



Town of Westford Massachusetts

Town Manager's Newsletter

November 2023



Kristen Las
Town
Manager

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

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updates:

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Annual Tree Lighting
Sunday, November 26
4 - 5:30 PM
On the Town Common
See page 6

[Survey of Housing
Needs for Adults Aged
55 and Over](#)

Westford Academy
Holiday Bazaar
Saturday, December 2
9 AM - 3 PM
30 Patten Road
See page 14



Watch
westford 
community access television
www.westfordcat.org

Dear Westford residents,

November tends to be a month of reflection, gratitude and giving thanks. I would like to thank Ryan Cobleigh, Veterans Service Officer, Heather Monahan, Veterans Department Senior Assistant and all that helped to arrange and those who participated in the November 11, 2023 Veterans Day ceremonies in the Town of Westford. We owe a great deal of gratitude to those who have served our country and the turn out for the ceremony is a true testament to that. During this month, I am also reflecting on the thanks and gratitude I have for the Select Board, town staff and town residents for welcoming me as Town Manager back in February 2023. There have been so many people that have provided me guidance and support over the course of the past ten months. I hope you all have time to relax and recharge next week over the Thanksgiving holiday.

It is also hard to believe is that December is upon us in less than two weeks. The Town has several meetings, offerings and programs that you may find interesting. On December 6, 2023, the Select Board and I will be preparing breakfast at the Senior Center. I will be presenting the FY25 Budget to the Select Board at their regularly scheduled meeting on December 12, 2023 at 7PM. The Communications Advisory Committee will be hosting a public hearing on December 13, 2023 at 7PM at the Millenium School and via Zoom take comments on entering into a franchise agreement between the Westford's Cable Operators, Comcast and Verizon.

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

At the Select Board meeting on October 24, 2023 they noted that the Town had renewed its contract with Electric Aggregation Program through November 2025. A letter should have come in your mail with instructions on how to continue with your current membership.

The Select Board heard from residents regarding the Special Town Meeting and the many logistical challenges they faced trying to attend the meeting, and during the meeting itself. The Select Board and Town Staff discussed steps moving forward to improve accessibility for future meetings and assured residents they would work to address all issues in the coming months.

The Select Board held a joint meeting with the Recycling Commission to discuss the proposals received by Waste Management and E.L. Harvey for FY25-FY29. In a 5-0 vote, the Select Board approved to enter contract negotiations with E.L. Harvey for both solid waste and recycling. The new vendor will begin services on July 1, 2024. More information regarding the switch in vendors will come out to residents in the spring.

At their meeting on November 14, 2023 the Chief Chambers announced that the Police Department had received a silver level honor for their achievements in traffic safety as well as educate and protect the citizens of our community. Officer David Siltan was recognized for his work on the Pedestrian Safety Committee and Click it or Ticket grant.

(Continued on next page)

WWW.WESTFORDMA.GOV

The Town Manager announced that Mark Warren, Water Superintendent had just completed a successful year as President of the Massachusetts Water Works Association. She thanked him for his serviced to that board and to the Town of Westford.

The Town Manager announced the [Survey of Housing Needs for Adults Aged 55 and Over](#). It's available online at the [Town of Westford's homepage](#), and printed versions are available at the Land Use Management Department, the Cameron Senior Center and the Fletcher Library.

The Assessors Office held a tax classification hearing for FY24. A single tax rate of \$13.77 was approved 5-0. Tax bills will be mailed at the end of December 2023.

The Communications Advisory Committee gave an update on their plans to hold a Public Hearing to renew cable provider contracts in town. The hearing will be held on December 13 at 7:00pm in the Millennium Building and through Zoom.

The Select Board approved a Memorandum of Understanding with Bootstrap Compost to serve as Westford's official preferred vendor for a one-year pilot program, providing residential food waste and hauling directly to residents to begin December 1, 2023. More information will be available on the town's website and mailed to residents.

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

- | | |
|---|--|
| Affordable Housing Trust | Dog Park Task Force |
| Agricultural Commission | Healthy Westford Committee |
| Board of Assessors | Housing Authority |
| Bylaw Review Committee | MBTA Communities Multi-Family Housing |
| Capital Planning Committee | Northern Middlesex Stormwater Collaborative |
| Clean Energy and Sustainability Committee | Parks and Recreation Commission |
| Commission on Disability | Permanent Town Building Committee |
| Community Behavioral and Mental Health Committee | Scholarship and Grant Committee |
| Council on Aging | Selectmen Policies & Procedures Sub Committee |
| Cultural Council | Tax Possession Disposition Committee |
| Diversity, Equity and Inclusion | |

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



Special Town Meeting held on October 16 was a learning experience for me. You can see the results of the votes taken [here](#), but what I'd like to discuss in this newsletter is the management of the Meeting that night. If you were present, or if you have read anything about it since, you probably know it was a very difficult Meeting. We were not well prepared for the number of people who attended and as a result the Meeting was chaotic. That is unacceptable. As the official most directly in charge of the Meeting I apologize to everyone.

I'd like to explain (not as an excuse but as an explanation only) why we didn't anticipate the large contingent of voters present on that night. We have been averaging about 400 voters at our Town Meetings. Knowing there was an issue generating significant interest I planned for double that number. We had 800 clickers, 838 parking spaces, sufficient poll pads to efficiently check in 800 voters,

double the usual police presence and we were in the WA gym which has a capacity of 896 people. In the last 30 years there have been only 3 other Town Meetings attended by more than 1,000 people. I monitored the informational events leading up to Town Meeting and while those gatherings were well attended they rarely generated overflow crowds and tapered off as we got closer to October 16. Nevertheless, my estimate for this Meeting turned out to be wrong. We checked in 1,124 voters that night. Compounding my error was the fact that we lost over 200 parking spaces on the WA practice fields which were too wet to be used for parking. Because some folks had mentioned that they believed 800 might be an underestimate, we had a contingency plan in place for overflow voting in the auditorium. That room was wired in advance for video and audio broadcast, we had an Assistant Moderator and Assistant Clerk at the ready and voters there would be able to vote with orange voter cards.

It wasn't enough. The Meeting took place, votes were taken, the Town's business was conducted BUT the voters were inconvenienced, kept out too late and were justifiably displeased. That cannot happen again.

What have we learned and where do we go from here? Here are some of our thoughts to date. **We need more parking:** another lot must be available with transportation to and from WA and there must be clear direction to the voters in advance of the Meeting and also once the WA lot is approaching capacity. **We need faster check-in:** we are in the process of securing additional poll pads and thinking about better placement of more tellers to avoid long check-in lines. **We need more clickers:** we have requested a proposal to purchase additional clickers from our vendor and to examine why the clickers we have took so long to calculate the votes. **We need two-way audio visual to any secondary location:** we are talking with vendors and other towns about how to efficiently and affordably accomplish this. This is only a partial list - we continue to work on all issues raised by the October 16 Meeting.

To those who have offered support and suggestions since the Meeting, my sincere thanks. I've taken every communication seriously and incorporated them all into my thought process. To those who might have been discouraged by the disorder of the Meeting, especially voters attending for the first time, please don't let this keep you from attending again. I promise you we will do everything possible to make things better! In spite of the conditions at the last Meeting I still sincerely believe that democracy works best when everyone participates. Annual Town Meeting will be held on Saturday, March 23, 2024. Please mark your calendar now and I hope to see you there!

Angela Harkness
Westford Town Moderator

A message from the Tax Collector's desk



As I formulate my budget for FY25, I am feeling the impact of inflation. I am launching out here and hoping that taxpayers will partner with me to reduce spending for printing and postage! I am currently budgeting over \$30,000 a year to print and mail tax bills. Over half our real estate tax bills are paid by mortgage companies and thousands of bills are paid online making the printed tax bill for some of our customers somewhat unnecessary. We have an opportunity to reduce spending if taxpayers would be willing to

receive their tax bills via email instead of hard copies mailed through the US Postal Service. If this method of delivery would work for you, would you consider signing up before December 10th to avoid the next print and mail cycle?

Help the Town of Westford GO GREEN & SAVE MONEY!

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 real estate tax notices go out each quarter (mailings are only twice a year)

E-Billing helps to reduce our postage and printing budget

One note about E-Billing. Since you must select which bills you want to receive via email, if you get a new vehicle registration number, you will need to remember to select that bill after the first excise tax is generated.

Thank you for taking advantage of our E-Billing option!

Questions? Call Tax Collector-Treasurer, Christine Collins @ 978-399-2526



WESTFORD LEAGUE TO HOST HOLIDAY PARTY DECEMBER 6

Come to the League of Women Voters' Holiday Party on **Wednesday, December 6**, at **7:30 p.m.** to celebrate the season and learn more about the League in a casual, relaxed environment. The gathering will be held at the Westford Museum, 2 Boston Road, and will include light refreshments.

The Holiday Party, like our monthly Civic Socials, is an informal get-together, open to all, where people can learn what's happening in and around town and about what the League is doing. The League's work is divided into two parts: **Voter Service** and **Issues and Action**. Membership gives you the opportunity to learn more about Westford, take a continuing and intensive course in government at all levels, and develop leadership skills.

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan, issues-oriented organization of community activists that encourages informed and active participation in government. The League does not support or oppose any candidate or political party. Go to lwv.westford.org for more information about the League.





HOSTED BY
 & Westford Girl Scouts
 THE WESTFORD MUSEUM

TOWN OF WESTFORD
TREE LIGHTING

We are delighted to have you join us for a **sing-a-long, crafts, games,** and more! Bring your camera to **take a photo with Santa!**



November 26th
4:00 PM to 5:30 PM
 WESTFORD TOWN
 COMMON

WHEN
 +
WHERE



**THANKS
 TO**

Westford Fire Department, Westford Police Department, Westford Select Board, Westford Garden Club, Westford Parks & Recreation, Town of Westford, Ellen Harde, United Methodist Church of Westford Adult Choir, and Santa.





The Town of Westford Diversity Equity and Inclusion Committee along with Westford Public Schools Diversity Equity and Inclusion Committee are excited to partner with Community TeamWork (CTI) to screen Jeffrey Robinson's documentary: *Who We Are ~ A Chronicle of Racism in America*

WHAT IS [THE WHO WE ARE PROJECT](#)?

The Who We Are Project was founded by Jeffrey Robinson. The organization is an outgrowth of a talk that Robinson has been giving for the past 10 years on the history of anti-Black racism and white supremacy in the United States. This talk forms the basis of the feature-length documentary film, **Who We Are: A Chronicle of Racism in America**.



OUR MISSION

The Who We Are Project will be one of the central voices that will correct the narrative on our shared history of anti-Black racism in the United States. The current narrative about the impact of anti-Black racism and white supremacy on the social, legal, political, and economic aspects of our culture in the United States is based on a "re-telling" of history that is incomplete, inaccurate, and misleading. **The Who We Are Project** will correct this false narrative about U.S. history and provide an objectively true account that exposes the role of white supremacy and anti-Black racism throughout history up to the present. This mission is crucial because reckoning with our true history is the only way for our country to move forward on a path toward racial equity and justice.

Please join us for our community viewing!
RSVP [Form](#): by January 3rd, 2024

Date: January 17th, 2024

Time: 6:30 pm

Location: Westford Academy Auditorium, Patten Road, Westford, MA

Facilitated Reflection, Question & Answer Discussion
Upon Completion of the film

SHAPING THE FUTURE ONE CHILD AT A TIME

November at the J.V. Fletcher Library



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

Holiday Hours: On Wednesday, Nov. 22, Thanksgiving Eve, the Library will close at 3:00 p.m.; we will be closed on Thanksgiving Day and on Friday, Nov. 24. The Library will be open on Saturday, Nov. 25 from 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

YA Crafternoon: Monday, November 20 from 3:30-4:30 p.m. Join us in the Meeting Room for a relaxing afternoon of crafting! For Grade 6 and up. Registration is helpful but drop-ins are always welcome. [Register here.](#)

Mystery Book Club: Monday, November 27th at 2:00 p.m. Wake up your week with a stimulating book club discussion! We'll meet in the Mary Atwood Room to discuss *A World of Curiosities* by Louise Penny. Print copies are available at Main Desk. Email Justin Liberti at jliberti@westfordma.gov for details!

Sweet Reads Book Club: Tuesday, November 28 at 6:30 p.m. in the Meeting Room Come for the desserts, stay for the discussion. This month we will read *Simon Sort of Says* by Erin Bow. Registration is appreciated, but drop-ins are welcome. Copies of the book are available at the Main Desk. For Grade 6 and up.

Porcupines Don't Shoot Their Quills! Facts with Newhouse Wildlife Rescue: Thursday, November 30 at 6:00 p.m. in the Meeting Room. Come join Jane Seeker (Newhouse), founder of Newhouse Wildlife Rescue, as she shares interesting facts about our local wildlife. Learn how you can help injured and orphaned wild animals in an emergency. Newhouse Wildlife Rescue is located in Chelmsford, MA. Each year they help numerous sick, injured, and orphaned wild animals heal and grow until they can be released back into the wild. Bigger, stronger, and free! This program is a collaboration between our Young Adult Department and our Adult Services Department. Anyone age 11 and up is welcome to attend. [Register here.](#)

Adult Nonfiction Book Club: Tuesday, December 5 at 7:00 p.m. We'll meet in the downstairs Meeting Room to discuss *How Democracies Die* by Steven Levitski and Daniel Ziblatt. Copies are available at Main Desk. Email Charles Schweppe at cschweppe@westfordma.gov for details!

Ukulele Play Along for Adults: Saturday, December 9 at 2:00 p.m. in the Meeting Room. Join Julie Stepanek and other players for a ukulele play along! A play along is participatory music at its best. Julie will prepare song sheets (lyrics and chords) of songs and lead participants in playing those songs, offering tips and encouragement as we play, sing and have a good time. Please note: this is not a beginner teaching class, though Julie will offer tips and all skill levels are welcome! A limited number of ukuleles are provided. However, you are welcome to bring your own! [Register here.](#) Please email any questions to [Justin Liberti.](#)

Story times are held in the **Meeting Room**. To accommodate a wider variety of participants there will be no registrations or reservations. All Story Times are Drop-In and scheduled Monday – Thursday. There are no story times on the Thanksgiving holiday (11/23-23).

- **Mother Goose – Mondays 10:30 to 11:00 a.m.** – for babies up and kids up to age 5, now through December 4.
- **ABC and Me – Tuesdays 10:30 to 11:00 a.m.** – for kids ages 2 to 5, now through November 28.
- **Book Bunch – Tuesdays 1:15-1:45 p.m.** – for kids ages 3 to 5, now through November 28.
- **Wiggle Words – Wednesdays 10:30 to 11:00 a.m.** – for kids ages 2 to 4, now through November 29.
- **Stay and Play – Thursdays 10:30-11:30** – for babies and kids up to age 5, now through December 7.

(Continued on next page)

J.V. Fletcher Library (continued)



Email Newsletter

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.](#)



Museum Passes

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.



J. V. Fletcher Library Hours:

Monday	10:00 AM - 9:00 PM
Tuesday	10:00 AM - 9:00 PM
Wednesday	10:00 AM - 9:00 PM
Thursday	10:00 AM - 9:00 PM
Friday	1:00 PM - 5:00 PM
Saturday	10:00 AM - 5:00 PM
Sunday	Closed

Wed Nov 22, 2023 (Thanksgiving Eve)	10:00 AM - 3:00 PM
Thu Nov 23, 2023 (Thanksgiving)	Closed
Fri Nov 24, 2023 (Thanksgiving Friday)	Closed

Cameron Senior Center



Ring in the Holiday Season at The Cameron - Please Join Us!

HAM & BEAN SUPPER

Saturday, November 18th at 5:30PM

The Annual Ham and Bean Supper, sponsored by the Westford Firefighters Association, American Legion Post 159 and the Franco American Club, will be held at the Franco-American Club. There is no charge for dinner, but we encourage you to bring an item for the Westford Food Pantry. RSVP to 978.692.5523

* If you need transportation, please let us know when you register.

JIM GERAGHTY'S FAMILY & FRIENDS

26TH ANNUAL THANKSGIVING DINNER FOR WESTFORD SENIORS

Sunday, Nov. 19th at Westford Academy A traditional Thanksgiving dinner will be prepared at Westford Academy, and it will be available as a sit-down dinner. The menu includes turkey and dressing, gravy, sweet potatoes, corn, pies, and more. BINGO will be played from 10 am- 12 noon, with dinner served at 12:00. RSVP to 978.692.5523.* If you need transportation, please let us know when you register.

PROPERTY TAX EXEMPTIONS – Are you eligible?

The town of Westford has several property tax exemptions for senior residents: the low income, blind, disabled, veterans and more. You may be eligible for a tax break. If you are interested in learning more about your options, you can call the Assessor's office at 978.692.5504 or call Annette/Jen to review them at 978.399.2326.

NEED ASSISTANCE WITH UNDERSTANDING MEDICARE?

SHINE (Serving Health Insurance Needs of Everyone) can help! Medicare health and drug plans can make changes each year: Things like cost, coverage, and what providers and pharmacies are in their networks. The SHINE (Serving the Health Insurance Needs of Everyone) Program can help you determine the best plan for you through individual meetings with a trained SHINE Counselor. To schedule an appointment with **Fred Baumert, our SHINE Counselor (Westford resident)** contact the Cameron Front Desk at 978.692.5523. Appointments are typically 45 minutes on **Monday, November 27th and December 4th**.



The Cameron was glad to support Blessed Trinity Parish - St. Catherine of Alexandria Church Walk for The Poor.

A special thanks to staff members Edna MacNeil and Jen Beale for providing nourishment and encouragement to many caring walkers.

(Continued on next page)

Cameron Senior Center (continued)



WESTFORD'S "A SPA FOR YOU" HERE AT THE CAMERON

Monday, November 27th from 10 am - 2pm
 Monday, December 11th from 10 am - 2 pm

For \$15.00, A Spa for you will perform one of the following services: 15 Minute Chair Massage, 15 Minute Express Facial, 15 Minute Pedicure, or 15 Minute Manicure. All Services provided by Licensed Tech. Payment in cash due at time of the service. Any questions call Eleanor at A Spa for You at 978.486.8900. RSVP 978.692.5523



SPECIAL TOWN MANAGER AND SELECT BOARD HOLIDAY BREAKFAST Wednesday, December 6th at 8:30AM

We are happy to honor Kristen Las at her first holiday breakfast with us as our Town Manager. The menu that Kristen had selected will include blueberry pancakes, scrambled eggs, home fries, sausage, fruit salad and pastries. This wonderful array of festive foods will be prepared by our Town Manager and her staff and the members of the Select Board. Please RSVP early online or by phone at 978.692.5523 because it will fill quickly.

LET'S GO SHOPPING

Wednesday, December 13th at 10 am

Take the COA van to the Pheasant Lane Mall do get some holiday shopping done or just buy yourself something nice. After a fun morning of shopping, enjoy a nice lunch at the Olive Garden. You are responsible for the shopping and food. Cost-\$10 RSVP-978.692.5523

HOLIDAY LUNCHEON AT THE WESTFORD REGENCY

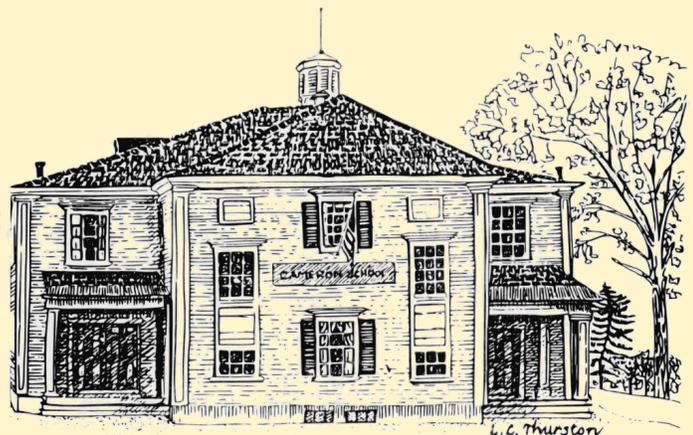
Friday, December 15th at 11:45AM We are happy to share with you an opportunity to stroll through the Festival of Trees while enjoying the music of our very own 'Upbeats Band' playing many traditional holiday favorites starting at 10:30 am prior to lunch. You will see many beautifully decorated Christmas trees and wreaths. Once again, we will enjoy the performance of the talented Westford Academy Honor's Chorus. Holiday menu: salad, chicken parmesan, starch and vegetable, holiday dessert, tea, & coffee. Reservations required by Dec. 5th. Limited Seating. Call 978.692.5523. Transportation will be provided, just call 978.399.2322 to reserve your van seat. Cost: Friends members \$15, non-Friends members \$29. This event is sponsored by our wonderful Friends of the Cameron Senior Center.

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

To view the complete Council On Aging Newsletter please visit our website:

www.westfordma.gov/coa and click on **Newsletters**.



Westford Senior Center

Health Department

FUNDED BY THE GLHA OF CHNA 10 GRANT

BURIED IN TREASURES WORKSHOPS

GOT TOO MUCH STUFF?
NEED TO DOWNSIZE?



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

**Westford Health
Department**



- Are there stacks of paper in nearly every corner of your house?
- Are your closets, cupboards and other storage areas overflowing with stuff?
- Is it difficult to use your kitchen or bathroom utility areas?
- Do you struggle with letting things go?
- Do more items come into the home than go out?
- Does it take a long time to find a particular item or important document in your house?
- Are you embarrassed to have someone come into your home? Do you want to declutter but are overwhelmed on where to begin?

If you can answer 'yes' to one or more of these questions, then our 15-week (in-person) Buried in Treasures (BIT) Workshop may be for you. This is a relaxed, non-judgmental program that teaches you how to build insight, skills and strategies to help declutter, get organized and reduce acquiring. The program addresses all clutter levels from just a few messy areas, to excessive collecting, to hoarding tendencies/disorder.

Workshop starts: Jan 11th, 2024

Workshop will be held once a week on Thursdays (for 15 weeks)

Time: 1PM-3PM

Where: Westford Council on Aging

Cost: Class & workbook are FREE

Open to Westford MA residents



PLEASE EMAIL BRITTANY NASH, BNASH@WESTFORDMA.GOV WITH ANY QUESTIONS OR TO REGISTER (THIS WILL BE A CLOSED GROUP; YOU MUST REGISTER IN ADVANCE). SPONSORED BY THE WESTFORD HEALTH DEPARTMENT AND COMMUNITY WELLNESS DEPARTMENT HOSTED AT THE WESTFORD COUNCIL ON AGING.

Sustainability Update- Sue Thomas, [Sustainability Coordinator](#), 978-399-2798

Gratitude

In this season of thanks and giving, amidst news of the hottest seasons on record and billions spent to recover from climate disasters around the nation and the world, I want to take a moment to thank all of you for everything you have done this year to protect and enhance the health of our town, whether you made a plan to make your [home more energy efficient with Mass Save](#) or assessed the viability of a [heat pump](#) for heating and cooling, [purchased an EV](#), [adopted a new waste reduction habit](#), started to understand [your landscape as habitat](#), or [installed solar](#). In the municipal sector, I have been working on all of those things as well. With the assistance of our dedicated staff and volunteers from both the Clean Energy and Sustainability Committee, the Westford Recycling Commission and Westford Climate Action, we have worked hard to supply you with opportunities to purchase clean energy, increase the energy efficiency of our buildings, electrify our facilities and fleets, secure grants and rebates to defray the costs of these efforts, reduce solid waste, become more resilient and preserve our natural resources.

November Top Ten To-Do list:

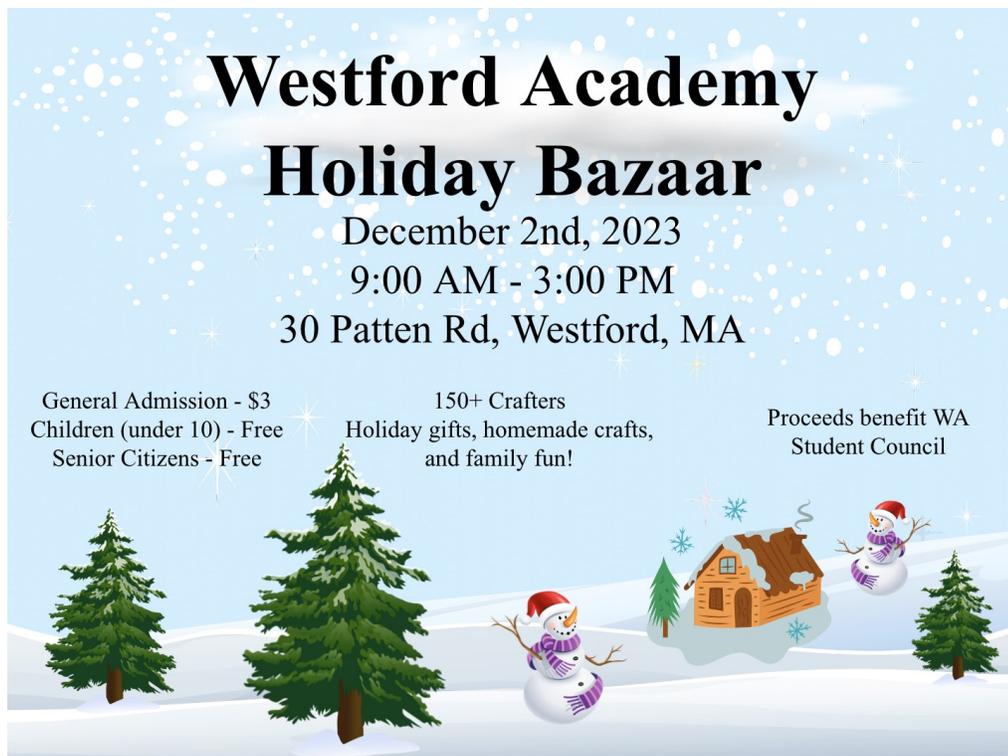
- 1. Opt in and Opt Up – [If you are a Pop Silver or Pop Gold Customer in Westford Pop, you MUST re-enroll here by NOVEMBER 20th or revert back to NATIONAL GRID Basic rates.](#)** Rates are increasing for the new contract period but unlike other programs, are locked for two years and you can leave the program at any time without penalty. ANY CUSTOMER interested and able to purchase more local renewable energy through the program can opt up to Pop Gold at any time.
- 2. [Work your energy conservation and electrification plan](#)** – based on your home energy audit. Consider a [% interest heat loan](#), which is now a misnomer, as it can be used to cover all of your hvac needs, including an electrical panel upgrade should you need one. Documentation of your home assessment is required to become eligible for MA rebates.
- 3. [Research your next car purchase](#)** – In January car dealers should start to provide the tax credit directly to you in the form of a discount, obviating the need to fund \$7500 of your purchase up front. MA rebates are available shortly after purchase.
- 4. [Rethink the gift giving and wrapping season](#)** – Purchase durable, clean energy goods, like an [induction stove](#), new cookware, or [fridge](#), make memories with shared experiences, cultivate a creative mind with hobbies and classes, curate a wardrobe filled with natural fibers and classic style including vintage thrifted pieces, learn to buy new things used and wrap in reusable or recyclable items (wrapping paper is trash), like linens and reusable decorative bags and boxes. Plan a treasure hunt in lieu of wrapping. Don't wrap items in stockings. Avoid plastic where possible. Shop local to avoid trucking emissions and to support our local economy. Stuff stockings with reusable gifts like reusable packable bags, metal straws, glass nail files, insulated mugs, travel cutlery and take out sets, and plastic free/petroleum free toiletries. Go back to the future with drying racks (no dryer and less humidification!), and manual (no plug or battery) devices, games and other entertainment.
- 5. [Feast and then forage in the fridge](#)** – Use perishables, like greens and leftovers first, freeze remaining fresh veggies raw or roasted, and herbs in oil in an ice cube tray, or dry and store in glass, make and freeze soups and casseroles, for rushed work days and consider stir fries as a destination for other left overs. Avoid accidental science experiments!

(Continued on next page)

Sustainability (Continued)

6. **Compost!** At home with your earth machine (the best choice, if you can), or try curb side with [Bootstrap Compost](#) for the cold months. Westford has arranged for a discounted group rate for customers interested in purchasing this service.
7. **Don't forget the lights and the stars (in the east... west, north or south)** - Enjoy the ambiance of warm lighting directed only where you need it, indoors and out. The holidays and the efficiency of LED lighting are not a reason to make your property obvious to the international space station. Choose your lighting to suit the likely, local audience. [Join Westford Climate Action for Stargazing, Sunday, November 19th at 6:00 PM](#)
8. **Leave the leaves!** And the stems in your garden. Skip the fall clean up this year. Save your back, your hearing, your lungs and heart, your time and your money. At least for portions of your yard where you would enjoy habitat. You will discover that a spring clean up is easier as mother nature will have done much of the work for you. A bare lawn is a dead and sterile one. Insects rely on leaves and stems for winter habitat, and loss of this habitat, along with the use of poisons, is putting holes in the food chain that supports not just our food, but entire ecosystems. Soil health is dependent on the natural compost provided by leaves, as are the trees who shed them. Mulch your leaves and grass where you do want lawn, but do it early and let the rest go so the insects have time to put themselves to bed and the birds and small mammals can find this natural food.
9. [Take the RecycleSmart quizzes to test your skills.](#)
10. **Mark your calendar to visit me and Westford Climate Action at the Westford Academy Holiday Bazaar on December 2nd** to see an induction cooktop in action, register to win your own and enjoy a festive hot beverage. Watching a pot boil has never been so exciting and delicious! We can talk energy or trash or make a resolution.

Best wishes for a bountiful and sustainable season of gratitude.



**Westford Academy
Holiday Bazaar**
December 2nd, 2023
9:00 AM - 3:00 PM
30 Patten Rd, Westford, MA

General Admission - \$3
Children (under 10) - Free
Senior Citizens - Free

150+ Crafters
Holiday gifts, homemade crafts,
and family fun!

Proceeds benefit WA
Student Council

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, substance use disorder and parental stress:

988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline:

The 988 Lifeline is a 24/7 toll-free lifeline for individuals experiencing emotional distress or crises. Call 988 to talk to a trained listener. <https://988lifeline.org/>

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.

The Massachusetts Substance Use Helpline: Call 800-327-5050 or text HOPE to 800327

Whether you are ready for treatment, worried about a loved one, or simply want to know what your options are, there is help to take that first step. <https://helplinema.org/>

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. Available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. <https://www.parentshelpingparents.org/stressline>

Supportive articles:

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

<https://mhanational.org/blog/looking-support-during-holidays-check-out-these-free-resources>

McLean's Guide to Managing Mental Health Around the Holidays

<https://www.mcleanhospital.org/essential/mcleans-guide-managing-mental-health-around-holidays>

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

<https://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

<https://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

<https://www.westfordma.gov/1487/Community-Wellness>

Community Wellness Coordinator

Nicole Laviolette

978-399-2503 ~ nlaviolette@westfordma.gov

Community Wellness (Continued)

Town of Westford Change of Mental Health Referral Service for Residents

AS OF DECEMBER 1, 2023 THE TOWN WILL NO LONGER HAVE ACCESS TO THE WILLIAM JAMES INTERFACE REFERRAL SERVICE

As an alternative to Interface please see the below resources:

The Behavioral Health Help Line (BHHL) is available 24/7, 365 days per year and is available for all residents of Massachusetts.

Call or text 833-773-2445.

Visit the website to chat online at https://www.masshelpline.com/

BHHL connects individuals and families to the full range of treatment services for mental health and substance use offered in Massachusetts, including outpatient, urgent, and immediate crisis care. Call for real-time support, initial clinical assessment, and connection to the right services.

The BHHL is staffed by trained clinicians and certified peer specialists to support every caller's needs.

The BHHL is available in more than 200 languages. Individuals who are Deaf or hard of hearing can also use the BHHL by contacting MassRelay at 711. The BHHL is free and available to all Massachusetts residents.



- Westford Mobile Clinician provides short term services while you or a family member is on a waitlist for ongoing therapy. For more information - contact Community Wellness Coordinator, Nicole Laviolette
- Community Behavioral Health Center (VINFEN) - 866-388-2242
- Suicide & Crisis Lifeline - call or text 988

Contact now with questions:

Community Wellness Coordinator
Nicole Laviolette 978-399-2503

Westford Recreation

Westford Partnership for Children (WPC), grades K-5, Session 2

Recreation's WPC After School Program offers:

- A safe and easy transition from classroom to program.
- Your choice of activities and flexible schedules.
- An experienced, caring Site Director and staff.

WPC runs Monday-Friday, school dismissal to 6:00 p.m., with locations at Abbot, Crisafulli, Day, Miller, Nabnasset, and Robinson.

Register for any session, at any time.

Learn more at [About WPC](#) on [westfordma.myrec.com](#).

Recreation Special Programs, grades K-8 December Break, December 26-29

Enjoy PJ's and Pancakes, *Migration* at the O'Neil Cinema, and fun at the Acton Bowl-A-Drome, plus more! Enrollment is open to Westford as well as other surrounding communities.

Learn more at [Special Programs](#) - [westfordma.myrec.com](#).



Crisafulli's WPC After School **MONSTER BASH** was a great success! From top to bottom: Games included Donut on a String, Find the Gummy Worm, and Mummy Making!

WPC's Crisafulli staff from left to right: Counselors Maia Gosselin, Bella Caruso, Brady Waterman and Campbell Twitchell with Scooby Doo, Site Director and photographer Tiffany Gintner, in the middle.

Westford Recreation (continued)



FUN WITH Recreation's Special Programs December Break!

**December 26-29,
for Grades K-8**

And then there were pancakes.



9am to 3pm daily. Options for Early Arrival (from 7:30am) and Extended Day (until 5:30 pm), are dependent on enrollment numbers, contact us for more information.

Open to residents from Westford and other surrounding communities.

65 Main Street, 3rd floor, Westford, MA 01886
westfordma.myrec.com
978-692-5532



Everyday, **Fun!**

- Tuesday:** PJ's, Pancakes, and Playtime
- Wednesday:** Migration - O'Neils Cinema
- Thursday:** Acton Bowl-A-Drome
- Friday:** Game Day and Pizza

Eatin' Out! Chillin' Out!
Strikin' Out! Hangin' Out!

Program and Registration details at
Special Programs - westfordma.myrec.com.

Recreation Special Programs offer full-day and full-week programming during school professional development days, parent conferences, certain holidays, and December, February, and April school vacations.

REGISTER NOW: westfordma.myrec.com.

CALL US. VISIT US. LEARN MORE!

Westford Recycling Commission

Is this item recyclable? Does it go in the trash or recycle bin?



You have questions. The Recyclopedia at: <https://recyclesmartma.org/> has the answers.

What you put in your recycling bin matters.



At the Massachusetts Recycle Smart website you will find a downloadable Smart Recycling Guide: <https://recyclesmartma.org/smart-recycling-guide/>.

Recycle Smart Smart Recycling Guide
Your go-to reference for recycling in Massachusetts

Metal
Food and Beverage Cans
empty and rinse

Plastic
Bottles, Jars, Jugs and Tubs
empty and replace cap

Glass
Bottles and Jars
empty and rinse

Paper & Cardboard
Mixed Paper, Newspaper, Magazines, Boxes
empty and flatten

NO!

- Do Not Bag Recyclables No Garbage
- No Plastic Bags or Plastic Wrap (return to retail)
- No Food or Liquid (empty all containers)
- No Clothing or Linens (use donation programs)
- No Tangles (no hoses, wires, chains or electronics)

Recyclopedia: Can I recycle it?
Enter name of item (ex. bottle) Search
Use our online search tool at: RecycleSmartMA.org

RecycleSmartMA.org

All recycling programs in Massachusetts accept the items pictured above.
Printed on Recycled Paper

To boost your recycling knowledge, take the Recycling Quiz: <https://recyclesmartma.org/quiz-1-0/>

Remember to empty and rinse all containers. Please do not put tangles, plastic bags, plastic wrap, or recycling in plastic bags as they can clog the sorting machinery.

Clothing and linens are not recyclable in the recycle bin and are banned from the trash. Consider donating textiles. For several suggestions, check the Westford Recycling Commission web site: www.westfordma.gov/recycling. Scroll down to Textiles in the A-Z Guide: How to Recycling Most Everything.

Reduce, Reuse, Repair, Repurpose, and Recycle!

MA resource for "What is Recyclable?" www.RecycleSmartMA.org.

The Mission of the Westford Recycling Commission is to:
Increase awareness of the financial and environmental impacts of recycling; provide opportunities for non-curbside recycling; educate residents on options to reduce, reuse, repurpose, and recycle; and organize recycling events that encourage diversion from the trash.

Westford Public Schools

A Grateful Update...WPS! 11-1-23

At this time last year, it looked as if changing our clocks twice a year was going to be a thing of the past. Here we are once again preparing to fall back this weekend and gain an extra hour of sleep. No complaint here, it has always been my favorite weekend of the year and I am grateful to be able to enjoy it again.

Gratitude is certainly on everyone's radar as we enter November...if it wasn't already. I am thankful every time I get the chance to visit our schools and see the tremendous work being done by our staff and students on a daily basis. Nothing can brighten your day like seeing kindergarten students' enthusiasm for a science project observing the decay of a pumpkin over time or seniors' creativity in carrying their things throughout the day when challenged to use anything but a backpack. Two ends of the spectrum with a lot of joy, laughter and critical thinking along the way. That can only happen when all of the staff are working together to create environments where students feel welcome, supported and encouraged.

As a reminder to everyone, we adjusted the [23-24 WPS Calendar](#) earlier in the year resulting in some changes to our November schedules. The Monday and Tuesday before Thanksgiving are full days of school since the conferences were moved to December for our elementary schools and January for our middle schools.

In October, we presented the report from the Town of Westford Budget Task Force to the Select Board, Finance Committee and School Committee. A copy of the report can be found on the Budget Task Force webpage: <https://westfordma.gov/1582/Budget-Task-Force> This was a very productive process in which I am very grateful to have participated and I hope you are able to take time to review the report. We will be creating some short informational videos in the near future that helps to break down the report and I will make sure to include them in a future update, as well.

Now that we are in November, the FY25 Budget development season is in full swing. While we work on determining the General Fund Operating budget for the schools, we are also prioritizing recommendations from last year's Feasibility Study in order to establish our 10 Year Master Plan for the district (WPS SDIP 2.2). That work informs how and when capital requests are generated. This month, we present our FY25 Capital Requests to the Town of Westford Capital Planning Committee. This process takes place every year and helps the Capital Planning Committee develop their recommendations which get presented to the entire community at the annual Town Meeting in the spring.

Finally, November is Special Education Parent Advisory Council (SEPAC) month. This acknowledgement throughout the state of Massachusetts was actually spearheaded in part by members of the WPS SEPAC a few years ago. We are grateful for the support and resources that they provide and we celebrate their partnership and advocacy. I look forward to joining them along with Gerard Coughlin, Director of Special Education and Social Emotional Learning, for their next meeting on November 15th. We will be discussing current topics regarding Special Education here in Westford and answer questions that members might have. For more information about the meeting, please access the WPS SEPAC website: <https://sepacwestford.wixsite.com/my-site/meeting-calendar>

With gratitude,
Chris

Christopher Chew, Ed. D
Superintendent
Westford Public Schools



Veterans Day

A wonderful Veterans Day event was held on Westford Common on a crisp fall day, November 11. The program featured a tribute to late Westford Police Chief Joseph R. Connell, a Marine veteran of the Korean War who served the town for 30 years. His daughter Jayne Connell delivered a moving speech in his honor. Family and friends gathered at the Connell Memorial afterward to remember him.



Very thoughtful remarks were also given by State Senator John J. Cronin (Worcester-Middlesex District) a West Point graduate, former US Army infantry combat officer who served in Afghanistan; and by John Cunningham of the Westford Select Board, an Air Force Veteran who graciously paid tribute to his fellow Veterans. Westford Veterans Services thanks all Veterans who attended and everyone who came out to thank them, including Scouts, WA band, honor guard, first responders and many residents.



Photos: Jayne Connell addresses the crowd; family and friends with the honor guard at the Connell memorial