

Local yokel

(n.) a country folk living in a quaint neighborhood community

West
Stockbridge
February
2023



Beech leaves rustle in the winter wind at Card Pond. Photo by John Parker

SERVING OUR COMMUNITY SINCE 2005



*Thank You,
West Stockbridge!*

Santa's Wish List Donations

Our annual appeal for donations to West Stockbridge organizations appeared in our December issue. This year, the total received was \$10,810—a new record and about \$4,000 more than in 2019.

We thank all those who gave so generously to these important community groups that work very hard to make West Stockbridge such a special place to live. Here are the totals by organization:

Friends of the Library	\$1,400
Local Yokel	\$3,405
Pet Partners	\$250
WS Farmers Market	\$925
WS Fire & Rescue	\$1,510
WS Historical Society	\$2,535
WS Parks & Recreation	\$785

Total: \$10,810



It takes a village: Ash Hallock and cousins Alex and Zachary Roy tending to the paths to the Info Booth. Photo courtesy of Anne Roy.



Winter Wildlife

Have you ever wondered what wild mammals live in your neighborhood and how they survive our cold winters? Learn how to interpret the subtle clues creatures leave behind, such as tracks, chews, scat, and more. You'll gain basic skills to enhance your outdoor walks and hikes with a greater awareness of the wildlife around you. We'll highlight a variety of mammals including American beaver, eastern coyote, raccoon, and fisher and the clues they leave for us to find as we explore the winter landscape.



**Friday, February 10, 6 pm
Virtual Slide Show and Talk**

Participation is free to all.
To register, email
info@weststockbridgehistory.org
You will receive a link a few days before the program



West Stockbridge
Historical Society



This program is supported in part by a grant from the West Stockbridge Cultural Council, a local agency which is supported by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency.

Presenter: Dale Abrams. Dale Abrams is the education manager for Mass Audubon in Western Massachusetts. He is a lifelong naturalist whose specialties include birding, wildlife tracking, and forest and wetland ecosystem studies. He holds a BS in biology from Humboldt State University and an MS in environmental studies from Antioch University. Dale has worked as a naturalist for state parks in California, Yellowstone National Park, the Fish & Wild Service in Puerto Rico, and many environmental education organizations. His home since 2000 has been in the Berkshire hills of western Massachusetts, where he explores the diverse ecosystems and rich cultural history of the Northeast.



WINTER PARKING BAN



The West Stockbridge "Winter Parking Ban" will be in effect from **NOVEMBER 15TH to APRIL 1ST** between **11pm and 7am** for all Town roads. Violation of the ban may result in a \$25 fine for parking in a prohibited area as well as a \$50 fine for impeding snow removal. The vehicle may also be towed at the owner's expense for impeding snow removal.

Municipal parking is located on Hotel Street and Center Street. Snow removal in these areas will be between 7am-8am.

❄️ Thank you for your cooperation ❄️

West Stockbridge Police Department

(413) 232-8500

Select Board Meeting Minutes

[Editor's note: At the town administrator's request, the Select Board minutes here are reprinted verbatim with no editing of text. Official board minutes are available at the West Stockbridge Public Library and on the town website, <https://www.weststockbridge-ma.gov/>. Select Board meetings are on Zoom and may be viewed by clicking on the link in the meeting agenda posted on the town website calendar. Residents can receive email notification of town events and meeting agendas by subscribing at <http://weststockbridgema.virtualltownhall.net/subscriber>].

Select Board Meeting Minutes December 15, 2022

Quorum present: Select Board Members Kathleen Keresey, Chair, Andrew Potter and Andrew Krouss and Town Administrator Marie Ryan

Others in Attendance: Mary Stodden, Assessing Clerk and Harold Scheid, Principal Assessor

Kathleen called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM and listed Select Board members present.

Andy Potter made a point of order that he was not convinced that this was a legal public hearing because he feels the meeting did not meet the Open Meeting Law Requirements.

Harold Scheid, introduced himself and explained to the Board that the Department of Revenue has recently changed the requirements for the Tax Classification Hearings. The meetings can be virtual and the only additional posting requirement was that the notice of the meeting be posted on the Town's website, which it was for this meeting.

Harold stated that the purpose of this meeting is for the Select Board to vote on one matter only. Per the Board of Assessors' recommendation, the Select Board is being asked to vote to keep a single tax rate for the Town. He then reviewed the handouts sent to the Board. (see below)

Andy Potter made the following motion, seconded by Kathleen; The West Stockbridge Select Board votes in accordance with

M.G.L., Ch. 40, Sec. 56, as amended, the percentage of local tax levy which will be borne by each class of real and personal property, relative to setting the Fiscal Year 2023 tax rates and set the Residential Factor at 1.0, with a corresponding CIP shift of 1.0, pending approval of the town's annual tax recap by the Massachusetts Department of Revenue.

Roll call Vote:

Andy Potter	Yes
Andy Krouss	Yes
Kathleen	Yes

Motion Approved.

Select Board Speak:
None.

Andy Potter made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Andy Krouss at 6:28 PM.

Roll Call Vote:

Kathleen	Yes
Andy Potter	Yes
Andy Krouss	Yes

Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Marie Y. Ryan

Marie Y. Ryan
Town Administrator

...continued on page 5



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The *Local Yokel* is published monthly. Please mail submissions to: **The Local Yokel, P.O. Box 238, West Stockbridge, MA 01266**, email info@thelocalyokel.org, or visit www.thelocalyokel.org. Copy deadline is the 15th of the month prior to the publication. Editors: **John Parker, 394-4368, john.j.parker53@gmail.com**; **Vicki Grayson, 232-6131, vicki.grayson@rocketmail.com**; **Susan Fisher, 232-4443, suefish12@gmail.com**; **Anne Lesser, 717-0277, anne@annelessercommunications.com**; Designer: **Kim Bradway, kim@bloominarts.com**.

The *Local Yokel* is supported in part by a grant from the West Stockbridge Cultural Council, a local agency which is supported by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency.



ART on MAIN Gallery

38 Main Street, West Stockbridge

Announces

WINTER'S WONDER

OPENING SATURDAY FEBRUARY 11, 11 am

The Guild of Berkshire Artists is holding its first prize show at Art on Main Gallery in West Stockbridge in February, where the guild will offer cash prizes between \$150 and \$500, including a “People’s Choice” award. Independent juror Michelle Daly will select the top two prizes. All visitors to the gallery are invited to vote for their favorite artwork for the “People’s Choice” award. Artists are encouraged to apply to the show and not required to be a guild member.

The guild first introduced Art on Main Gallery in August 2022. Since then, the storefront space at 38 Main Street has become a lively and welcome addition to the downtown West Stockbridge cultural and commercial scene with rotating art exhibits every 2 to 4 weeks.

Some 16 guild artists, in groups of one to three, have exhibited their work in the new gallery. Artwork representing various media has included oil paintings, pastels, watercolors, acrylics, various mixed media, ceramics, fiber arts, and more, while attracting hundreds of visitors, both local and travelers from out of state. More guild artists are slated to show in 2023 at the gallery.

Participating artists all agree it was a great learning experience, inspiring comments such as “we loved doing it; we learned so much by working together by building relationships and being involved in all parts of mounting a show.”

Gallery manager Shany Porras offered much valued advice on hanging and positioning of each artist’s work and the overall look of the gallery. She will be preparing the February prize show and welcomes volunteers. Everyone is invited to come to the gallery and vote for their favorite artwork.

“Winter’s Wonder” will run from Saturday, February 11, to Sunday, February 26.

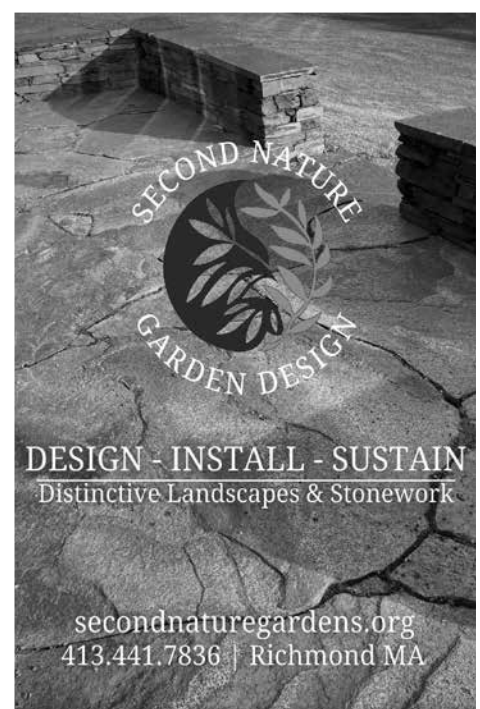
- Show Opens Saturday, February 11, 11 am–5 pm.
- Show Reception and Juried Awards Ceremony: Saturday, February 11, 2–4 pm.
- People’s Choice Award Ceremony: Saturday, February 25, 2–3 pm.
- Show closes Sunday, February 26, 11 am–5 pm.

Details and show prospectus are available at www.berkshireartists.org/call-for-art-members.

February Donor Roll Call

- Robert & Lucy Bellville
- Sue Coxon
- Doug & Kathy Davis
- Gerald Elias & Cecily Patton
- Susan Fisher & Gary Schieneman
- Kathryn & Henry Gallitano
- Ricki Gardner & William Cavanagh
- Denise Glasser
- Nancy Howell
- Steven Knott
- Raquel & Lear Levin
- Thomas & Cecelia Meade
- Clark Nelson
- Ed & Elizabeth Parnes
- Sid & Vivian Schwartz
- Shaker Mill Books
- Stockbridge Grange
- Mary K. Stodden
- Leonard Tabs
- Wayne & Lisa Tenney
- Jeannie & William Zox
- Anonymous: 1

Thanks to everyone who has donated to WSLY. We couldn’t do it without your support! Keep the *Local Yokel* coming. Please send your gift today! (See response form on page 17.)



Fiscal Year 2023
Tax Classification Hearing
December 15, 2022

Introduction

Prior to the mailing of 3rd quarter tax billings, the Select Board holds a public hearing to determine the percentage of the Town’s property tax levy to be borne by each major property class. This responsibility and procedure are described in Chapter 40, Section 56 of the Massachusetts General Laws.

The steps in completing the Classification Hearing are outlined below. Also provided is information about the levy, property assessments, and recommendations made by the Board of Assessors.

Steps in Setting Tax Rates

Pre-classification Hearing Steps

- Step 1: Determination of the property tax levy (Budget Process)
- Step 2: Determine assessed valuations (Assessors)
- Step 3: Tabulate assessed valuations by class (Assessors)

Classification Hearing Steps

- Step 4: Classification hearing presentation (Assessors & Select Board)
- Step 5: Determine tax shift options (Select Board)
- Step 6: Voting a tax shift factor (Select Board)

Post Classification Hearing Steps

- Step 7: Sign the LA-5 Classification Form (Select Board)
- Step 8: Send annual recap to DOR for tax rate approval (Assessors)
- Step 9: Obtain DOR approval of tax rates (DOR)

Terminology

The following are definitions of the terms frequently used in the discussion of tax rates.

Levy: The tax levy (or levy) is the amount of property taxes to be raised. The levy amount is determined by the budget. The total amount of the approved budget less revenues from other sources like motor vehicle excise, municipal fees, and state aid is the amount to be raised from property taxation. The fiscal year 2023 levy is \$5,490,793, \$124,673, 2.3% higher than last year’s levy of \$5,366,120.


Levy Ceiling: The levy ceiling is 2.5 percent of the full value of the Town. Based on the West Stockbridge aggregate valuation of \$532,569,609, the town cannot levy taxes in excess of \$13,314,240.

New Growth Revenue: Property taxes derived from newly taxable properties like new construction, additions, renovations, subdivisions, and personal property. The assessors have tabulated new growth revenues of \$61,196.

Levy Limit: Also referred to as the “maximum allowable levy,” this is calculated by adding 2.5 percent of the previous year’s levy limit plus new growth revenue for the present fiscal year to last year’s levy limit. Exceeding the levy limit requires an override of Proposition 2 ½. For Fiscal Year 2023, there are no overrides of Proposition 2 ½.

Excess Levy Capacity: Excess levy capacity is the difference between the levy and the levy limit.


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Henry Baldwin (413) 232-7757

February History Quiz Question:

During the 19th century, West Stockbridge was built on three minerals: marble, limestone, and iron ore. The quarries and mines spurred the growth of the town with Canadian, Irish, and later Italian immigrants all coming here to work in the extractive businesses. The town's identity was formed with West Stockbridge marble, and we were known for providing quality lime for construction and agriculture. Iron ore from the open pits fed the Pomeroy and Richmond furnaces until the 1920s. These businesses connected West Stockbridge to the outside world as we went beyond just another farming community.

As a practical matter, how did we get this heavy bulky product from the quarries to the market? Mechanization was limited. Roads were dirt paths, impassible part of the year with ice or mud. The railroad came in 1838, but it wasn't until the 1900s when trains could move bulk product economically. Moving product was a logistical challenge that had to be solved to grow a significant industrial business.

(Find the answer somewhere in this issue!)

When friends, neighbors, or relatives move, downsize, or just clean house, *please* ask them to think of the West Stockbridge Historical Society before they discard any old books, pictures, postcards, letters, or memorabilia of the Town of West Stockbridge. Email info@weststockbridgehistory.org or call (413) 232-4270.



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- Plowing & Sanding
- House Checking/Caretaking
- Drainage & Driveway Repairs
- Lawn & Field Mowing
- Fall & Spring Cleanups
- Building & Maintaining Gardens
- Firewood

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The Fiscal Year 2023 Levy Limit and Amount to be Raised

The following is a calculation of West Stockbridge's levy limit for fiscal year 2023.

Fiscal year 2022 levy limit	\$6,535,357
Amended FY2022 Growth	0
Levy increase allowed under Prop. 2 ½	163,384
New growth revenue	61,196
FY2023 Overrides	0
FY2023 Debt Exclusions	84,315
Fiscal year 2023 levy limit	6,844,252
Levy to be raised	\$5,518,751
Excess levy capacity	\$1,325,501

Valuations by Class Before Tax Shift

Major Property Class Valuation Percent Res vs CIP%

Residential	498,639,456	93.6290	93.6290
Commercial	16,057,263	3.0151	
Industrial	2,700,900	0.5071	6.4107
Personal Property	15,171,990	2.8488	
TOTAL	532,569,609	100.0000	

Shifting the Tax Burden

Municipalities with a large commercial/industrial tax base often see fit to shift the tax burden to help maintain lower residential taxes. Given West Stockbridge's small commercial and industrial base, it would take a large shift of the tax burden from the residential class to the commercial and industrial class to yield a modest residential tax reduction.

Board of Assessors Recommendation

The Board of Assessors recommends that the Select Board adopt a single tax rate to be applied to all classes of property in West Stockbridge.

Tax Rates

Based on the above shift factors, the Board of Assessors has calculated the following tax rates needed to raise the tax levy:

<u>Property Class</u>	<u>FY2022 FY2023</u>	
Residential	\$12.56	10.31
Commercial	\$12.56	10.31
Industrial	\$12.56	10.31
Personal Property	\$12.56	10.31

Note that the FY2023 rate is an estimate only and may change upon Department of Revenue review.

Tax Impacts

While the relatively modest change in tax rate is encouraging, actual property tax impacts will vary from property to property.

The residential classes, including single family homes and small multifamily homes, have increased for FY2023, reflecting the continued increases in the real estate market. Valuations for other classes of property have also been increased.

Examples of Typical Residential Tax Changes

<u>Residential Class</u>	<u>FY22 Value</u>	<u>Average</u> <u>Avg. Tax</u>	<u>FY23Value</u>	<u>Average</u> <u>Avg. Tax</u>	<u>Change</u>	
Single Family Homes	\$455,200		\$5,717	\$574,500	\$5,923	\$206 (3.6%)
2 & 3 Family Homes	404,400		5,079	487,100	5,022	-\$57 (1.1%)

Voting a Tax Shift Factor (proposed motion)

The West Stockbridge Select Board votes in accordance with M.G.L., Ch. 40, Sec. 56, as amended, the percentage of local tax levy which will be borne by each class of real and personal property, relative to setting the Fiscal Year 2023 tax rates and set the Residential Factor at 1.0, with a corresponding CIP shift of 1.0, pending approval of the town's annual tax recap by the Massachusetts Department of Revenue.

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**Select Board Meeting Minutes
December 19, 2022**

Quorum present: Select Board Members Kathleen Kerese, Chair, Andrew Potter and Andrew Krouss and Town Administrator Marie Ryan

Kathleen called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM and listed Select Board members present.

Andy Potter made a motion, seconded by Andy Krouss, to approve the minutes from December 5, 2022.

Roll Call Vote:

Kathleen	Yes
Andy Potter	Yes
Andy Krouss	Yes

Motion Approved.

Citizen Speak:

Truc Nguyen discussed her concerns in regards to Andy Krouss as a Select Board member voting on the Entertainment Licenses for the Foundry. She stated that she thought since he was on the Historical Society it may be a conflict of interest since she thinks that the Foundry and the Historical Society are in a partnership. Andy responded that the Historical Society has only ever had two events at the Foundry and there is no partnership. They do not have any future events planned at the Foundry and he does not feel he has a conflict of interest and can judge the approval without prejudice.

Truc also requested that the Board to be considerate when approving the licenses and how they effect the neighboring businesses and homes.

Annual Alcohol License Renewal for the Foundry:

Kathleen stated that the Board received a letter right before the meeting from Earl & Jackie Moffatt, Maggie Merelle and Truc Nguyen about their concerns for the Entertainment Licenses to be approved for the Foundry. The letter will be placed in the public record attached to the minutes of this meeting.

Kathleen made a motion, 2nd by Andy Krouss to approve the Annual Alcohol License for 2023 for the Foundry.

Roll call Vote:

Andy Potter	Yes
Andy Krouss	Yes
Kathleen	Yes

License Approved.

Annual Entertainment License and Sunday Entertainment License Renewal for the Foundry:

Kathleen made a motion, 2nd by Andy Krouss to approve the Annual and Sunday Entertainment Licenses for 2023 for the Foundry.

Andy Potter requested that the application forms be completed with the missing phone number. Amy will provide that information.

Roll call Vote:

Andy Potter	Abstain
Andy Krouss	Yes
Kathleen	Yes

License Approved.

Auto Class II & III License and Taxi Renewal for William B. Kie DBA: WBK Construction:

Kathleen stated that Billy Kie is having health issues and is unable to attend this meeting. She requested that the Board approve the licenses for 6 months at which time the Board can have a discussion with Billy prior to extending the Licenses.

Andy Krouss made a motion, 2nd by Kathleen to approve the Auto Class II & Class III Licenses and Taxi License for a 6-month period to expire on June 30, 2023 for William Kie DBA WBK Construction.

Roll call Vote:

Andy Potter	Yes
Andy Krouss	Yes
Kathleen	Yes

License Approved.

Select Board Speak:

Andy Potter reported that the 8 Town School District Planning Board meet last week and he believes they have a final version of the make-up of the proposed new 8 Town Regional School District School Committee. The next step will be to work on the financial aspect of the new school district.

Andy informed the Board that he is still working on the records retention project and will keep the Board updated as he progresses.

Andy Krouss will be contacting the Massachusetts Broadband Institute to get more assistance and information on bringing high speed broadband to West Stockbridge. He will keep the Board updated.

Kathleen made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Andy Krouss at 6:50 PM.

Roll Call Vote:

Kathleen	Yes
Andy Potter	Yes
Andy Krouss	Yes

Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Marie Y. Ryan

Marie Y. Ryan
Town Administrator

December 19, 2022

Selectboard Town of West Stockbridge, MA

To West Stockbridge Select Board Members:

As the Board members consider the granting of Entertainment licenses to the Foundry for the upcoming 2023 period, this letter is to share our collective experience as it relates to impact to specific businesses which directly share property lines with the Foundry.

We believe that any consideration of any license for The Foundry at 2 Harris Street needs to address the following impact and detriment to our businesses, specifically as it relates to any

...continued from page 8

entertainment which would allow amplification of outdoor events and must specifically address enforcement of any violations.

We would like to remind the Selectboard that it is not just ONE business that has experienced detriment due to the allowance of the amplification of outdoor events from entertainment licenses granted by the Selectboard, it has impacted THREE long-standing businesses, and a family's residence.

Charles H. Baldwin's Extracts

- During 2020 and 2021, amplified noise from the Patio Bar and the Foundry Green was disruptive to our business and customers; and
- Specifically, sound checks during the hours that Baldwin's in open for business.

Rouge

- During 2020 and 2021, excessive noise from Foundry events held outdoors impacted the fine dining experience of Rouge's customers, specifically during Covid when many of our customers were dining outside;
- Many have shared this experience in their own testimonies during the Planning Board hearings related to the granting of the Special Permit;
- Lack of crowd control resulted in constant trespassing on Rouge property during these events, specifically Rouge's back parking lot; and
- The lack of these controls, noise, trespassing, parking had a direct impact on Rouge's business.

Truc Orient Express Restaurant

- In 2020, subjected to amplified noise from the Patio Bar and lack of crowd control resulted in parking on our property and trespassing;
- Summer 2021, amplified noise from an unpermitted business, the Foundry, allowed to hold events on an unpermitted stage facing the Foundry Green caused loss of business, as customers did not want to dine out on the deck;

- Summer 2021, lack of crowd control resulted in the constant trespassing on Truc Orient Express property – specifically in the back parking lot, which continued to happen in 2022 despite conditions which were put into place by the last Selectboard; and
- Summer 2021, lack of parking controls resulted in Foundry customers parking on Truc Orient property, despite signage and barricades to deter this, and this continued to happen in 2022 despite conditions attached to their Special Permit.

The Nguyen/Duong Private Residence

- 2020, 2021 - amplified bass and drums through our home residence, and again in 2022 despite conditions on the Special Permit granted in Sept 2021;
- 2020, 2021 - Parking violations on Nguyen/Duong private residence, and in 2022 despite conditions attached to the Special Permit granted in Sept 2021; and
- 2021 – Trespassing on Nguyen/Duong private property with liquor and cannabis violations from Patio Bar customers.

Respectfully, we are requesting that this letter be entered into public records as the collective summary from the ONLY three directly abutting businesses, and a family residence, to share their property lines with the Foundry.

Respectfully submitted,

Jackie & Earl Moffatt
Charles H. Baldwin & Son's

Maggie Merrell
Rouge Restaurant

Trai thi Duong & Truc Nguyen
Truc Orient Express
Out of Vietnam
Nguyen Family

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West Stockbridge and Richmond Take On Flood Reduction Project

Housatonic Valley Association

The towns of Richmond and West Stockbridge are completing a one-year collaborative project to proactively reduce flooding, improve climate readiness, and address stormwater impacts across the two communities. The towns have ongoing maintenance and replacement efforts underway to address dangerous flooding and erosion that can blow out roadways and culverts, damage public and private property, and degrade the natural environment. But local efforts and funding are not enough to keep up with current needs, let alone plan for the increased impacts of climate change.

This year's project will position the towns to receive additional state funding through development of the "Resilient Stormwater Action and Implementation Plan" that identifies and prioritizes future flood reduction projects across the communities.



Washed out roadway on West Road

How Can Residents Get Involved and Learn More?

During the upcoming months, the town and its project partners, Weston & Sampson, Housatonic Valley Association, and Mass Audubon, will share tips and resources for homeowners who want to be part of the solution. Join us for a conversation at two upcoming virtual webinars about the expected local climate change impacts and nature-based solutions. The **webinars are scheduled for February 27 and March 29 from 6:30 to 7:15 pm**. These webinars,

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WANDERING JEWS
WONDERING JEWS
CULTURAL JEWS
MIXED MARRIAGE JEWS
MIXED UP JEWS
NON-JEWS
LGBT JEWS
CREATIVE JEWS

Please check our website www.ahavathsholom for information about our Zoom services, events and updates.

See our new Marketplace section featuring a selection of books, craft items and art works by our members. A portion of each purchase will be donated by the synagogue to the Southern Berkshire area People's Pantry.

SEARCHING JEWS
OBSERVANT JEWS
NON-HEBREW-READING JEWS
PASSIONATE JEWS
HIGH-HOLY-DAY JEWS
ARTISTIC JEWS
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HAVEN'T-BEEN-IN-SHUL-SINCE-MY-BAR-MITZVAH-JEWS

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open to all, will provide specific information for riverfront and lakefront homeowners about what can be done to reduce flooding and support a more climate-resilient community. Register for the February 27 webinar at <https://tinyurl.com/Feb27flood>.

Why Do We Need Stormwater Management?

In Berkshire County, due to the impact of climate change, the frequency of rain events of 1-inch and more has increased. Recent intense storms have already washed out roads and increased flooding on streets and private properties. Flooding also occurs where increased rainfall amounts have saturated the soil and cannot be fully absorbed. Polluted stormwater runoff results when rain or snowmelt runs off hard surfaces such as asphalt, pavement, and roofs, picking up pollutants like sediment, motor oil, and dog waste along the way. Stormwater is often channeled to the nearest water body to prevent street flooding, leading to quickly rising river levels and increased pollutant loads. Greater stream volume and velocity results in bank erosion that can mean loss of land, and higher flows can overwhelm or damage road crossings over streams.



Flooding, West Alford Road

We're in This Together

Information about key problem areas in both communities is being gathered from town officials, residential input, and expert field investigations led by Weston & Sampson. The resulting “Resilient Stormwater Action and Implementation Plan” will provide the towns with innovative and collaborative solutions to current and future stormwater management across both communities.

Last month, 86 residents noted in a town-wide survey the areas where they have noticed flooding of roads or properties from heavy precipitation events. Most often cited areas of concern were around Richmond Pond at Richmond Shores, Lake Road, near the Williams River on East Alford Road, Shaw Road and Cobb Road, and the Pixley Hill Road/Route 41 intersection. The recent town-wide survey also notes that problems—and solutions—occur on both public and private properties. Landowners are already helping contribute to a more resilient watershed (including 17 survey respondents!) by adding vegetative buffers, rain gardens, and other stormwater best management practices on their properties. Residents also expressed interest in stormwater solutions that can specifically benefit wildlife habitats, soil stabilization and hillside protection, safety, and water quality.

Stay Tuned!

The towns will also seek input this spring on the draft of the “Resilient Stormwater Action and Implementation Plan” that will include short- and long-term recommendations for culvert and drainage improvements, dirt and gravel roads, and stormwater management on public and private property. Solutions will consider costs and benefits, community priorities, and ways to improve climate readiness. The plan will also identify possible grant funding to support implementation of priority projects.

If you have questions, comments, or would simply like to receive future notifications about this project or upcoming webinars, please fill out the email signup form at <https://tinyurl.com/RWSSsignup>. If you have information about stormwater problems or solutions, you may share it in the comment form.

Culvert Replacement Projects Being Finalized

In addition to creating the plan, the project will assist both communities with the final design and permitting to reconstruct two high priority culverts (one in each town) to better accommodate fish passage and increasing rainfall events. The towns have partnered with Weston & Sampson, Housatonic Valley Association, Mass Audubon, and Comprehensive Environmental Inc. to complete this project.

The project is generously funded by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs’ Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) grant program that supports cities and towns to help plan for climate change and to implement projects to build local resiliency. More information about this program can be found at <https://resilientma.mass.gov/mvp/>.

Project contacts: Danielle Fillio, Richmond (Town Administrator TownAdmin@richmondma.org), and Marie Ryan, West Stockbridge Town Administrator (admin@weststockbridge-ma.gov).

Photos courtesy of HVA

Berkshire Community Action Council Provides Assistance for Staying Warm This Winter

Fuel Assistance, also known as the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), is a federally funded program to help low-income households with their heating bills. The program begins November 1 and ends April 30 each year. All heating types are eligible for assistance: oil, propane, kerosene, coal, cord wood, wood pellets, natural gas, electric, and even some households that have heat included in their rent.

Fuel assistance can only pay for the cost of the heat you actually use during the program. If the cost of heating your home is less than your benefit amount, we only pay that amount. For example, if you are eligible for \$400 and the heating bills submitted by your heating company total only \$350, the \$50 left over is returned to our funding source. Any low-income household whose gross yearly income falls at or below the income guidelines may be eligible. Homeowners and tenants are both eligible to receive fuel assistance.



Visit the BCAC online customer portal to help you assess your eligibility for the LIHEAP (commonly called Fuel Assistance), the Heating System Repair & Replacement Program (HEARTWAP), and the Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP). Then submit the online application. To access the portal, visit <https://toapply.org/BCAC>.

Towns Served by the Program

Adams, Alford, Ashley Falls, Becket, Berkshire, Cheshire, Clarksburg, Dalton, Drury, East Otis, Florida, Glendale, Great Barrington, Hancock, Hinsdale, Housatonic, Lanesboro, Lee, Lenox, Lenoxdale, Mill River, Monterey, Mt. Washington, New Ashford, New Marlboro, North Adams, North Egremont, Otis, Peru, Pittsfield, Richmond, Sandisfield, Savoy, Sheffield, South Egremont, South Lee, Southfield, Stockbridge, Tyringham, Washington, **West Stockbridge**, Williamstown, and Windsor.

For More Information

If you believe you could be eligible for fuel assistance based on the income guidelines listed on the website, contact our administrative office at (413) 445-4503, 7:30 am to 4 pm, Monday through Thursday.

Source: <https://berkshireredo.wp.iescentral.com/fuel-assistance-2/>.



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granniemends@gmail.com
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8 Town Regional School District Planning Board

January 2023 Update

Stockbridge Grange Dinner

On Sunday, February 12, the Stockbridge Grange will serve a takeout-only dinner at the Grange Hall at 51 Church Street, Stockbridge. The dinner will be roast pork with lemon and chocolate cream pies for dessert. Cost is \$15. Pickup time is 12 to 1:30 pm. To place an order, call (413) 243-1298 or (413) 443-4352. The deadline for ordering is Friday, February 10. Please call if the weather is iffy. If the dinner is canceled, it will take place on Sunday, February 19.

Council on Aging

The Council on Aging will meet Wednesday, February 8, in the Community Room at 12 noon. Please bring your own lunch and drink and enjoy socializing with your neighbors and friends during this time of year. We look forward to seeing you.

West Stockbridge Plant Exchange

The West Stockbridge Plant Exchange will meet the first Sunday of each month to exchange seeds, cuttings, plants, and advice. This is a great way to meet people in the community and exchange indoor and outdoor gardening knowledge. We will meet in the Community Room at the Town Offices from 2 to 4 pm. For further information, please contact Alisa Desmond at (561) 235-4392.

The Knitters Group

The Knitters Group meets every Wednesday from 2 to 4 pm in the Community Room at the Town Offices. All crafts are welcome.

Friends of the Library

The Friends of the Library Committee meets every second Wednesday of the month from 3:30 to 4:30 pm in the Community Room at the Town Offices. All are welcome.

Send your notices for Community News & Events to the Local Yokel, P.O. Box 238, West Stockbridge, MA 01266, email info@thelocalyokel.org, or visit thelocalyokel.org.

Merger Model under Consideration. In April, the 8 Town Board voted (16 to 6) to continue developing the merger model recommended by our research team: merging the Berkshire Hills Regional School District and the Southern Berkshire Regional School District into a single PreK to 12 district, maintaining the existing elementary and middle schools as they are, but creating a new merged grades 9 to 12 high school to be built on the Great Barrington campus.

Transportation Report. We received an encouraging report from our outside transportation consultant about the effect any merger would have on student transportation. These are the two questions we have heard most often:

“Would most students be spending longer times on the bus?”

“Would the cost of transportation increase significantly with a merger?”

The answer to both questions is “no,” according to Richard Labrie, our transportation expert. With a merger and a move to a common bell schedule, new routes could be designed so students’ time on the bus would actually decrease for the vast majority of students with only a very modest added cost.

For elementary school and middle school students, bus time will either stay the same or decrease. With a common bell schedule, the 8 Town district could move to a two-tier system for all students, as opposed to the current SBRSD single-tier system. As a result, no elementary school child would need to ride a bus with high school students. And, with the addition of a few vehicles and greater use of vans, we could not only reduce bus time significantly for most students, but we could also lower the maximum time on the bus for all students (including high school students) from the current 1 hour to 45 minutes. The estimated cost would only be \$55,000/year, assuming state transportation reimbursement of 80% (state reimbursement this year is more than 95%). According to our expert, transportation concerns should not be an impediment to merger. See the link to the full Transportation Study on our website, <https://8towns.org/>.

Work on an 8 Town Regional School District Agreement/Agreement on Committee Composition. Governance is a critical piece of any new district. Following much thoughtful deliberation, our 8 Town Board voted by a strong majority (18 to 2) for a school committee of 11, with 3 members from Great Barrington, 2 from Sheffield, and 1 each from Alford, New Marlborough, Monterey, Egremont, West Stockbridge, and Stockbridge, with all members elected district-wide at biennial elections (as is the case now in both districts). This composition has solid support from representatives of both districts, and the decision represents a major milestone forward.

Timeline. We are now targeting the end of February/early March for a board vote on a recommendation to the Select Boards of the 8 Towns, and, if the vote is to recommend merger, the question will be posed to the voters of the 8 Towns at the annual meetings in May/June 2023.

*Lucy Prashker, Chair of the 8 Town Regional School District Planning Board
Jake Eberwein, RSDPB Project Manager*



WEST STOCKBRIDGE PUBLIC LIBRARY

21 State Line Rd | West Stockbridge, MA 01266 | In the Town Offices
weststockbridgelibrary.org | 413-232-0300 ext. 308

Mon., Wed., Thurs., and Sat. 10 am–3 pm | Tues. and Fri. 2–6 pm | Sun. Closed

Please join us on Saturday, February 4, at 11 am when local author Carolinda Goodman returns to read her new picture book in rhyme. It encourages children (and their readers) to look up at the sky and use their imaginations.

Here is a bit of information from our upcoming annual report to the town, with our deepest thanks to all who enjoy the free resources of the library and our invitation to everyone who is interested in joining us.

We look forward to seeing you soon!
Vicky, Rachel, and Tess

NEW ADULT FICTION

- Cameron, *Tom Clancy: Red winter*
- DeMille, *Maze*
- Gunty, *Rabbit hutch*
- Irving, *Last chairlift*
- Jonas, *Vladimir*
- McCracken, *Hero of this book*
- Patterson, *Triple cross*
- Spotswood, *Secrets typed in blood*
- Warrell, *Sweet, soft, plenty rhythm*

NEW ADULT NONFICTION

- Freeman, *Cast iron skillet*
- Perry, *South to America: A journey below the Mason-Dixon to understand the soul of a nation*
- Rojas Contreras, *Man who could move clouds: A memoir*
- Saunders, *Apollo remastered*

NEW YOUNGER READERS

- Billet, *I love Mozart: My first sound book*
- Gidwitz, *Basque dragon*
- Gidwitz, *Creature of the pines*
- Gidwitz, *Madre de Aguas of Cuba*
- Gidwitz, *Sasquatch and the Muckleshoot Guinness World Records 2023*
- Marzollo, *I spy school days*
- Marzollo, *I spy spooky night*
- National Geographic Kids, *wild & wacky facts & photos, 2023*
- Tiger Tales Boardbooks, *Noisy trucks*

FY 2022 BY THE NUMBERS


	2020	2021	2022
TOTAL LIBRARY HOLDINGS, (print books, dvds, audiobooks, magazines, museum passes)	10,092	10,391	10,557
CIRCULATION	6,844	8,610	10,753
LOANS RECEIVED FROM OTHER LIBRARIES	1,821	3,580	3,279
LOANS DELIVERED TO OTHER LIBRARIES	966	1,377	1,486
TOTAL EBOOK / AUDIOBOOK DOWNLOADS TO PATRON DEVICES	1,385	2,539	2,732
ESTIMATED VALUE OF MATERIALS CIRCULATED (how much library users would spend if they had to buy a copy of the book or other items they borrowed)	156,221	157,560	177,250

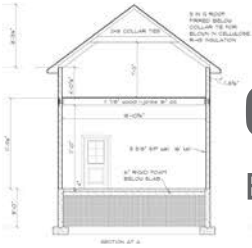


Scrapbook Questions/created by Paula Farrell TEST YOUR TRIVIA KNOWLEDGE!

1. What date marked the deadline for state funding for the Berkshire Hills Regional School District high school renovation?
2. What happened to a separate measure to fund the renovation project?
3. What compromise did town officials offer for the mobile home rent dispute?
4. What group presented their annual winter concert at the West Stockbridge Congregational Church?

1. July 31, 2013
2. It was defeated by Great Barrington taxpayers
3. The West Stockbridge Board of Selectmen, acting as the Rent Control Board, proposed bylaws regulating rent at the Mill Pond Mobile Park
4. West Stockbridge Chamber Players

 This program is supported in part by a grant from the West Stockbridge Cultural Council, a local agency which is supported by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency.



On the Home Front

By Thom Lipiczky

Heat Pumps



There's less and less debate about how changing climate is affecting us all. Reliance on burning fossil fuels contributes to the instability in that giant ocean of air where we all live on the bottom. One recent development can alleviate this situation. Heating and cooling homes and businesses with heat pumps has become an increasingly positive step in that direction.

Yeah, yeah, I know. Heat pumps run on electric, and our current (no pun intended) electrical grid is underpowered if everyone switches to heat pumps overnight. The solution is to fix the grid at the same time as making the switch.

In response to the gas and oil shortages in Europe due to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, most of western Europe is switching from fossil fuels to heat pumps. A recent *Washington Post* article (Robert Gebelhoff, January 4, 2023) says that heat pump sales have increased 25% in Germany and a whopping 80% in Finland!

To make heat pump technology more attractive to Americans, the recently passed Inflation Reduction Act provides generous rebates and tax incentives for new installation. The upfront cost of a new system can range from \$5,000 to \$20,000, but rebates and incentives will offset this. And the efficiency of heat pumps over fossil fuel furnaces is remarkable. The International Renewable Energy Agency states that a heat pump is 250 to 550% efficient, compared with 95% efficiency for the best gas-fired furnace! (For every unit of electricity used by a heat pump, it generates 2.5 to 5.5 units of heat.)

How do heat pumps work? We already experience how they operate with air conditioning. Heat always moves to cold, and when the refrigerant gas in our AC is pressurized, it can get quite cold and absorb heat, cooling a room or your car. A heat pump reverses the flow, even when the outside temperature is below zero! As long as the pressurized gas is colder than the outside temperature, heat can be pumped back into the house. And pressurizing a gas makes it very cold—that's why aerosol can sprays are cold. The workhorse of the heat pump is the compressor that pressurizes the refrigerant gas and transfers the heat from one place to another.

Inside the house is a "cassette," usually mounted high on a wall, also available as a flush-mounted ceiling unit, that has an adjustable fan directing warm or cool air into the room, depending on the mode the homeowner chooses.

Both readers of my column know that when we built our new house a few years ago, we opted for a two-zone heat pump system. After our third year, we've been very happy with the result. And combined with the solar panels on our roof, the cost of operating the heat/AC system is virtually zero.

Before the development of "hyper-heat" technology, heat pumps were used only in warmer climates. But today's systems are being used in new energy-efficient houses throughout northern Europe and Canada, as well as right here in West Stockbridge.

Send comments, questions, and rants to info@thelocalyokel.org.

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History Quiz Answer:

The logistics of efficiently moving heavy bulky raw materials in the 19th century was huge. There were no front-end loaders, excavators, or dump trucks. The roads were narrow unpaved dirt paths, sometimes just ice or mud, and not good at handling heavy loads. Later on, the railroad helped, but first the product had to be moved from the quarry or mine to the train.

Of the three elements, the heaviest and most cumbersome was the easiest to move. Marble blocks were lowered by crane (hand or steam powered) to a "dinky" rail line that connected to the main line and off to the world. The dinky lines were a smaller gauge than the main line and powered by small steam engines. The blocks were simply rolled onto a mainline flat car and shipped out. It connected to Hudson and Albany, the closest ports, and product was easily loaded onto ships for transport or rail lines further west. Marble was heavy but manageable.

Iron ore was more complicated to move. Iron ore is like soil and can be handled with shovels and hand labor. The ore was shoveled into a bucket attached to a chain lift raised from the pit to the surface level and then dumped into a wagon. The iron pits on Route 102 served the local Pomeroy and Richmond furnaces, so the transport distance was short. The wagons were hauled by oxen or horses to the Richmond Furnace or to the Pomeroy Furnace on Moscow Road. They were designed to open and dump the ore directly into the furnace. Manual labor involved with moving iron ore was more involved than shipping marble blocks, and more of our workforce worked in the mines than the quarries.

Lime was likely the most difficult to ship. Quarried limestone and marble rock was broken up, heated, or burned in a furnace, then converted to a powder. This powder was shoveled (by hand) into wooden barrels, then loaded into railroad boxcars for shipping to their destination. Simple wooden barrels were an important part of the supply chain and served a role much like modern steel shipping containers. Without them, the lime business would not have been practical or economical. These simple wooden staves, held by iron straps to make a cheap and easily handled barrel, were key to shipping powdered lime efficiently to the world market.

The wooden barrels were made on site in a shop called a cooperage. West Stockbridge had three of them located near the lime quarries. One was sited near Cobb Road and Route 41 and another on Miller Lane. The third cooperage was in a space next to the post office. Workers who made these barrels were treated with some respect. The census and business directories list their occupation as coopers, unlike the other quarry workers who were just listed as laborers. We believe the attached picture was the cooperage in the village.

Wooden barrels disappeared with the advent of the 55-gallon steel drum in the early 1900s. By 1923, the drum was standardized and the wooden barrel relegated to garden accessories and tabletops in cute bars and restaurants.



Larkin Cooperage Workers. Photo courtesy of Virginia Larkin

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With increased printing and postage costs, we need your help more than ever. To get the latest town news, please contribute to the *Local Yokel*. For your donation of at least \$25.00 per year we will mail each issue to you (unless you prefer otherwise). The *Local Yokel* will continue to be available free at selected locations as long as possible, but we hope you will contribute anything you can. The West Stockbridge Local Yokel, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) organization, and all contributions are tax deductible to the full extent of the law. Please check with your employer, or former employer if retired, for matching gift programs.

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 City State Zip

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Town Government Boards and Commissions, Phone Directory, and Office Hours				
Town Offices Main Number (413) 232-0300 • Fax 232-7195				
Animal Control	<i>John Drake</i>	464-2148		As Needed
Assessors Office	<i>Mary Stodden</i>	232-0300	ext. 303	Tues. 1–5 pm; Thurs. 9 am–1 pm
Board of Health	<i>Earl Moffatt</i>	232-0300	ext. 314	Fri. 9 am–4 pm, or by appt.
Select Board	<i>Kathleen Keresey Andy Krouss Andy Potter</i>	232-0300	ext. 319	
Town Administrator	<i>Marie Ryan</i>			Mon.–Thurs. 7 am–3 pm Fri. 7–11 am
Building Inspector	<i>Brian Duval</i>	232-0300	ext. 313	Leave Message for Inquiries
Conservation Commission	<i>John Masiero</i>	232-7063		Leave Message for Inquiries
Council on Aging	<i>John Zick</i>	232-0300	ext. 340	Leave Message for Inquiries
Emergency Management	<i>Louis Oggiani</i>	528-2175		
Fire Department	<i>Steve Traver</i>	911 or 329-7153 (non-emergency)		Mon. 6:30–9 pm
Highway Department	<i>Curt G. Wilton</i>	232-0305		Leave Message for Inquiries
Library	<i>Rachel Alter</i>	232-0300	ext. 308	Mon., Wed., Thurs., and Sat. 10 am–3 pm; Tues. and Fri. 2–6 pm; closed Sun.
Police Department	<i>Marc Portieri</i>	911 or 232-8500 (non-emergency)		24 hours, 7 days/week
Post Office	<i>Colleen A. Wich</i>	232-8544		Lobby: 7 am–7 pm; 7 days/week; Window: Mon.–Fri. 9 am–4:30 pm; Sat. 9 am–12 noon
Sewer & Water Commission	<i>Michael Buffoni</i>	232-0309		
Town Accountant	<i>Elaine Markham</i>	232-0300	ext. 317	Leave Message for Inquiries
Town Clerk	<i>Ronni Barrett</i>	232-0300	ext. 300	Tues. & Thurs. 1:30–3:30 pm
Town Collector	<i>Kellie Bradbury</i>	232-0300	ext. 302	Tues. 3–7 pm; Wed. 7 am–12 pm; Thurs. 1–6 pm
Town Historian	<i>Robert Salerno</i>	232-4465		
Town Treasurer	<i>Karen Williams</i>	232-0300	ext. 316	Thurs. 9 am–4 pm
Transfer Station	<i>Wayne Cooper</i>	232-0307		Tues. & Thurs. 10 am–6 pm and Sat. 8 am–6 pm
Tree Warden	<i>Andrew Fudge</i>	212-9206		
Veterans Agency	<i>Laurie Hills</i>	528-1580		
Zoning Board of Appeals	<i>C. Randolph Thunfors</i>	232-0300	ext. 300	

Official Town Government Website: weststockbridge-ma.gov • Community and Business Website: visitweststockbridge.com

February Art Calendar

Guild of Berkshire Artists | BerkshireArtists.org | infoberkshireartists@gmail.com

2023

February 6, Procrastinator's Challenge, 10-11 a.m. Start or work through a current project or art piece!

February 7, Photo Editing Workshop, 1:30-2:30pm. Mobile photo editing online.

February 7, Intro to the Guild and Website, 4:30-5:30pm. Overview and info on the Guild and our website. Online.

February 7 & 21, Positive Critique, 7:30-8:30 p.m. Join Michele Caplan for a positive critique session for Guild members via Zoom.

Feb 11-26, select days, "Winter's Wonder" at Art on Main Gallery. Juried Art Show. 38 Main Street, West Stockbridge, MA.

February 21, Best Practices, 3pm, "How to Price Your Art". Join a discussion hosted by David Honneus.

February 28, Meet the Artist, 3pm. Molly Kellogg.

February 26, Berkshire Photo Gathering. Online. See webpage for information: berkshirephotogathering.com/online-meetings.

Wednesdays, Art Together,. Join GBA artists together.

**published events are subject to changes due to artist and volunteer availability.*

Winter's Wonder

Juried Art Show

February 11,12,14,17,18,19,25,26

11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Reception: February 11, 2:00-4:00 p.m.

(Juried Awards Announced)

at Art on Main Gallery

38 Main Street, West Stockbridge, MA

Meet the Artist



Molly Kellogg
Painter

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			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28				

February Calendar of Events

Due to the coronavirus health situation, many meetings and events are being canceled, postponed, or held online. We are including all information available to us up until publication, but with the likelihood of changes, readers should check with the office, department, or organization for the latest information.

2/2 Groundhog Day			
2/5	Plant Exchange	2-4 pm	Community Room, Town Offices
2/6	Select Board meeting	6 pm	Town Offices, 21 State Line Road
2/8	Council on Aging meeting	12 noon	Town Offices, 21 State Line Road
2/8	Friends of the Library committee meeting	3:30 pm	Community Room, Town Offices
2/12	Stockbridge Grange takeout dinner		See Community News for details
2/14 Valentine's Day			
2/15	*** Deadline for the next <i>Local Yokel</i> ***		Send to info@thelocalyokel.org
2/20 Presidents' Day. Town Offices closed			
2/21	Select Board meeting	6 pm	Town Offices, 21 State Line Road
2/22 Ash Wednesday			