



Town of Westford Massachusetts

Town Manager's Newsletter

May 2024



Kristen Las
Town
Manager

klas@westfordma.gov
www.westfordma.gov/tm
978-692-5500

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Apple Blossom Parade
Saturday, May 18, 10AM
Main St to Abbot School

Memorial Day Observance
Sunday, May 26
(See page 24 for list of
Ceremonies)

Acton - Westford Pride
Saturday, June 15
12 - 3 PM
(See page 19)

Dear Westford residents,

As I am writing this introductory letter, the DPW staff is dressing up the landscaping on the Town Common and in front of Town Hall to prepare for the annual Apple Blossom Festival and the [Memorial Day festivities](#). Many areas of town are looking quite spring-like. We are looking for residents to submit photographs for our "website redesign. If you wish to do so, please email photos@westfordma.gov

On April 27, 2024, the Town of Westford held the largest Town Meeting in history. We hosted 2,072 registered voters at the Westford Academy field to vote in a 22-article warrant. The results of the Town Meeting can be found [here](#). I would like to thank all of the Town staff, volunteers, board and committee members, WCAT, Westford Academy food service and Town Moderator for their exemplary efforts in pulling off such a well-run Town Meeting.

Just over a week later, the Town of Westford held the townwide election where 7,198 voters cast their ballots. This constitutes over 37% of registered voters. The election results can be found [here](#). Although Article 1 (the override budget) passed at Town Meeting, Question 1, asking the Town to raise \$4.2M in additional taxes did not. Therefore, the Town will move forward with the fiscal year 2025 budget under Article 4 as amended. A comprehensive [memorandum](#) with this information was presented to the Select Board on May 14, 2024. More information on the service and staffing cuts can be found [here](#). More information on the budget can be found on the [budget website](#).

Congratulations to our Westford Public Health Nurse, Gail Johnson, R.N.! She received the Shelia Miller Memorial Public Health Nurse award at the Massachusetts Association of Public Health Nursing (MAPHN) Conference. The award is to recognize a current member of MAPHN that has shown leadership qualities, and has demonstrated expertise in the field of public health nursing. We are so proud of her and all she does for this community.



**Gail Johnson, R.N. ,
Public Health Nurse**

Beginning July 1, 2024, the Town of Westford will end its contracts with Acme Waste (trash, bulk and white goods) and Waste Management (recycling) and begin curbside services with E.L. Harvey to collect both recycling, trash, bulk and white goods. There are some important changes that you need to keep in mind.

- While the days won't change, YOUR TIME OF COLLECTION MIGHT! It is important to have all containers curbside by 7 A.M. on your regularly scheduled day of collection.

(Continued on next page)



Watch
westford CAT
community access television
www.westfordcat.org

WWW.WESTFORDMA.GOV

- There will be changes to the BULK WASTE AND WHITE GOODS COLLECTION sticker program. These include fees, limitations, and collection request procedures. Please visit www.westfordma.gov/recycling-trash for additional information.
- Customer service will be provided by E.L. Harvey's local live customer service center both by phone and online with extended hours and Saturdays.

In the coming weeks, the Town will be providing additional information to our residents through its website, social media, mailings, and both online and in-person informational forums.

Please visit www.westfordma.gov/recycling-trash for the latest information or scan the QR code with your mobile device.



Latest Trash and Recycling Information

Please see below for matters that were discussed or acted upon by the Select Board in the past month.

At their meeting on April 23, 2024:

Mark Warren, Water Department Superintendent, gave an update on construction of the PFAS treatment plants and he and Kyle Fox, Department of Public Works Director, led a discussion on the water rate study.

The Select Board approved setting the Special Town Meeting date of October 21, 2024 as well as the draft Special Town Meeting timeline.

The Select Board reviewed pending bills on hybrid Board and Committee meetings and directed the Town Manager to write a letter to the State Legislators to support the Municipal Modernization Bill that allows for remote and hybrid meetings. They also discussed with Jeff Morrisette, Assistant Town Manager of Land Use Management and Economic Development, a potential policy on hybrid meetings for Westford Land Use boards. The Select Board requested those 3 boards put this item on their next agenda for discussion and feedback, and requested that the Planning Board hold a hybrid meeting on May 6, 2024 to accommodate the Firearms Bylaw Public Hearing.

At their meeting on May 14, 2024, Select Board Vice Chair Scott Hazelton announced that it was National Peace Officers Week, and May 15, 2024 was Peace Officers Memorial Day. He also announced a pig roast fundraiser for Officer Haslam, whose home was lost in a fire, which would take place at the Franco-American Club on Friday, May 17, 2024. Select Board Member Chris Barrett announced the Apple Blossom Parade on Saturday, May 18, 2024 at 10AM. Resident Meghan O'Connell of 44 South Chelmsford offered congratulations to John Cunningham for his reelection to the Select Board. She also asked the Select Board to reflect on the outcome of the override, and how they can better represent town residents in the future. She also asked for more transparency and implementation of policies for Citizen Activity Forms and appointment to Boards and Committees. In addition, she asked the Select Board to use Free Cash for the FY 25 School Budget and to review the revenue and efficiency findings by the Budget Task Force, with potentially a new task force.

The Select Board voted to reorganize their board positions. Scott Hazelton is the Chair; Tom Clay is the Vice Chair and Chris Barrett is the Clerk.

The Select Board discussed and reviewed the logistics of a successful Annual Town Meeting which took place on April 27, 2024. Moderator Angela Harkness gave her thanks to all departments involved in the planning execution and the Town Manager explained that plans were in place to update the technology in the cafeteria and auditorium at Westford Academy to better accommodate larger Town Meetings in the future. These updates will be completed this summer in time for the Special Town Meeting on October 21, 2024.

(Continued on next page)

Mike Edwards, Assistant Town Manager of Strategic Operations, gave an update on solid waste and recycling public outreach and rollout. The Select Board approved in a 4-0 vote to raise the cost of the bulk waste sticker from \$5 to \$15. This will go into effect on July 1, 2024 with the rollout of the new contract with E.L. Harvey for both solid waste and recycling.

The Select Board approved in a 4-0 vote the request from DPW Director Kyle Fox for a proclamation for National Public Works Week, which honors public works professionals during the week of May 19-25, 2024.

Select Board Vice Chair Tom Clay thanked organizers of the First Responders Appreciation event which was held on May 5, 2024. John Cunningham thanked the Friends of East Boston Camps for their work, and announced the group was disbanding.

The Select Board accepted a donation of \$55,000 from the Westford Friends of East Boston Camps to restore or replace the Nashoba Lodge Fireplace and chimney and contribute to any other projects of East Boston Camps with the Stony Brook Conservation Area. The Select Board also accepted a donation of \$500 from Larry and Dori Mariasis for maintenance of the Ronan McElligott Playground.

There are several openings on our local boards and committees, including:

Affordable Housing Trust

Board of Assessors

Bylaw Review Committee

Capital Planning Committee

Clean Energy and Sustainability Committee

Community Preservation Committee

Cultural Council

Diversity Equity and Inclusion

Dog Park Task Force

Economic Development Committee

Finance Committee

Healthy Westford Committee

Historical Commission

MBTA Communities Multi-Family Housing

Northern Middlesex Stormwater Collaborative

Parks and Recreation Commission

Pedestrian Safety Committee

Permanent Town Building Committee

Recycling Commission

Scholarship and Grant Committee

Selectmen Policies & Procedures Sub Committee

Tax Possession Disposition Committee

I urge you to peruse our website for information about the work of these committees; and if you have interest, please complete and submit a Citizen's Activity form at this link: [Citizen Activity Form](#).

Would you like more detailed information on the Select Board's meetings? Click the following links to access: [Select Board Documents](#) & [Select Board Meeting Videos](#).

If you have any suggestions for articles or added features in future newsletters, please do not hesitate to reach out to the Town Manager's office at (978)-692-5501 or email at klas@westfordma.gov.

Sincerely,



Kristen Las, Town Manager

From the Moderator



**THANK YOU WESTFORD VOTERS,
TOWN STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS!**

On April 27 Westford held what was by far the largest Annual Town Meeting in 295 years of Town government with 2,072 voters in attendance. I was privileged to preside over that meeting as Moderator. Twenty-two articles were voted on and the business of the Town was concluded in a single day. Debate was sometimes passionate but always civil and the decisions made by the Town's voters were expressed only after careful consideration. Thank you to all who attended, for making this very direct form of deliberative democracy work here in Westford.

The entire Town pitched in to make the meeting a success. In addition to the voters who gave up their free time to attend the meeting, Town staff were heavily involved in the extensive planning that made the meeting happen. The Town Manager, Town Clerk, IT Department, Police, Fire, Facilities staff, Rec Department, GIS staff, Engineering staff, Council on Aging and Commission on Disabilities were all essential to the conduct of the meeting as were dozens of volunteers. Hours and hours of public hearings and information sessions, planned and run by Town board and committee members, allowed voters to be prepared in advance and arrive at the meeting knowledgeable on the issues to be discussed. The League of Women Voters and Westford CAT provided pre-meeting coverage and information as well as broadcast of the meeting itself. Finally, thank you to Westford Academy for allowing us to use the field and to all the local sports and cultural organizations who rescheduled their activities to avoid conflict for the voters.

This was truly a Town wide effort and a very successful one at that. It should serve as a model for future Town meetings and an example of what can happen when we all work together.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY! The Finance Committee has several openings for people who are interested in serving our community in this capacity. To apply for a seat on the Finance Committee or any other volunteer committee position in Westford you can fill out and submit an application [here](#)

Angela Harkness
Westford Town Moderator
aharkness@westfordma.gov

May at the J.V. Fletcher Library



Unless otherwise noted, the following programs are made possible by the Friends of the Library.

Director's Corner: Summer is quickly approaching! Nancy Boutet and other Youth Services staff members will be visiting the schools to share information about our eagerly anticipated summer reading programs. We offer Summer Reading programs for children, young adults, and adults. The themes and prizes will be revealed soon! We promise a fun-filled summer at the Library!

Friends of the Library June Book Sale: Mark your calendars for the June Book Sale! **Friday, June 7, Saturday, June 8 and Sunday, June 9.** A Friends Members Only Sale will be held on Friday evening from 6:30 – 9:00 p.m. A Friends membership (which may be purchased at the door) is necessary for attending this sale. The entire public is invited Saturday for an all-day sale, 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. and for the \$10.00 Bag Sale on Sunday, from 2:00 – 4:00 p.m. So much stock! So little time!

Monday Mystery Book Club: Monday, May 20 at 2:00 p.m. in the Mary Atwood Room. Wake up your week with a stimulating book discussion! We meet on the fourth Monday of the month at 2:00 p.m. Copies of the current selection are available at Main Desk. This month's book is *The Stolen Coast* by Dwyer Murphy. New members are always welcome! Email [Justin Liberti](mailto:Justin.Liberti@westfordlibrary.org) at with any questions.

YA Crafternoon Monday, May 20 at 3:30 p.m. in the Meeting Room – Perler Bead Art. Open to grades 5 and up. Registration is appreciated, but drop-ins are welcome. [Register Here.](#)

YA Boba Lounge: Thursday, May 23, 6:00-8:00 p.m. in the Meeting Room For teens in grade 7 and up. Come to the Meeting Room to play board games, listen to music and enjoy some boba! [Registration](#) is appreciated but drop-ins are always welcome.

Sweet Reads MG Book Club: Tuesday, May 28 at 6:30 p.m. At our May meeting, we'll be discussing "Well That Was Awkward" by Rachel Vail. We'll also enjoy some dessert. Open to grade 6 and up. Copies of the book are available at the Main Desk.

Wishing Nancy Boutet a Happy Retirement! : Friday, May 31, 1:30-3:45 p.m. After many years of bringing joyful learning to the children of Westford, our Head of Youth Services Librarian, Nancy Boutet will retire on May 31, 2024. Help us send Nancy off to enjoy time in her garden! Join us on the back lawn to say goodbye, enjoy a craft, eat some cake, and have some bubble fun! If it rains, we will be in the Meeting Room. No registration required.

Staff Recommends: Whether you are a cat lover or not, you will enjoy Caleb Carr's new book about his rescue cat and their special relationship, *My Beloved Monster: Masha, the Half-Wild Rescue Cat, Who Rescued Me*. "Caleb Carr has had special relationships with cats since he was a young boy in a turbulent household, famously peopled by the founding members of the Beat Generation, where his steadiest companions were the adopted cats that lived with him both in the city and the country. As an adult, he has had many close feline companions, with relationships that have outlasted most of his human ones. But only after building a three-story home in rural, upstate New York did he enter into the most extraordinary of all of his cat pairings: Masha, a Siberian Forest cat who had been abandoned as a kitten and was languishing in a shelter when Caleb met her. She had hissed and fought off all previous carers and potential adopters, but somehow, she chose Caleb as her savior. For the seventeen years that followed, Caleb and Masha were inseparable. Masha ruled the house and the extensive, dangerous surrounding fields and forests. When she was hurt, only Caleb could help her. When he suffered long-standing physical ailments, Masha knew what to do. Caleb's life-long study of the literature of cat behavior, and his years of experience with previous cats, helped him decode much of Masha's inner life. But their bond went far beyond academic studies and experience."

[Programs – Adults](#)
[Programs – Kids](#)
[Programs – Young Adults](#)

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www.facebook.com/J-V-Fletcher-Library

Friends of The J.V. Fletcher Library



SPRING BOOK SALE



FRIENDS OF THE JV FLETCHER LIBRARY • 50 MAIN STREET • WESTFORD MA

Fri June 7
6:30 to 9

Members' Night
Join now or at the door!



Sat June 8
10 to 5

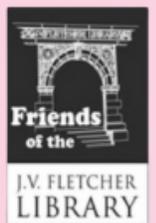
Public Sale
Most items \$1 or \$2



Sun June 9
2 to 4

Bag Sale
Buy a \$10 bag and fill it up!

Thousands of gently used books and AV materials
Your purchase supports our many innovative programs
Cash, checks, and credit cards accepted



Helping Your Library Do More

April 2024 Sustainability Update, Sue Thomas, [Sustainability Coordinator](#)

Grant Updates

Town Facilities: As a Green Community, Westford is eligible and has received grants to help us put energy conservation measures in place to save dollars, energy and carbon emissions. This summer, Westford will update the air sealing and insulation at both Westford Academy and Rita Miller school, approximately **\$200,000** of work, at no cost to the Town, due to both a Green Communities grant and utility incentives. This work will make the buildings more comfortable and less expensive to operate as well as prepare them for future electrification. In addition, a technical assistance grant (**\$13,900**) will pay for expertise to help the Town evaluate the Investment Grade Audit and any contractual arrangements that might result from it. Staff continue to secure utility rebates that apply to facilities projects.

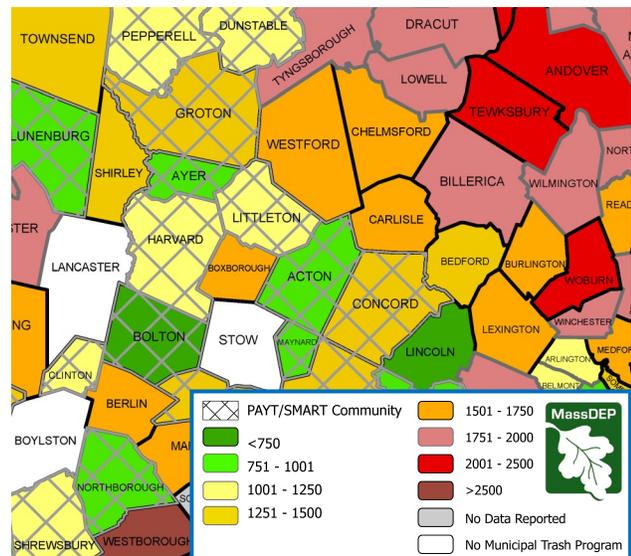
Transportation: The Town applied for and received a grant for **\$7,500** from Mass DEP's EVIP program to help defray the cost of the electric vehicle for the Department of Public Works approved at Annual Town Meeting last month. Both electric vehicles last month should be eligible for tax credits of an additional **\$7,500 each** under the IRA Direct Pay option for municipalities when it comes time to file next year. The Town is applying for this same credit for the electric vehicles purchased in 2023 now and expects a **\$15,000** "refund".

Solid Waste Updates

Trash and Recycling: The Town is finalizing the new curbside collection contracts that will start July 1. Our long-time trash vendor, Acme Waste, is retiring after 25 years of service to the Town. While many things will remain the same, some things will change, and EL Harvey has more enforcement capabilities, so it is a good idea to review the Town's solid waste information to make sure you know the rules. The Town is planning an outreach campaign to inform residents. Look for more information soon and, as always, keep an eye out for your Recycling Guide in the mail, with all the info you need at your fingertips or on your fridge.

[This Recycle Smart Newsletter](#) is a terrific resource to better understand waste and how to think and act more intentionally about the dollar and carbon impacts of your decisions. It also features a map of how Westford compares to other towns in the Commonwealth (hint: not well – although the efforts of the Westford Recycling Commission and the residents who attend their events keep us from being entirely in the red – thank you!).

[Bootstrap Compost](#) The Bootstrap Compost Program continues to grow! There were 125 customers at the end of April, 5 over the 120 needed for the additional \$1 discounts, which are now in place for residents. Diversion data continues to show that an average Westford household produces 10 pounds of food waste a week, and therefore every 4 households participating divert a ton of trash from the waste stream over the course of a year! In April, participants diverted just under 2.5 tons of food waste.



Trash - Pound Per Household in 2022

[The Electronics and More event](#) is now scheduled for June 22nd and the [Roudenbush Town Wide Yard Sale](#) is scheduled for June 1st. See the Westford Recycling Commission section of this newsletter and their and website for more information on solid waste.

(Continued on next page)

Sustainability (Continued)

Gratitude

Many thanks to everyone who sponsored, hosted, volunteered, or attended **Earth Month** events and/or our **political processes** in April, as well as those who signed up for Boot Strap compost collection. It takes a Town!

Many thanks, too, to the Department of Public Works, for their continuing dedication to hosting diversion events at the Highway Garage, in conjunction with the Westford Recycling Commission (**brush chipping, household hazardous waste and electronics recycling**) and for the **tree seedling giveaway!**

Volunteer Opportunities

If you are energized by the contents of this newsletter, please consider joining one of the two committees most involved in implementing the functions and ideas presented here in Westford: the [Clean Energy and Sustainability Committee](#) and the [Westford Recycling Commission](#). These committees will become even more vital to meeting the Town's commitments and goals now that the staff Sustainability Coordinator position has been eliminated. Join a meeting to learn more or fill out a [Citizen Activity Form](#) to express your interest. Reach out if you have any questions about these Committees doing great work for you.

Sustainability at Home

[Massachusetts Community Climate Bank launches First Consumer Loan Product](#). Households in single to 4 unit family housing earning \$190,000 or less can apply for the Energy Saver Home Loan Program [here](#) to finance a variety of home improvements on their primary residence related to electrification, including not just those upgrades that already are eligible for Mass Save rebates, but also roofs, oil tank removal. The intent is for this program to be as easy to access and finance as the 0% interest heat loan and to work with it. This financing mechanism just might be the key to starting your electrification journey!



Heat Pumps: The summer is expected to be hot. When looking to stay cool with heat pumps, don't hesitate to size your system for heating, too, and take advantage of all the incentives available now. Modern heat pumps, when sized correctly, and installed in a properly insulated home, can perform safely and comfortably without fossil fuel backup.

MassSave isn't just for the big things: Don't forget to check out [their page](#) as you replace **anything that requires power**. Or don't replace it right away and see if you can go manual or without. If you have to pick one medium sized thing to start, [replace your gas stove](#) to protect your health, safety and the climate without sacrificing taste or cool – induction cooktops don't stay hot once turned off!

Don't forget [shave the peak programs](#) to save money and electricity without sacrificing comfort. Whatever system you have, tune it up and change the filters for optimum performance!



(Continued on next page)

Sustainability (Continued)

Sustainability in your Landscape

People: I never see butterflies or lightning bugs in my yard

Their yard:



We have been trained to think that this is a picture of a clean, appealing, healthy yard. In reality, this is a picture of a fairly sterile environment “in need” of human care to keep it that way. It requires (often petroleum based) additives, or soil supplements and often extra water to remain green. Planting a mix of native plants, or dedicating a portion of your property to habitat native to your microclimate, will provide homes and food for beneficial insects and other critters. Leaving the leaves and other things that drop from the trees also enriches the soil and provides habitat for fireflies and caterpillars that become butterflies and feeds the birds naturally. If the only edible food in your neighborhood is in your birdfeeder, your flower beds and your vegetable gardens, then you have forced the critters to focus there, and you have forced your species trees to exist without the network of underground roots and community that allow them to communicate and produce natural defenses against insects and disease when warned by other trees. Use plants to attract the animals you want, and to deter those you don't want.

An easy change to make (it is less work!) is to stop insisting on a monoculture. If your lawn isn't filling with invasive species, or poison ivy, let what grows there grow. Lawns with mixed plants left long (set your blade no lower than 3 inches) and mowed with a mulcher, rather than bagging, will help enrich the soil naturally and it should retain moisture for longer, eliminating the need for irrigation. You will be surprised at all the flowers and other life that appears. In addition, it might protect the plants you want to eat! I watched a woodchuck with trepidation one season only to see it completely ignore my veggies and flowers in favor of the plants in my lawn!



Both beneficial and concerning insects may find habitat in your yard. Lexington Living Landscapes is offering [this presentation](#) by Xerces May 30th to help you deter the insects that carry disease while not poisoning the insects we need to pollinate our food and gardens and to maintain a resilient environment. They have a bunch of other events to consider too.

Celebrate sustainably this month! Congrats to everyone recognizing a lifetime achievement.

Community Wellness - May is Mental Health Awareness Month

The Town of Westford, does hereby proclaim the month of May as Mental Health Awareness Month; We also call upon all Westford residents, agencies, public and private institutions, businesses, and schools to recommit our community to increasing overall awareness and understanding of mental health, reducing stigma and discrimination of mental illnesses, and promoting appropriate and accessible mental health services for all people. To view the entire, Select Board approved proclamation please click the link - [Westford Mental Health Awareness Month Proclamation](#)



Community Behavioral and Mental Health Committee

Did you know that Westford has a Community Behavioral and Mental Health Committee? Check out their webpage here: <https://westfordma.gov/1567/Community-Behavioral-and-Mental-Health-C>

Mental Health Awareness Poster contest for 6th, 7th and 8th grade Westford residents. For more information about the contest please click the link: [Poster Contest Flyer](#)

We encourage you to explore the various resources available to support you or your loved ones mental health journey:

Behavioral Health Helpline: The Massachusetts Behavioral Health Help Line (BHHL) is here to connect you directly to clinical help, when and where you need it. Even if you're not sure what kind of help or treatment you may need, they can help guide you. Call or Text: 833-773-2445 <https://www.masshelpline.com/>

SAMHSA (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration): SAMHSA recognizes Mental Health Awareness Month every May to increase awareness about the vital role mental health plays in our overall health and well-being and provide resources and information to support individuals and communities who may need mental health support. <https://www.samhsa.gov/mental-health-awareness-month>

NAMI, Massachusetts (National Alliance on Mental Illness) - NAMI seeks to improve the quality of life for people living with mental health conditions, their families, and their caregivers. They work to ensure that all people impacted by a mental health condition receive the support they need when they need it. To learn more about NAMI's resources, programs, and supports visit: <https://namimass.org/>

National Suicide and Crisis Lifeline – call 988 - The Lifeline provides 24/7, free and confidential support for people in distress, prevention and crisis resources for you or your loved ones, and best practices for professionals in the United States. <https://988lifeline.org/>

National Maternal Mental Health Hotline:

Pregnancy and a new baby can bring a range of emotions. Many new moms feel overwhelmed, sad, anxious, or exhausted at different times during their pregnancy or after the baby is born.

Sometimes these feelings go away on their own. But if these feelings last for more than two weeks, and make it hard to carry out daily tasks, like caring for themselves or their family, a mom may have perinatal depression or anxiety. These are common and treatable health conditions during or after pregnancy. And that's why a new mom, or those supporting them, should reach out right away for help.

The National Maternal Mental Health Hotline can help. **YOU ARE NOT ALONE!** Call or text 1-833- 852 - 6262 (1-833- TLC - MAMA). TTY users can use a preferred relay service or dial 711 and then 1-833- 852 - 6262.

For more information or help connecting to resources:

Community Wellness Coordinator, Nicole Laviolette

(978) 399- 2503 - nlaviolette@westfordma.gov - www.westfordma.gov/Wellness

Community Wellness

ARPA FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR KIDS CLUB SUMMER OR AFTER SCHOOL CARE

Through ARPA funding we are proud to announce that we will be reviewing/accepting applications for the Fiscal Year 2024-2025 for one free week of Kids Club Summer (starts June 24th, 2024) per child OR \$400 per child for the Recreation Department After School Program (starts August 28th, 2024).

Eligibility for this program is income and Westford residency based. The information on the application will be used to determine your family's eligibility for assistance based on your present gross household income that falls at or below 300% of the federal poverty level (the following income eligibility chart is located on page 3 of the application).

Applications should be emailed to Community Wellness Coordinator, Nicole Laviolette at nlaviolette@westfordma.gov or hand-delivered to the Westford Town Hall, Town Managers Office Attn: Nicole Laviolette. Applications are funded on a first-come, first-serve basis.

For any questions please email nlaviolette@westfordma.gov or call Nicole Laviolette at (978) 399-2503.

Click the link below for the ARPA Financial Assistance Application

<https://www.westfordma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/14584/FINAL-ARPA-Afterschool-and-Camp-Assistance-Application-2024>

Community Wellness (Continued)

Mind & Every Body Practice

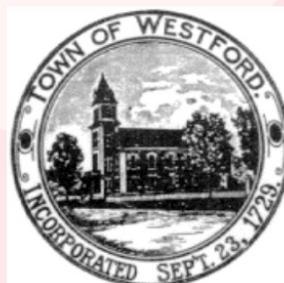
MAY 22ND

10:30—11:30 AM

J. V. FLETCHER LIBRARY, MEETING ROOM
50 MAIN ST, WESTFORD, MA

NO REGISTRATION REQUIRED

JOIN BRITTANY NASH,
REGIONAL COMMUNITY
HEALTH AND WELLNESS
COORDINATOR, FOR A 45-
MINUTE GUIDED MEDITATION



Health Department



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

TICK-BORNE ILLNESS INFORMATION

Attention: Westford Residents,

As tick season is now in full swing, the Westford Health Department would like to remind you to be aware of tick-borne illnesses, as well as how to stay safe around ticks. Tick bites can happen year-round, although ticks are most active from April until September. A single bite by a nymph or adult female tick may potentially transmit multiple infections at once. It is not uncommon for a tick to harbor three or four pathogenic diseases. To avoid being bitten, it is crucial to check yourself after you've been outside. Ticks may be found anywhere outside, such as in the woods or meadows, as well as your yard.

Some of the most common tick-borne diseases in Massachusetts are Lyme Disease, Babesiosis, and Human Granulocytic Anaplasmosis (HGA). Some of the less common, or more rare, tick-borne diseases in Massachusetts are Tularemia, Borrelia Miyamotoi, Powassan Virus, and Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever.

Some of the most common ticks in Massachusetts are the Black-Legged Tick, also known as the "deer tick." This tick primarily transmits Lyme Disease, Babesiosis, Anaplasmosis (HGA), Borrelia Miyamotoi, and Powassan Virus. The Lone Star Tick is a known carrier of Ehrlichiosis and Tularemia. The Groundhog Tick carries Powassan Disease. The American Dog Tick and Rocky Mountain Wood Tick may both carry Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever and Tularemia.

Each tick-borne disease may present with different symptoms ranging from headaches, fatigue, muscle & joint aches and pains, fevers, and rashes. The symptoms of Powassan may include weakness, loss of coordination, confusion, trouble with speech, seizures, and could lead to meningitis and death. Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever can have symptoms of nerve damage, hearing loss, partial paralysis, and if left untreated can be fatal. If you have a known tick bite, report it to your doctor as soon as possible, and the physician will decide if you should start antibiotic treatment.

From January 2023 to April 2024, Westford has had two confirmed cases of Powassan, 48 probable Lyme Disease, 35 suspected Lyme Disease, six confirmed cases of Anaplasmosis, five cases of Babesiosis, and one case of Ehrlichiosis. These cases of tick-borne diseases can be found throughout Westford, not only in one neighborhood.

Ticks typically hang out in grassy areas, damp leaf piles, and wooded areas in and around your yard, so it is best to create a yard free of leaf litter, tall grasses, and remove anything that attracts rodents, and other animals that carry ticks, like deer, racoons, and woodchucks. It is recommended to use insect repellent, wear protective clothing such as long sleeves and long pants, and treat socks and pant legs with permethrin-containing insecticide.

There are many resources available on the CDC and MDPH website. Please take time to look at them for further information. Knowledge is the best way to prevent exposure to tick-borne illnesses.

Sincerely,
Westford Health Department
Gail Johnson, BSN, RN, Public Health Nurse

Health Department (continued)

MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH FACT SHEET

Powassan virus

What is Powassan virus?

Powassan virus causes a rare, but often serious disease, and is spread by the bite of tiny, infected black-legged (deer) ticks. There are two types of Powassan virus in the United States. One type is found in ticks that normally feed on woodchucks (groundhogs); the second type is carried by black-legged (deer) ticks, the same ticks that can also carry the germs that cause Lyme disease, babesiosis and anaplasmosis.

Where do cases of Powassan virus disease occur?

Although approximately 100 cases of Powassan infection have been reported in the last 10 years in the United States, most of those cases have occurred in the Northeast and the Great Lakes region. There have been 16 cases of Powassan virus infection in Massachusetts since 2013.

How is Powassan virus spread?

Powassan virus is spread by the bite of an infected tick. In Massachusetts, the black-legged (deer) tick is the type of tick most likely to carry this infection. While ticks must be attached for a certain length of time before they can spread most infections, there is some evidence that Powassan virus can spread from the tick into a person after only a short time of attachment.

When am I at risk from Powassan virus?

Cases of Powassan virus disease can occur any time ticks are active. Young ticks (nymphs) are most active during the warm weather months between May and July. Adult ticks are most active during the fall and spring, but may also be out searching for a host any time that winter temperatures are above freezing.

How soon do symptoms of disease appear after a tick bite?

Symptoms of disease usually begin between one week and one month after the bite of an infected tick.

What are the symptoms of Powassan virus disease?

Although most people who are exposed to Powassan virus likely never feel ill, others may become severely ill with meningitis (inflammation of the covering of the brain and spinal cord) or encephalitis (inflammation of the brain). Signs and symptoms include fever, headache, vomiting, weakness, confusion, loss of coordination, speech difficulties and seizures. Approximately 10% of people with this severe form of the disease will die and survivors may have long-term health problems.

Is there treatment for Powassan virus disease?

There is no specific treatment once infection with Powassan virus has occurred. Treatment consists of supportive care, rest and fluids to prevent dehydration.

Did you know?

You don't have to be a hiker on Cape Cod to worry about ticks. In Massachusetts, you can be bitten in your own back yard. There are lots of things you can do around your own backyard to make it less inviting for ticks! Visit the MDPH Tick-borne Disease Website at www.mass.gov/dph/tick for suggestions.

(Continued on next page)

Health Department (Continued)

What can I do to lower my chances of getting any disease from ticks?

Prevention begins with you! Take steps to reduce your chances of being bitten by any tick. Ticks are most active during warm weather, generally late spring through fall. However, ticks can be out any time that temperatures are above freezing. Ticks cling to vegetation and are most numerous in brushy, wooded or grassy habitats. When you are outside in an area likely to have ticks (e.g. brushy, wooded or grassy places), follow these simple steps to protect yourself and your loved ones:

- Use a repellent with **DEET** (the chemical N-N-diethyl-meta-toluamide) or **permethrin**. Repellents containing DEET should not be used on children less than 2 months of age and should be used in concentrations no higher than 30% on older children. Permethrin products are intended for use on items such as clothing, shoes, bed nets and camping gear and should not be applied to skin. Other repellents, such as picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus and IR 3535, have also been found to provide protection against ticks. More information on choosing a repellent and how to use repellents safely is included on the MDPH Public Health Fact Sheet on Tick Repellents at www.mass.gov/dph/tick.
- Wear long, light-colored pants tucked into socks or boots, and a long-sleeved shirt. This may be tough to do when the weather is hot, but it will help keep ticks away from your skin and help you spot a tick on your clothing faster.
- Stay on trails when walking or hiking, avoiding the edge habitat where ticks are likely to be.
- Showering immediately after potential tick exposure may help remove unattached ticks.
- Talk to your veterinarian about tick control options (tick collars, repellents) for your pets.

After spending time in an area likely to have ticks, check yourself, your children, and pets for ticks. Young ticks, called nymphs, are the size of a poppy seed. Adult black-legged ticks are the size of a sesame seed. Both nymph and adult ticks can spread diseases ticks carry; however, nymphs are often of more concern. They are aggressive feeders and so tiny that it can be difficult to see them on the body, unless you are looking carefully. When doing a tick check, remember that ticks like places that are warm and moist. Always check the back of the knees, armpits, groin, scalp, back of the neck and behind the ears. If you find a tick attached to your body, remove it as soon as possible using fine-point tweezers. Do not squeeze or twist the tick's body, but grasp it close to your skin and pull straight out with steady pressure.

Know the symptoms of tick-borne disease. If you develop symptoms of any disease carried by ticks, see your health care provider right away.

Where can I get more information?

- **For questions about your own health**, contact your doctor, nurse, or clinic
- **For questions about diseases spread by ticks**, contact the MDPH at (617) 983-6800 or toll free at (888) 658-2850 or online at www.mass.gov/dph/tick. You may also contact your local Board of Health (listed in the telephone directory under "Government").
- **Health effects of pesticides**, MDPH, Bureau of Environmental Health at 617-624-5757.



Health Department (Continued)

JOIN US FOR THE FREE UPCOMING

YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID TRAINING



This Youth Mental Health First Aid Training is supported by a grant from the Greater Lowell Community Foundation (GLCF)

WHAT IS YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID?

The Youth Mental Health First Aid training teaches adults how to identify, understand, and respond to signs of mental health and substance use challenges among children and adolescents from ages 12-18.

HOW IS THIS TRAINING BENEFICIAL?

1. Informs adults about common mental health concerns among youth.
2. Helps reduce stigma.
3. Helps adults recognize common signs and symptoms of mental health and substance misuse challenges beyond "typical" teen behavior.
4. Provides guidance with a simple 5-step action plan (ALGEE) how to properly and safely respond to these challenges.

WHO SHOULD KNOW AND BE INVOLVED?

- Parents
- Educators
- All community members



Date: May 30, 2024

Time: 9:00AM-3:00PM

Location: Acton Town Hall, Meeting Room 204
72 Main St, Acton, MA 01720

Interested in attending?

Please contact Brittany Nash for registration!

Email: bnash@westfordma.gov



Health Department (Continued)

Your Language Matters

The words you use matter. You can break down negative stereotypes and give people hope by choosing **words that are more relatable and promote understanding.** This simple but caring approach may help people feel more comfortable and willing to **talk openly about mental health** and to reach out for support early.

Tips for Talking About Mental Health

CONSIDER SAYING

- Mental health condition
- The weather is unpredictable
- My daughter has schizophrenia
- Person with a mental health condition
- Lives with, has or experiences

INSTEAD OF

- Brain disorder or brain disease
- The weather is bipolar
- My daughter is schizophrenic
- Consumer, client or patient
- Suffers from, afflicted with or mentally ill

Tips for Talking About Suicide

BE SAYSING

- Suicide attempt/ attempted suicide
- Died by suicide/ suicide death
- Took their own life
- Died as the result of self-inflicted injury
- Disclosed

INSTEAD OF

- Failed suicide or unsuccessful attempt
- Successful or completed suicide
- Committed suicide
- Chose to kill him/herself
- Threatened

When talking about suicide, consider other meanings your words may have. For example, "committed suicide" implies that suicide is a crime. You can help **eliminate the misunderstanding and stigma** that prevent people from speaking up and getting support by **choosing words that are clearer and more neutral.**

The Westford Coalition for Non-Violence

Mother's Day Gift Donations



The Westford Coalition for Non-Violence (WCNV), Live for Liv, and two Westford Academy Interns partnered with the team from the Alternative House, to collect donations that were used to assemble Mother's Day gift bags, for twenty women staying in a domestic violence shelter.

The mission of WCNV is ***"to promote healthy relationships and foster a culture of non-violence for all members of our community."*** The Westford Coalition for Non-Violence has recently updated a domestic violence educational handbook, which includes definitions of DV, safety planning with children, information on restraining orders, and resources. This handbook is for educational purposes only. This free handbook can be found at the Town Hall, Fletcher Library, Police Station, and Cameron Senior Center. Everyone deserves to live healthy, and happy lives!

In an emergency call 911

National Domestic Violence 24 Hour Hotline: 1-800-799-7233

SafeLink Domestic Violence 24 Hour Hotline: 1-877-785-2020

Alternative House 24 Hour Hotline: 1-888-291-6228 (local)

Warmly,
Gail Johnson, RN, Public Health Nurse
Chair, Westford Coalition for Non-Violence (WCNV)



CELEBRATE DIVERSITY!
STAND FOR EQUALITY!

Acton- Westford Pride 2024

JUNE 15, 2024, 12-3 PM

FREE EVENT

NARA AMPHITHEATER

PRIDE FESTIVAL INCLUDES:

FAMILY ACTIVITIES,

LIVE MUSIC, & VENDORS!

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/acton-westford-pride-festival-2024-tickets-876798898107>

Westford Recreation

Westford Partnership for Children (WPC)

Session 5 – Register at any time! WPC is safety focused, with activities and scheduling flexibility like no other program. Conveniently located at Abbot, Crisafulli, Day, Miller, Nabnasset, and Robinson schools. Runs Monday-Friday, from school dismissal to 6:00 p.m. Visit About WPC - westfordma.myrec.com.

Rec's Summer Weekly Programs

Swimming, Arts & Crafts, Sports & Games, plus, field trips like Wingersheek, Canobie Lake Park, FunStuf, and more!

Summer Beach Party at D.E. Program coverage just when you need it, the last week in June and in Mid-August. *East Boston Camps (EBC)*

Kids Club Fast-Paced, fun-filled activities for children at all levels. *Nabnasset School*

Destination Exploration Classic summertime activities in a classic summertime setting. *East Boston Camps (EBC)*

NEW SWIM LESSONS at EDs will now be offered for both Kids Club and Destination Exploration participants!

Enjoy **NINE WEEKS OF FLEXIBLE FULL-WEEK PROGRAMS** with *early arrival and extended day* options.

Visit Summer Weekly Programs - westfordma.myrec.com.



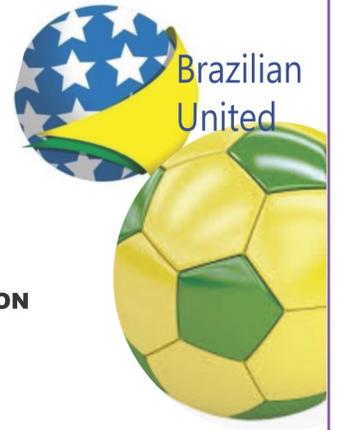
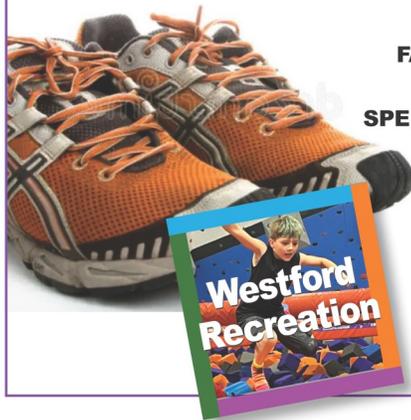
LOTS OF ACTION: Swinging and running at **Rec's After School program** at Miller and Abbot. AND creatures, lots of creatures, with **Rec's Special Programs** at **Animal Adventures Family Zoo & Rescue Center, Bolton, MA**

Animal Adventures receives over 300 animal surrenders a year. Some of these animals will live here forever and some get re-homed. 200-400 animals are housed at any given time, with roughly 175 species of animals.



LEARN MORE about our other Seasonal Programs 

65 Main Street, 3rd Floor, Westford, MA 978-692-5523
westfordma.myrec.com



REC UPDATE 5-20-24 Spring. Summer.

"Not to Miss" Programming!

starting in late **MAY**

YOUTH CHESS - INT'L MASTER PRATHIBA Y
AGES 8-14: FUN. CREATIVE PROBLEM SOLVING.

starting in **JUNE**

CPR. FIRST AID, AED - MIKE VOTANO, RN
AGES 9-UP: WITH EXPERIENCED EMT AND ER NURSE
FAST SKILLS FOOTBALL - FULL SUMMER SESSION - PAT GENDRON
AGES 8-13: NON CONTACT, PLAY FAST, HAVE FUN.

PICKLEBALL - DONALD VAN DYNE - SPRING 2
AGES 18 AND UP: ALL LEVELS, GREAT EXERCISE.

SOCCER SHOTS - SUMMER
AGES 2-5: THE BASICS, HIGH ENERGY, POSITIVE, FUN.

MARCUS LEWIS TENNIS - NEW SESSIONS
TENNIS FOR EVERYONE AT STONYBROOK COURTS.

starting in **JULY**

BRAZILIAN YOUTH SOCCER SUMMER CLINICS
AGES 7-14: THE BASICS WITH CONFIDENCE, MOTIVATION, AUTONOMY.

FAST SKILLS FOOTBALL "DROP-INS" - PAT GENDRON
AGES 8-13: NON CONTACT, PLAY FAST, HAVE FUN.

FLAG FOOTBALL - SCOTT BROWN
AGES 7-12: LEARN CORE SKILLS. THEME DAYS.

SPEED AND AGILITY, JR AND PRIME - D.J. BROCK
FULL AND WEEKLY SESSIONS
AGES 12-21: IMPROVE ATHLETICISM, COMPETITIVE, SUPPORTIVE.

PICKLEBALL - DONALD VAN DYNE - SUMMER 1
AGES 18 AND UP: ALL LEVELS, GREAT EXERCISE.

starting in **AUGUST**

BRAZILIAN YOUTH SOCCER - SUMMER CLINICS
FAST SKILLS FOOTBALL - "DROP-INS" - PAT GENDRON
ON THE MARK ARCHERY - SUMMER 2
SPEED AND AGILITY, JR AND PRIME - D.J. BROCK - WEEKLY
PICKLEBALL - DONALD VAN DYNE - SUMMER 2

Experienced Instructors! Great Coaches!

REGISTER at westfordma.myrec.com

Westford Recreation | 65 Main Street, 3rd flr, Westford, MA | 978-692-5532

FOLLOW US ON FACEBOOK

NEW!
SUMMER SWIM LESSONS
now offered for
Rec's KIDS CLUB
and DESTINATION
EXPLORATION
program
participants!

Recycling Commission



Before Throwing Anything Away, consult the A-Z Guide: How to Recycle Most Everything



The Westford Recycling Commission has developed the A to Z Guide to list items that cannot be recycled curbside and provide an alternative to placing items in the trash. Simply go to westfordma.gov/recycling and click on "A to Z Guide: How to Recycle Most Everything."

This list is in alphabetical order from "Aerosol" to "Yard Waste". Find the category you are interested in, click on it, and you will be brought to good alternatives to keep unnecessary items out of the trash and utilize best practices or green methods of disposal. Please note: The companies and services listed here are for reference only and are not specifically endorsed by the Westford Recycling Commission. Please call the listed organization for up-to-date information.

The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection also offers other recycling suggestions through the Recyclopedia page accessible at <https://recyclesmartma.org/>.



Household Hazardous Waste Collection, was held on Saturday May 4th – Here are the Results!

Our thanks to everyone who came on May 4th to dispose of their waste properly – we had a total of 173 cars!

Our residents were prepared and well informed. The vehicles were packed safely. "Early birds" were stacked up at 9 a.m. but were very patient as they moved through the line. After that the flow was smooth and steady. Many expressed appreciation for the opportunity to easily and safely get rid of their waste.

In total we collected 12,350 pounds of waste – over 6 tons!

Thank you again and we'll see you at our next event – "Electronics and More", on Saturday, June 22nd at the same DPW location.

Reduce, Reuse, Repair, Repurpose, Rot (Compost) and Recycle!

Visit www.westfordma.gov/recycling for further details
and future collection events.

Westford Schools

Superintendent Chew's May 1st update... May Dip...

My daughter currently attends university in Scotland. Today, they participate in a tradition known as May Dip. On the first day of May, the students parade to the North Sea and run into the frigid water to celebrate (?) and then warm themselves near bonfires on the beach. This tradition has continued for a few hundred years and while they claim it protects them from superstitions connected to their academic performance it is more evident that they simply want to have fun. Sometimes it is that ability to simply have fun that can lead to improved academic outcomes. I am not advocating that we all do a polar plunge, but I do believe that joy in education leads to overall engagement and that we know leads to more individual success.

As spring approaches, joy is often more noticeable in the classrooms, out at recess, during after school events. Year-long bonds have been established and stronger relationships lead to greater celebrations in May as activities and events pick-up leading into June. Not that we don't see it all year long, but the anticipation of the end of the year brings out more joy for various reasons. Life gets really busy this time of year so finding that balance of responsibilities, expectations and joy is really important. Hopefully, what is making us busy is bringing us joy!

Now, acknowledging that this time of year can get very busy, this month we are embarking on the next phase of our Equity Audit to assess our curriculum and practices in order to best meet the needs of ALL of the members of our school community. It includes establishing a number of Focus Groups in order to collect qualitative and quantitative data that we would like to gather before the summer break as this is an ideal time for reflection. We are soliciting interest for individuals to participate in interactive discussions facilitated by our outside consultant from AIR (American Institute Research). In order to ensure we have a diverse sectionality of representation amongst the varying focus groups, we have created a survey/form to help them select a wide range of participants from those expressing interest. If you choose to share your information and submit your interest to participate, one of our team members will communicate with you if you have been selected. When considering your time and commitment to this integral part of the audit please take these details into consideration before signing up as a potential participant:

1. Range of 3 - 5 Focus Groups representative of our Community/School Members
2. Range of 3 - 5 Sessions per Focus Group (In-Person, Virtual and/or Hybrid)
3. Sessions will take place either on Tuesdays or Thursdays starting in May 2024.
4. Session Times will vary to accommodate AM and PM schedules with the greatest number of participants at the time.

Participants will be assigned to ONLY ONE Focus Group to increase stakeholder voices. You can access the survey/form here: [Equity Audit Focus Group Member Interest Sign-Up Form](https://forms.gle/wiNLnKo7VUGpWTva7)
(<https://forms.gle/wiNLnKo7VUGpWTva7>)

Cheers!

Chris

Christopher Chew, Ed.D
Superintendent
Westford Public Schools



Veterans Services - Memorial Day 2024



Town wide celebration of Memorial Day will be held on Sunday, May 26th. Ceremonies will be conducted at Freedom Park @ 8:45 AM, Forge Village monument @ 9:15 AM, Graniteville monument on North Main St @ 9:45 and then at Nab Lake, Byrne Ave. dam at 10:45. On the Town Common, the reading of the Honor Rolls will begin at 10:20 AM.

Culminating the village ceremonies will be a parade starting at noon from the Roudenbush Community Center to the Town Common.

Veterans who would like to participate should meet at Freedom Park at 8:30 AM on Sunday. All are encouraged to commemorate our US servicemembers who have died in defense of our country on this holiday weekend. Join us if you can.

US flags to be placed on Veteran's graves on May 18th.

American Legion Post #159 members and volunteers will be putting the US flags up in the weeks prior to Memorial Day. We will do our best to make sure that every veteran's grave is properly marked. Sometimes a flag will be misplaced or unintentionally omitted, please let the



Veterans Service Officer know if a flag is missing, we will try and put one in place prior to Memorial Day. The Town of Westford's Military Burial Index can be found at <https://data.westfordma.gov/vets/>

The flat bronze markers are provided by the VA at no cost, more information on obtaining them can be found at <https://www.va.gov/burials-memorials/memorial-items/headstones-markers-medallions/> or by calling/emailing the Veterans Services department. (978) 392-1170 or veterans@westfordma.gov