



Jodi Ross,
Town
Manager

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www.westfordma.gov/tm

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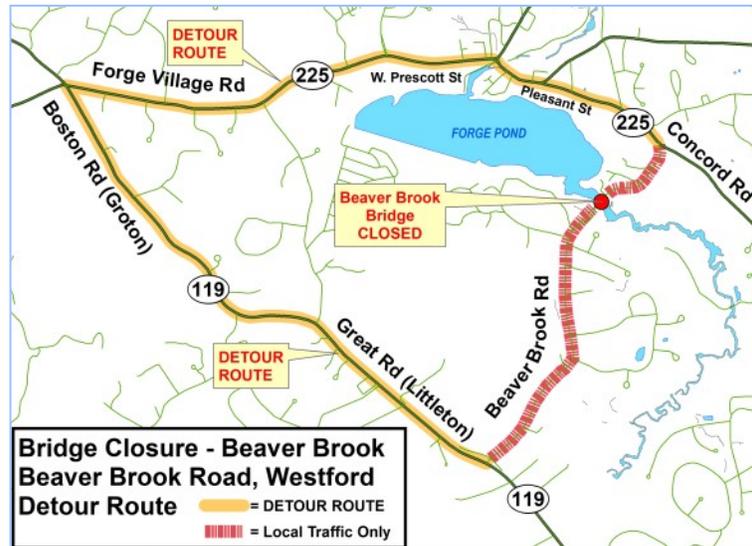
Happy Thanksgiving!

ARPA fund requests due
by December 5
See bottom of page 2

Holiday Bazaar and
Bake Sale
Wednesday,
December 7, 10AM—3PM
Cameron Center
See page 9

Dear Westford residents,

The Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) - Highway Division has undertaken the inventory, inspection, and rating of the Beaver Brook Bridge on Beaver Brook Road in Westford and has determined that recent changes in the bridge condition requires that the bridge be **CLOSED** to vehicular traffic as of 6:00 PM on Friday, November 18, 2022. The reason for this closure is due to severe deterioration of the corrugated structural pipes and the loss of fill that the corrugated pipes are intended to support. Town officials are coordinating the closure with public safety, schools, businesses, residents and surrounding communities. Westford Public Schools and Nashoba Valley Technical High School will contact impacted families directly to coordinate student busing arrangements. The town is working with MassDOT to accelerate the bridge replacement which was already scheduled for next summer. A detour map and trash and recycling information is available online at www.westfordma.gov/beaverbrookbridge. Beaver Brook Road will remain closed to through traffic until further notice. We apologize for the inconvenience, but safety is our number one priority. For more information, please contact Stephen Cronin, Director of Public Works, scronin@westfordma.gov 978-692-5520.



I would like to thank everyone for their hard work conducting and supporting the recent State and Local Elections, especially Patty Dubey, our Town Clerk, and her staff: Andy Sherman, Celia Hughes, Marilyn Frank and Alyssa Ingalls, also our election workers, our Westford Police Department, the administration and custodians of Westford Academy and Stony Brook Middle School the Westford post office, and all others who lent a hand to conduct two elections. Unofficially approximately 11,000 of our residents voted and the election results will be certified and as per state regulations, with official results posted by November 23rd.

At the Select Board's latest meeting, Chair Peraner-Sweet acknowledged the rising electricity and heating costs, and asked town staff to research assistance for residents in need and provide appropriate information to them. Information may be found at the following link: [Community Wellness](#).



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Select Board Vice-Chair Clay encouraged residents keep the Westford Food Pantry in mind for donations during the holiday season as they are experiencing a record demand. The Food Pantry is located at the Cameron Senior Center, 20 Pleasant Street. For more information and to find out what items in particular are most needed, please visit their website at the following link: [Westford Food Pantry](#).

The Select Board heard a request from our Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee to join with cities and towns across the country in taking a stand against antisemitism that reflects Westford's character as a peaceable, welcoming community that embraces diversity and belonging. The Select Board voted unanimously in favor of recognizing January 27th as Holocaust Remembrance Day and January as Holocaust Education Month in Westford in perpetuity. Furthermore, the board voted to adopt the working definition of antisemitism, which may be found at the following link here: [International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's \(IHRA\) Working Definition of Antisemitism](#). The committee will draft a proclamation which will include these measures and return to the board for approval.

Our Principal Assessor, Will Naser, presented the tax classification plan for Fiscal Year 2023 to the board. The board voted to adopt a single tax rate with an estimated tax rate of \$14.76 per thousand. To review the presentation, please visit the following link: [Tax Classification Hearing](#).

Our Annual Town Meeting date has been set for Saturday, March 25, 2023 at 10:00a.m. and the corresponding town meeting timeline has been approved. All town meeting documents may be found at the following link: [2023 Annual Town Meeting](#). The Access to Town Meeting Committee requested our town offer childcare services during the meeting. The board directed the Town Manager to work with the Recreation Department to attempt to provide childcare at future town meetings. The board also voted unanimously to request town organizations and local non-profits not hold events on the same day as the meeting, to allow residents the ability to attend without other town scheduling conflicts.

The Select Board heard a request from Rae Dick, Health Director, and Nicole Laviolette, Community Wellness Coordinator, to form a Community Behavioral Health Committee which focuses on mental health services and access, suicide and substance use disorder prevention and interventions. In return, the Select Board asked a representative from local churches be involved and requested more clarification on the committee's charge. Rae and Nicole will follow up with the board at a future board meeting.

At the request of resident Ellen Harde, the Select Board discussed the next steps for the New Center Building to be located at 51 Main Street. The board expressed their continued support for the project to provide appropriate office space for our town employees, and also provide meeting room space to encourage participation by our residents at our many public meetings. It is their intention to bring the project back to our upcoming Annual Town Meeting for our residents' consideration. Here is a link to information regarding the project: [New Center Building Project Information](#).

At their meeting on November 16th, the board approved raising the minimum wage for municipal employees from \$14.25 to \$15.00 effective January 1, 2023.

On October 25th the board reviewed a revised "Hunting on Board of Selectmen Land Policy" established on October 14, 2014 to become the new "Hunting on Select Board Land Policy". This revision was approved subject to confirmation of indemnification signature requirements on the application forms. To view a copy of the policy, please visit the following link: [Hunting on Select Board Land Policy](#).

Since publishing the Town Manager position, the town received a total of 26 applicants. The Town Manager Search Committee is meeting on November 17th to review applications and determine who they would like to interview. They will recommend 3 or 4 finalists to the Select Board who will conduct interviews with the finalists on Saturday, December 10th, at 9:30 AM in the Town Hall Meeting Room. Following those interviews, the board will consider appointment of a new Town Manager.

At the Select Board's meeting on December 13th, the board will continue their review of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding requests to determine allocations. Anyone who is interested in applying for funds may email their request to odonnell@westfordma.gov by December 5th. ARPA summaries are available to view at the following link: [ARPA Funding](#).

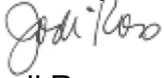
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There are several openings on our local boards and committees, including: 35 Town Farm Road Task Force, Affordable Housing Trust, Agricultural Commission, Board of Cemetery Commissioners, Bylaw Review Committee, Capital Planning Committee, Commission on Disability, Conservation Commission, Council on Aging, Cultural Council, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee, Dog Park Task Force, Economic Development Committee, Election Officer, Healthy Westford Committee, Housing Authority, Parks, Grounds and Recreation Commission, Pedestrian Safety Committee, Permanent Town Building Committee, Scholarship and Grant Committee, Senior Low Income Disabled Tax Relief Committee, Tax Possession Sale Committee, Town and School Safety Task Force, and Zoning Board of Appeals. 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](#).

I hope you all have a nice Thanksgiving holiday!

Sincerely,



Jodi Ross

Public Safety

Plan Ahead for Any Emergency

Receive alerts and notifications, stay informed of weather, traffic, and other emergencies in your community via Rave/Smart911 emergency notifications.

Most residents will not need to take action in order to receive notification of events on their home telephone. However, if you have recently moved into Westford, changed your home phone number, or have an unlisted phone number you will need to register your phone number

[Click here](#) to register additional phone numbers or email addresses.

Download the Smart911 Mobile App for your smartphone [Here](#).



Set Your Radio Preset to Westford Emergency Management's 1630 AM

A Message from the Friends of the Parkerville Schoolhouse



Donation for Parkerville Improvements, October 6, 2022

Pictured clockwise from bottom left: Eric Heideman (Asst. Town Manager), Joe Morano, State Rep. Jim Arciero, Heidi Hatke, Tom Unterberg, Jo-Anne Lund, Ruth Margetts, Claire Owen, & June Kennedy (center)

Roof Restoration, Fall 2022

Thanks to the generosity of Westford citizens and aid from State Representative Jim Arcerio, The Parkerville Schoolhouse has received the funds needed to replace and restore the roof. The roof will be completed by the end of November.

Westford students will hold their Spring living history classes under a new roof with new windows next on the agenda.

A special thanks to Eric Heideman (Westford Assistant Town Manager), Jeff Goodwin (Director of Westford Town Facilities), and members of the Friends of the Parkerville School House Board: John Wilder (treasurer), Joe Morano (vice president), Tom Unterberg (facilities) and Heidi Hatke (president) for their tenacity in getting this job done!

Parkerville Fall Open House - November 6, 2022



The public was invited to the annual the Parkerville Schoolhouse Open House on Sunday, Nov. 6, from 1 to 4 p.m. The open house at the 1880 District School #5 was sponsored by the Friends of Parkerville Schoolhouse.

The schoolhouse, located in Westford at the corner of Carlisle and Concord Roads, is used for

the “Old School Days” program for all Westford third graders each spring. The town-owned building is also used for scout meetings, 4-H Club meetings and other small groups.

Original artifacts from this schoolhouse, which closed as a school in 1929 were on hand as well as Friends of Parkerville Schoolhouse board members and schoolmarms. Many board members are related to former students and teachers of Parkerville Schoolhouse.

Parkerville Schoolhouse note cards and forest green T-shirts, sweatshirts, and tote bags were available for sale. Apple cider, cookies, and donuts were served! Cookies were donated by Classic Kitchen Café of Westford.

Sustainability

Still not sure if you are in Westford's Community Aggregation Contract?

The Supply portion of your Bill should look like this:

Supply Services	
SUPPLIER	CONSTELLATION
	NEWENERGY (WESTFORD POP)
	1310 POINTE ST. BALTIMORE, MD 21231
	 Constellation.

Participation in **Westford Power Options Program (POP)** is a **great low-rate** opportunity to protect the planet and your wallet at **\$0.10793/kWh** for 10% above the state mandated renewable generation threshold vs \$0.33891/kWh from National Grid with no extra Class I RECS (Renewable Electricity Certificates). Rates are locked and guaranteed through December 2023.

If you have the means, consider giving the planet an additional gift this holiday season and Opt up to:

Pop Silver for 50% extra class 1 RECs at \$0.12083/kWh

or

Pop Gold for 100% Class I RECS for \$0.13695/kWh,

both of which are a savings over National Grid rates. Class I RECS fund the development of additional renewable energy in Massachusetts. If you are experiencing hardship, the Power Options Program allows you to opt down to POP Basic at a rate of \$0.10470/kWh with the state minimum Class 1 RECs.

To sign up or opt up visit: <https://masscea.com/westford/>

Looking for help becoming more energy efficient?

[Sign up for a FREE Home Energy Assessment.](#)

Find additional ideas on the [Sustainability Website](#).

Ready to explore making your own electricity?

The Massachusetts Clean Energy Center offers [this great Guide to Solar Electricity](#) to get you started.

Sustainability (continued)

Holiday Hints

- **Compost** your pumpkin or toss it in the woods for the critters (no candles or wax, please)
- Cut down on food waste by sticking (mostly) to a list. Freeze or gift extras. Give leftovers a new taste as soup, or casseroles. Make veggie stock from old, bruised or trimmed veggie waste in an instant pot or similar (less energy than a stove top) before composting.
- Read the Westford Recycling Commission's section of this newsletter on giving time and shared experiences
- Think carefully about purchases that require electricity or batteries. Consult the EnergyGuide or Energy Star labels when available.
- Support local businesses and the climate (by minimizing trucking).
- Gift new habits for a new year:
 - Travel sets of bamboo cutlery
 - insulated mugs
 - Reusable insulated bag with reusable take-out containers
 - Reusable straws
 - Glass nail files
- Avoid packaging altogether – have a treasure hunt instead. Savor the in-person exchange, rather than the display.
- Get creative about repurposing and reusing items around the house for packaging, like fabric or craft supplies, or buy a gift that can also be the package, like a beautiful box or mug or basket. Reuse ribbon and wrapping paper, neither of which is recyclable.
- Replace physical holiday cards and photos with digital versions to save postage and carbon. If your recipients (or you) cherish the tradition of mailed cards, use them in lieu of decorations and repurpose the fronts for gift tags and the backs for lists when the season is over.
- Hang clothes to dry and humidify your house at the same time. Or stuff stockings with dryer balls. These wool balls have natural lanolin for softening clothes, reduce drying time and energy use, last for hundreds of washes, eliminate exposure to dryer sheet chemicals, and save money
- Seek out natural fibers in all of your textiles (clothes, linens) to avoid plastic pollution.
- Turn off your lights, indoors and out, when not in use, and use blinds, shades and drapes to conserve energy and to preserve dark skies.
- Select soft white or yellow LED decorations and those that project light out rather than up to help migrating birds and other critters find the right path to their winter destinations.

November at the J.V. Fletcher Library



From the Director: Library Building Expansion Approved – Thank you!

Thank you to everyone who attended Special Town Meeting and the November 8 election and voted to approve the Library Building Project! This could not have happened without the hard work of the Friends of the Library, the Board of Trustees, the Library Building Committee, the Library Staff, and of course, all of you who took the time to show up and express through your vote how important the future of the Library is to the town of Westford. We look forward to providing the town of Westford with new services and a state of the art Library! To learn more about the Library Building Project, please visit the [Library's website](#).



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

VIRTUAL JOB SEARCH HELP FOR 50 & OVER – JOB SEARCH HELP FOR 50 & OVER – Interview Practice: Wednesday, November 16, 9:30-11:30 a.m. The Massachusetts Library Collaborative's 50+ Job Seekers Group meets on the 1st and 3rd Wednesdays of the month, from 9:30am to 11:30am, via Zoom. If you are unemployed and actively looking, underemployed, seeking a new career direction, re-entering the job market after a long employment gap, or recently retired and looking for your "Encore Career", this networking group program is perfect for you! [Register here](#)

Wiggle Words Storytime: Wednesday, November 16 at 10:30 a.m. This weekly drop-in story time is for kids ages 2 to 4. Join us as we share music, movement, and really FUN books for the younger kids in this program. Please plan to arrive 15 minutes before the program and go to the Children's Desk upstairs and ask for name tags for each child. Once you have your name tags, go down to the Meeting Room and wait at the door. The doors to the Meeting Room close when the program is full and will remain closed. Latecomers are welcome to visit the children's room upstairs. No registration required.

Math Club: Wednesdays on 11/23, and 12/28 from 3:30-5:00 p.m. Join YA Librarian Jess and library volunteer Patrick for a meeting of mathematical minds. Each meeting we will learn theories, solve problems, and build upon your math knowledge with fun activities and games. For Grades 6-8. [Register here](#).

Pajama Story Time: Mon., Nov. 28 at 6:30 p.m. Pajama Time meets once a month on a Monday evening in the Meeting Room for children ages 3 to 7. Get into those pajamas and grab a favorite stuffed animal or blanket and come on in!

Monday Mystery Book Club: Mon., Nov. 28 at 2:00 p.m. We'll meet in the Mary Atwood Room. We'll be discussing *Lightning Strike*, by William Kent Krueger. Print copies are available at Main Desk, and the ebook and digital audiobook are on Overdrive. Email Kristina at kleedberg@westfordma.gov for details.

(Continued on next page)

November—December at the J.V. Fletcher Library (Continued)

YA Crafternoon: Mon., Nov. 28 at 3:00 p.m. Come to the Meeting Room to hang out, listen to music, and get crafty! Join Jess and our special guest artist Manmeet to learn the art of paper quilling. For Grade 6 and up! [Register here.](#)

Virtual Nutcrackers-a Colorful History: Thur., Dec. 1 at 11:00 a.m. Registrants will receive a link to access the Zoom Meeting via email.**You may never have given those funny painted statues much thought but the history of nutcrackers involves the development of tools from the Stone Age to the Industrial Age. Their story encompasses the political changes of Communist-era Germany, a Russian ballet and American G.I.s. These are all elements in the history of the charming, colorful creations we enjoy today. Our look at nutcrackers will include a nod to other traditional Christmas decorations such as pyramids and 'smokers' that have developed along with them. Led by art historian Mary Woodward, who serves as a guide at several Historic New England properties. She previously served as Public Programs Coordinator and Educator at the Concord Museum. Woodward has a B.A. in Art History from Furman University and a M.A. in Art History from Emory University. She has 40+ years of experience in museums of all shapes and sizes, from the comprehensive collection at the Cleveland Museum of Art to the one-room log cabin birthplace of President James K. Polk. [Register here.](#)

Adult Nonfiction Book Club: Tuesday, Dec. 6 at 7:00 p.m. Join us in the Meeting Room to discuss *Codebreaker* by Walter Isaacson. This will also be our Title Picking party for 2023. Copies are available at Main Desk or download a copy from Overdrive . Email Charles Schweppe at cschweppe@westfordma.gov for details!

Mother Goose Story Time: Monday AND Thursday Mornings from 10:30 -11:15 a.m. Twice a week in the Meeting Room! This is a great early literacy program for you and your littlest ones. Get them started with reading fundamentals like rhymes, finger plays, and stories. If the weather cooperates, we may hold some sessions outside. This story time will be limited to 20 participants (not including adults) when held inside.

Friends of the Library e-newsletter: The best way to learn about our upcoming programs and new services is through the FOL weekly e-newsletter. [Sign up here.](#)

Check out our [Museum Passes page](#) or call the Library for reservations. Unless otherwise noted, our museum passes are generously funded by the Friends of the Library. [Have you joined the Friends yet?](#)



Quick Links to Our Most Popular Services!

[Programs – Adults](#)

[Programs – Kids](#)

[Programs – Young Adults](#)

If you have questions or need assistance, please call us at 978-399-2300 or send us an email at westfordlibrary@westfordma.gov.

Cameron Senior Center

Holiday Festivities at the Cameron Senior Center

SPECIAL TOWN MANAGER AND SELECT BOARD HOLIDAY BREAKFAST

Monday, December 5, 8:30AM

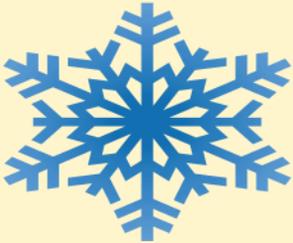
We are happy to *honor Jodi Ross at her last holiday breakfast with us as our Town Manager*. She has selected the following menu just for you which will include pancakes with blueberries, scrambled eggs, home fries with pepper and onions (her own recipe), sausage, fruit salad and pastries. This wonderful array of festive foods will again be prepared by Town Manager and staff and Select Board members. Please RSVP early because it will fill quickly.



Friends Holiday Bazaar and Bake Sale

December 7, 2022, at 10AM-3PM

The Friends of the Cameron are sponsoring a fun filled Holiday bazaar and Bake Sale in support of the Cameron. All are invited to attend and enjoy the wonderful craftsmanship of a variety of vendors including our own talented knitters, quilters, bakers, and artisans. Vendors will be displaying their wares on the first floor while jewelry and holiday items can be found on the second floor. Sip your coffee, try a delicious baked good, purchase holiday gifts and enjoy your day.



SECOND ANNUAL HANUKKAH LUNCH

Wednesday, December 21, 12 noon

Come join Martha and Cindy as they again serve traditional Hanukkah latkes (potato pancakes), kugel (noodle pudding) and bagels with cream cheese. Come have a little nosh with your friends and enjoy some traditional music. RSVP to 978.692.5523

COOKIES & COCOA BY FIREPLACE

Thursday, December 22nd at 10AM

Join Katie in the library for some very enjoyable conversation and warm hot chocolate and holiday cookies. This will be a fun time!



DO YOU NEED ASSISTANCE WITH MEDICARE OPEN ENROLLMENT ENDS DECEMBER 7th

By appointment only SHINE (Serving Health Insurance Needs of Everyone) can help! Fred Baumert, Certified SHINE Counselor and Westford resident offers free unbiased confidential counseling on aspects of health insurance to anyone eligible for Medicare. Call 978-692-5523 to schedule an appointment.

(Continued on next page)

Cameron Senior Center (Continued)

Fun weekly offerings to consider:

Music Makers- Come and sing with us each Friday at 9AM under the direction of our wonderful director, Tom Boyer.

UPBEATS- Are you experienced playing a musical instrument if so, join our house band, each Thursday at 10AM and bring your instrument.

Billiards- If you enjoy playing, please consider joining us on Fridays at 9AM for a game or two, three, four. Pool Room is open M, W, F -8AM-3:30PM and Tu., Th.- *8AM-7:45PM. Just bring your stick or borrow one from us.

Ping Pong- Come join our avid group of players varying in skill from beginner to advanced. Mondays and Tuesdays at 2PM and Fridays at 9:30AM.

BINGO- Mondays at 1PM and Friday November 18th and December 2nd 1PM. Lunch is served on Fridays starting at noon for \$3 Menu choice for 11/18: Sausage, Peppers, and Onion Stir Fry and 12/2: Hamburger and Hot Dogs a favorite BINGO sheets \$3 includes three BINGO boards and dobbers-\$1. You must RSVP for lunch by calling 978-692-5523.



The Cameron was glad to help support the Westford Friends of the Poor Committee for their annual fundraising walk. A special thanks to **Edna MacNeil** and **Shirlee Plourde** two of the wonderful volunteers are center is fortunate to have assist this event.

Edna and Shirlee handing out water and apples

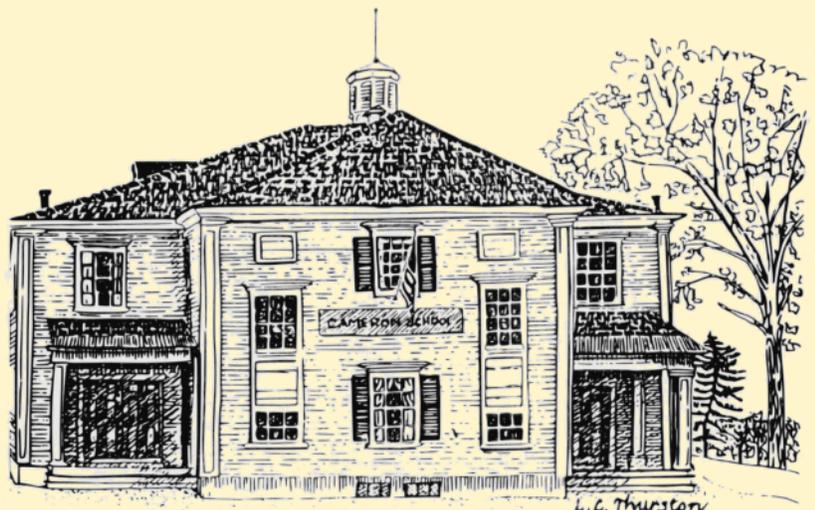
To learn more about the Cameron Senior Center programs and services please visit:

www.westfordma.gov/coa,

[www.facebook.com/Cameron Senior Center](https://www.facebook.com/CameronSeniorCenter)

www.youtube.com or simply call 978-692-5523.

To view the complete Council On Aging Newsletter please visit [Newsletters](#) on our web page.



Westford Senior Center

Assessors Department

Valuation and Tax Assessment: Straight from the Assessors mouth

The Town of Westford has a value of 6.1 billion. This is the value of all the taxable real estate and taxable personal (business) property within the 30 plus square miles of the town. So how do we translate that value amount into approximately 9200 tax amounts (bills), to be paid four times a year? Where do you start and finish?

We start with a good professional staff and a very sophisticated software system that can adjust data in many different ways to account for various property types on the real estate side, and cost data on the personal property side. We use what is called 'mass appraisal' (small 'm', not Massachusetts). Mass appraisal is a valuing technique that employs standardization methods and statistical analysis to value a group of properties based on a single date in time.

PERSONAL PROPERTY

Personal property, mostly business property, is valued by a list of taxable items within businesses- generally speaking, but not limited to, machinery used in the business. Second homes with furniture and movable home fixtures are also taxable, however, through a local option, Westford exempts values that fall below 10,000 in value. So this removes the taxable accounts with most of the second home/seasonal properties located on water areas in town.

Personal property relies mostly on the taxpayer reporting a list of items to the Assessing department. The list is reviewed and valued. If we feel the list is inadequate, we can estimate items and/or request to inspect the business to verify taxable assets. Ultimately, the assets are listed, depreciated and we arrive at a final value for each item. An example of a single asset value line:

Description	QTY	YR NEW	YR INST	QUAL	COND	DEP SCH	AGE	ORIG COST	DEPR PER.	PERC. GOOD	FY2023 VALUE
copier	1	2020	2020	GD	GD	3	2	4,500	10%	90%	4,050

So, 4,050 would be the value and the tax amount is calculated as: VALUE x TAX RATE = TAX AMOUNT or 4050 x 0.01612 = \$65.29 (tax rate is expressed in dollar charge per 1000 in value or \$16.12/1000)

REAL PROPERTY (Estate)

All real estate is unique. But we have to find ways to look at the similarities and produce a value that is fair and equitable. The idea behind valuing real estate is to come up with a range of values, and then conclude on a singular value. As assessors, we are appraisers first. We use appraisal techniques that are similar to real estate appraisers, appraising for lending institutions, attorneys, and other non-mass appraisal valuing, typically called fee appraisal reporting.

Just in Westford, there are all kinds of properties- from quarries, to single family homes, to commercial condominiums to farms to waterfront properties, and just plain old vacant land. There are three general techniques or approaches to valuing real estate:

Cost approach: Land value, plus building value, plus any other value items on a parcel of land, equals the total value. This works well with new real estate construction. As buildings age, it becomes more difficult to depreciate buildings. The cost approach is helpful with unique properties such as power plants, antennas, quarries, etc.

LAND + BLD + SWIMMING POOL = TOTAL VALUE 330,000 + 350,000 + 40,000 = 720,000

Sales or market approach: This approach looks at similar properties compared to the subject property. You take a sale of a property and compare that sale to one property or other properties to generalize a value range. Adjustments can be made for differences, such as age of building, size of building, land area, etc. If a very similar property to your property sells, it gives an indication where your property value may be.

Income approach: This technique is typically used for larger income producing or investor properties. This technique relies on figuring out a net amount of income for the property and using a capitalization rate to convert the income into an indication of value. There is a tremendous amount of information that can be reviewed and used, to come up with income components for properties, such as vacancy rates, building square footage costs, and capitalization rates. In the end, you are using income and an estimated rate (of return and on return), to arrive at a value.

NET OPERATING INCOME/CAP RATE = VALUE Example, rounded: \$215,000/0.07 = 3,071,400

In the appraisal and assessment worlds, it is desirable to use at least two of these techniques to reconcile your values. However, it is not possible to do so in many cases. Tough to find income information on single family houses in Westford and tough to find sales of quarries as well.

(Continued on next page)

Assessors Department (continued)

SUMMARIZING THE TAX YEAR

We work all year long reviewing sales, deeds, visiting new construction properties, inspecting businesses and houses and all types of buildings. We study what has gone on in the real estate and economic marketplace, and make adjustments to the values and cost tables based on the data study, with emphasis on the statistical analysis for real estate sales. We then submit our analysis to the state Department of Local Services (DOR division), for review and approval. Once approved, we turn to the tax side of things. **This is important- we value property without any review of tax information for the tax year!** Assessors value property and then convert the value to tax. Then the town budget is built, approved and the tax dollars created by real and personal property are the 'gap amount' needed to run the town- here it is:

FY2023	
Amount to run the town, one year;	\$133,088,230 ← EXPENSE
Revenue Sources:	
▪ State funds (cherry sheets)	\$20,722,236
▪ Local Receipts (motor vehicle, investments, etc)	\$18,549,223
▪ Free Cash and other	<u>\$2,979,071</u>
Total Receipts/Revenue Sources	\$42,250,530 REVENUE
TOTAL TO BE RAISED (town expenses total)	\$133,088,230
Minus Cash available (all revenues)	<u>(\$42,250,530)</u>
'Gap' amount is money needed from Real and personal property taxes....	
Called the Levy Amount	\$90,837,700

In the appraisal and assessment worlds, it is desirable to use at least two of these techniques to reconcile your values. However, it is not possible to do so in many cases. Tough to find income information on single family houses in Westford and tough to find sales of quarries as well.

SUMMARIZING THE TAX YEAR

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It then becomes a math equation with some options by the Select Board regarding tax burden. The equation for a single tax rate is:

$$\text{TAX LEVY AMOUNT/TAXABLE VALUE} = \text{Single tax rate OR;} 90,837,700/6,154,315,654 = 0.01476 \text{ or } \$14.76/1000$$

For the past 5 years, the Select Board has chosen a single tax rate thereby equalizing the tax rate for all taxpayers. Of course, the rate is the same for all, however, the tax charge is *ad valorem* based- 'according to value'. You pay real and personal property taxes based on the value of the property.

There are choices to shift tax burden- see tax classification on Assessing webpage.

www.westfordma.gov/383/Board-of-Assessors-and-Assessing-Departm

The Assessing department has many other duties as well. We encourage all taxpayers to review their property information annually and we appreciate all the cooperation we receive when visiting businesses and homes.

Please contact us with any questions or stop by Town Hall.

Thank you from your Assessing Department: Will, Steve, and Anne.

Year End Reminders from the Tax Collector's Office

'Tis the Season for Tax-Deductible Giving

Income tax season is right around the corner. Are you looking for a good cause to boost your charitable giving this year? Did you know that there are three local funds here in Westford to which you can make a tax deductible donation that will benefit your neighbors? If you would like to donate, please **make your check payable to Town of Westford** and mail it to the Tax Collector's Office, 55 Main Street, Westford, MA 01886. Please be sure to indicate which fund you would like your donation to be deposited into. We will send a receipt for your tax records. Or if you prefer, you can donate online by going to our bill pay site: <https://epay.cityhallsystems.com> select Donation under bill type.

Tax Relief for the Elderly & Disabled, also known as the TREAD program, is overseen by a volunteer committee. Applications are taken at the Senior Center and reviewed by the committee. The funds are distributed to elderly and disabled residents in need of help. This is a worthy cause and your donations make a big impact in the lives of those who are helped.



The **Tax Collector's Scholarship Fund** is intended to provide resources to all in our community for job training and educational opportunities. The fund benefits students and adult residents.



The **Arts & Technology Fund** provides for innovative initiatives to enrich and advance current and future programs for Westford students.

Will you help us go GREEN by signing up for Email Tax Bills?

SAVE TREES AND REDUCE POSTAGE & PRINTING COSTS WITH E-BILLING!

Taxpayers can help save trees and reduce postage and printing costs by signing up for emailed copies of their tax bills! More than half of the real estate tax bills in Westford are paid through mortgage escrows, and yet only a handful of tax bills are set up to be emailed. If every taxpayer whose bill is paid through an escrow were to sign up for e-billing, the town would save over \$6,000 per year. Even if your bill is not paid through an escrow there are advantages to having your bill emailed. would you consider taking a few minutes to sign up today?

Help the Town of Westford Go GREEN! Sign up for E-Billing Today!

- Go to <https://epay.cityhallsystems.com>
- Click on Sign Up in the My Account block on the left
- Follow the prompts to set up your User Account
- Once set up, you will have the option to select E-Billing

Benefits of signing up for E-Billing:

E-Billing provides you with an easily retrievable emailed copy of your tax bill
 E-billed notices go out each quarter (mailings are only twice a year)
 E-Billing helps to save trees and will reduce the postage and printing budget

Looking Up Tax Bills Online

Need to know what you paid in taxes for 2022? You can look up tax payment information anytime online. Go to the Town's website www.westfordma.gov. From the homepage choose Pay & Look Up Bills. If you are on a desktop computer, you will see 'Look Up Tax Bills' on the right. If you are on a smartphone, scroll down until you see Look Up Tax Bills. Select Look Up Tax Bills. There you can enter your parcel ID with no spaces and no dashes. All the tax years available will display on the next screen. Calendar year 2022 had tax payments in Fiscal Year 2022 and FY2023. Scroll to the bottom and right to select View Bill next to 2023 and then View Payments/adjustments on the upper right corner of the quarterly tax information. Pick up the 2 quarters paid in 2023 and repeat these steps for 2022.

I hope this information is helpful to you!
 Have a safe and happy Holiday Season!

Community Health and Wellness

Community Wellness:

The holidays can be a time of joy and happiness. The holidays can also be a time of increased stress and anxiety. If you are feeling sad, lonely, and stressed during the holidays, you are not alone. There are supports available to explore your thoughts and feelings around the holidays. The Community Wellness Department would like to support your well-being during the holidays by sharing support lines and articles.

Support Lines for mental health and parental stress:

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline:

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is a 24/7 toll-free lifeline for individuals experiencing emotional distress or crises. Call 988 to talk to a trained listener.

Crisis Text Line: Text MHA 741-741

Crisis Text Line provides free, confidential text message support for individuals experiencing emotional distress or crises. It is available 24/7. Text "MHA" to 741-741 for support.

Parental Stress Line: 1-800-632-8188

The Parent Stress Line is a toll-free, confidential helpline for parents who need to discuss issues related to their children. Trained volunteer counselors answer the Parental Stress Line and offer support, empathy, encouragement, information, referrals, and crisis intervention. We are here for you 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Supportive articles:

Mental Health America:

Looking for support during the holidays? Check out these free resources:

mhanational.org/blog/looking-support-during-holidays-check-out-these-free-resources

McLean's Guide to Managing Mental Health Around the Holidays

www.mcleanhospital.org/essential/mcleans-guide-managing-mental-health-around-holidays

Nami: The Most Difficult Time of The Year: Mental Health During the Holidays

nami.org/Blogs/From-the-CEO/December-2021/The-Most-Difficult-Time-of-The-Year-Mental-Health-During-the-Holidays

Mental Health First Aid:

Five Ways to Take Care of Your Mental Health This Holiday Season

www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/2021/11/five-ways-to-take-care-of-your-mental-health-this-holiday-season/

American Psychological Association: Tips for parents on managing holiday stress

<https://www.apa.org/topics/parenting/holiday>



For more information about the Community Wellness Department, please visit

www.westfordma.gov/1487/Community-Wellness

Community Wellness Coordinator

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Community Health and Wellness (Continued)



COMMUNITY TEAMWORK

COMMUNITY NEEDS SURVEY

2022 - 2023



Community Teamwork, Inc. is the Community Action Agency that provides needed services to the Greater Lowell region. Our communities of service include Lowell, Billerica, Chelmsford, Dracut, Dunstable, Tewksbury, Tyngsboro, and Westford. Every three years, Community Teamwork surveys our community residents to learn about community issues, including housing, employment, etc. Please help us by linking to our current Community Needs Survey and provide us your thoughts. These surveys support the Agency applying for and receiving additional financial supports for residents from federal, state, and private sources. Please check out the available resources at:

www.commteam.org

Community Needs Survey: Help us understand our community!

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/VZV6TYC>

Encuesta de las necesidades de la comunidad: Ayúdenos a entender nuestra comunidad!

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/PCJ2HYY>

ការស្ទង់មតិអំពីតម្រូវការសហគមន៍៖ ជួយយើងឱ្យយល់អំពីសហគមន៍របស់យើង។

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/6Q8PCPS>

Pesquisa das Necessidades da Comunidade – Ajude-nos a entender a sua comunidade.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/JF6N9WV>

استبيان الاحتياجات المجتمعية: ساعدنا على فهم مجتمعنا.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/GBKVL56>

Community Teamwork is a catalyst for social change. We leverage our programs, our partnerships, and our collective voice to foster equity, compassion, and community engagement to create housing, education and economic opportunities.

Recycling Commission

Reminder: Mattress, Box Spring and Textile Waste Bans became Effective on November 1st, 2022.

Mattresses, box springs, and textiles (anything cloth) are now banned from the trash and incinerator. The bans began on November 1st per order of the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection. Bulk stickers will no longer be accepted for mattresses and box springs. Please consider reusing or donating. Options can be found in the WRC "How to Recycle Everything" document - click [HERE](#).



A Gift of Your Time is the Greenest Gift



The holiday giving season is here. And though we've moved on from the brunt of the pandemic, goods are still in short supply. There are fewer choices, things take longer to get here – we have to “order early!”

What if you could give a gift that doesn't have to be ordered online? Or picked off a warehouse shelf somewhere? Or one that might just be a little kinder to our Mother Earth?

How about giving of your time, or as some have put it, giving “experiences”? There are so many benefits! You'd be spending time with those you care about. And you may be helping someone check a task off their to-do list that's been festering there forever.

Here are some ideas:

Our chilly New England fall weather makes a trip to a museum a good option. Your local library may have discount passes. At the J.V. Fletcher Library here in Westford, the most popular passes are to the Boston Museum of Fine Arts and the Discovery Museum in Acton. For those, book ahead! Or choose to visit historic houses with the History New England Pass. Or go to the zoo with the Zoo New England Pass. Give an outing to a museum or zoo this holiday season to someone you love.

We're all procrastinators. And we have angst over our to-do lists with closets that need to be cleaned out, or rooms that need re-painting. Give someone a hand! How great would your “giftee” feel if you offered to help them with a project, so they could finally get it done? An afternoon spent organizing and a trip to Goodwill with boxes of items for others to enjoy. Or a day painting a room – one rolling, one trim-painting – it goes so much faster with two. It's a win-win!

There are lots of other places to treat someone - a movie, a concert, a play. And it's all enhanced by the gift of your time.

This holiday season, avoid the supply chain and shipping issues. Give a gift of yourself and your time instead.

Veterans Services

CH 115 BENEFITS - About Massachusetts General Law (MGL) Chapter 115 Veteran's Benefits

Who is eligible to receive MGL Chapter 115 Benefits?

Anyone qualifying as a veteran under the MGL Chapter 4, Section 7, clause 43, as amended by the Acts of 2005, Chapter 130, may be eligible for veterans' benefits from the community in which they reside, provided they meet the Income and Asset Limits for this need-based program. For the year 2022, the maximum monthly income allowed for an individual is \$2265.00, and for a couple is \$3052.00. Additional family members would change these amounts. However, applicants whose income is slightly above allowable limits may be eligible for medical benefits at a "spend down" adjustment amount. Asset limits for 2022 are \$8400.00 for an individual and \$16,600.00 for a couple. Unlike many states, Massachusetts extends the coverage for Veterans' Benefits beyond the veteran and his or her eligible dependents. These eligible dependents may also apply for veterans' benefits. The surviving spouse of a deceased veteran, provided that the spouse was married to the veteran at the time of his or her death, is considered an eligible dependent. Living spouses, children, and parents might also qualify to receive benefits.

What types of benefits are available?

Benefits may be available in several forms. The most frequently asked about benefits are provided in the form of financial assistance to aid in meeting the cost of shelter, sustenance, and medical expenses. To determine the eligibility to receive such financial assistance, the VSO will ask the applicant to provide proof of certain expenses, as well as proof of income and assets. The VSO may require other supporting documents such as Marriage, Birth, Death Certificates, and Discharge papers, depending on the situation. Ceilings are set for income and benefits based on the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) at 200%. Using the documents provided, the VSO will determine an allowable budget as outlined in 108 Code of Massachusetts Regulations (108 CMR). Once the applicant's budget has been established, the VSO will determine if the applicant is eligible for any financial assistance. Other types of benefits may be available depending on certain qualifying criteria.

How long can I expect to receive financial assistance?

Recipients of financial assistance under MGL Chapter 115 Veterans' Benefits may fall into several categories, which affect the status of their claims. For instance, a recipient who is not totally and permanently disabled or retired, would be expected to seek full time employment, and might expect to receive assistance for a brief period of time while they secure a job. A recipient who is totally and permanently disabled, or who is retired, might find themselves in a financial situation whereby their needs dictate that they continue to receive benefits indefinitely.

What are my responsibilities as a recipient of GL Chapter 115 Benefits?

Full disclosure and timely updates for changes in circumstances are key responsibilities. For starters, during the application process you must **fully disclose** to the VSO the financial information and documents requested. You must declare **all income, and all possessed assets**, to include bank accounts, IRAs, Certificates of Deposit, and available on hand cash. If you generate income from self-employment efforts, even if not on a regular basis, you must report this income when it is generated. You may be required to provide forms such as the IRS 1099 or Schedule C Form 1040 tax claim.

Once enrolled, you must report any changes in circumstances to the VSO, to include any changes in the amount received from a reported income source, or any new sources of income. You must report any changes in medical or shelter expenses. This includes changes in rent, fees, mortgage, fire insurance, or taxes that are charged to you; or changes in your share of such expense if you begin sharing this cost with another. You must report increases or decreases in medical insurance premiums or other health care costs. These changes must be reported within one month from the change occurring.

When eligible, you must seek alternate sources of income and benefits such as VA Health Care, VA Compensation, VA Pension, Social Security Disability Income, Supplemental Security Income, or benefits from MGL Chapter 115, such as MassHealth and Prescription Advantage.

All recipients of MGL Chapter 115 Veterans' Benefits are eligible to file for medical reimbursement for co-pays associated with doctor visits, hospital visits, and most medication expenses. Reimbursement for dental and eye care may be available at the Division of Health Care Finance and Policy (DHCFFP) allowable levels.

The bottom line is to **keep the VSO in the know**. The VSO cannot help you with things he or she doesn't know. Although most recipients do not intentionally attempt to defraud the community and state, failure to disclose information about assets and/or income, or changes in reimbursed expenses can lead to benefits being discontinued, and possible action to recover benefits already paid.

(Continued on next page)

Veterans Services (Continued)

How do I file claims for medical expenses?

One of the most used and beneficial aspects of Massachusetts General Laws (MGL) Chapter 115 Veterans Benefits program is the filing of claims for reimbursement of Medical Costs. Most Medical Costs are reimbursed at 100% of the out-of-pocket expenses to the claimant, after all other payers, discounts, deductions, and rebates have been applied (e.g., Insurance, Assistance programs, etc.). However, certain items such as Dental and Vision are reimbursed based on tables created by the Division of Health Care Finance and Policy (DHCFP) of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. This benefit is not guaranteed for Unemployed/Employable veterans.

Some examples of Medical Cost that are reimbursable are Doctor, Hospital, Dental, and Prescription co-pays. Also, reimbursable are Medical Insurance premiums, however, Dental Insurance premiums are **NOT** reimbursable. Medical Insurance Premiums include premiums for Medicare Supplemental Insurance. Some plans include Medicare Part B and Part D Supplemental Insurance in a combined premium, while others provide only one or the other; both are reimbursable. Also reimbursable, is the premium for Medicare Part B enrollment (\$170.10 in 2022). No matter what the source of the medical cost, when filing Medical Claims, you must provide supporting documentation. The supporting documentation must include certain items, depending on the type of medical cost to be reimbursed.

Medical Insurance premiums may be claimed by providing a copy of the paid monthly or quarterly bill, and by providing proof of an auto-debit from a banking account for premium amount. When providing copies of bills, the bills must include the insured's name, the coverage period, and the amount of the premium after all other payers, discounts, deductions, and rebates have been applied (e.g., assistance by the state or federal programs).

Questions for any topics not covered herein should be directed to your VSO.

Ryan Cobleigh

Veterans Service Officer

Town of Westford

23 Depot St., Door #11

Westford, MA 01886-2602

Phone: 978-392-1170

Westford's Revolutionary War Heroes Remembered

On October 15 at Fairview Cemetery, Captain Joseph Read (1716-1795) was honored in a ceremony attended by representatives of the Boston Tea Party Ships & Museum, the Westford Historical Society & Museum, Cemetery Department staff and commissioners, the Westford Colonial Minutemen, Westford Girl Scouts and many residents as a Boston Tea Party Medallion was placed at his gravesite. Captain Read was an active participant at the famous Boston Tea Party (December 16, 1773) and was honored in advance of next year's

250th anniversary. Captain Read was praised in rousing speeches and with a ceremonial volley performed by the Minutemen.



A colonial reenactor helps Westford Girl Scouts place Capt. Read's medallion at Fairview Cemetery

Four days later, Private Oliver Barrett (1727-1777) was honored with the placement of a veterans marker at Saratoga National Cemetery in NY, near where he was killed in action on the famous battlefield. At the time of his death Pvt. Barrett was a Westford resident. His well-attended ceremony, organized by Pvt. Barrett's fifth great-granddaughter, featured honored guest Dan Lacroix of the Westford Colonial Minutemen, who traveled a long way to be there and represent Westford in uniform. It is very gratifying that these Westford heroes are still remembered and honored.



Dan Lacroix of the Westford Colonial Minutemen (on left) at Saratoga



Private Barrett's gravesite