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Neighborhood News

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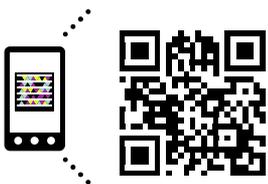
Volume 16, Issue 3 • January 14, 2021

Teeming with information you need.
(And some you don't need, but will be glad you have anyway.)

Last ride home for Fire Chief Tim Francis



Firefighters salute as the ladder truck carrying retiring Fairhaven Fire Chief Timothy Francis pulls up to his house on his last ride home on 1/8/21. See page 12 for story. Photo by Glenn C. Silva.



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First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

Judge Murray Gurfein, Pentagon Papers case, June 17, 1971:

"The security of the Nation is not at the ramparts alone. Security also lies in the value of our free institutions. A cantankerous press, an obstinate press, a ubiquitous press must be suffered by those in authority in order to preserve the even greater values of freedom of expression and the right of the people to know."

From The Editor

WEST ISLAND —
A day late and many dollars short.



Beth David, Publisher

It's been a very sad few days for our country. Our own president sent an angry mob to the Capitol building in Washington DC to try to stop legislators from certifying the Electoral College votes, generally a routine event, pumped up with a little flourish here and there.

Trump supporters are trying desperately to say the attack on the Capitol building was no different than the protests in the streets all across the country this summer that protested police brutality against Blacks.

My Facebook threads are filled with comments comparing the rock throwing protesters of the summer to the white supremacists who rampaged through the halls of one of our most sacred places of democracy chanting "Hang Mike Pence," and "Where's Nancy."

Imagine if they had found either one of them?

To add injury to the insult, the president refused to send in the National Guard. DC is not a state, so it has no governor, so the rules are different there. It took hours before help arrived. One Capitol police officer was beaten to death. In the end five people were dead. One Capitol police officer killed himself the day after the riot.

I have lost my patience with people enabling this president. Insurrection is not the same as peaceful protest, or even violent protest. All violence and vandalism should be condemned and prosecuted. These were not protesters. To use Trump's own words, they were thugs.

More information is coming out daily as the investigation continues.

The sight of thousands of people on the steps, walls, and balconies of the Capitol building looked like something out of one of those "shithole" banana republics Trump is always talking about. They waved huge Trump flags and huge pictures of their supreme leader.

I ask you again: What do you think would've happened if they had caught Nancy Pelosi or Mike Pence?

Their purpose was not to make lasting change. Their purpose was not to stage a sit-in and make their voices heard. Their purpose was to force a handful of "elites" as they like to call legislators, to steal away the votes of

EDITOR: cont'd next page

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Fairhaven Neighborhood News

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CORRECTIONS/CLARIFICATIONS

FROM THE EDITOR: cont'd from previous page

81,281,502 Americans who voted for Biden. For you math geniuses, that's more than the 74,222,593 that Trump got. That means he lost.

There was no "steal."

I realize I am not being my usual clever self, not especially articulate, or even very compelling. Honestly, I'm too tired. I've got other stuff going on. My point here is to go on record with how disheartened and sad I am at what happened at our nation's Capitol building, the biggest symbol of our democracy. I am sickened by the people I know who are still making excuses for that sad excuse for a human in the White House.

There was no conspiracy to steal the election. The election was not stolen. Your guy lost. He lost. He didn't get enough votes to win. That's all there is to it. There is no point in going over it lie by lie.

You've chosen to believe the charlatan who's a big baby who can't admit defeat than to believe your own eyes.

No...that wasn't a hearing, it was Rudy Giuliani at a folding table in a hotel or something. If they had any real evidence, they would have presented it in court. But, you see, if you're a lawyer and you present your lies to a judge, you get in trouble. Lots of trouble.

So more than 60 cases got thrown out by 90 judges. There was no "steal." Your guy lost, suck it up, buttercup.

The only way this vast conspiracy exists is if every precinct in question had people in on the steal. That means every Republican and Democratic representative on every board of registrars everywhere. Will you please get real?

My country, my beloved USA looks like a banana

republic. Stop it. Just stop it.

We have a bit of a controversial story in this week's issue. Wendy Graves has been named interim Town Administrator and it was revealed at the last Selectboard meeting that she has applied for the permanent TA position. Well, we found out some disturbing things about her personal finances and some issues with her employment here in Fairhaven. She did give us a thorough statement in response to our questions. I am grateful for that, so that our readers will be able to make their own determination. Dan Freitas of course made a reference to a lawyer and a lawsuit and didn't answer any of the questions. Keith Silvia didn't respond at all (Guess he lost his voice along with his backbone). Bob Espindola answered the questions for you. See page 7 for that.

These kinds of stories are hard to do. Honestly, I hate them when it comes to people's jobs. But the TA position is the top slot in Fairhaven and is in charge of the whole \$52+ million budget. Questions of integrity and competence need to come to light. The public has a right to know. And that's what we do...we tell people stuff.

Just making friends and enemies with every sentence. That's my job...and I love my job! Now, if I could just make a living at it...

There's plenty more in here, of course. Please look through to find it all and be sure to notice who our advertisers are and let them know you saw their ads in the *Neighb News*.

Until next week then...see ya
(from a distance),



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Selectboard discusses town owned fiber-optic system

By Jean Perry

Neighb News Correspondent

The Fairhaven Selectboard met with Jeff Christensen, president of EntryPoint Network, on 1/11/21 to discuss progress with the request for proposals (RFPs) as Fairhaven tentatively moves toward installing a fiber-optic system throughout the town.

The Broadband Study Committee has spent months looking at the feasibility of such a project. As Mr. Christensen summarized it, it is getting close to hardening those numbers of the potential cost for such an undertaking.

Selectboard member Bob Espindola has been the board's representative on the committee. He said roughly 500 residents had responded favorably to the prospect of bringing a fiber-optic Internet, cable TV, and telephone infrastructure to Fairhaven. His concern was keeping the momentum as Finance Director/Treasurer/Collector Wendy Graves assumes the interim town administrator role. He asked her to continue the progress retired Town Administrator Mark Rees had made up to this point of accepting RFPs and asked her to attend the committee's next meeting on 1/14 at 6:00 p.m. Mr. Espindola also recommended that residents with questions or interest in hearing more should also participate in the meeting via Zoom.

Resident Gary Lavalette posed a few questions, beginning with how the 911 system would change due to the new technology infrastructure. His main emphasis was the impact that cost would have on the feasibility of the project.

According to Mr. Christensen, the town may have to establish a municipal light plant if it constructs and owns its own fiber-optic network operated by a third party. It would not result in any new tax on residents, he said, and switching from their current cable and Internet providers would be voluntary.

"The broad goals [are that] the system would not lead to a new tax in Fairhaven ... and the system would be sustainable on its own [and] it wouldn't create a burden on the town," said Mr. Christensen.

It would add value, not be a drain on resources.

However, as Mr. Lavalette put it,

Fairhaven establishing its own fiber-optic network, "It's a big step."

Improving Internet service to residents is a no-brainer, he said, and it was evident that "fiber optics is the way to go." But he said he understood how cable companies can be "territorial" and wondered what it would look like with a third party operating with the use of infrastructure (i.e., telephone poles) owned by another party.

The 911 network would run better on a broadband network and even have its own dedicated 911 network, Mr. Christensen pointed out.

"Your town or region would decide how that's going to work," he said, adding, "We plan to improve what's there and improve it significantly."

According to Mr. Christensen, the town may have to establish a municipal light plant if it constructs and owns its own fiber-optic network operated by a third party.

"Everybody wants to cut their cable bill down," said Mr. Lavalette. "I just don't want to lose anything.... The bottom line will be the cost."

Selectboard Chairperson Daniel Freitas said he hopes the fiber-optic project becomes a reality.

"I think it could be a really good thing for the town, so I hope it pans out," he said, adding that his cable bill is already "astronomical," so to get "something better for cheaper, then that's the way of the world."

Also during the meeting, Building Commissioner Chris Carmichael introduced a new permit fee schedule, which the board approved as presented.

Mr. Carmichael said he initially implied that he would slowly roll out new fees if they resulted in higher rates; however, there will not be any shocking rises in permit fees, he said, adding that some residential permit fees will go down slightly.

He assessed area averages for commercial fees and set them just

below that regional average.

Mr. Freitas said the new fee schedule was more aligned with how he had wanted to see it with modest changes instead of fee hikes.

"This is not like punching someone in the face to get something done," said Mr. Freitas. "This is more like you said: some things are actually coming down."

"He's right on target," commented Selectboard member Keith Silvia, a contractor by trade who is familiar with such fees. "It's not going to kill anybody."

Mr. Carmichael said he expected the new online permitting system, with the new fees, to be live on the website at the beginning of February.

In other matters, the board received some legal guidance from the law firm Clifford & Kenny, LLC, regarding the COVID-19 vaccine and town employees.

In summary, the town has been advised that mandatory COVID-19 vaccination for employees is an option, "but there are several factors that should give you pause before considering such a mandate.

"One of the biggest challenges faced in vaccinating the population lies in educating the general public as to the benefits and risks associated with the vaccine," reads the law firm's memo to the board. "We would generally recommend providing as much information as possible about the vaccine to your employees and hope that they voluntarily participate in a vaccination program."

Mr. Espindola pressed to have the board vote on a specific policy direction to take, but neither Mr. Freitas nor Mr. Silvia was inclined to do so.

Mr. Freitas said he would generally oppose making it mandatory for employees to get the shot. Although Mr. Espindola expressed a similar sentiment, he hoped to set a policy that evening.

Mr. Freitas expressed frustration with Mr. Espindola's request, saying that he felt as though Mr. Espindola had led him down a "rabbit hole" and said he was unclear about what Mr. Espindola was asking. Mr. Freitas then suggested that if any board should suggest a vaccine policy, it should be the Board of Health.

At that, Mr. Freitas ended the discussion abruptly, saying, "We're

SELECT: cont'd on page 22

AROUND TOWN HAPPENINGS

Snow Park Ban

No vehicles shall be permitted to remain on the hydrant side of all streets in Fairhaven from December 1st to March 31st from midnight to 8:00 a.m. and also at the time of any snowfall or snow removal operations. On streets with no hydrants, NO vehicles shall be permitted to remain either on the east* side of streets running north and south or on the north side of streets running east and west. Violators will be towed and/or ticketed.

COVID Testing

The Fairhaven Fire/EMS department, in cooperation with the Fairhaven Board of Health, will be offering a FREE Covid Test Clinic **EVERY SATURDAY** for Fairhaven residents and town employees until further notice. Next Dates: **Sat., 1/16, 23, 30, from 9 a.m. to 12 noon, Fairhaven Recreation Center, 227 Huttleston Ave. WALK-IN ONLY, NO**

appointments. Visit <https://www.fairhaven-ma.gov/fire-department-ems-ema/news/free-covid-19-testing-fairhaven> to get the form and fill it out ahead of time to expedite your visit.

Please contact the Health Department with questions at boh@fairhaven-ma.gov or 508-979-4023 ext. 125.

Vote for Roof Gift

Care Free Homes, Inc., a local home improvement company, announced that a Fairhaven family is among the finalists of their 6th Annual New Year, New Roof Giveaway; **the community will vote online January 10-15, 2021 to choose the winner of a GAF roof.**

Earlier this month, communities from SE Mass., Cape Cod, and Rhode Island nominated deserving homeowners to be recipients of a GAF Timberline HDZ roofing system at absolutely no cost. Care Free Homes, Inc. selected five finalists who will advance to the voting stage. Fairhaven resident and single mother,

Kelly Ochoa, is among the finalists. The other four finalists include Jane and Michael Bailey of Newport, RI; Hilda Lopes from New Bedford, MA; Peter and Pam Mathieu of Fall River, MA; and Francis Tichelaar of Taunton, MA.

The community can read the stories of each finalist and cast their votes online via the Care Free Homes, Inc. website at <https://carefreehomes.com/new-year-new-roof-giveaway-2021/>. The winner will be announced with a surprise reveal on Monday, January 18, 2021.

The New Year, New Roof Giveaway is made possible thanks to a partnership between Care Free Homes, Inc. and GAF Roofing. Black Tie Cookies, United Way of Greater Fall River, and United Way of Greater New Bedford also support the program as community partners. United Way assists with community outreach. Black Tie Cookies donates their gourmet cookie bouquets to all the finalists and the winner.

Millicent Library still offering an array of services

Press Release

The Millicent Library is still closed to in-person visits but continues to offer some services to the public. People can still request books, audiobooks, movies, and music and pick them up through the library's contactless curbside pickup service.

To request library material, you can search the SAILS Library Network catalog at <http://www.sailsinc.org>. When you log in with your library card you can place requests and holds on material. You can also call the Millicent Library staff to find and request materials at 508-992-5342 or send an email to Millicent@sailsinc.org

If you do not have a library card you can request a temporary library card online at <https://www.sailsinc.org/my-account/get-a-library-card>.

Have a few pages you need printed? The library staff can do that as well. You can email your document or request something to be printed. We can print it for you to pick up.

In addition, Millicent Library also has Wi-Fi hotspots that can be checked out. Wi-Fi hotspots allow you to connect to the internet in areas where you have little or no internet connection. These can also be

requested through the catalog or by contacting the library.

For those that miss browsing the shelves, or help from the staff in picking out new authors or suggestions relating to your favorite genres, the library is now offering our Book Bundles service. Staff can select books for you based on your favorite author or genre. Just go to the library's website and click on Book Bundles at the top of the page, complete a form and you will be contacted when your bundle is ready. Book Bundles are available for children, young adults, and adults. You can also call the library with your Book Bundle request.

The Millicent Library's website has links to many resources that are available by logging in with your library card. These resources include Consumer Reports, Birds of the World Online, and historical newspaper databases. Library card holders can also access eBooks and audiobooks through Libby and Hoopla as well as TV shows through Acorn TV and Hoopla, all available on our website.

For local history lovers you can access and search digitized publications through the library's website. These include the *Fairhaven Star*

(1879-1967), local fishing industry newspaper, *Barnacle* (1990-1993), Fairhaven Town Reports (1847-2019), and Fairhaven High School yearbooks (1923-2019).

Additionally, there are several local history searchable databases including Fairhaven Vital Records (1844-1899), Fairhaven Cemetery Records which include Nasketucket, Riversides, Woodside and private cemeteries, and the Lost Fishermen Database which notes fishermen and fishing vessels lost at sea.

Weather may impact curbside pickup services. If you need assistance picking up your requests during inclement weather please notify the staff in advance and they can help you when you arrive.

The library staff is available for any questions you may have or help with finding something to read, getting a library card, searching a database and much more.

The Millicent Library pickup times are Monday 10:00 AM – 7:00 PM, Tuesday-Friday 10:00 AM – 5:00 PM, and Saturday 10:00 AM – 2:00 PM.

To contact the library email us at Millicent@sailsinc.org or call 508-992-5342.

Oxford School cupola returned

By Beth David
Editor

The cupola that once sat atop the Oxford School building is back home. On Saturday, 1/9/21, volunteers from A-1 Crane lifted the iconic piece and placed it atop the roof.

Keith Silvia and his son Danny restored the cupola, repairing and replacing rotten boards, etc., and painting it.

“It took us some time.... but today with the hard dedicated work of Keith Silvia, Danny and crew along with Patrick Carr and his crew at A1 crane, we were able to fulfill our promise and return the cupola back to its home,” wrote the Fairhaven Bell Committee on its Facebook page. “Thank you to Keith and his son for their many hours of work. Thank you to A1 Crane company who volun-

teered their time and services, and to the people who volunteered their time and effort that helped make this possible. Thank you, also, to Peter DeTerra for allowing use of his facility to enable the work to progress.”

The former elementary school is going to be converted to affordable housing units. Construction is set to start this spring.



ABOVE FAR LEFT: Workers secure the cupola to its former base atop the Oxford School in Fairhaven on 1/9/21, after being absent for more than five years. The bell and cupola were removed in October, 2015. The cupola was restored and returned on Saturday, 1/9/21. The bell, which was made by American patriot Paul Revere in 1795, is still being restored and will be on display in town at a yet to be decided location. LEFT: The cupola sits in its usual perch atop the Oxford School in Fairhaven on 1/11/21. Photos by Glenn C. Silva.



BELOW: A crane carefully lowers the cupola to awaiting workers to set it on its former base atop the Oxford School in Fairhaven. Photos courtesy of the Fairhaven Bell Committee.



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Graves named interim TA despite recent concerns

Jean Perry

Neighb News Correspondent

Beth David

Editor

When the Fairhaven Selectboard chose Wendy Graves in 2013 as its pick for the finance director/treasurer/collector position, the deciding factor was the 15 years of municipal finance experience Ms. Graves indicated. Nearly seven years later, Ms. Graves is currently serving as the appointed interim town administrator and waits for the Town Administrator Search Committee to include her as a possible finalist for permanent TA.

However, Ms. Graves has a track record of resignations from past positions under dubious circumstances that remained essentially undisclosed to the public during her hiring process, in addition to a consistent pattern of personal finance mismanagement that resulted in several civil actions, all of which the *Neighb News* uncovered during a routine online search of Ms. Graves's qualifications.

At least six cases in Worcester District Court and Worcester Superior Court name Ms. Graves as a defendant for non-payment of credit card debt, failure to appear, defaults for failure to appear, and at least two capiases (orders for her arrest), one as recent as 2018.

A letter obtained by the *Neighb News* and written in November, 2018, by recently retired Town Administrator Mark Rees cites these cases as a reason Ms. Graves might not be able to be bonded and informs her of a notice to terminate, or not renew her contract. Ms. Graves has remained on the job, and is no longer on a contract, but is on the non-union classification and compensation plan at a Level 21, Step 9, which is \$2,222 per week/\$115,544 annually.

In the letter dated 11/8/2018, Mr. Rees wrote, "Your failure to pay these debts and appear in court on multiple occasions shows a pattern of poor judgment and decision making directly related to your job duties as Finance Director and Treasurer/Collector with the Town. These acts amount to conduct unbecoming a municipal employee in your position...."

Mr. Rees indicated that she would likely not be terminated immediately,

rather the Town would not be extending her employment with the Town beyond 120 days.

The letter refers to an interview on 10/25/18 conducted by special counsel Jaime Kenny investigating allegations of harassment in the workplace made against her, the existence of four pending court actions against her on behalf of four creditors totaling \$85,000, with two of them resulting in capias (arrest) orders for failure to appear in court, in addition to a failure to pay her federal taxes.

In a subsequent letter dated 1/29/19, Mr. Rees wrote that while the investigation did not yield evidence of unlawful harassment or workplace violence, there was some evidence of "creating a hostile workplace."

Selectboard chairperson

Daniel Freitas, who was also on the board during the time frame in question, wrote:

"I will not comment on this article until I speak with our attorney."

He further disclosed a "failure to pay federal taxes," continuing to write, "As a public official entrusted in collecting current and delinquent taxes of Fairhaven residents and businesses, disclosure of this information would compromise your ability to effectively carry out your duties." In addition, he noted, her ability to be bonded as per state law could also be affected by her circumstances.

In that letter, Mr. Rees offered to allow Ms. Graves to keep her position if she furnished evidence of addressing her personal financial problems via proof of making payment plan payments on her defaulted debt, and documentation from the IRS demonstrating that Ms. Graves was addressing her federal tax delinquency.

In the letter, Mr. Rees also requested documentation that Ms. Graves had been legally bonded after

she submitted a copy of a private bond she allegedly secured that he noted had since been canceled.

Ms. Graves responded in a 2/4/19 letter to Mr. Rees summarizing that the investigation's final report showed "there wasn't enough evidence to be illegal," adding that Mr. Rees "suggested that a third party would work with me on a plan regarding my personal finances."

She also expressed opposition to submitting the proof Mr. Rees requested, writing, "Handing over all this personal information to you seems to be very intrusive and I don't trust what will be done with the information going forward."

She offered to submit proof of bonding to the Selectboard if the board asked for it, "[B]ut I hesitate to provide any information to you because it has become apparent to me that the bond of trust has been broken."

She then asked for a hearing before the Selectboard to appeal her impending termination. The *Neighb News* has been unable to find any documentation of that hearing taking place. However, Charles K. Murphy, Sr., who was a selectboard member at the time, said he recalled that a hearing of that kind took place.

"I believe there was a hearing going on but I was not present because of the death of my mother," said Mr. Murphy, who is no longer on the board. "I am not aware of what happened in the hearing, and don't have minutes from it."

A phone call to Mr. Rees was not returned by press time.

Selectboard member Bob Espindola, who was also on the board at the time of the alleged hearing, said in an email that he was "not at liberty to discuss anything that may have taken place in executive session that has not been approved for release by our Board."

Selectboard chairperson Daniel Freitas, who was also on the board during the time frame in question, wrote: "I will not comment on this article until I speak with our attorney. Some of the questions you have asked are false and I don't want to get in the middle of a lawsuit without council [sic] telling me what I can answer too. You may want to ask yourself why she still is employed by

GRAVES: cont'd on page 17

HAPPENINGS OVERTOWN

NB COVID testing

Free daily testing for all Mass. residents is available at the Whale's Tooth Parking Lot, 532 Acushnet Ave., New Bedford, every day (appointment is required), 10 a.m.-4 p.m.; call 401-654-4679 with questions; for other sites in NB, visit <https://www.newbedford-ma.gov/health-department/covid-19-resources-2/>

Dock-U-Mentary

New Bedford Fishing Heritage Center's Dock-u-mentaries series continues with the virtual event, *Swimming Upstream: A Book Talk* by Mike Foley.

This program will take place over ZOOM at 7:00pm on Friday, January 15th. The event is free and open to the public. To join the ZOOM Meeting, use the link, bit.ly/JanuaryBookTalk.

Swimming Upstream is the story of four generations of Foley fishmongers, their successes and failures, their talents and foibles. Hear the story of Michael Foley who immigrated to the United States from Ireland in the late 19th Century and eventually started Foley Fish Company. Author Mike Foley will speak about his family's history as well as the process of writing the book. Learn more about Mike Foley and *Swimming Upstream* at mikefoley.com.

Please contact Hannah at programs@fishingheritagecenter.org with any questions.

Dock-u-mentaries are presented by New Bedford Fishing Heritage Center and New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park. Thank you to BankFive for supporting our film series.

New Bedford Fishing Heritage Center is dedicated to preserving and presenting the story of the commercial fishing industry past, present, and future through exhibits, programs, and archives. For more information, visit the Center's website at fishingheritagecenter.org, email programs@fishingheritagecenter.org, or call (508) 993-8894.

The Center is open Thursday-Saturday, 10:00am- 4:00pm. Admission is free.

Mini Grant Sessions

United Way's Mini-Grants program

empowers all-volunteer groups with budgets of \$40,000 or less to apply for funding to implement small-scale, impactful projects in the Greater New Bedford area (Acushnet, Dartmouth, Fairhaven, Freetown, New Bedford, Marion, Mattapoisett, Rochester, or Wareham). Potential projects must reflect the goals of United Way in the areas of health, education, financial stability, or basic needs. Groups can apply for up to \$2,500 to implement a project that builds community and addresses a need or issue of concern.

Interested groups are encouraged to attend one of two virtual information sessions to learn more about the Mini-Grants Program and application process. Information sessions will be held on **Tuesday, January 19th at 4 pm and Friday, January 22nd at 10 am**. Registration is required for the sessions, please call 508-994-9625 ext. 219 or register online at unitedwayofgnb.org/mini-grants.

Since its inception in 1995, the Mini-Grants Program has granted \$820,314 for local community projects. These projects have positively benefitted schools, neighborhoods, and our community as a whole. Projects have included community gardens, a diaper pantry, literacy programming, community meals, and more. Join past Mini-Grantees and be a change agent in Greater New Bedford by submitting an application to the Mini-Grants Program.

Applications will be accepted beginning January 15th and are due on February 26th at noon. More information on the Mini-Grants Program and the application can be found at unitedwayofgnb.org.

Patrons of the Arts

Each year New Bedford Art Museum/ArtWorks! has been privileged to recognize individuals and organizations that have helped the arts succeed through their generous support and work in the community. Because of them, the arts flourish here in New Bedford.

It is our privilege to shine a light on Irene and Norman Buck and the New Bedford Symphony Orchestra. Each has played a pivotal role in supporting the arts for many years. In recognition of their support, we will be presenting each with a specially commissioned hand-carved wooden

bird whistle made by New Bedford artist Bill White.

2020 Patrons of the Arts Honorees Irene and Norman Buck & New Bedford Symphony Orchestra are longtime supporters of the arts. The Bucks moved the south coast's creative culture forward through the amazing work done at ArtWorks! Partners for the Art by Irene and Norm's development of Ropeworks! Artist Condominium project to name a few.

The Bucks and the NBSO are longtime friends and supporters of the Museum. From collaborative programming to supporting events, to advancing educational opportunities they epitomize the honor of Patrons of the Arts.

Watch the Awards Here: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCZ9-4fArFuDRmZrxWLOfa5A>

Thank you to this year's sponsors! Timothy Mahoney and Pamela Donnelly, Allan and Priscilla Ditchfield, Margaret and Michael Nash

NB Resilient

With the start of 2021, Mayor Jon Mitchell and the City of New Bedford have formally launched NB Resilient, the City's strategic climate action plan aimed at climate adaptation and mitigation.

The plan sets ambitious but achievable goals to help New Bedford achieve its vision — "a thriving, self-sustaining city that is culturally and historically secure, and ready to implement innovative approaches to prepare for tomorrow's possibilities."

The full NB Resilient plan and a dashboard marking its progress have officially launched at nbresilient.com.

Under the leadership of Mayor Mitchell and led by the Department of Resilience and Environmental Stewardship, New Bedford created a climate action steering committee to support and develop a plan around six focus areas: climate and energy; economy and jobs; infrastructure, utilities and waste; natural resources; public health and safety; and transportation and land use; designed to cover all aspects of the city.

These goals address climate adaptation and resilience, and are geared toward enabling all residents of New Bedford to thrive, including:

HAPPS: cont'd next page

HAPPENINGS/STILL OVERTOWN

- 100% of waste diverted from landfills by 2050
- Protecting the Port of New Bedford from sea level rise through infrastructure and resilience investments
- Offsetting the city's carbon footprint through the planting of thousands of trees in New Bedford
- Committing to green building practices in new facility investments
- Improving food security and healthy living for New Bedford

residents

NB Resilient is a roadmap for everyone in the city to take action, and it includes short- and long-term goals for a safe, thriving city – from reducing greenhouse gas emissions, to ensuring the waterfront and port are protected from the climate change the world is experiencing.

capacity on a per capita basis than any other city in the continental United States besides San Diego. The

City's leadership was profiled in the Wall Street Journal in 2014.

Ten major solar installations totaling more than \$60 million in privately financed construction will save city taxpayers nearly \$1 million this year by cutting the utility bills of city departments. Over 20 years the solar projects are projected to save city government \$22 million.

Visit <https://nbresilient.com/home> to learn more

HAPPENINGS/OTHER LATITUDES

Family Activities

Family Activities along the Handy House Heritage Trail

(A friendly family of log deer will greet visitors to the trail this winter!)

Archaeology Scavenger Hunt

Archaeologists look for clues on the surface to help them find sites and artifacts that are buried underground, and to understand what people did in the past. Be an archaeologist for a day and help figure out what happened along the Handy House Trail!

Download your scavenger hunt here: <https://wpthistory.org/handy-house-heritage-trail/family-activities-on-the-trail/>

Paul Cuffe: His Purpose, Partners An Audience with

Susannah White Winslow

Sat., 1/22, 2 p.m. Join Mayflower passenger Susannah White Winslow and discover the harrowing stories about her life in England and the challenges of building a new life in a world unknown to her. This first-person living history program is presented by Plimoth-Patuxet (formerly Plimoth Plantation), a living history museum in Plymouth, Mass.

Registration details coming soon!

Annual Appeal

We would like to thank those of you who have already responded generously to our annual appeal. We are closing in on our goal but still have a way to go!

If you are a previous donor –Thank You! Would you consider a move to a higher gift level? If you are a new donor, please understand that your participation is critical to our success. Whatever level you choose, you have our heartfelt thanks for the support and confidence you have placed in us.

We offer a convenient, secure

donation form via our website: <https://wpthistory.org/join-support/donate/> Westport Historical Society, 508-636-6011, westporthistory@westporthistory.net; www.wpthistory.org

Bike for All

We are thrilled that the long awaited Mattapoissett Rail Trail connection to Depot Street is opening this Spring. To celebrate, MATTREC and the Friends of the Mattapoissett Bicycle and Recreational Path (the Friends) have teamed up to ensure that every Mattapoissett resident/family has an opportunity to fully enjoy it. This new initiative is called Bikes for All. We are asking for donations of gently used bicycles, to be given to any town resident, of any age, who needs a bike. Children's sizes with training wheels to adult 26" bikes – all sizes can be donated or exchanged.

The Friends are working closely with our town officials to build a safe and welcoming bike path. Many of us are also walkers and runners, and are excited that this spectacular new mile of the bike path will connect Mattapoissett village to Fairhaven center and beyond.

So, take a look in the corners of your garage/basement... Is there a bike that is no longer being used by your family? Or a child's bike that has been outgrown? If so, dust it off and call Jane at MATTREC at 508-758-4548 for pickup.

In this era of increased demand, higher prices and waiting lists for new bicycles, recycling well cared for bikes here in Mattapoissett is one way to make the Mattapoissett Rail Trail accessible to all!

If you would like to make a donation for the Friends to purchase/repair bicycles, please feel

free to send it to: Friends of the Mattapoissett Bike Path, PO Box 1336, Mattapoissett, MA 02739. Please note that your contribution is for "Bikes for All".

The Friends is a 501 (c)(3) charitable organization, so contributions to the Friends for Bikes for Kids are tax deductible to the extent permitted by law. The Friends will apply 100% of contributions toward the bicycles.

Contacts: Jane Finnerty 508-758-4548 JANE.MATTRAIL@gmail.com and Liz DiCarlo, 508-942-9343, lizdicarlo@comcast.net, and Website: mattapoissettrail.org.

MLK Day

The Gloucester Meetinghouse Foundation Presents The Fifth Annual Celebration for Martin Luther King, Jr. Day On-Line Mon., January 18 at 2pm

The Gloucester Meetinghouse Foundation Presents the Fifth Annual Celebration of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day called Listening to Generations of Local Voices. The online event will premiere on Monday, January 18, 2021 at 2 p.m. on the Gloucester Meetinghouse Foundation YouTube channel and will be available anytime afterwards on YouTube in case you miss the premiere.

The presentation is a collage assembled from videos of Cape Ann residents interwoven with excerpts from speeches by Dr. King and John Lewis. We hope the video will inspire everyone to imagine what it must be like to be in the shoes of "the other" and to be humbled by what we don't know. More information is available at

www.gloucestermeetinghouse.org where you will find a link to the video, or simply go to YouTube and search for "Gloucester Meetinghouse Foundation, MLK Day Celebration 2021."

Recipe of the Week

Toasted Ravioli

- 2 large eggs
- 1/2 c. milk
- 1 c. Italian bread crumbs
- 1/4 c. freshly grated Parmesan cheese, plus more for serving
- Kosher salt
- Freshly ground black pepper
- 1 lb. frozen ravioli
- Marinara, warmed (for serving)
- Vegetable oil, for frying
- Marinara, sauce for serving

Line large baking sheet with parchment. In a shallow bowl, whisk together eggs & milk. In another shallow bowl, combine bread crumbs and Parmesan. Season with S&P.

Dip one ravioli at a time in egg mixture then in bread crumbs, pressing to coat. Place on prepared baking sheet. Freeze until solid, 30 mins.

In a large pot over med. heat, heat 2" oil until shimmering (about 365°). Fry ravioli until golden and pasta is cooked through, 3 to 4 mins, flipping as necessary. Place on a paper towel lined plate and immediately sprinkle with more Parmesan. Serve warm with marinara for dipping. *From Delish.com*

COVID-19 update

Jean Perry

Neighb News Correspondent

With Massachusetts now in the "severe outbreak" category for COVID-19 infection at the federal level, Governor Charlie Baker on 1/12 announced that Gillette Stadium in Foxboro would open on Thursday, 1/14 as the state's first mass vaccination site to provide first doses of the vaccine to those administering the vaccination to the state's first responders. The site will start issuing about 300 doses daily and eventually increase to about 5,000 doses a day.

First responders started receiving their first dose of the vaccine this Monday as part of Phase 1, and about 60 sites statewide are equipped to accommodate 45,000 people seeking their first vaccine dose.

"There is literally light at the end of the tunnel, and it feels good to be at this phase," said Lieutenant Governor Karyn Polito on Tuesday.

Massachusetts confirmed 4,239 new positive cases on 1/11 for a total of 417,568 since the start of the pandemic. There are 2,211 patients hospitalized with COVID-19; 415 in Intensive Care, and 285 on

ventilators.

Fifty-four more died from COVID-19 on 1/11, totaling 12,929 confirmed COVID-19 deaths in Massachusetts.

The two-week data from January 7 shows that Acushnet confirmed another 126 cases for a total of 664, while Fairhaven saw another 201 positive cases totaling 1,129.

Gov. Baker urged residents to continue wearing masks and warned about gathering in groups of people who do not live in the same household.

"Stay home wherever possible," he said. "Don't let your guard down."

On 1/8, Gov. Baker announced a new initiative to conduct pooled COVID-19 testing at schools within the next month, which involves mixing several test samples in a "batch" or "pool," a method that maximizes testing ability and utilizes fewer laboratory resources. If a pooled test is negative, then those tested are presumed to be negative; however, if a pooled test is positive, all individuals will be retested to identify individual cases.

On 1/7, Gov. Baker extended the Capacity and Gathering Limits until 1/24, meaning that most industries will remain at a 25% capacity limit.

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NMLS # 422864

DaCunha's

Dispatches

News from high school in the age of COVID

By Elizabeth DaCunha



Special to the Neigh News

"This year's election was completely different from last year's," stated the Class of 2023 President, Adin Monroe.

No, not the U.S. election, but the Fairhaven High School Class Officer Election.

Campaigning and voting clearly had to be modified this year because of the pandemic, so I have asked class officers, including myself (I got elected class president) speak on the challenges that went along with running for a class officer position.

One obstacle that we freshmen faced was trying to get students that we didn't know to vote for us.

Ireland Nordstrom, the newly elected Class of 2024 Vice President who was completely new to the district explained, "I had not yet had the chance to meet and connect with my fellow classmates. Especially with the different cohorts, communicating with our class was very difficult, and I had to come up with new ways to reach them."

Many of the Acushnet students did not know Fairhaven students, and vice versa, making it harder for candidates to communicate their ideas because they didn't even know half of the kids in their grade.

Freshman Public Relations Officer Grace Dupre described how she found a way to reach students

outside of her small class of six.

"I was able to connect with students during this pandemic by using social media," she said, and this was the case for most, if not all of the candidates.

If this pandemic has proven anything, it's the power and influence social media holds, especially among new, up and coming generations.

Senior President Nina Medeiros said, "During my previous 3 years in office as president and hugely this year, my fellow class officers and I have used and continue to use social media as the main source of connecting with not only our fellow classmates but their guardians as well."

As the elected freshman Class President, I can agree that social

For the rest of the grades, the election was on, but it did not have that sense of competition and excitement that it usually has.

media played an important role in my campaign too. I and other students posted election date reminders, videos and digital posters that shared a little bit about ourselves, as well as our thoughts and ideas to benefit not only our individual class, but the school as a whole.

Although there are most definitely many advantages to using social media for a campaign, there are also several challenges.

It was tough to tell how much support you had, especially against an opponent; and because of how small the classes are, it was difficult to communicate in person with students

that you don't spend the whole day in the same classroom with.

Students were trying their best to adapt to the new situation before them, and attempted to communicate with classmates face to face (socially distant of course)!

Ireland Nordstrom explained her efforts to try and introduce herself to others, despite limitations:.

"I would say 'hello' to other students when walking by them in the halls or saying 'goodbye' to them at dismissal," she said.

Election voting took place digitally this year as well.

Senior Nina Medeiros said, "[The administration] felt it was best to allow those who were in our class office when we left for quarantine to continue their roles in our class office for our senior year."

So she did not end up having to run again, but mentioned that she plans on having "a fun, safe, and great senior year," and wants to give students a sense of normalcy that has been missing.

For the rest of the grades, the election was on, but it did not have that sense of competition and excitement that it usually has. Students were simply sent a Google form through their email where they'd choose their candidate of choice. Instead of looking forward to an election day, voting became a responsibility, and this affected the voter turnout.

Adin Monroe shared his disappointment that only 40% of students sent in a vote, but at least it was safe and efficient given the circumstances.

Even with the pandemic, the selected Class Officers are fully committed and looking forward to fulfilling their responsibilities at FHS with innovation, dedication, and hard work!



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Last ride home for Fire Chief Tim Francis ends 42 year career

By Jean Perry

Neighb News Correspondent

It was more than 40 years ago that Timothy Francis joined the Fairhaven Fire Department as a call firefighter. In 1982 he was appointed as a permanent firefighter and ascended the ranks to lieutenant in 1993. It wasn't long before he was promoted to deputy chief in 1995, and in 1999 Tim Francis became Fairhaven's fire chief and would serve in that capacity for roughly 21 years.

On January 8, 2021, Chief Francis retired from his post, and the strident symphony of a stream of fire trucks from Fairhaven and surrounding towns through the sunny streets of Fairhaven let everyone in town know about it.

To honor the event's significance, the town coordinated a "last ride home" for Mr. Francis from the fire station on Washington Street down through the center of town. The convoy stopped at the Town Hall steps where a socially-distanced crowd of face-masked family members, Town Hall employees, and grateful Fairhaven residents gave a round of applause for Mr. Francis's service over the last several decades.

Francis rode shotgun in Ladder Truck 1, his eyes scanning the familiar faces on the front lawn of Town Hall, and set his sights on one particular little face. He dismounted the fire truck and headed straight to a nearby baby stroller.

"Look, it's Papa! Say hi to Papa!"

Those standing with the stroller



Attention turns to the little one and the dog as retiring Fairhaven Fire Chief Tim Francis (center) and newly pinned Lt. Josh Benoit (next to Francis) try to get a family photo on 1/8/21 after Mr. Francis's last ride home on the day of his retirement. Photo by Beth David.



ABOVE: Retiring Fairhaven Fire Chief Timothy Francis waves to supporters as he exits the ladder truck at town hall to receive a citation during a stop on his "last ride home" on 1/8/21. Photo by Jean Perry.

suggested as Mr. Francis approached with a smile that couldn't possibly be concealed by the mask covering half his face.

With one of those affectionate gestures still allowed during a pandemic, Mr. Francis brushed the back of his hand across his grandchild's knee and gave it a little squeeze before ascending the stairs to the foyer of Town Hall where Selectboard Chairperson Daniel Freitas waited to present Mr. Francis with a congratulatory citation.

Mr. Francis's list of accomplishments and honorable achievements is

a long one, with one of his most proud being his oversight of the merging of EMS services with the fire department.

Mr. Francis began the transition in 1999 and worked to train all firefighters for dual certification in fire rescue and emergency medical services. He has also served as chairperson of the EMS Committee for the Massachusetts Fire Chiefs since 2001 and was appointed by Governor Mitt Romney to the Homeland Security Advisory Council.

Mr. Freitas wished the chief all the best in his retirement and, on behalf of the Selectboard, declared January 8, 2021, as Fire Chief Timothy Francis Day in Fairhaven.

The convoy then proceeded to Mr. Francis's home where uniformed officers lined the street to greet him.

Mr. Francis told the crowd that he was looking at the future of the Fairhaven Fire Department and he could not be more proud, as he got emotional.

"You men and women have a great future ahead of you," said Mr. Francis. "You're under new leadership who's gonna take you places way beyond where you are now."

He told them to keep learning and to learn from their mistakes.

"You're brothers and sisters. You need to treat yourself like brothers and sisters and take care of each

FRANCIS: cont'd to next page

FRANCIS: cont'd from previous page

other,” he said. “Enjoy your careers. Do the best you can do. And that’s all the people can ask of you. So as long as you do the best you can do.”

He also said he would be around town keeping an eye on them, and they are there to set an example.

“When you’re wearing that uniform you’re wearing now be proud of it,” he said. “Not everybody gets to do that. So be proud of it.”

Chief Francis also pinned his nephew Josh Benoit, who was promoted to lieutenant.

“The town should be very proud of Tim and Josh,” said Lt. Benoit’s mother-in-law Carol Fateux. “And of course they mean a lot to the family.”

“It’s a great day,” said Lt. Paul Correia, adding the chief “elevated” the department, and the new chief,

Todd Correia, and deputy chief Joy Nichols will take it to a new level due to their dedication to the department and the town. “They have good ideas, good thoughts.”

“I’m a little overwhelmed,” said Mr. Francis after the saluting and speechmaking were over, adding that he did not want to get emotional, “but I did.”

His daughter Samantha said she felt very proud. The fire department has been her “second family forever.”

She said she knew her dad would miss it, but she knows she will always be welcome at the fire station.

“It’s been such a big part of my life,” said Samantha, 26. “I’m proud to be his daughter, that’s for sure.”

Her brother Scott, 20, echoed the sentiment, saying he felt “blessed

that I could be part of this.”

“My dad is a good role model,” said Scott. “He deserves the best.”

Scott said he, too, loves the fire department and is considering a career in firefighting, but not quite yet. He has a some school to get through.

Josh Benoit, who became Lt. Benoit when Joy Nichols’s promotion opened up a spot, said he owed Chief Francis “a lot.”

Lt. Benoit said he was not necessarily headed in the right direction when his uncle suggested he try out being a call firefighter.

“I fell in love with the job and found my calling,” said Lt. Benoit, adding that he remembered going to the station as a kid and “being in awe.”

Beth David contributed to this report.



ABOVE LEFT: Retiring Fairhaven Fire Chief Timothy Francis (right) poses with former fire chiefs from around the region at the Fairhaven fire station just before Mr. Francis’s last ride home on the day of his retirement, 1/8/21. ABOVE RIGHT: Mr. Francis pins the lieutenant badge on his nephew Josh Benoit. BELOW LEFT: Mr. Francis goes down the line giving fist bumps instead of handshakes and hugs due to the pandemic. BELOW RIGHT: Retiring Fairhaven Fire Chief Timothy Francis signs off the radio for the last time in front of his house after his last ride home. *Photos by Glenn C. Silva.*



Fairhaven Recreation Center

Open Mon-Thurs, 6 a.m.-8 p.m.; Fri., 6 a.m.-6 p.m.; Sat., 8 a.m.-2 p.m.; Closed Sunday • 227 Huttleston Ave, 508-993-9269 <https://www.fairhaven-ma.gov/recreation-department>

The Gym is Open!

We have socially distanced!

All cardio equipment has been moved to the gymnasium. No appointment is required. We are open regular hours. At this time no other activities will be allowed in the gymnasium also no rentals

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- Members must bring in their own water bottles or purchase from machine.
- Members must wear masks upon entering and exiting building
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Fairhaven Council on Aging

The Fairhaven Council on Aging Senior Center remains closed to the public until further notice. The staff is available to take phone calls and to assist you in any way possible.

Holiday Closing

The Fairhaven Senior Center will be closed January 18th, Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

Transportation

The COA van will run Monday through Friday beginning at 8:00 a.m. for in town shopping and errands as well as daily trips to Market Basket. All passengers will have their temperature taken before entering the van and must wear a mask while on the van. The van will be thoroughly

sanitized after each use. Volunteer Medical transportation has not yet been resumed.

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Acushnet News

Feedback Requested

From Acushnet Fire & EMS
Department Facebook page

Each week, usually on Fridays at 6:15 p.m., the Town of Acushnet sends a recorded phone message to residents providing an update on Covid issues. Current data, testing information and reminders of personal protective practices is provided.

As we move deeper into the crisis we want to ask: are these weekly calls useful? Is there additional information you would like to know?

If these calls are to have value we need to step back and make sure they are achieving their goal.

We know there is sometimes a technical hitch with a delay before the message begins. We are working

on that with the provider.

Please don't be shy. We want this service to be of value to the residents of Acushnet.

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Snow Park Ban/ Acushnet

By vote of Town Meeting, parking is restricted as follows: in water district, parking allowed opposite side of hydrants, out of water district, parking allowed north side of street running east and west; and, parking allowed on west side of streets running north and south.

Violators subject to being towed away at owner's expense. (Authority, Article 17, March 11, 1970 Annual Town Meeting, which adopted Chapter 40, Section 22D of the General Laws.) Parking restriction is from November 25, 2020 to April 15, 2021. *Acushnet Selectboard: Kevin Gaspar, Sr., David Desroches, David E. Wojnar*

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GRAVES: cont'd from page 7

the town if all that information was in fact true? If I can get ahold of council [sic] I'd gladly do a three way call."

Selectboard member Keith Silvia, who was not on the board during the time in question, but did vote to make Ms. Graves the interim TA, also did not answer an email by press time.

Ms. Graves gave a point-by-point response to a series of questions from the *Neighb News* via email (her full statement is at the end of this article).

In it, she said she experienced "personal financial hardships" due to a personal relationship "dissolving." She said she was unaware of the capiases that had been issued, but claims she resolved the matter as soon as she found out.

When Ms. Graves was interviewed on 3/18/13 and appointed as finance director on 3/25/13, there was no discussion of her experience as town accountant of two years for the Town of Medway in 2005, or her resignation from the position. Nor was there mention of her resignation as treasurer for the City of Taunton in 2012 in under two years on the job, her last position before applying with Fairhaven.

The Massachusetts Department of Revenue (DOR) performed a Financial Management Review on the Town of Medway, and a copy of that September 2005 final report is available on the internet. The report revealed multiple examples of financial mismanagement and poor department oversight that led to a significant budget deficit. The report further states that the town accountant's (Ms. Graves) "false statement about the deficits" led to a series of requirements that resulted in Medway joining "a limited group of 11 communities that have been sanctioned due to their unreliable financial submissions."

The report also found that the accountant (Ms. Graves), under the direction of the town administrator, transferred funding from a wage settlement account to various department budgets to cover contractual increases, which was an illegal action.

The report also emphasized the dire impact on the budget from Ms. Graves's and prior accountants' underperformance of accounting functions such as providing revenue

and expenditure reports, maintaining information of town debt, and reconciling cash and receivables with the treasurer/collector, among other duties.

"Unfortunately, the town accountant's office has not been able to adequately carry out these duties in recent years," reads the report, citing high turnover in the department, "insufficient training and experience, and a lack of supervisory or managerial guidance."

The report cites numerous and consistent failures in various reporting that is necessary for keeping track of expenditures and planning for future budgets.

"Consequently, the lack of timely and accurate financial reports has resulted in a widespread level of frustration and lack of reliance on the

I believe that my performance in Fairhaven is a clear indication that I am fully capable of managing the financial responsibilities of the Town Administrator
[Wendy Graves]

information provided," reads the report. "Also, based on preliminary FY 2005 closing information, it appears that the town has ten overdrawn accounts that will have to be provided for before setting it FY2006 tax rate."

Because Medway filed its FY2003 year-end fiscal statement of revenues and expenditures late, the report states that the town's third-quarterly state aid distribution of \$1,755,682 was withheld for a month. As a result of failing to timely reconcile receivables and certify free cash, the town's 6/30/04 balance sheet submission reflected an \$870,290 deficit in free cash "that was negatively impacted by non-reconciling receivables, a revenue deficit, and overdrawn capital projects."

Ms. Graves said in her email response to the *Neighb News* that she had left her position prior to the DOR review and report.

"Given that I don't have a copy of the report, I don't recall accusations concerned with me personally," wrote Ms. Graves. "That said, I have always worked with the best interest of the community in performing my official duties and I have never intentionally done something that was incorrect."

Ms. Graves also said she was aware of the letter of intent to terminate, but that the issue of her getting bonded was resolved. She said the town had bonded her and she acquired a bond personally.

"In response, the recommendation of the Town Administrator did not go forward," she wrote.

Ms. Graves resigned from her job as treasurer for the City of Taunton, as announced during the Taunton City Council's 12/24/12 meeting and reported by The Taunton Gazette. According to the article dated 12/24/12 titled "Taunton's treasurer resigning" by Charles Winokoor, Ms. Graves "has agreed in principle to resign." The article further states, "Sources close to City Hall recently have suggested Graves was ill-prepared for the job in the Silver City."

It cites City Councilor David Barbour as commenting, "It's not easy stepping into that job. Taunton has a large commercial (sic) base," said Barbour, who also pointed out that Graves had to endure a daily commute of more than an hour each way."

Ms. Graves has a robust history of personal finance mismanagement, as documented in the court files from four civil cases and two Supplementary Actions from the Worcester County District Court.

The *Neighb News* gained copies of the public records, which revealed that a Supplementary Action filed as recently as 9/26/17 resulted in the judge issuing a capias order for Ms. Graves's arrest that only expired on 5/2/2020 after exceeding the two-year timeframe.

That Supplementary Process stemmed from a civil action filed on 1/13/15 by Midland Funding, LLC to collect \$14,593 in debt accrued on a Citibank/Sears Mastercard. This was the only one out of six court actions that Ms. Graves responded to, which resulted in an \$8,000 settlement and an agreement to make monthly payments.

GRAVES: cont'd to page 20

From our readers

Leave things better than they were

This week felt like I was caught watching one of those Gerard Butler Olympus/London/Etc is Burning movies. Americans decided that because they didn't get the election result they wanted, that they would attack the government in the most epic temper tantrum ever. In the fashion we have seen time and time again via our political leaders the response has been to point to something else: "Well when Antifa did it the media..." How is that relevant?

When most of us were children we learned early on that method doesn't work. When we tried it the response was "If (insert name here) jumped off the Brooklyn Bridge, would you jump too".

That's when our parents were trying to teach us to own our mistakes; own our flaws; own our actions. It doesn't matter what everybody else does. We are responsible for our own actions.

A few months ago during a bickering session...sorry I mean a Select Board meeting, one Select

board member made a request to discuss a particular matter. That request was met with another member going on a rant about how his requests were shot down in previous years so he was going to take up everybody's time by revisiting all of the issues he ever wanted to discuss.

Is this where we are? Forget what the people want. Forget what's right, or noble, or professional, or mature. Let's just make this what I want because I carry the gavel.

Our Washington leadership has provided the justification to those who want to draw a line in the sand and no matter how reasonable the request, to never cross that line. If one side said trees will save the ozone layer, the other side proposes we cut down every tree in the country, unless they build that wall (this is hyperbole fyi).

I wasn't born and raised in Fairhaven. I don't have any personal issues I'm looking to take up. I am here for one reason. I love this town.

I attended both retirements (see pages 12 and 19) and when asked by

anybody my answer was consistent. I was taught to leave things better than they were when you got them. It's that simple.

Leon Correy, Fairhaven

Town should pick seasoned person for interim TA

With Mark Rees retiring, his salary became available and, with COVID-19 presenting unique challenges (large draw on free cash) I do feel we need to proceed with caution. Critical capital planning recommendations are ahead of us (which the TA has ultimate responsibility for making) and I felt that the Town deserved to have a full complement of experienced staff/leadership at the highest level at this critical time.

Yes, I would have been willing to pay extra for a candidate who had extensive experience (often retired TA's fill this sort of role on an interim basis).

Selectman Freitas went into negotiation with Ms. Graves on a stipend and brought that back into our Open Session for a vote.

While I was in favor of paying a

LETTERS: cont'd on page 21

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Fairhaven Town Administrator Mark Rees retires

By Beth David
Editor

Mark Rees says his experience as Fairhaven's first Town Administrator, overall, has been "very, very positive."

He recites a long list of accomplishments, sings the praises of town officials and employees, and grew to like the community so much that he and his wife bought a house here and have officially moved here full time.

The last couple of years have clearly seen some turmoil, with what looked like tension on camera in meetings with elected officials, a pandemic, economic uncertainty, and some long time employees retiring. But Mr. Rees would not go negative in a phone interview, not the least bit.

He said he had the opportunity to work with some "very dedicated and hard working department heads and employees, and we were able to accomplish a lot of good things for the community."

He said they enhanced service to the community in a variety of ways, including a revamp of the emergency response system; rolling the Emergency Management Agency into the Fire Department; implementing the RAVE system, which is a modern alert system for residents; working to mitigate the effects of natural disasters; received a grant to analyze risks and benefits of existing infrastructure; and...well, you get the idea.

The town is a designated "Green Community" with the state and, as such, has already reduced its energy consumption "significantly."

Policing has also been more responsive to resident concerns, such as traffic and speeding.

"The police department has put together a comprehensive approach toward's that," he said, admitting, though that not all residents are thrilled with the increased traffic/

speeding enforcement. "You can't deny we're out there more."

Under his tenure the town also implemented a capital improvement plan, increased road spending, and brought back some services that had been suspended, such as leaf collection in the fall.

Being the first TA in a town that had a different type of structure could not have been easy, right?

In some ways, it was easier to do certain things, he said. In other areas, it was more difficult.

Not having a TA form of government allowed him to build a leadership team.

"One positive is that the town had very well qualified department heads," he said, who welcomed the opportunity to work together. They "really blossomed," he said, because they had someone to go and build the relationships among the different departments.

The best example, he said, is the information technology department that is shared between the school and the town hall.

The difficult part, he said, was created the strong chain of command along with the continuation of elected boards with a certain, and sometime ambiguous, amount of autonomy, such as Board of Health and Board of Public Works.

It "created new challenges."

"But, I think we were able to overcome that by building bridges."

He said there are a few things that he was not able to finish, but hopes they will get done, such as the town-wide personnel policy, which is close to being finished. The town did implement a new wage classification plan that did not exist before. That is critical, he said for people to get paid similar amounts and be competitive in the marketplace.

The fate of the Rogers School



Fairhaven Town Administrator Mark Rees at a bridge dedication ceremony on 12/4/19. He has since grown a beard, but with the COVID-19 restrictions, the *Neighb News* hasn't been able to snag a picture of him with his mask off. *Neighb News* file photo by Glenn C. Silva.

building is still limbo, but the Oxford School Building project should start construction in the spring.

As for the next phase?

"I'm going to take a break to be honest with you," he said. "I've been doing this work for 40-plus years. I think I deserve time away, to read some books, play some golf, enjoy my new house. My wife and I are really looking forward to our years of retirement in Fairhaven."

So, Fairhaven's famous politics-as-bloodsport didn't scare him away?

"It really is a great town," said Mr. Rees. "The job is what it is. You know that going in. It's a very nice town with a lot of very friendly people, a lot of historical and natural beauty. We always wanted to live near the water. This is our dream come true."

Mr. Rees lives with his wife Beth near the center of town.



LEFT: Fairhaven Town Administrator Mark Rees speaks to Principal Assessor Del Garcia, who's on the big screen at town hall on Thursday, 1/7/21, during a send-off for Mr. Rees who retired on 1/8. RIGHT, L-R: Mr. Rees and Fire Chief Timothy Francis pose for the local free sheet during Mr. Rees's send-off; both men retired on 1/8/21 (see page 12). Photos by Glenn C. Silva.



GRAVES: cont'd from page 17

In a 2/25/15 signed letter included in the court file, Ms. Graves stated that she stopped making payments on her credit card because "I got caught up with a very bad man that took my money to pay for his drugs and things got so bad that I lost my job."

At that time Ms. Graves had been employed by the Town of Fairhaven for a few days shy of two years.

Ms. Graves subsequently defaulted on that agreement and the judge later issued a default judgment against her for \$14,593. On 9/26/17 the plaintiff filed a Supplementary Process action and the judge issued a *caipias* order for her arrest on 5/2/18, which expired on 5/2/20.

Discover Bank filed a civil action on 3/25/15 for \$10,975, which she did not respond or appear for, resulting in a subsequent 5/15/18 complaint naming the City of Taunton, her former employer, as a trustee defendant. A 7/13/18 motion by the defendant to garnish Ms. Graves's wages was subsequently removed from the action on 1/22/19. The default judgment against Ms. Graves was for \$14,533.

A Superior Court action was filed on 11/29/17 by Cavalry Portfolio Services, LLC, to recover \$35,574. Ms. Graves did not respond or appear in court and the judge issued a default judgment against her.

Another civil action was filed by Midland Funding for a Barclay's credit card on 3/2/18 for \$24,041, which Ms. Graves did not respond to or appear in court for, resulting in a default judgment against her.

Mr. Espindola declined to comment on Ms. Graves's financial difficulties, writing, "I can not confirm or deny any of these things you are referring to regarding creditors and bonding without first having the opportunity to track back through all Executive Session minutes since Ms. Graves has been hired and, if something were to be found, to determine what could or could not be released to the press."

He did note, however that the DOR report is public information and he

was made aware of it "at some point along the way."

Mr. Espindola also said he believed his reasons for not wanting to hire Ms. Graves as the Interim TA were clear, as he stated in the meeting: He felt that they should use the retiring TA's salary to hire an outside person, and, due to the pandemic, the town should not run short-staffed (by moving Ms. Graves from her current position), and the consultant recommended using an outside person.

Mr. Espindola said his comments were for the interim TA appointment only: "When Selectman Freitas revealed that Ms. Graves was on the list for the permanent TA position and I realized that we could then be interviewing her along side other candidates, I determined that it would be unfair to comment any further on her one way or the other, giving her the same consideration every candidate deserves. To be clear, I have no knowledge of any of the other candidates in the screening process from start to current time (not even names)."

Find the Medway DOR report at <https://www.mass.gov/doc/medway-financial-management-review-september-2005/download> and the Taunton Gazette article at: <https://www.tauntongazette.com/article/20121224/NEWS/312249930> ●●

Complete response from Wendy Graves

1. [Court cases] As a result of a personal relationship dissolving, I experienced some personal financial hardships which I addressed with the creditors. I was unaware of the filing of some matters with the court and, thereafter, I was not aware that a *caipias* had issued. When this was brought to my attention, I resolved the matter before the court.

2. As for the DOR report which I believe was 16 years ago in 2005, I had left my position with the Town of Medway prior to the review and the issuance of the report. Given that I don't have a copy of the report, I don't recall accusations concerned with me personally. That said, I have always worked with the best interest of the community in performing my official duties and I have never intentionally done something that was incorrect.

3. I am aware of the letter from Town Administrator Mark Rees expressing an intent for me to leave my position because of an inability to be bonded because of the matter that I had before the court years ago. It was ultimately determined that this was not the case because I was bonded by the Town and I had a second bond that I acquired personally. In response, the recommendation of the Town Administrator did not go forward.

SELECT BOARD AND SCREENING COMMITTEE [question is, are they aware of all of it]

The Select Board including Mr. Keith Silvia, have been and are presently aware of the accurate information related to me.

BONDING [question is, are you bonded]
When I was informed by the Town Administrator that I was not bonded and there was an assertion that I was unable to be bonded, I personally sought and received a bond. Subsequently, I learned that I was properly bonded by the Town during this same period of time.

OUTSTANDING CAPIAS [question is, are there any]
As I indicated previously, I resolved my personal affairs to the mutual satisfaction of myself and my creditors, so, I believe that the appropriate response to your question is: No.

OUTCOME [question is what happened to the intent to terminate]

See #3 above.
[QUESTION IS: In light of all this information, how can the public be confident that you are able to competently carry out the complex duties of TA and oversee a \$50+ million budget?]

I believe that the 8 years that I have worked for the Town of Fairhaven is a sound reflection of my performance and that which the public can expect of me in the future. I believe that the Fairhaven community at large have the same confidence in my abilities as I have in their ability to see that I have and will perform with their best interests in mind. With regard to the financial aspects of the community, again, I believe that my performance in Fairhaven is a clear indication that I am fully capable of managing the financial responsibilities of the Town Administrator.



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SELECT: cont'd from page 4
moving on. The discussion is over."

In another matter, Mr. Silvia asked if the board could invite the tree warden to one of its future meetings after he said he had received several complaints.

Mr. Espindola expressed concern over a lack of communication pertaining to last Friday's retirement presentation for the fire chief. Mr. Espindola said he had asked whether Mr. Freitas would be able to attend the ceremony several times but did not get any response. Out of concern, Mr. Espindola said he rearranged his schedule to be at the event just in case there were no other board members there.

"I don't know why the communication is breaking down," said Mr. Espindola. "It does affect my time; if you could make an effort to respond..."

In other business, the board appointed John Medeiros and David Braga as associate members on the Historical Commission.

In light of Town Administrator Mark Rees's retirement last week, the board appointed its interim town administrator, Wendy Graves, as ADA coordinator, affirmation action officer, procurement officer, and the board's rep to the Mattapoissett River Valley Water District and Capital Improvement Committee.

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LETTERS: cont'd from page 18

seasoned person extra, I did not feel that the Town was obligated to pay that rate for someone who did not have any actual experience at the TA position and I also felt it did not make sense to pay her a rate higher than what the permanent position was being advertised for. Doing so sets up for one of two things if she is ultimately offered the fulltime position: 1) The Town would have to pay a rate \$11,000 higher than what the position was advertised for on the basis of what could be just a few weeks of experience on the job, or 2) Ms. Graves would have to take an \$11,000 per year equivalent pay cut to accept the salary advertised.

To explain the weighted average calculation, it showed that if she were to work 50% of her time on the old position and 50% on the new position, the equivalent hourly rate for the TA position would actually be \$105 per hour or \$218K per year for the hours worked in that role.

Even if she were to work 80% of her time in the new role, that equivalent TA pay would have been \$86.25 per hour for the hours worked, in that role or nearly \$180K equivalent annual pay for those hours worked in that role.

The person who picks up for the work she was doing at this time last year is not being compensated for their increased work load. None of this made sense to me. I do try to apply common sense.

If you want to call me a Nickel and Dimer, in this scenario, I will gladly accept that moniker. If you feel I am not doing the best for the Town of Fairhaven, I'd truly like to hear from you.

Fairhaven Selectman Bob Espindola

Upcoming Meetings

In-person attendance is restricted during the COVID-19 crisis. The information on how to join remotely is listed on the agendas. Most meetings also run live on the government access channels, and Fairhaven meetings are livestreamed at FairhavenTV.com

Visit <https://www.fairhaven-ma.gov> for remote access information

Fairhaven

Broadband Study Comm

Thurs., 1/14, Remote, 6 p.m.

School Committee

Wed., 1/27, FHS Library, 6:30 p.m.

Selectboard

Mon., 1/25, Town Hall, 6:30 p.m.

Sustainability Comm

Tues., 1/26, Town Hall, 6:30 p.m.

Acushnet

Board of Appeals

Tues., 1/12/21, Zoom, 6:30 p.m.

Old Colony School Council

Wed., 1/20, Remote, 3 p.m.

Planning Board

Thurs., 1/21, Remote, 6:30 p.m.

Selectboard

Tues., 1/19, Town Hall, 6 p.m.

TIDE TABLE

US Army Corps of Engineers, Cape Cod Canal/Piney Point/Wing's Neck

	Jan. 2021	HIGH		LOW	
		a.m.	p.m.	a.m.	p.m.
Thursday	14	0830	2058	0200*	1510*
Friday	15	0917	2145	0245*	1529*
Saturday	16	1002	2231	0321*	1549*
Saturday	16	1002	2231	0321*	1549*
Sunday	17	1048	2319	0354	1616*
Monday	18	1137	----	0429	1649
Tuesday	19	0010	1228	0513	1730
Wednesday	20	0100	1318	0614	1825
Thursday	21	0148	1408	0727	1922
Friday	22	0239	1503	1029	2012
Saturday	23	0337	1607	1122	2103
Sunday	24	0436	1703	----	1200
				----	2158
Monday	25	0525	1748	1151	2249
Tuesday	26	0607	1828	1156	2334
Wednesday	27	0646	1909	----	1229
Thursday	28	0727	1952	0019*	1309*

* = Predicted minus tides from -0.1 ft. to -1.0 ft
** = Predicted minus tides from -1.1 ft to -2.0 ft or more

Public Hearings/Legal Notices

NOTE: All legal notices are available on the Neighb News website, www.NeighbNews.com, under the "Legal Notices" tab on the top of the main page. Legal ads are also available at <http://masspublicnotices.org>, search under "Fairhaven Neighborhood News"

Town of Acushnet Board of Selectmen Public Hearing/Delta Realty

Notice is hereby given under Chapter 148, Section 13 of the Massachusetts General Laws that Delta Realty, of 280 Ayer Road, Harvard, MA, has applied for a fuel storage license of 35,000 gallons at 158-166 Main Street, Acushnet, MA. The application for this license is for the storage of (2) underground fuel storage tanks; (1) 20,000-gallon gasoline and (1) 15,000-gallon compartmentalized: 6K premium gasoline/9K diesel fuel.

A public hearing on the above referenced fuel storage license application has been scheduled for Tuesday, January 19, 2021, beginning at 6:00 p.m., via Zoom. Info can be found on the Acushnet Website, www.acushnet.ma.us

Board of Selectmen: Kevin A. Gaspar, Sr., Chairman, David Desroches, David E. Wojnar
FNN, 1/14/21

Fairhaven Public Schools Request for Proposals Operation and Management of the School Food Service Program

The Fairhaven Public Schools is requesting proposals for Operation and Management of the School Food Service Program beginning Monday, January 18th at 9:00 am. RFP documents are available by emailing npotter@fairhavenps.net. Proposals shall be emailed or delivered to the Office of the Superintendent located at Fairhaven School Department Administration Building, 128 Washington St Fairhaven, MA 02719 by Monday, February 8th at 11:00 am. Fairhaven Public Schools reserves the right to waive any or all informalities in the RFP process and to reject any or all proposals if it is

considered to be in the best interest of the Fairhaven Public Schools to do so.

Contact Information: Nicole V. Potter, School Business Manager, 128 Washington St., Fairhaven, Massachusetts; (508) 979-4000 ext 140; npotter@fairhavenps.net

FNN: 1/14/21

PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE Fairhaven Conservation Commission

Monday, January 25, 2021 at 6:30 p.m.
Town Hall, 40 Center Street
Fairhaven, Massachusetts

To Access Meeting Remotely:
<https://zoom.us/j/96636726697?pwd=aTk2WGpzYVQvNjVlc2owT2RaaEIQQT09>
or CALL 1-929-205-6099
Meeting ID: 966 3672 6697
Passcode: 142164

The Fairhaven Conservation Commission will hold the following Public Hearings pursuant to the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act (M.G.L. c. 131, s. 40) and the Code of the Town of Fairhaven Chapter 192, Wetlands:

1. SE 023-1342, CON 023-196: **3 Hidden Drive** Notice of Intent filed by Richard and Elizabeth Perreira for the installation of a fence, removal of stumps, and loaming and seeding previously disturbed area at the property located at 3 Hidden Drive, Assessors Map 39, Lot 27C. Work to take place in the 100-foot buffer zone to Bordering Vegetated Wetland.
2. CON 023-197: **Jerusalem Road (Torrington Road to west end)** Notice of Intent filed by Vincent Furtado, Town of Fairhaven Board of Public Works, for the construction of stormwater retrofit practices at four sites along Jerusalem Road between Torrington Road and New Bedford Harbor, Assessors Map 29B. Work to take place in Coastal Dune, Land Subject to

Coastal Storm Flowage, and the 100-foot buffer zones to Coastal Dune and Coastal Beach.

Public participation will be via virtual means only: Pursuant to Governor Baker's March 12, 2020 Order suspending certain provisions of the Open Meeting Law, M.G.L. c. 30A, §18, and the Governor's March 15, 2020 Order imposing strict limitation on the number of people that may gather in one place, this meeting of the Fairhaven Conservation Commission will be conducted via remote participation. The public may participate in this meeting via remote participation. Information regarding remote meeting access, listed above, will also be provided on the Conservation Agenda posted on the Town's website at least 48 hours prior to the meeting.

Copies of the applications listed in this hearing notice may be viewed electronically at: <https://www.fairhaven-ma.gov/conservation-commission/pages/current-filings>

Geoff Haworth, Chair, Fairhaven
Conservation Commission
FNN: 1/14/21

The darkest places
in hell are reserved
for those who
maintain their
neutrality in times
of moral crisis.

Dante Alighieri



Submission of Town Meeting Articles

Pursuant to Chapter 50, Section 2 of the Town of Fairhaven By-Laws, all citizen petition articles for the May 1, 2021 annual town meeting, including street acceptance articles, must be submitted in writing with the signatures of not less than

10 voters to the Board of Selectmen,
Fairhaven Town Hall, 40 Center Street,

Fairhaven, MA by February 8, 2021 at 4:00 p.m.

Petitions can be found on the town webpage at

<https://www.fairhaven-ma.gov/board-selectmen/pages/licenses-and-permits>

Fairhaven Board of Selectmen



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Listed by Danielle Cyr-DeFrias. For further information on this property or to schedule a showing, please contact Danielle Cyr-DeFrias. Mobile: 401.919.2199 | Email: danielle@howeallen.com

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