said in a release. "We're proud that ISO New England has designated ours as its preferred solution, and we look forward to working with local communities to make this proposal a reality."

Barry said the Mass. Department of Public Utilities is responsible for overseeing the project in the commonwealth. She said the permitting

process allows people to intervene if they object to the new power lines. Company officials said they hoped to be able to work with neighbors who may have concerns based on diminished views or other reasons.

"There are opportunities for communities or individuals to request the right to intervene in the state siting processes," Barry said. "We hope it doesn't come to that. We hope we can come to solutions."

The project is on the Board of Selectmen's agenda for Monday night. The meeting starts at 7 in the third-floor conference room of the Town Offices Building on Bartlett Street.



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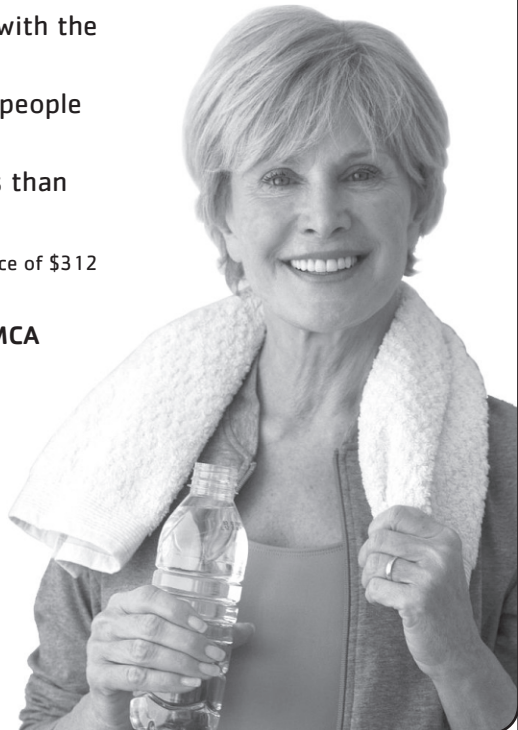
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Zoning changes target senior housing projects

By TIM LIMA
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Residents fighting two major senior housing developments will be going before Town Meeting this spring in hopes of better defining where similar projects can be built in the future.

Three zoning bylaw amendments proposed for the May Town Meeting warrant have grown out of two large-scale projects currently before the Planning Board for approval.

"I think Andover is wide open ground for developers right now," said Heather Lauten of 243 Lowell St., an abutter to a proposed two-phase, 133-unit senior housing community eyed for the 9.2-acre Strawberry Hill Farm site.

"We're not only concerned about our immediate neighbors, but all of our neighbors across the town."

The first phase of plans for Strawberry Hill Farm at 254 Lowell St. calls for a single-story building containing 63 assisted-living units for individuals in need of memory-care services.

The second phase, called Andover Senior Residences, would create an affordable, 55-and-older community with 70 one-bedroom, congregate-living apartments in a three-story complex.

The public hearing on the project was closed at the Dec. 16 Planning Board meeting. The board opened its deliberations Tuesday night and continued them to a subsequent meeting.

It's the three-story building that most concerns Lauten. She said it doesn't belong in her neighborhood.

She added the developer is looking to disguise an independent living complex under the term "congregate care" to bypass restrictions.

Under the current zoning, the developer cannot build a new independent living residence for elderly on the site. But because the definitions aren't clear, she said, this facility can be masked as something different.

Lauten is seeking to amend the last sentence of the "Congregate Living Facility" definition in the town's zoning bylaw to offer greater clarity. The change would prohibit congregate housing from containing separate independent dwelling units and instead require residents to share "one or more of the following: kitchen facilities, dining facilities and/or bathing facilities."

Currently, the bylaw reads: "Each resident shall have an individual bedroom and may have a separate living room, kitchen, dining area or bathroom and may share living, dining and bathroom facilities with other elderly persons, such as a common dining facility."

"I think it's manifestly clear to my neighbors and I that a project that includes an apartment building, consisting of 70 discreet dwelling units, where there is no sharing of units other than a community living room, is not congregate living by any stretch of the imagination," she said.

Across town, Mark Bernardin of 140 Elm St. wants to prevent a problem he sees with the senior housing project proposed for his neighborhood.

An 88,126-square-foot, 103-unit assisted-living development is looking to be built on the hill at 139-143 Elm St.

Bernardin said he and his neighbors are concerned about how the imposing structure will affect the character of their neighborhood.

"It would turn it into a mixed-use neighborhood,"

he has said. "It's a business with traffic 24 hours a day."

Bernardin is aiming to differentiate the rules for construction of facilities depending on the zoning for the property. He believes new buildings in a residential neighborhood should have vastly different regulations than ones proposed in mixed-use or business districts.

"Talking to my neighbors, none of us had any idea that a developer could build something like an assisted-living project in a residential area," he said. "If we did, we would've assumed that they'd be limited more strictly in terms of how tall they'd be, and how many units."

Under his proposed zoning changes, new construction in Single Residence A and Single Residence B districts could be no taller than 25 feet, while they could extend to 35 feet in mixed-use and general business districts.

The proposal also seeks to expand the lot area per assisted-living unit to 6,000 square feet in the SRA and SRB residential districts, while reducing the current mandate in half to 1,500 square in mixed-use and general business districts to encourage facilities to be built in those areas.

Also, setbacks of at least 100 feet from existing ways and streets and 50 feet from property lines would be required in residential zones, while a 20-foot setback would be allowed in mixed-use and business districts.

"We are not opposed to senior housing, but if you're going to build this type of facility in a residential area, we should make sure it's a size and density that fits in a residential area," he said.

The Planning Board is scheduled to continue its discussion of the Elm Street project on Tuesday, Feb. 24.

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Residents call for property tax relief

Selectmen: Proposed budget will require cutbacks

By BILL KIRK

bkirk@andovertownsmen.com

A group of taxpayers filed a petition with the Board of Selectmen and the School Committee in the last couple of weeks, asking them to hold the line on tax increases.

"With household incomes in Andover having been stagnant for the past eight years as a result of the Great Recession, we say, 'Enough is enough,'" said Mike Roli of 2 College Circle, who read the petition, signed by 47 residents, into the record at the Feb. 5 Board of Selectmen meeting. "We say, 'Sharpen your pencils and bring us a budget for the next few years that does not result in property tax increases.'"

Roli lamented that the average property tax bill could go over \$10,000 in a few years following this year's "sticker shock of the huge property tax increases that we just got in the mail."

The average tax bill is estimated to increase about \$300, although many people are reporting much higher tax increases than that. "Oh, it's triple that," said Joe Ponti of Marion Avenue, one of the many senior citizens to join in the petition campaign. Ponti said the petition was also read at last week's School Committee meeting.

■ For excerpts from the petition, visit us online at: www.andovertownsmen.com

"The paradigm in this town is to solve problems by throwing money at it rather than getting hard-nosed solutions," he said. "They could learn from the private sector."

Bob Pokress of Cherrywood Circle, one of the organizers behind the petition, said the town is throwing millions of dollars at the school system while getting mediocre results. "Andover High School is no longer in the top 10," he said. "And we are paying more per pupil than any other comparable district."

The petition drive comes just as Town Manager Reginald "Buzz" Stapczynski presented his annual budget.

Stapczynski went before the Board of Selectmen last week where he proposed a spending plan amounting to nearly \$172 million, an increase of \$7.5 million, or 4.6 percent, over last year's plan. While the budget includes a reduction in \$1.1 million in taxes, as requested by selectmen, many town officials remain unhappy with the plan. (See related story.)

During his presentation of the petition, Roli said he didn't understand why Andover's proposed school budget of \$73 million was

so much higher than North Andover's, which is proposed at \$44 million.

According to the Mass. Department of Elementary and Secondary Education website, North Andover has nearly 4,800 students enrolled in seven schools, while Andover has nearly 6,100 students enrolled in 10 schools.

Roli said both young families and elderly residents are struggling to pay their tax bills.

"Seniors are being pushed out of their homes," he said.

He praised Selectmen Alex Vispoli and Mary O'Donoghue for their efforts in holding the line on taxes, which prompted a response from Selectmen Chairman Dan Kowalski, who is running for re-election on March 24. "All the selectmen are steadfast to save the \$1.1 million," Kowalski said, referring to Stapczynski's proposed budget, which held back on taxing to the levy limit by \$1.1 million. "All five of us have supported that, not just Vispoli and O'Donoghue."

Ponti said the petition was only signed by 47 people, but organizers could have gotten more than that, except that the snowstorms have made signature-gathering difficult. He said the petition has the support of scores of people, particularly senior citizens, who are suffering from skyrocketing property tax bills.

By BILL KIRK

bkirk@andovertownsmen.com

Town Manager Reginald "Buzz" Stapczynski's proposed \$172 budget immediately encountered questions from the Board of Selectmen last week, who said his spending plan didn't go far enough in holding the line on tax and spending increases.

The town leaders said following Stapczynski's presentation that now the process of budget-cutting would have to begin.

"I'm a little bit incredulous, to be honest with you," said Selectman Mary O'Donoghue, who was concerned that Stapczynski didn't take seriously the board's request to consider a budget proposal that didn't tax up to the Proposition 2 1/2 levy limit — the maximum property tax increase allowed by state law.

Selectman Alex Vispoli agreed. "I'm frustrated," he said. "We've been down this road before. I know I'm beating a dead horse, but here we are again at the same point."

Selectmen convinced Stapczynski to hold back on taxing \$1.1 million — a holdover from last year's budget when they offered taxpayers a small, almost symbolic cut in property taxes after skyrocketing tax bills were mailed out — a result of the new \$50 million Bancroft School debt going online.

Last March, selectmen asked Stapczynski to prepare a budget this year that would have gone even further — saving

the \$1.1 million while also taxing below the levy limit. While he agreed to withhold the \$1.1 million, he has proposed a budget that is 4.6 percent higher than last year — an increase of \$7.5 million, and in fact taxes up to the levy limit.

"We haven't had that discussion yet," Vispoli said. "We decided, before this (budget) gets published, to have this discussion. Now we have to go back and start cutting proposals made by the town manager ... creating a theatrical event, about why one department needs more money than the other, and pitting departments against each other. Nobody likes that."

Stapczynski countered that he thought removing the \$1.1 million in taxes from the revenue stream was what selectmen wanted.

But selectmen said they had hoped Stapczynski would create a budget that started at a lower level — one or two points below the Proposition 2 1/2 levy limit — preventing the need to make cuts.

"The clear expectation was that it would change this year," O'Donoghue said. "But now we are talking about cutting."

Selectmen Chairman Dan Kowalski said he also thought there might be room for improvement.

"I foresee additional trimming of the budget," he said. "Now the board needs to evaluate his proposed budget and come up with its own recommendations for Town Meeting."

HIKE

■ Continued from Page 1

increases in the larger departments, including police, fire and public works.

Within town departments, there are a number of increases. For example, an almost \$23,000 hike is proposed in the salary of the next town manager, whose pay would climb from \$152,641 to \$175,000. Stapczynski said that increase is designed to bring the salary in line with the going rate for an experienced town manager for a community the size of Andover.

Stapczynski said health insurance costs remain among the unknowns in the budget, but could rise by around 10 percent, as the budget projects.

During a presentation to officials, the town's health care consultant said while the health insurance contract has gone out to bid, health care

companies have been reluctant to bid on Andover's employees and retirees because they don't have enough information on the risk pool.

As currently budgeted, health insurance could go up from \$15.8 million last year to more than \$17 million next year — a projected 10.2 percent increase.

"That's the worst-case scenario," he said. "Hopefully, we'll be able to work on that."

Retirement costs have also increased, as the Retirement Board has asked the town to become more aggressive about paying down the long-term pension liabilities facing the town. At the request of the Retirement Board, Stapczynski agreed to include \$1.5 million in the budget toward pension costs — a 23.9 percent increase over last year's allotment.

'Community compact' Before presenting his budget

to the Board of Selectmen and Finance Committee last Thursday night, Stapczynski was in Boston participating in a focus group with members of Gov. Charlie Baker's administration. Stapczynski was among about 25 municipal officials invited by Baker's office to be part of the forum aimed at improving communication and collaboration between the state and community leaders.

"The Baker/Polito administration is making all the right moves," Stapczynski said, referring to the governor and Lt. Gov. Karyn Polito.

He said that Baker, a former selectman from Swampscott, and Polito, a former selectman from Shrewsbury, understand what cities and towns are going through as they try to meet state mandates and assorted funding woes.

The focus group was part of what the governor's office is calling a "community

BUDGET HEARINGS

A series of budget hearings will be held over the next couple months in advance of the annual May Town Meeting, during which department heads, along with Town Manager Reginald "Buzz" Stapczynski, will discuss their funding requests. The schedule is:

- Monday, Feb. 23:** Department of Community Services, Elder Services and Andover Youth Services; 7 p.m., selectmen's conference room, Town Offices, Bartlet Street
- Saturday, Feb. 28:** General government budgets, including police, fire, municipal services, water/sewer; 9 a.m. to

- noon, Memorial Hall Library, 2 North Main St.
- Monday, March 2:** Fixed costs/obligations, warrant articles; 7 p.m., selectmen's conference room, Town Offices
- Saturday, March 7:** Town department budgets, information technology, Memorial Hall Library, community development and planning, general government; 9 a.m. to noon, Memorial Hall Library
- Monday, March 9:** Revenues, financial articles, water and sewer rate hearing; 7 p.m., selectmen's conference room

compact" that will keep the lines of communication open. Already, it has borne fruit, Stapczynski said.

One of the first things Baker did upon taking office was to restore the Chapter 90 road-paving money that had been held up by former Gov. Deval Patrick, who was using it as a bargaining chip in his efforts to reform the Mass. Department of Transportation.

Baker has also pledged to streamline regulations, reduce unfunded mandates and simplify paperwork procedures for town officials. The Baker/Polito administration has also pledged not to cut local aid, despite a \$760 million budget deficit.

Stapczynski said he even expects slight increases in local aid and Chapter 70 education funding for the next

budget year. "They want to try to help us," the town manager said, adding that the new administration has also vowed not to propose any 9C cuts, executive privilege budget trimming often made mid-year to enable a balanced budget.

"We need to get behind them. We need to encourage them," Stapczynski said.

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Time to nominate Citizens, Educator of Year

The Rotary Club of Andover is once again searching for its annual Citizens Who Care and Educator of the Year honorees.

The 18th annual Citizens Who Care and seventh annual Educator of the Year Awards will be handed out at the club's gala evening on Thursday, May 7, at 6 p.m. at the Wyndham Andover Hotel on Old River Road.

Nominations are now being sought for both awards. The deadline for submissions is March 15.

The Citizens Who Care Awards recognize civic-minded individuals or groups for their extraordinary contributions to the Andover community, above and beyond their normal job descriptions. Recipients

must have an Andover connection, by either living, working or volunteering in the community. Ten honorees have been selected annually since 1996. One of the honorees is typically an Andover High School student.

The Educator of the Year Award, launched in 2009, honors one educator in the Andover public school system who possesses the same exceptional values and qualities of the Citizens Who Care, both inside and outside of the classroom, and who has made a significant and lasting difference in the lives of Andover students.

Nomination forms may be downloaded via the Rotary Club of Andover's website at <http://portal.clubrunner.ca/3379>. They are also available from club members. Inquiries and completed forms may be emailed to Don Gottfried at dgottfried@bulfinchgroup.com or faxed to 978-749-9961.

The gala is Andover Rotary's signature event and will include a dinner and awards presentation featuring the unveiling of a portrait and a biography of each recipient. The portraits will then be placed on display at businesses, public buildings and other locations throughout town for the coming year.

The Rotary Club of Andover regularly meets Fridays at 7:30 a.m. at the Lanam Club, 260 North Main St., Andover, and welcomes inquiries from prospective members.

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Chicken Finger	5.79	6.29
Buffalo Chicken	5.79	6.29
Golden BBQ Chicken	5.79	6.29
Chicken Parmesan (Eggplant)	5.79	6.29
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Scarlet Knight Chicken Parmesan with meatballs and American cheese on a toasted garlic bread.	7.49
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Caesar Salad Fresh Romaine with parmesan cheese and croutons. With Chicken add 2.50	5.79
House Salad Mixed Greens with cucumber, red onion, tomato, and croutons. With Chicken add 2.50	5.29
Greek Salad Mixed Greens, Olives, Tomatoes, Feta, Greek Dressing With Chicken add 2.50	5.79

Buffalo Chicken Salad House salad with buffalo chicken and Blue Cheese dressing.	7.49
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Crispy Chicken Salad Mixed Greens, Chicken Tenders, Bacon, Cheddar Cheese, tomatoes, peppers and honey mustard dressing.	7.49
--	-------------

Chefs Salad Ham, Turkey, American Cheese served over our House salad.	7.29
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Chicken Parmesan Chicken, Marinara, Parmesan and Mozzarella	11.49	11.49
Mediterranean Feta, Mozzarella, spinach, diced tomatoes, olives and a butter garlic sauce.	11.99	11.99
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Golden Warrior Golden BBQ sauce based pizza wid, steak, fried Chicken, Mac and Cheese Bites, and Mozzarella Cheese.	13.99
Buffalo Bomb Red sauce based pizza wid, steak, jalapeños, Fried Buffalo Chicken and Mozzarella Cheese then drizzled wid, ranch	13.99
Italian Feast Our Homemade Alfredo marinara sauce topped with meatball, chicken parmesan and Mozzarella Cheese	12.99
Chicken Bacon Alfredo Ranch Chicken Bacon Ranch pizza with Alfredo as the sauce	12.99
Four Cheese Pizza Monterrey Jack Cheddar, Mozzarella, Feta, Parmesan over our butter garlic sauce	10.99
Sunset Pizza Ham, Pineapple, Jalapeños, Banana Peppers and Bacon	13.49
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BLT Pizza Our butter garlic sauce cooked with tomatoes, bacon and topped with a lettuce mayonnaise mix!	12.99

Sides

Pulled Buffalo Nachos Waffle fries, bacon, jalapenos, cheese and shredded buffalo chicken.	8.99	8.99
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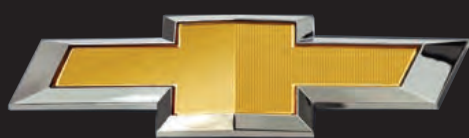


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Townspeople TAKING IT TO THE HOOP



LEFT: Luke Batchelder, left, uses his best defensive moves on Nevin Jayasing. RIGHT: David Dunham extends his arms as he waits for a rebound.

Bob French Jr. League expanded to students in grades one through eight

By BOB FRENCH
Staff Writer

The town's first- and second-graders called foul when they had to wait until third grade to register for the Bob French Basketball League.

So for the first time, the town-wide program invited the community's youngest hoops players onto the court this winter, creating the Bob French Junior League just for them.

Like their older counterparts, the youngsters practice one day a week, then meet up

on Wednesday afternoons at Bancroft School for games.

Offered through the town's Department of Community Services, the basketball league is now open to students in grades one through eight who live or attend school in Andover. It teaches the fundamentals of the sport, including ball handling, rules of the game and, most of all, hustle, teamwork and sportsmanship.

The current session wraps up at the end of the month. But not before a few more three-point shots are attempted.



Players scramble for the rebound, as Dylan Flynn, Alex Lee, Jacob Santagati and Christian Neal, front to back for the green team, and Daniel Goldsmith for the blue team battle for the loose ball.



John Driscoll, right, is focused as he guards opposing player Luke Organisciak as the first- and second-graders take to the Bancroft School basketball court.



Chace Kivlehan, back center, brings the ball up court as players get into position at the Bancroft School gym.



Adam Segal celebrates a basket.

MIKE SPRINGER/
Staff photos

'Comically Speaking' shows the humorous side of art

By TERRY DATE
Staff Writer

As a boy growing up in Andover, the first thing that Don Mathias would do each day was tear open the newspaper to the comics. Favorites included "Bloom County," "Peanuts" and "Garfield."

Today, his online comic strip, "Peanizles," draws inspiration from them. The urban strip, which has been published by Skope Magazine since 2002, also plays with meta humor, a comic twist tinged with irony. Characters step out of their roles to make light of their presence in a comic strip — an additional layer of humor, an inside joke that everyone is in on.

The 43-year-old freelance illustrator and cartoonist who once published a weekly family comic strip in The Andover Townsman is among five artists who are showing their humor-driven illustrations and drawings this winter in an exhibit at Essex Art Center in Lawrence.

In the years since graduating in 1998, Mathias has

been producing a variety of freelance illustration in all aspects of publishing, the film industry and theater. His cartoons and comic strips have appeared in numerous magazines and newspapers across the globe.

"Entering Andover," a family strip, appeared in The Townsman for about 10 years.

Mathias, who has a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in illustration and graphic design from Montserrat College of Art in Beverly, is well-acquainted with the Essex Art Center, where he teaches comic illustration, said Sara Hildago, director of the center's Sidell Gallery.

Hildago said Mathias is successful in presenting the world through children's eyes in "Peanizles."

"He reminds me of a kid," she said.

Mathias said he is good friends with his fellow exhibitors in the Essex Art Center show — David Sullivan, Sage Stossel, Mark Parisi and John Klossner. The artists draw on their lives and observations for



Andover cartoonist Don Mathias, whose family comic strip "Entering Andover" appeared in The Townsman for 10 years, is one of five illustrators displaying work this winter at Essex Art Center in Lawrence. Mathias' online comic strip "Peanizles" is published by Skope Magazine.

inspiration, he said, and their works blend words and graphics in interesting ways, presenting a range of comedic approaches.

Take Stossel, of Cambridge, a cartoonist and the executive editor of The Atlantic Online who recently became a mom. Some of her cartoons reflect on new motherhood, an often frazzling adventure of 24/7 baby care, including bouncing, feeding and cleaning.

Sullivan, of Dracut, makes caricatures of real people, and tends to be more political, Hidalgo said. Political cartoonists were once a media staple, Mathias said, and Sullivan's work continues the tradition, drawing on local humor and issues and thought-provoking items.

"It's neat to see somebody be able to do that," Mathias said.

Parisi, a Gloucester native who now lives in Melrose,

does single-panel comedic drawings. His humor is all over the place, Mathias said.

Klossner's fine-line cartoons and illustrations, meanwhile, tend to be New Yorker-style social commentary and technology cartoons.

Mathias said New England is full of cartoonists. It's a region of creative and independent thinkers ready to push the boundaries of their work. And the exhibit illustrates that well, he said.

IF YOU GO

- **What:** "Comically Speaking," an exhibit of cartoonists' works
- **When:** Through March 6. Regular hours are Mondays through Fridays, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.
- **Where:** Essex Art Center, 56 Island St., Lawrence
- **How much:** Free
- **More information:** Call 978-685-2343 or visit www.essex-artcenter.org. For more on Andover artist Don Mathias' work, visit www.punkrockcartoonist.com.

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Education

A SOUND HONOR

8th-grade violinist chosen District Festival Orchestra concertmaster

STAFF REPORTS

Sean William Diehl may very well be one of the town's youngest concertmasters ever.

The 14-year-old Wood Hill Middle School student-violinist has been tapped to serve as concertmaster of the Music Educators Association's Northeast District Festival Orchestra performance this spring.

Diehl's accomplishment is an "honor that few students have reached throughout the years at Andover Public Schools," Beth Delforge, the district's visual and performing arts program coordinator, said in a release.

An eighth-grader, Diehl has been working toward the prestigious title since the age of 4, when he began his violin studies with Andover's Adrienne Caselle. Since then, he has taken lessons from faculty members at the New England Conservatory Preparatory School in Boston, including Boston Symphony Orchestra violinist Jason Horowitz and Cate Howard.

Currently, Diehl is a second violinist in NEC's Youth Philharmonic Orchestra, under the direction of Hugh Wolff and David Loebel. The 2013 winner of the NEC Preparatory School Concerto Competition (Category B), he is an avid chamber music student at the conservatory, where he also studies music theory and music composition.

"I feel very flattered to receive such an honor," Diehl said in the release. "I would like to thank everybody who had a part in giving me this fantastic opportunity. I can't wait to get started."

Delforge said Diehl likely inherited his musical skills from his parents. His mother, Julie, is an orchestra teacher and director within the Andover Public Schools, and his father, Brian, is the principal trombonist of both Connecticut's Hartford Symphony



Sean Diehl, an eighth-grader at Wood Hill Middle School, was selected as concertmaster for the Massachusetts Music Educators Association's Northeast District Festival Orchestra performance in April.

COURTESY PHOTO

Orchestra and the Springfield Symphony Orchestra as well as a freelance musician throughout New England and an instrumental teacher.

Brittany Kolodziej, Diehl's orchestra teacher at Wood Hill, said Diehl is respected by the other student-musicians at the school.

"He cares about his ensemble and even if the level of pieces are not at a level he's accustomed to, he always puts time into knowing them to demonstrate his commitment to the ensemble," she said.

In addition to his musical pursuits, Diehl is involved with Academic Bowl and Student Government at Wood Hill. He recently tried his hand at theater, playing the role of fiddler in his school's production of "Fiddler on the Roof" and he has been working on his creative writing, with pieces selected for a Merrimack Valley student literary magazine. He is also a competitive tennis player.

But much of his attention is on his music. He will lead the Northeast District Festival Orchestra's performance at Lowell High School in April, and then will be participating in a summer tour to Iceland with New England Conservatory's Youth Philharmonic Orchestra in late June.

"To me, the concertmaster is the violinist who doesn't just meet the standards of being a great violinist, he or she exceeds them," Diehl said. "The concertmaster must have lots of experience, and as a natural leader, know how to lead the violin section and the orchestra."

\$1.95M sought to turn AHS library into 'Digital Commons'

By TIM LIMA
tlima@andovertownsmam.com

Town Meeting this May will be asked to spend \$1.95 million to transform the library and media center room at Andover High School into a "21st century Digital Commons."

Two articles — one by Superintendent Marinel McGrath and Deputy Director of Plants and Facilities Ed Ataide and another by a private citizen, Shannon Scully of School Street — have been submitted to the Town Meeting warrant to bring the project forward.

Town Clerk Larry Murphy said the dual articles, which have similar wording, guarantee that the issue will be brought to a vote in May. While a public warrant request can be dropped from the warrant if it fails to gain the support of town officials, a private warrant article submitted by citizen petition must be heard, he said.

"What I was told by the private applicant was that

they wanted to make sure it made it onto the warrant, and didn't get pulled by the School Committee or cut by the selectmen in some way," he said. "It is somewhat unusual to see that, but indeed that's the case."

According to McGrath's proposal, the project aims to redevelop the existing media center to create more room for "collaborative work in groups of different sizes, from small groups to whole classes, often with access to technology to capture and manipulate material from multiple sources, such as books, newspapers, videos and websites."

The upgrades would bring more visibility into the area, more entrances, more natural light via skylights or clerestories, better acoustics and more opportunity for technology such as data drops, Wi-Fi hot spots, charging stations, shared screens and printers.

If approved, the project is expected to be completed by August 2016.

EDUCATION NOTEBOOK

AHS spring open house postponed

The Andover High School Spring Semester Open House, originally scheduled for Wednesday, Feb. 11, was postponed until after the winter vacation break because of difficult conditions created by the weather.

Officials decided to delay the open house because excessive mounds of snow would have made parking for the event an issue. A new date is expected to be announced soon.

Volunteers, donors sought for AHS Senior Safari

Parents of Andover High School students are needed to volunteer for Senior Safari, an all-night, substance-free graduation celebration planned for Monday, June 8.

To register or make a donation to the event, go to <https://eventbrite.com/event/152766476352/>. For more information, email Irene Pien at ipien@comcast.net.

Parent to Parent series tackling anxious behavior

Lynn Lyons, a licensed clinical social worker, psychotherapist and author, will present "Anxious Kids, Anxious Parents: Seven Ways to Stop the Worry Cycle and Raise Courageous & Independent Children" on Tuesday, March 3 from 7:30

to 9 p.m. at Pike School, 34 Sunset Rock Road, Andover.

The free presentation is part of the Andover Parent to Parent group's annual lecture series. Organizers say Lyons has been one of their most popular speakers. She is returning to the series for her fourth consecutive year.

For 23 years, Lyons has helped individuals, families and groups overcome their anxiety, compete effectively and parent confidently. Research shows that children with anxious parents are up to seven times more likely than other children to develop anxiety, she says. Typically, she says, both parents and children in these families have trouble tolerating uncertainty, handling discomfort and problem-solving.

Her presentation will help people identify patterns in families that increase anxious behavior, as well as the common pitfalls that make it worse. It will focus on a program of effective exercises for both parents and children to help them normalize anxiety and find innovative, playful ways to deal with it. Lyons says the goal for families isn't to try to avoid anxiety, but to deal with it in effective, healthy ways.

Visit www.andoverp2p.com for more on the presentation and the Parent to Parent series.

Have an item for the Education Notebook? Email townsmam@andovertownsmam.com.

A high note for Junior District performers

Thirty middle and high school students from Andover have been selected to perform in the 2015 Massachusetts Music Educators Association's Junior District Music Festival.

Beth Delforge, the district's visual and performing arts program coordinator, congratulated the students for their achievements. She also applauded teachers Joe Wright, Catherine Hofius, Brittany Kolodziej, Julie Diehl and Katie Simko for their work.

The local musicians and vocalists who will be participating in the districts are:

- BAND**
GRADE NINE
■ Teagan Mahoney, principal
■ Kevin Xu, principal
GRADE EIGHT
■ David Adly, principal
■ Alison Care, clarinet II
■ Ethan Cogswell, trumpet I
■ Quincy Mattor, horn III
■ Madison Quill, horn IV
■ Avery Wendell, principal
GRADE SEVEN
■ Emily Qui, principal
■ Sam Garth, horn III

- ORCHESTRA**
GRADE NINE
■ Yanchen Zhang, first violin
■ Timothy Wang, second violin
■ Samuel Zhang, second violin
■ Meredith Stewart, viola
GRADE EIGHT
■ Sean Diehl, concert master
■ Shyan Koul, first violin
■ Marisa McCarthy, second violin
■ Sarah Park, viola
■ Hanna Morrill, cello
GRADE SEVEN
■ Emerald Tan, first violin

- CHORUS**
GRADE EIGHT
■ Audrey San Cartier, soprano I
■ Kerrigan Bigelow, soprano I
■ Caroline Hall, soprano II
GRADE SEVEN
■ Imani Physic, soprano II
■ Michael Long, alto
■ Avery Miller, alto
GRADE SIX
■ Daniel DeMoor, alto
■ Sean Ballou, alto
■ Joseph Hall, alto
■ Declan Woodring, alto

8 AHS students tapped for All-State Music Fest

Eight Andover High School students have earned a spot in the 2015 Massachusetts Music Educators Association's 60th All-State Music Festival at Boston Symphony Hall next month.

The students were chosen for the prestigious ensembles through a highly competitive audition process in which they were judged based on technical abilities and musicality in playing a prepared piece of music or performing selected scales, as well as in sight reading.

The local All-State performers are:

- SENIORS**
■ Shannon Manuel, trombone
■ Daniel Zhang, clarinet
JUNIORS
■ Tim Chen, viola
■ Joseph Kim, cello
■ Victoria Wu, flute
■ Francesca Lionetta, vocal soprano
■ Daniel Webber, vocal bass

SOPHOMORE
■ SeongWoon Moon, trombone
Beth Delforge, the Andover school district's visual and performing arts coordinator, says participation in the All-States on March 21 will offer the students opportunities to rehearse with like-minded musicians and vocalists from across the state and to create new friendships.

The students are led by orchestra directors Brittany Kolodziej and Julie Diehl, as well as band director Catherine Hofius and choral director Mark Mercer.

Order's Up

Xerxis Palsetia, left, and Arnav Bhakta get ready to serve their dinner guests at High Plain Elementary School's fifth annual Pasta Palooza last Thursday night. The fifth-grade class took on the role of waitstaff for the pasta dinner attended by their families, teachers and fellow schoolmates in every grade.

CARL RUSSO/Staff photo



Colleen Ritzer Memorial Scholarships seek applicants

The family of Colleen Ritzer has announced that applications are now being accepted for the next round of memorial scholarships in her honor.

The scholarships are open to Andover and Danvers high school seniors who will be graduating this spring and plan to pursue a degree in the field of education at an accredited four-year college or university in the fall.

The Ritzer family established the scholarship fund to honor the young Andover woman's passion for teaching and family and to create a permanent legacy for their daughter and sister. The fund is supported by donations from generous individuals and organizations, the Step Up for Colleen 5K and other events held to honor the memory of Ritzer such as the Andover Youth Services Christmas Tree sale, a Holiday Pops concert and more.

"Colleen had two passions in life: making the learning of complex math theorems fun and spending time with

her loving family," the Ritzer family says. "Recipients of a Colleen E. Ritzer Memorial Scholarship help to create a permanent legacy for Colleen as they study to become caring teachers dedicated to the success of their future students."

Last year, more than \$20,000 in scholarships were awarded to 12 students from the two high schools. The first recipients are attending such colleges as Assumption College in Worcester, Endicott College in Beverly, the University of Connecticut and UMass. At the end of their first semester, each student reaffirmed their commitment to pursuing a degree in education or education-related field such as math or science.

Eligible applicants for the 2015 scholarships must be well-rounded students who demonstrate a passion for teaching, academic excellence and love of family. The application deadline is April 1. Scholarship applications are available for download at www.colleenritzer.com.

Business

A slice of Middle Eastern flavor

New pizza place has more than pie

BY BILL KIRK
bkirk@andovertownsmen.com

With items on the menu like homemade hummus and falafel, stuffed grape leaves and shawarma wrap, it seems odd that the sign on the front of the 38 Park St. restaurant says Andover House of Pizza.

But owners Younan Abraham and Mary Riad say they like the name — since it’s similar to another restaurant they own, the Bolton House of Pizza.

“Our customers in Bolton love us,” Riad said. “We make all our dough from scratch. We don’t buy frozen dough or ready-made. I make my sauce from scratch.”

It shows.

The beef pie is a delightful mix of beef, lamb and a variety of spices sandwiched between light, fluffy layers of her homemade phyllo dough. It’s one of Riad’s — and her customers’ — favorite dishes.

“I learned how to cook from my mother and grandmother,” said Riad, 48, who moved from Egypt to the United States with her husband in 2007. “There were five girls and one brother in my family. We used to sit in the kitchen from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m., making desserts and all kinds of food with my mom and my grandmother.”

She still cooks, but now for customers in Andover, Bolton and a third location in Bellingham known as Aroma Pizza and The Grill.

Her husband was in



Mike Springer/Staff photo
Younan Abraham and Mary Riad have taken over the pizza shop on Park Street and infused it with Mediterranean flavors, including delicacies from their home country of Egypt. Andover House of Pizza is the couple's third eatery.

Andover last summer when he drove down Park Street and saw the “For Rent” sign in front of the plaza that is also home to the Park Street Pub, Peking Garden and Andover Cleaners.

He made a few calls, completed some renovations, and two months ago they moved in.

Younan said business has been slow, however, something that could be related to the fact that a prior establishment there had some run-ins with the Board of Health.

But Riad said she keeps a clean restaurant and hopes to overcome the reputation of the previous eatery.

Ricky Ricci, a customer who walked over to Andover House of Pizza from his job down the street at Dellaria Salon, said he eats at the new spot as often as possible.

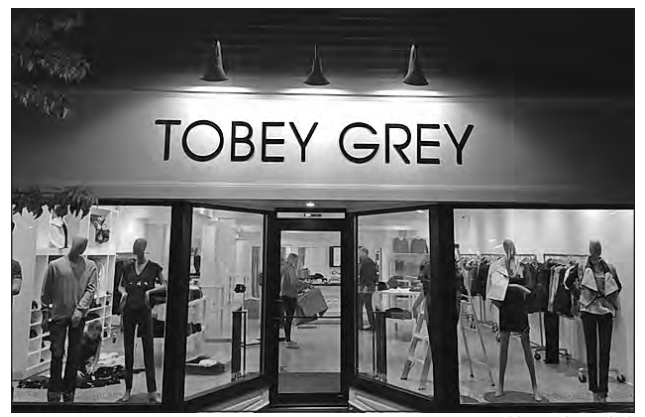
“This place is a hidden gem,” he said.

He and some co-workers at the salon saw the restaurant’s grand opening sign a couple of months ago and decided to

check it out. While not typically a fan of places named “House of Pizza,” he said he was “pleasantly surprised.”

He said he orders something different every time he eats there, and every dish is excellent.

“They have Middle Eastern food, including fresh pita bread and homemade hummus,” he said, as he enjoyed the steak tip dinner with rice pilaf and a fresh salad. “They always give me more food than I can eat.”



COURTESY PHOTO
The women's and men's clothing retailer Tobey Grey chose downtown Andover for its fourth location.

Tobey Grey settles into Andover

Tobey Grey, a men’s and women’s clothing shop known for high-end denim, trendy pieces and emerging designers, opened its fourth location in Massachusetts at 9 Main St. in Andover just in time for the holiday season last year.

The 10-year old business with other locations in Newton, Weston and Wellesley is owned by Steve Simon and his two daughters, Jill and Stacy.

“With the opening of our Andover shop, we bring the style and brands synonymous with cutting-edge fashion cities like New York City and Los Angeles direct to the North Shore,” Steve Simon said in a release. “We are also excited to introduce our private Tobey Grey label to our customers who won’t compromise quality and style, but are happy to see a lower price

point on the tag.”

The Andover location carries such names as J. Brand, Paige, Joe’s Jeans, Hudson and Citizens of Humanity, as well as its own in-house private collection of Tobey Grey tops, dresses, sweaters and jackets.

Launched in 2004 as the National Jean Company and later renamed Tobey Grey, the retailer closed its store on Boston’s Newbury Street last fall to focus on its suburban expansion. It is readying to launch new locations in Lynnfield and Hingham this year.

Tobey Grey also recently launched an e-commerce platform at www.tobeygrey.com to allow for online sales. To reach the Andover store, call 978-783-3131.

BUSINESS BRIEFCASE

Goodman joins Coco, Early & Associates

Carol Goodman, a former leading agent at Keller Williams, has joined the Coco, Early & Associates office at 63 Park St. in Andover.

The Andover resident, who brings nearly 20 years of industry experience to the agency, was the former owner and operator of Vertex Designs, Inc.

Goodman, who serves clients throughout Massachusetts, is certified as a Military Relocation Provider and as a First-Time Home Buyer Specialist.

She can be reached by email at cgoodman@cocoearly.com or by calling 978-475-1009 or 617-839-4011.

Carol Goodman

Andover Liquors gearing for relaunch

Will reopen next month as Andover Classic Wines

Buyers grabbed wine and beer until 9 p.m. last Saturday, Feb. 14 at Andover Liquors in Shawsheen Plaza.

Then, it was lights out at the store for the next month as a remodeling project is now in full swing.

Local lawyer Robert “Bob” Gilbert, who bought the 40-year-old liquor store in

2003, said the renovation is simply due.

Customers will see a much improved store when it reopens its doors around March 15, he said.

“We will be installing all new floors, shelving, lighting and beer cooler as well as a new floor layout,” Gilbert said.

People will also see a new name on the sign. The business will be relaunched as Andover Classic Wines to emphasize its focus on its wine collection.

Gilbert said his wine business has grown over the past few years and now accounts for 60 percent of his sales.

His staff of about 20 workers will be paid during the closure as Gilbert said he did not want to lose any of his employees. Staffers will be attending workshops about the wine and liquor business while the store is being remodeled.

— *Judy Wakefield, staff writer*

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Originally from Long Island, New York, Dr. Provenzano has been treating residents of the Greater Merrimack Valley for over 14 years. After graduating with honors from Adelphi University, he went on to receive his doctorate in Chiropractic from The University of Bridgeport College of Chiropractic. Following years of clinical practice and post-graduate seminars, Dr. Provenzano realized the benefits for his patients when manual therapy was used in conjunction with physical therapy and rehabilitative exercises. Dedicated to providing the best possible care to his patients and to broaden the scope of his practice, he enrolled in the doctoral program in Physical Therapy at Simmons College, Boston, MA. In 2007, Dr. Provenzano graduated with honors with his doctorate after an extensive three and a half year curriculum with

clinical rotations at Salem Hospital, Shaughnessy-Kaplan Rehabilitation Hospital, Health South, Beth Israel, Lahey Clinic, Newton Wesley, Boston Medical Center and Massachusetts General.

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Sports



RYAN HUTTON/Staff photo

Sara Faigel flies down the slopes for Andover High this season. After a serious fall last winter took her out of competition her junior year, Faigel has won five of six meets this year.

Dominating the slopes

After overcoming crash, Faigel excels for Andover High ski team

By DAVID WILLIS
dwillis@andovertownsmen.com

*As she crashed down the slopes, tumbling head over heels, unable to control her body as it flipped and skidded, Sara Faigel's fears raced to the worst scenario.



Sara Faigel

"There was a hole in the course and the light was flat so I couldn't see it," Faigel said. "I hit it at the right angle and it threw me into the air. I started doing front handspings without touching the ground and then I slid for another 50 yards."

"Initially I feared I was really hurt. When I finally stopped, I realized I could feel my legs and arms and could move my feet and hands. But something was wrong."

That was just over one year ago, and Faigel suffered a serious ankle injury in that crash that cost her the entire 2013-14 high school ski season.

But after a season away, the Andover High star has returned for a stellar senior year.

Faigel has dominated the field this winter, placing first overall in five of Andover's six meets, including the last

four straight, to lead the Golden Warriors to an 8-2 record.

"It has been an amazing season," she said. "It's been my goal since my freshman year to lead the league. It hurt so much to miss last year. I didn't know what to expect this season, but I wanted to win. I set the bar high and it has been great."

Faigel was born to be a ski racer.

Her parents — Bob, a former Andover High skier, and Amy — met on the slopes while competing in college, during a meet between his UMass Amherst and her Smith College.

"As soon as (Sara) was old enough to walk, she was skiing," her father said. "She started skiing when she was 2 years old and was racing soon after. I was coaching, and she would always want to ski against the older kids. She has loved it her whole life."

As a freshman and sophomore, Faigel impressed for Andover High, contending while studying under stars like Kerry Christopher and Julia Ganley.

Faigel then hoped to emerge as a leader of the Golden Warriors last year. But the day before the first meet of the season, her plans came to an abrupt end while skiing for her club team in New Hampshire.

"When she crashed, I was standing about 20 yards away at the top of the hill," Bob Faigel recalled. "She was coming around a gate, and there was a hole developing. She hit it and it just launched her in the air. She was flipping like a gymnast. It was terrifying."

"The expectations were that she was very injured. When I got down the hill, she was able to move her hands and feet, which was a huge relief. Then she tried to stand, but couldn't. She was hurt, but not as seriously as she could have been."

Faigel had suffered a severe high ankle sprain and muscle damage. And the season was over before it began.

"It was awful sitting out," she said. "I was just sitting around, doing nothing all the time. All I could do was watch other people ski. I went to all the varsity meets and cheered the girls on, and went to my brother's meets. But it hurt to not be able to ski for the first time."

"The whole time, all I could think about was coming back. I finally got to ski some that spring, and it was strange. But when I finished my first run I was so happy. I thought, 'OK, I finally made it back.'"

Faigel has certainly been in more than dominant form this winter.

She began the season by scoring her first varsity win with a 22.00, 0.22 better than second place. After finishing second in meet No. 2, she won the final four North Shore meets of the winter.

"It just feels so amazing when you come through the finish and your time is the top time," she said. "Normally, you have to wait until everyone's done to see the times. But my mom writes down everyone's time when they announce it, so I have a pretty good idea."

"I just want to get down the hill as fast as possible. Every race is amazing, and winning never gets old."

Faigel, who is considering skiing in college, now has her eyes set on the state meet and Interscholastics. Coach Tom Busta is thrilled to have her on the slopes again.

"We always knew she had the talent and will to be the league's top skier," Busta said. "I could see that she had the drive and patience to get there. It was devastating for her to miss a season, so she is so thrilled to be back. She is always the first one to grab her ticket and get out on the slopes."

David Willis is a sports writer/videographer for *The Andover Townsman*. Reach him on twitter at @DWillisET.



COURTESY PHOTO

Chris Kuchar, head coach of the Andover High School hockey team, second from left, together with team captains Will Sauerbrunn, left; Nick Scarpa, third from left; and Conor Silk, right, present a \$3,508 donation to Waltham High hockey coach John Maguire, second from right, and captain Shamus Egan, third from right, to benefit a fund for a Waltham player whose mother was murdered Dec. 31.

Hockey hearts aplenty

By JUDY WAKEFIELD
jwakefield@andovertownsmen.com

There's tough checking. There are occasional fist-fights. And, there can be parents in the stands who loudly disagree with a referee's call. That's high school hockey.

In Andover, hockey also has a heart.

Earlier this season, members of the Andover High School hockey team and their parents reached out to a player on an opposing team after he suffered an unimaginable tragedy.

Cole Soave is a senior on the Waltham hockey team. On Dec. 31, Soave woke to learn that his mother, Gloria Santiago, had been murdered in their Waltham apartment, allegedly by his stepfather.

Three days later, Waltham played Andover High and the Golden Warriors made sure Soave's mother was remembered.

AHS hockey coach Chris Kuchar, who is in his first season at the helm, organized a moment of silence in Santiago's memory.

Local hockey parents and players went one step further: They opened their wallets with their hearts and donated \$3,508 to the Soave Children's Fund to benefit Soave and his younger brother, Cameron Soave.

"Hockey players and coaches are only opposing foes when we are on the

ice. When we are off the ice, we create the largest extended family of people who care and support each other in the time of need," Paul Walker, president of the local hockey boosters, The Hat Trick Club, wrote in an email. "No child should go through the process of losing a parent through domestic violence. We cannot fathom the hurt and pain that the family is going through."

When the teams faced off again a few days later, coach Kuchar and Andover High team captains Will Sauerbrunn, Nick Scarpa and Conor Silk, all seniors, met with Waltham coach John Maguire and the opposing team's captain before the game and presented the check.

"Coach Kuchar initiated a challenge stating that he was going to personally donate \$100 and welcomed anyone to add to this donation ... parents and players responded," Walker said.

In a thank-you letter, Waltham coach Maguire wrote about Andover's "kindness" and "meaningful gesture" to remember Gloria Santiago. The letter was signed by the players on the Waltham High hockey team.

"We hope that our small contribution can help the (brothers) ease their pain and move forward with productive lives to honor their mother," Walker said.

► High School Roundup

Silveira, Caveney star on track at Division 1 States

TRACK

It wasn't long ago that Sebastian Silveira was playing hockey for Andover High, and Sean Caveney was a member of the Golden Warrior ski team.

On Friday, both delivered further proof they made the right decision to focus on track.

Silveira tied his own state season best to win the 55 hurdles in 7.56 and teammate Caveney placed second in the event in 7.71 to help Andover place second as a team at the Division 1 States at the Reggie Lewis Center in Roxbury on Friday.

Those two also combined with Hamza Naveed and Raymond Gorzela to win the 4x200 in 1:31.34. Naveed and Gorzela also ran on the championship 4x400 quartet.

"They are two studs," said Golden Warrior coach Peter Comeau. "Sebastian's leg. Caveney will be the kid tripling at (All-States) on Feb. 21) with the 4x200, 4x400 and hurdles."

Silveira got off to a poor start, hitting the first hurdle in the prelims.

"I didn't want to go 100 percent in the prelims," explained Silveira. "I wanted to save energy. It may not have been the best strategy. I almost didn't make the final."

His confidence, though, wasn't shaken.

"Once I made the finals, I was fine," he said. "The big



RYAN HUTTON/Staff photo

Sebastian Silveira receives his medal after winning the 55 hurdles at the Division 1 State meet last week. Teammate Sean Caveney, left, took second place in the event.

meets just motivate me to run faster."

On the girls side, Andover placed fifth with 41.5 points. Sarah Rothmann ran on the winning 4x800 relay (9:41.36) along with Colleen Mullins, Grace O'Hara and Catherine Donovan. Rothmann also took fourth in the mile in 5:16.71.

Andover multi-event star Lizzie Kobelski also had a stellar day. She took second in the 55 hurdles (8.92) and fifth in the long jump (16-9).

BOYS BASKETBALL

Warriors lock down MVC hoops title

With the Merrimack Valley Conference title on the line and Andover needing a boost, sharpshooter Jonathan Rodriguez scored all of his team-high 19 points in the second half as the Warriors turned a halftime deficit to a 62-55 victory over archrival Central Catholic to earn the MVC crown last Friday.

Connor Merinder contributed

16 points for the Golden Warriors, while E.J. Perry IV added 18 points.

"It's been so long since an Andover team had beaten them here, so it's huge," Merinder said. "And to lock up a league title like this on a night like this is just unreal."

Gabriel Hernandez scored 12 points, but Andover fell to Lawrence 59-41 last Wednesday, Feb. 11. E.J. Perry IV added a team-high

See **ROUND UP**, Page 19

COURTESY PHOTO

Members of the Lexettes Synchronized Figure Skating Team sport their new Team U.S.A. jackets after earning a spot to represent the U.S. in the Junior World Championships. Team member Leah Gens, front right holding the flag, is a junior at Andover High School.

■ COMMUNITY SCOREBOARD

Synchronized figure skater headed to junior worlds

An Andover High School student is headed to Croatia next month to represent the United States at the Junior World Synchronized Skating Championships.

Leah Gens and her synchronized figure skating team, qualified for the junior worlds by winning a 12-team regional competition recently in Marlborough. The win guaranteed the team a trip to Zagreb, Croatia, in March to go up against the top junior synchronized figure skaters in the world.

Until then, the Lexettes will be working to further improve their programs to be competitive for the championships. The team will also be defending its champion title at the nationals in Providence, R.I., in late February.

Gens has been skating for several years, the past six as a member of various Hayden Synchronized Skating Teams based in Lexington. The team draws skaters from across the country.

Swimmer Casha named WPI Student-Athlete of the Week

Nysa Casha was selected Worcester Polytechnic Institute Women's Student-Athlete of the Week last month.

Casha, who is on the swimming and diving teams, helped WPI take a double-dual against host UMass Dartmouth and New England Women's and Men's Athletic Conference rival Wheaton College in Norton the week ending Sunday, Jan. 25, with a pair of victories and a second-place finish.

The senior touched the wall first in the 100-yard butterfly in a time of 1:01.47 and was part of the winning 200-yard medley relay team with a time of 1:55.33. Casha also earned valuable points by finishing second in the 100-yard breaststroke (1:12.35) to help the Crimson and Gray tie its single-season record for victories.

To submit an item for the *Community Scoreboard*, email townsman@andovertownsmen.com.



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- **21-23 Central St.:** Olde Center Ventures Inc. to CR Stern Realty LLC, \$1,550,000
- **21 Corbett St.:** Digital FCU to Mojo Realty Investments, \$301,600
- **3 Courtney Lane:** South Andover Development to Jason E. and Amy B. Rothstein, \$425,000
- **4 Haskell Road:** James P. and Eleanor F. Clark to Anthony D. and Lana Silvestro, \$760,000
- **180 High St.:** Paul A. and Anita L. Vallee to John K. and Lora M. Williams, \$499,900
- **8 Shepley St.:** Robert and Corinne V. Lafond to Sean D. O'Brien, \$250,000
- **3 Apple Blossom Road:** Janet A. Carney to Il D. Yoo and Soo Y. Choi, \$630,000
- **21 Balmoral St., Unit 21:** Balmoral Development LLC to Davinder Nagra and Sandra Makkar, \$382,500
- **23 Balmoral St., Unit 23:** Balmoral Development LLC to Davinder Nagra and Sandra Makkar, \$382,500
- **135 Chestnut St.:** Bernard H. Smith to Peter W. Smith, \$385,000
- **5 Courtney Lane:** Carolina Properties LLC to Susiladevy Anton and Anton Mariathasan, \$719,900
- **19 Pauline Drive:** Tao Tu and Ying Shen to Arun Swaminathan and Akila Viswanathan, \$665,000
- **15 Stouffer Circle:** Robert G. and Lisa M. Slayton to Adam P. and Emily M. Samansky, \$705,000
- **43 Abbot St.:** Wendy M. Cole to David Geaslen, \$900,000
- **17 Bobby Jones Drive, Unit 17:** Melkon Hacobian to Stephen E. and Tracy Doherty, \$849,900
- **15 Chandler Road:** 15 Chandler Road RT and Lisa M. Terranova to Joseph A. and Anthony J. Camilo, \$395,000
- **49 Elm St.:** US Bank NA Trust to 49 Elm Street LLC, \$400,000
- **4 Gina Jo Way:** Edward G. and Michele S. White to Vivechana Dixit and Jagdish C. Tewari, \$640,000
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