



COMMUTER TRAIN SCHEDULE CUT BACK

PAGE 5



LOTS OF CHOICES FOR SUMMER VACATION

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WARRIORS STATE CHAMPS – AND NO ASTERISK

PAGE 15

OUR 131ST YEAR

Andover Townsman

Issue No. 20

MARCH 19, 2020

\$1.00

Coronavirus cripples Andover

Threatens election, closes schools, empties store shelves

Voters to fill Select Board, School Committee seats

One member will be elected to each group

By GENEVIEVE DiNATALE
gdinatale@andovertownsman.com

The coronavirus crisis has deeply affected life in Andover, particularly the educational community, from kindergarten to college, as schools remain closed.

The virus threatens to halt the local political process, as Andover seeks state approval to postpone next week's town election.

The disease has firefighters and other first responders on high alert, both for the sake of their own health and that of the public. It has also halted

More inside
■ **Andover supermarket among those under siege by shoppers.** Page 2
■ **First responders from Andover, region deal with virus issues.** Page 10.

gatherings at local houses of worship and caused shoppers to clear supermarket shelves of essential items, as residents fear the possibility of being homebound for long periods.

As local leaders try to prevent the spread of the coronavirus, here is a detailed look at the impact on the community:

The town election scheduled for March 24 may be postponed. At a special Select Board meeting this week, the board began pursuing several avenues to delay the election, including approval from a court, the governor or Legislature.

Public schools are closed until at least April 6, per Gov. Charlie Baker's order. SAT testing in May is cancelled and the AP Program is developing resources to support student learning during the school closures. School trips are canceled.

All spring high school sports See CRIPPLED, Page 4



Fire and police officials across the Merrimack Valley and southern New Hampshire – and around the globe for that matter – are on heightened alert as coronavirus continues to spread. Local departments are taking extra precautions when dealing with the public to slow the spread of COVID-19.

CARL RUSSO/Staff file photo

Andover tries to postpone election

Asks state to OK delay due to coronavirus

By GENEVIEVE DiNATALE
gdinatale@andovertownsman.com

EDITOR'S NOTE: At press time for the Townsman, the election date was not set. Local leaders were awaiting a ruling from state officials or a court, after the Andover Select Board asked to postpone the election from its scheduled date of March 24. When the ruling is made,

the election date will appear at andovertownsman.com and eagletribune.com, and in a print edition of The Eagle-Tribune.

It is unclear when voters will go to the polls for the town election — March 24 as scheduled, or at a later date because of coronavirus concerns.

In an effort to prevent the spread of the virus, the Select Board voted unanimously at a special meeting Monday night to postpone the election. It's up to the state whether the postponement happens.

"A postponement of the election, though not ideal, is the safest choice for both

the voters of Andover and the staff who work so hard to make sure our elections go well," said Select Board member Dan Koh.

Voters are scheduled to go to the polls Tuesday, March 24. The Select Board's decision contains four methods that can be taken to See POSTPONE, Page 4

By GENEVIEVE DiNATALE
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When Andover voters go to the polls, they'll choose leaders who will later make decisions affecting residents across the community.

The candidates voted into office will influence the lives of everyone from elders living on

fixed incomes to students whose future depends on the education they receive in Andover schools.

Whether polls are open March 24 as scheduled or on a later date due to the coronavirus crisis, voters on election day will choose winners in two contested races — one for a seat on the Select Board and the other for a seat on the School Committee.

Parents seek school seat

Three candidates, all with children, are vying for the School Committee position. There would have been four candidates in the race if School Committee Chair Joel Blumstein had decided to seek re-election this year, but he chose not to run.

Those who are in the race say they have big plans for See ELECTION, Page 2

Andover Day in jeopardy

Group that hosted annual celebration disbands

By SEAN MURPHY
Staff Writer

For decades, a group called the Andover Business Center Association has existed to welcome businesses to Andover. A name change came in 2013, but the group's mission remained the same — to promote and improve the quality of town businesses.

The organization now known as the Andover Business Community Association is calling it quits — and that puts the annual Andover Day celebration in jeopardy.

Throwing the Andover Day shindig that takes up all of Main Street requires a team effort, from coordinating with local government and the police and fire departments, to booking entertainment, to setting up tents for 200 vendors. The vendors and other participants provide festival food, kids activities and live music for the thousands of people who attend the event.

"Volunteers and committees have fallen on the shoulders of two individuals, and it's just too much for us," said Phyllis Riordan, commercial client agent for the

Fred C. Church insurance company who is still listed as the business association's acting president. "After the death of my husband in 2018, my life direction and focus have shifted, and unfortunately it's not with the community that I love so much, Andover."

The other individual Riordan referenced is Ted Teichert, a member of the business association since the 1970s who said he feels sad that the group has disbanded.

"I've always helped out with the group over the years, but the membership has kind of dwindled," said Teichert, whose father opened a sporting goods store in Andover in 1959. "When people don't want to show up at meetings and take part, it's frustrating. Phyllis and I can only do so much."

For nearly two decades, the organization has hosted the grand-daddy of all local family events — Andover Day, the huge block party held on Main Street. The group's departure from the event could put a stop to the fun.

"We don't know what See DAY, Page 4

Frozen out

Warm winter leaves backyard rinks all wet

By SEAN MURPHY
Staff Writer

For the Finneran family of Andover, assembling their backyard hockey rink is a rite of passage heading into winter, as tried-and-true as holiday leftovers.

"We typically put ours up the weekend after Thanksgiving, which takes about two days," Lisa Finneran of South Main Street said. "My husband and three teenage sons have it down to a science."

Thanks to the unpredictable science of weather, the Finnerans' rink has joined hundreds throughout the area in being transformed

into puddles of slush this year.

"For this winter, there is certainly a component of climate change in the mix," said Michael J. Ventrice, meteorological scientist at the Weather Company, an IBM Business. "Over the past 10 years, we are no longer seeing the amplitude of cold air masses that we used to see 30 or 40 years ago."

That trend was See RINK, Page 4



COURTESY PHOTO

Henry Gourdeau poses on his backyard rink on South Main Street last winter with his sons, Ollie, 6, left, and Sammy, 5. The rink didn't get as much use this season because of the warmer temperatures.

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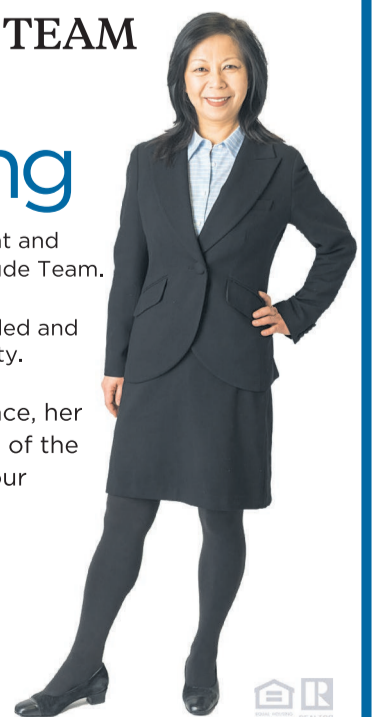
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'We've been through tough times before'

Local restaurant vows to survive

STAFF REPORT



Yella owners Danielle and Carlo Berdahn say local businesses are a resilient group and will weather the latest crisis with the community's support.

Courtesy photo

For the businesses of the Merrimack Valley hardest hit by the Columbia Gas disaster, the challenges surrounding COVID-19 are a chilling reminder of the economic impact a crisis brings.

It's been a devastating couple of years for local businesses, said Danielle Berdahn, who owns Yella on Bartlet Street in Andover, as well as Yella on the Water in Gloucester, with her husband, Carlo.

Facing distress and hardship in the aftermath of 2018's Columbia Gas disaster, a year and a half later, COVID-19 puts many in a difficult financial predicament once again.

For many who overcame adversity, the gas disaster has made them stronger.

"It will be difficult, but we've been through tough times before and we've survived with the help of the community," Berdahn said. "Slowly, but steadily, we'll move forward together. For all the challenges

we're facing, we're blessed to be in a community that supports its small businesses."

What will businesses be doing during the crisis? Many restaurants, including Yella, will continue to offer meals to help families get through these stressful times.

Yella has created a special takeout menu that includes family-style meals available for curbside pickup.

"As we all know, food has a way of making everything better," Berdahn said.

To help their team, Yella has offered help navigating the unemployment process, financial assistance and complimentary meals for them and their families during the closure.

The Berdahns are hopeful for the future.

"This is a unique opportunity for busy families to

reconnect," Danielle Berdahn said. "We're looking forward to being a part of that and having guests come together, enjoying our food at their own dining room tables."

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CRIPPLED

Continued from Page 1

are cancelled until April 27 per order of the Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association.

Many shelves at local grocery stores have been picked clean by customers stocking up in case they face a quarantine or so they can remain in their homes by choice. In particular,

toilet paper, paper towels and hand sanitizer are often sold out, although stores say they are working hard to restock.

Andover is designating 10 spots in the downtown area for curbside pickup of take-out food, after the governor banned bars and restaurants statewide from serving food and drinks on site. The pickup areas will be in municipal lots and on Park and Barnard streets, the town

manager said.

The Senior Center is closed but the town is still offering services to elders. Town Manager Andrew Flanagan said Meals on Wheels has been expanded to bring food to senior citizens' homes, and other services are available by appointment.

Houses of worship are closed or services are curtailed, with the Catholic Archdiocese of Boston suspending Masses until further notice.

Town offices and administrative buildings are closed to the public until further notice. The offices are staffed and services are provided to the public by phone, email and appointment if necessary.

The Police Department is temporarily suspending its car seat installation program and taxi licensing services. Food donations will also no longer be accepted at the Public Safety Building.

The MBTA's commuter rail service is operating on a reduced schedule.

Memorial Hall Library is closed. Flanagan said the coronavirus has made it difficult for the town to provide public services while maintaining a safe environment for town workers. He said, however, that the community is well equipped for the health crisis because of what the people of Andover went through during

the Merrimack Valley gas disaster two years ago.

"Andover residents and businesses are resilient and continue to show strength of character during the crisis," Flanagan said. "I think the community's relationship with the town and each other strengthened during the response to the gas disaster, and we have all relied on that experience to help guide us through this situation."

POSTPONE

Continued from Page 1

accomplish a postponement.

The first option requests a written order from Gov. Charlie Baker stating that postponement is consistent with his executive order

made Sunday night, which prohibits gatherings of 25 people or more.

A second method is a request for the governor and Legislature to pass legislation proposed by the secretary of state giving communities authority to make such postponements.

A third method authorizes the town manager to file court action.

The final option, called a Governor's Bill, asks Baker to file legislation on the Select Board's behalf.

Town Clerk Austin Simko said the town of Wellesley postponed its election by

using the third method. This method is often used in the event of snowstorms.

The method Wellesley used could not be pursued by Andover on Tuesday because the state's courts were closed Monday and Tuesday.

Until approval of the

motion is given by the governor or the courts, the election is scheduled for March 24. Select Board member Alex Vispoli said the decision on postponement is likely to come Wednesday from state officials.

"It's a little bit of a nuanced

question but we are trying to communicate it clearly," Simko said. "The election is scheduled for March 24 and that has not changed, but we have taken these actions to try to get a postponement so it's almost like continue to get ready to vote or behave as you would."



2019: The Gourdeau family of South Main Street enjoys an afternoon of hockey on their backyard rink.



2020: The Gourdeaus has to cut their outdoor skating season short after a winter of abnormally elevated temperatures. The backyard rink was packed up for season in early March.

RINK

Continued from Page 1

particularly evident from December through February, traditionally the coldest months of the year.

According to local statistics from Weather Underground, nighttime temperatures dropped below 20 degrees only nine times this year, and never three nights in a row.

"This winter pattern was

driven by what is known as the stratospheric polar vortex, or SPV, which sets up every winter," Ventrice said. "This year was record strong, according to some statistics, which caused a stronger-than-normal,

west-to-east, jet stream flow locking up arctic cold air over the North Pole."

With temperatures routinely in the upper 30s, while flirting with the 40s and 50s, backyard rinks never stood a chance.

Henry Gourdeau, also of South Main Street, took his home rink down three weeks earlier than planned.

"The rink completely melted in early January, which never happened before," said Gourdeau, the father of two young sons.

"Maybe we got 10 or 12 days of good skating in where you should be able to get in 2 1/2 or three months' worth."

A rink full of water means the loss of countless hours of physical activity that kids need, he said.

"The nice thing about having one of these is the unstructured play time for the kids and their friends," said Gourdeau, as he pointed to a huge rectangle of discolored grass where his rink once sat. "My guys (would) get out there before school sometimes."

Financial cost is also a factor.

The Finnerans' rink is 70 by 40 feet. For a rink that size, the average cost of a liner is \$200. Add to that an additional \$350 for the more than 9,000 gallons of water needed to flood the rink. Plus, there's the painstaking process of keeping the ice surface clear of leaves and snow.

"I've got 2-by-12s for the boards, 18 or 20 of them, with floodlights off the top

of the house and back deck," Gourdeau said. "I even built a subfloor, which is 20 more sheets of plywood, to try and mitigate the depth of the water in the low end."

Most homeowners don't have a flat lawn, which requires extra finagling and even greater expense. Despite a shaky dollars-to-rink time ratio, these die-hards have no regrets.

"Do I think I got my money's worth this year? Probably not," Finneran said. "This year was a little bit of a bust, but it's provided us a lot of fun over the last 10 years."

"The skates before school, weeknights after dinner, they make it all worthwhile," Gourdeau said. "We got the most out of it, you know, every chance we got."

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DAY

Continued from Page 1

will happen to Andover Day. That is a question for the town manager's office," Riordan said. "We have offered to supply details on the behind-the-scenes planning

to whomever would take it over."

One thing is obvious: The task of hosting a celebration that has lured 10,000 people in the past will take a group effort.

"We need community partners. We need to talk to the downtown businesses," said

Ann Ormond, director of business, arts and cultural development for Andover. "I think this is an opportunity to bring people around the table and to collaborate because the town can't do it alone."

One business owner ready to step up is Mimi Queen, owner of Sweet Mimi's Chocolates on Main Street, who refuses to accept the idea of a year without Andover Day.

"We need it, we want it, we love it," said Queen. "They can't do away with it. We need it for the town."

"If there was another board elected and other community members were interested in taking over the association," Riordan said, "Ted (Teichert) and I would be very happy to see it continue."

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Hafensteiner is the leader Andover's schools need

Editor, Townsman:
I am writing in support of Amy Hafensteiner, candidate for School Committee. As a veteran who has held numerous leadership positions, I've learned to be a good judge of character and leadership. It is clear that Hafensteiner is a person of character and the leader Andover needs. Her leadership and

recruiting experience make her uniquely qualified to serve on Andover's School Committee. She has led diverse teams in the accomplishment of challenging assignments, with an inclusive and respectful leadership style that produces results. If you want someone who is genuine and listens to all sides of an issue before making a decision, Amy Hafensteiner is your candidate. She wasn't asked or picked to run for School Committee; she stepped forward and volunteered, not because it

would be easy, but because it is the right thing to do. The progress we have made and will continue to make as a country is because of people like her, stepping forward to be a part of something greater than themselves. I ask the voters of Andover to remember that as Americans we're all a part of something greater than ourselves and remember that this election is not about us but the students of Andover Public Schools, our children and our future. I ask your readers to join me in voting Amy Hafensteiner for School Committee on March 24. Andover needs leadership, not more of the same.

DAVID MATSON
ANDOVER

Hafensteiner is dedicated to Andover's children and community

Editor, Townsman:
On March 24, we have the opportunity to make our voices heard and ensure that the people we elect to represent us share our commitment to our schools and our children.

■ See more letters . Page 7.

My choice for School Committee is Amy Hafensteiner. She will bring a new perspective, new ideas and a true dedication to our school system. If elected, I have no doubt she will listen and will use her considerable energy to work on behalf of all parents and children in our district. I've seen firsthand Hafensteiner's dedication to our children and involvement in our community. She served as the manager for my daughter's Destination Imagination team at West Elementary, putting in countless hours to prepare our team for their STEAM project, making it a memorable, positive and wonderful learning experience for them.

She was also a strong supporter of the Andover AED initiative and for our desire to keep our children and community safe by installing AEDs on our fields. Asked if she could assist in obtaining signatures for our AED initiative, she didn't hesitate to help. It is clear that she cares deeply about our community and wants what's best for our children. I hope your readers will join me in voting for Amy Hafensteiner for School Committee.

SANTINA WILSON
ANDOVER

All Those Years Ago

By Susan McKelliget

Andover Center for History and Culture

The following items were taken from past editions of the Townsman:

100 years ago - March 26, 1920

The November Club House in Andover became the classroom for a course in conversational French four months ago, when 50 Andover ladies enrolled in this course offered by the division of university extension. Since then, on Thursday afternoon when the Phillips Chapel bells are tolling the boys to classes on the hill and the Abbot girls are busy preparing Friday's lessons, the wives and daughters of Andover businessmen and Phillips professors, as well as several members of the Punchard High School faculty, have settled down for a serious hour of study quite in the manner of academy students. An ad for Andover Riding School at 53 School St.: "You can enjoy this sport and learn to ride very easily. We teach you how to ride, not just the art of sitting on a horse. Call up Andover (One) and make an appointment with Mr. H.A. Paton riding master."

Joseph C. Kimball, a shoe manufacturer of Haverhill, has recently purchased the Dove Estate on the Reading Road. Mr. Kimball will

probably occupy his home about May 1.

75 years ago - March 22, 1945

For the third time, the Army-Navy E has been granted to Tyer Rubber Company in Andover; it was announced this week by the War Department in a letter addressed to the men and women of the Tyer Rubber Company. The letter from Under Secretary of War Robert P. Patterson reads as follows: "I am pleased to inform you that you have won for the third time the Army-Navy production Award for high achievement in the production of war material."

Tragedy struck at the Ladd home at 46 Whittier St. early this morning when Mrs. Sarah Emma (Jones) Ladd fell on a stairway and died. She had awakened when her husband, Fred Ladd, editor of the Lawrence Daily Eagle, arrived home from his night's work. She started down the stairs to talk to him, and fell to her death.

Corporal Ralph N. Sulis, 22, of Medford, formerly of Andover, lost his life on Iwo Jima on Feb. 23. He was with the Fourth Marine Division as that unit added more glory to the title of United States Marines. He father, A. Heustis Sulis, was at one-time manager of the Andover Coal Company.

50 years ago - March 26, 1970

The Andover YMCA is offering 19 aquatic courses in its spring term beginning March 27 all at Phillips Academy pool. Registrations are being accepted for all programs. Further information may be obtained at the YMCA on Brook Street.

Town Manager J. Maynard Austin is hopeful of having all papers in order within the week to make formal application for a federal grant to assist in the construction of a water treatment plant for the town. The treatment plant will cost an estimated \$4 million.

Town Clerk Irving O. Piper and Water-Sewer Superintendent Donald C. Bassett will leave their town jobs as of April 1.

Using the library as a clearinghouse for a variety of ecology action and education programs in Andover are: the Conservation Commission, Andover Village Improvement Society, Chamber of Commerce, every garden club in Andover, the League of Women Voters, Newcomers, the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, Campfire Girls, students associated with the high school's Ecology Action Committee, and the Natural History Club active at Phillips Academy and Abbot Academy.

25 years ago - March 30, 1995

Using phone calls, postcards and poll-checking, Barry Finegold out-hustled, outspent and ultimately unseated 12-year incumbent Charles Wesson to garner a seat on the Andover Board of Selectmen Monday. Finegold's 2,089 town-election votes earned him a place next to incumbent Jerry Silverman (1,864 votes) on the board, and knocked off Wesson and challenger Bill Coderre.

Andover's largest golf driving range has opened. The Sarkisian Farms range, located next to the Sarkisian Farm greenhouses on Chandler Road, opened March 18. The range already has quite a following among the employees at nearby offices and companies. Still in their three-piece suits, businessmen sometimes use the range during their lunch breaks.

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TownsBeat



MIKE SPRINGER/Staff photos

A camera livestreams the Rev. Dana Allen Walsh as she leads Sunday services at Andover's South Church on Central Street. To minimize the spread of the new coronavirus, parishioners were asked to view services from home.



A sign on the door of the chapel at South Church on Central Street asks people to wash or sanitize their hands before entering.

VIRTUAL WORSHIP

South Church streaming Sunday services for safety

The Rev. Dana Allen Walsh, pastor of South Church in Andover, asked her parishioners to forego coming to church on Sunday. But she encouraged them to attend from home.

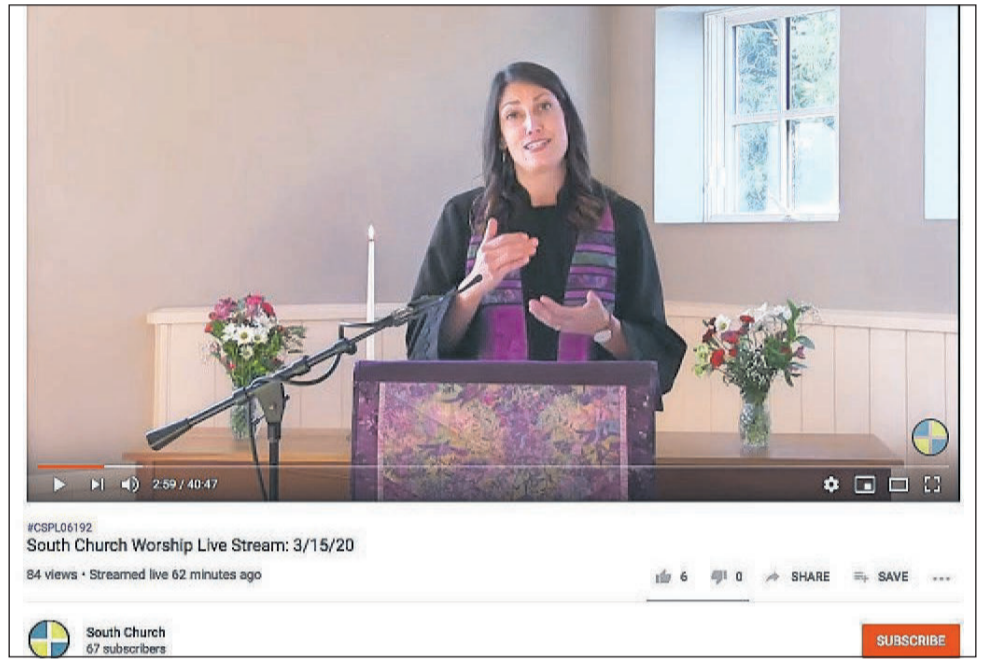
In order to prevent the spread of the new coronavirus, Walsh led a livestream worship service Sunday from the Central Street church.

Parishioners were asked to stay home and watch the service on their computers and phones.

"This is not a decision that our pastors, moderator, and church council have taken lightly," according to a statement from Walsh on the church website.

"Rather, it is a sacrifice that we make, an act of love for the most vulnerable within and around our church community. It is not an act of panic, but a proactive decision based on awareness, compassion and the hope of prevention."

— Mike Springer



A screenshot of South Church of Andover's YouTube page shows the Rev. Dana Allen Walsh leading Sunday's service.



MIKE SPRINGER/Staff photos

Parents Mike and Megan McGuinn get the lowdown on Camp Evergreen in Andover from Allie Loscuttoff, right. The camp was founded by Loscuttoff's late grandfather, Boston Celtics' star, Jim "Locsy" Loscuttoff.

Summer's coming! Are you ready?

BY SEAN MURPHY
Staff Writer

"I'm bored!" With summer coming fast these are two words every parent wants to avoid.

The Summer Camp and Kids Activities Fair came to the Holiday Inn Tewksbury/Andover recently to solve the problem. Representatives from more than 30 camps, martial arts schools, and dance and sports programs were on hand to pitch their unique brand of summer fun for kids across the Merrimack Valley.

Kids enjoyed crafts, games and activities as parents explored the possibilities.

The fair was presented by Lowell Macaroni Kid and Macaroni Kid Merrimack Valley.



MIKE SPRINGER/Staff photo

Getting some assistance making a bracelet with beads is Daisie Castiglione, 2, of Tewksbury at a crafts table sponsored by the Merrimack Valley MA Macaroni Kid website.



Rose Moulder, 3, of Billerica tries her hand at spin art with motorized LEGOS at an information table sponsored by the 'LEtGO Your Mind Summer STEM Programs.'



A beaver skull and a log chewed by a beaver capture the attention of cousins Nolan Mercier, 9, and Abigail Desmarais, 5, of Dracut as they learn about Mass Audubon's Wildwood Camp.

Virus concerns has land trust pulling plug on annual dinner

By SEAN MURPHY
Staff Writer

Another local event has fallen victim to the coronavirus.

Out of an abundance of caution, the Andover Village Improvement Society has postponed its annual dinner scheduled for April 14.

"We made the decision early on because we saw the writing on the wall, so to speak," said John Hess, the society's president. "It looks like the right one now that we know what the governor has decided."

On Sunday, Gov. Charlie Baker banned all public gatherings of 25 or more people, down significantly

from the initial number of 250.

"I realize these measures are unprecedented," Baker said, "but we're asking our residents to take a deep breath and understand the rationale behind this guidance."

No makeup date for the dinner has been announced.

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A Message to our Patients

Dear Patients;

As you know, this pandemic has created unprecedented uncertainty in all of our lives. Our office has always placed the health and well-being of our patients and staff as our priority.

I have been closely following the directives of the CDC as well as the American Dental Association and Massachusetts Dental Society throughout the last few weeks.

Based on the most current information, I have decided to restrict our patient visits until April 6.

Until then, we will be available to see patients who have post operative appointments, emergencies, or who require more urgent periodontal care.

For those who have appointments scheduled prior to April 6, we will be contacting you to reschedule after this date. On behalf of my team, I appreciate your understanding and patience during these troubling times.

Please feel free to contact my team or me if you should have any questions.

Regards,
Ian M Turner D.D.S.



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New homes up for grabs in Andover

By SEAN MURPHY
Staff Writer

If you've dreamed of owning your own home, a local community trust might just make that dream come true. Andover Community Trust has announced the owner selection process for two, permanently affordable homes at 8 Lupine Road in Andover.

The homes, which are being built by students at Greater Lawrence Technical

School under instructor supervision, are expected to be completed by fall.

The 1,800-square-foot, two-unit duplex with three bedrooms and 1 1/2 baths will be sold for \$210,000.

Income-eligible, first-time home buyers who are able to occupy a three-bedroom home should attend one of two online information sessions on Sunday, March 22, at 2 p.m. or Monday, March 23, at 6 p.m., at www.andoverclt.org.

A summary of the sessions as well as an application for consideration will be available at the website.

Andover Community Trust advocates for and develops homes that families can afford in the Andover community.

For more information and a list of requirements, go to www.andoverclt.org or contact Executive Director Denise Johnson at 978-276-9228.



Courtesy Photo

An architect's rendering of two affordable, three-bedroom homes at 8 Lupine Road in Andover, built by students of Greater Lawrence Technical School.

Plan to bring hydro power to Massachusetts faces opposition

By CHRISTIAN M. WADE
Staff Writer

A plan to bring Canadian hydro power into Massachusetts to green the power grid faces an uncertain future amid opposition from activists in a neighboring state.

A \$950 million project, which is being pursued by Central Maine Power Company, calls for delivering 9.4 million megawatt-hours a year of hydro power to Massachusetts consumers and New England's regional power grid for the next two decades. That's enough to supply roughly 17% of the state's peak electricity demand.

A 2016 law requires utilities to buy clean power to address climate change and diversify the state's energy portfolio. The New England Clean Energy Connect project would import electricity generated by Hydro-Québec's hydroelectric dams along a yet-to-be-built, 145-mile transmission line through western Maine.

But opponents say the project is a bad deal for Maine, as it would carve through scenic swaths of untouched forest and lead to a loss of jobs and recreational tourism.



Hydro power involves harnessing energy from rapidly running water.

FILE PHOTO

They've submitted enough signatures to put the project before the state's voters in November, which could end up derailing Massachusetts' clean energy plans.

"This project would basically create an extension cord running from Quebec to Massachusetts, with no benefit to the people of Maine," said Sandra Howard, executive director of Say No to NECEC, a coalition of environmental groups opposed the project.

"It would cause large-scale

environmental damage in what is the largest intact forest east of the Mississippi," she said.

Avangrid, parent company of Central Maine Power, argues that the clean energy project is good for Maine and the environment, and it will reduce carbon emissions that scientists say are contributing to a warming planet.

A company spokeswoman said there are questions "regarding the validity of the signatures" submitted to the

state by the project's opponents and "whether they were attained legally."

"If this matter does go to referendum, we will make sure that Maine voters have all the facts about the project," the company said in a statement. "We will also consider all other options available to us."

Despite simmering opposition, the project has been slowly but steadily moving through the regulatory process.

In January, Maine's Land Use Planning Commission gave a green light to the project to proceed after determining that it complies with the panel's land use requirements.

The project must also get approval from Maine's Department of Environmental Protection, among other regulatory hurdles. The final plan must be certified by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and get a presidential permit from the U.S. Department of Energy because its transmission line would cross the border into another country.

The New England Clean Energy Connect project is actually Massachusetts' second choice to import hydro-power-generated electricity.

The Northern Pass project, a joint venture between Hydro Quebec and Ever-source, was the state's first attempt and was expected to convey 1 million megawatt hours per year through a 192-mile transmission line that would have run through New Hampshire. It was rejected by New Hampshire regulators in 2018 amid concerns it would suppress property values and damage the tourism industry.

Environmental groups,

which have prodded Massachusetts to move away its reliance on fossil fuels and natural gas, want the state to accelerate a switch to wind, solar and renewable energies.

While some environmentalists support hydropower as an alternative to expanding the use of natural gas to heat homes and keep the lights turned on, they point out that hydro also has downsides. Among those are forests lost to flooding for new dams, the release of carbon dioxide from trees decomposing after floods and lower river levels.

Meanwhile, plans for the country's first utility-scale offshore wind farm remain on hold amid opposition from President Donald Trump, a vocal critic of wind energy who has focused on supporting coal and other fossil fuel industries.

Vineyard Wind, a \$2.8 billion, 84-turbine wind farm planned 15 miles south of Martha's Vineyard, was delayed in July by federal regulators amid concerns about the impact on commercial fisherman. The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management said additional review is needed in light of the concerns raised by "stakeholders and cooperating agencies."



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Spike in cases threatens to overwhelm hospitals in Merrimack Valley, elsewhere

By CHRISTIAN M. WADE
Staff Writer

Effect of coronavirus felt nationwide

Emergency rooms across the state and nation are bracing for an influx of coronavirus cases, but with limited capacity and supplies, concerns are being raised that they will not be to handle a surge of sick people.

The virus could result in 10 million to 34 million hospital visits nationwide, according to the Harvard Global Health Institute, based on statistics from other infected countries. Roughly one-fifth of those patients will require intensive care units with ventilators and other equipment needed to treat respiratory infections, the group said.

With an estimated 2.8 hospital beds per 1,000 people in U.S., the country has fewer than the 3.2 beds per 1,000 in Italy, where an explosion of cases has overwhelmed hospitals.

Massachusetts hospitals only have about 4,000 available beds at any given time.

Experts have suggested that hospitals will be forced to extreme measures to accommodate a surge of patients, such as renting space in nearby facilities or setting up makeshift hospital rooms.

Steve Walsh, president of the Massachusetts Health and Hospitals Association, which represents the state's hospitals, said the best way to prevent the hospital system from being overloaded is to curb the spread of the virus by social distancing

and other preventative measures, and protecting health care workers who will be treating the sick.

"The only way to manage capacity is to flatten the rate of infection," Walsh said Friday during a teleconference with health experts. "That will be the only shot we have."

Gov. Charlie Baker echoed those sentiments recently when he announced a new round of measures under his state emergency declaration to prevent spread of the virus, including banning public gatherings of more than 250 people.

Baker said the best way to deal with the capacity issue in the state's hospitals is to "flatten the curve."

"Right now, the data indicates the number of people infected and requiring medical attention is very much within the health care system's capacity to serve and handle," Baker said. "If everyone does their part in slowing the spread down, the number of people who become infected and require medical attention doesn't spike at once."

Lacking protection

Last week, the World Health Organization designated the new coronavirus outbreak, which began in Wuhan, China, a pandemic.

Another issue facing hospitals and front-line health care workers in the state is a

Massachusetts hospitals only have about 4,000 available beds at any given time.

lack of protective equipment. The federal government maintains stockpiles of masks, full-body suits and other emergency supplies that hospitals can tap into when patient volume substantially increases.

But Donna Kelly-Williams, president of the Massachusetts Nurses Association, said the "personal protective equipment" is in short supply in the state's hospitals.

She said the state's hospitals need to set up triage centers to screen patients as they arrive, and set up designated areas within their facility to specifically treat the infected.

She said hospitals also need tests to show definitively who is infected.

"We desperately need point-of-care testing that hasn't been available," she said. "We need to be able to identify patients quickly when they come and to protect the people who are going

to be taking care of those who get infected."

Walsh said hospitals are going to run out of protective equipment "in the very near future" if supplies aren't made available by the federal government.

"It is vital," he said. "We do not want to stop seeing patients because we can't protect our workforce."

Marylou Sudders, the state's Health and Human Services Secretary, said the state late last week received its first "partial" shipment of protective equipment from the Strategic National Stockpile, including masks, gowns, eye protection and gloves.

She said the equipment is being deployed quickly to hospitals around the state.

More needed

Sen. Ed Markey, who huddled with health care officials in Boston late last week to discuss the state's response

to communicate with medical staff.

"Everybody needs to get as innovative as possible about ways that we can provide optimal patient care but preserve this equipment," he said.

Taking precautions

In addition to preparing for a possible surge of patients, health care centers have activated emergency operations and taken numerous preventative steps to try to prevent transmission of the illness, from quarantining doctors and nurses who have had contact with infected patients to limiting the number of visitors to facilities.

Massachusetts hospitals have been prepping for a viral pandemic since the Ebola outbreak of 2014, but rapid spread of COVID-19 has caught many off guard.

"We are facing one of the most cataclysmic public health crises in our history," Dr. George Daley, dean of the Harvard Medical School, said in a briefing Friday. "This crisis we have to meet on the frontlines of health care, but there has to be a longer term response. We have to learn the lessons from this crisis so we can be prepared the next time."

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THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY
Cooler with rain	Spotty showers	Cooler with sunshine	Plenty of sun	Some sun	Considerable clouds	Rain
High: 44° Low: 40°	High: 69° Low: 35°	High: 43° Low: 20°	High: 41° Low: 24°	High: 43° Low: 34°	High: 57° Low: 38°	High: 56° Low: 39°

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