

SPIRITED



Wassailers sing to the apple trees at the conclusion of Winter Fest. The ancient tradition of wassailing dates back to 16th-century England and was meant to deter evil spirits from the orchard and invite benevolent ones to ensure a good harvest. From left: Laura Johnson, Alice von Loesecke, Nick Browse, John Drummey, Deb Oliva, and Phoenix Briggs.

(Photo by Thomas Kilian)

DEC approves site plan for town water connection to Devens

by Joan Eliyesil

The town is one step closer to being able to put the Devens water connection project out to bid. When it is complete, town water will be supplied by the Devens water system instead of by the two wells on Pond Road. The town voted to approve the project at Special Town Meeting in February 2023 after one Pond Road well was closed for coliform contamination, and both tested positive for PFAS (perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances).

At a Feb. 8 hearing, the Devens

Enterprise Commission, which acts as the permitting authority for Devens, voted to approve the permit for the section to be constructed on Devens land. That includes the water line extension as well as the pump station and associated site improvements.

The DEC also voted to approve a list of 18 conditions that must be met, which include ensuring emergency vehicle access to the site, lighting regulations, and stormwater, wetlands, and erosion control requirements.

Engineering firm Tighe & Bond submitted the necessary components

to apply for the permit, including the design documents, a stormwater management plan, and a wetland Notice of Intent, which describes the measures that will be taken to protect wetlands, including limits on vegetation clearing and a 26-foot wetland buffer zone.

The Devens Soil Management Policy does not allow any excavated soil from Devens to leave without being screened and tested. According to Department of Public Works Director Tim Kilhart, that’s because the soil at

WATER continued on page 3

Primary will determine future of state parties and nominees for the presidency

by Luke Macannuico

This Super Tuesday, March 5, Massachusetts voters will cast their ballots in the 2024 presidential primary.

Along with voting their presidential preference, Harvard residents will vote for state committeeman, state committeewoman, and town committee members of their chosen party. Those registered as a Democrat, Republican, or Libertarian will receive ballots according to their registration status, while unenrolled voters may choose any of the three.

While Donald Trump and Joe Biden

have all but secured the nominations of their respective parties, there will still be candidates on both the Republican and Democratic ballots challenging the favorites.

Challenging Biden on the Democratic ballot is Minnesota Representative Dean Phillips. On Feb. 16, Phillips laid off most of his campaign staff but did not drop out of the race. Former U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Nikki Haley will be on the Republican ballot, continuing her campaign against Donald Trump despite suffering a 20-point defeat on

Feb. 24 in South Carolina, her home state.

On the Libertarian party ballot, there are five candidates for presidential preference: Jacob Hornberger, Michael Rectenwald, Chase Oliver, Michael Maat, and Lars Mapstead.

State committee and town committee are organizational bodies that handle decisions within the local and statewide Democratic, Republican, and Libertarian parties.

Town committees, whose members are unpaid volunteers, meet monthly

PRIMARY continued on page 2

Town Administrator Tim Bragan to retire July 1

by Joan Eliyesil

After 17 years as town administrator, Tim Bragan told the Select Board last week that he will be retiring as of July 1 this year. Select Board Chair Rich Maiore told the Press the board will discuss the details of the search procedure for Bragan’s replacement at its March 5 meeting. Maiore emphasized that the process will be fair and transparent, with input from the community.

In an interview with the Press, Bragan, who will turn 63 in June, said the two events that played a major part in his decision to retire were COVID-19 and this year’s budget process. “COVID was two years of hell,” he said, trying to make the right decisions to keep people safe and getting negative feedback for making those decisions. “It was wearing.”

This year’s budget process also wore him down. While the financial picture looked more dire in the early days of that process, the town will be voting on two override options in April, and those options involve sacrifices from most departments. “It wasn’t fun telling Library

BRAGAN continued on page 5

FinCom recommends Select Board’s \$34M budget and money for DPW buildings

by John Osborn



The Finance Committee voted Tuesday to recommend passage of the Select Board’s proposed operating budget for fiscal 2025, spending that requires the subsequent passage of the second of two tax overrides at Town Election to be implemented in full.

The committee’s 5-1 recommendation was among a baker’s dozen of votes taken on financial articles in this year’s April 6 Town Meeting warrant. The articles were approved by the Select Board last week; FinCom’s job was to review them and decide whether to recommend them to voters. Most passed unanimously, 6-0, except for the recommendation of the Capital Planning and Investment Committee that the town borrow approximately \$9.9 million to renovate the Department of Public Works facility on Depot Road, which eked out a 3-2 recommendation.

Article 10—the omnibus budget for fiscal 2025—is the largest financial article on this year’s warrant. A majority of voters at the April 6 Town Meeting must first pass it and then, three days later at Town Election, vote for the extra tax dollars needed to pay for it.

The proposed budget totals \$34 million, the amount that department chairs say they need next fiscal year to pay for police and fire protection; public works; the education of Harvard’s children; and other services as well as employee benefits and debt. The amount is approximately 4½% more than the town will spend in the current fiscal year, but includes four additional full-time employees that departments and schools say they need to keep up with a growing demand for their services.

At the ballot box, voters will be offered two tax overrides. The first (\$423,902) provides enough money

BUDGET continued on page 9



Election Day



Tuesday, March 6
7 a.m.–8 p.m.
Bromfield Cafeteria

Bean there, done that

page 10



INDEX

Calendar	12	Notice Board	4
Classifieds	11	Police and Fire Logs	12
Current Events	6	Senior Spotlight	11
Legal Notices	6	Sports	8, 9

Policy for Letters to the Editor

We welcome your letters to the editor on local issues. Letters should include your name, address, and phone number, which will be used only for verification. We will not print anonymous letters, form letters, or blanket-mailing letters. The word-count limit on letters is 350, including signatures (with exceptions at the discretion of the editor). Letters will be edited for length, style, and clarity. We will not publish letters that are libelous. Letters should be mailed to Editor, The Harvard Press, P.O. Box 1, Harvard, MA 01451 or emailed to letters@harvardpress.net to be received no later than 5 p.m. on Tuesday.

Be the first to read the news each week!



Join our award-winning team in bringing the news—accurately and error-free—to town each week. Get to know more about the goings-on in Harvard.

Proofreader

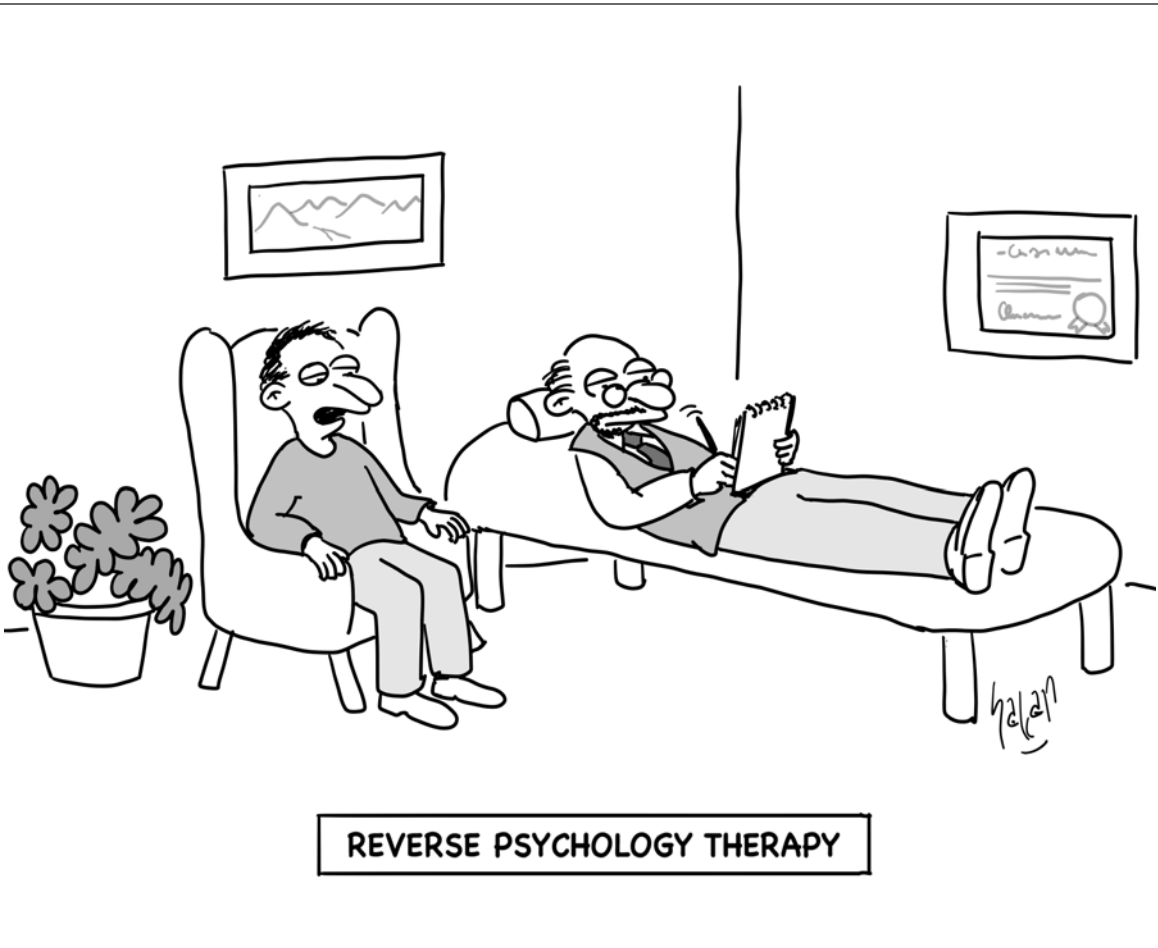
Proofreader wanted 3-5 hours each Wednesday. Previous editorial experience preferred and knowledge of AP style a plus. Send resume to John Osborn, editor@harvardpress.net or call 978-456-3700.

Correction

The boys Bromfield/North Middlesex Alpine ski team missed the league championship by one win, not three, and the photo accompanying the Feb. 23 story, “Boys ski team heads to states after placing second in final slalom of season,” shows the team at an earlier race in the season, not at the final slalom. In addition, the correct order of names in the team photo, from left, is as follows: Rowan McCarthy, Oscar Pride, Cole Maddalone, and Owen Wood.



The review of “Deception Downeast” in the Feb. 23 issue falsely implied that some of the saints mentioned were made up to suit an occasion. In fact, all the saints and their patron roles are real and were carefully researched by the book’s author.



Primary will determine future of state parties and nominees for the presidency

PRIMARY continued from page 1 to promote candidates for local and state office. Along with supporting and fundraising for local candidates, town committees have specific issues on which they focus their attention.

For example, the Harvard Democratic Town Committee, as explained by Chairman Dennis Bradley, worked to increase voter engagement and turnout beyond Harvard and Massachusetts by participating in letter-writing campaigns to voters in battleground states such as Pennsylvania, Georgia, and Virginia in previous years. “I am sure we will be engaged in that activity this year as well,” said Bradley.

John Knowles, the chairman of the Harvard Republican Town Committee, explained that the Harvard RTC often invites speakers to their monthly meetings, including local candidates, giving voters a rare opportunity to learn about and talk with candidates running for lesser-known positions and who receive less publicity than state- or national-level ones.

Because they missed the deadline for submitting names, all of the Democratic Town Committee candidates will be write-ins. They are Dennis Bradley, Shannon Molloy, Paul Green, Robert Coit, David Kay, Katie Weeks, and Kelene Blumstein.

On the Republican Town Committee ballot are John Knowles, Theresa Hoggins, Pamela Marston, Lynda Kachanis, Bonnie Chandler, and Edward Gordon Jr.

Similar to town committees, but on a larger scale, the state committees help to elect candidates to state and national office, as well as decide on party direction. The state committees meet several times throughout the year.

Voters will choose a committeeman and committeewoman to represent their districts, Middlesex and Worcester, on their state committee. On the Democratic ballot, there are no contested races: James B. Eldridge, the sitting state senator for the Middlesex

and Worcester district, is running unopposed for state committeeman, and Kara M. Le Treize is running unopposed for reelection as state committeewoman.

While Dave H. Lunger is uncontested as a candidate for Republican state committeeman, there is a contested race for state committeewoman. Dorothy Bisson, the Sudbury RTC chairwoman, is mounting a write-in campaign against the Massachusetts GOP’s nominee, Caroline Cunningham, a former fundraiser for Charlie Baker’s gubernatorial administration.

John Knowles said that he and the other Republican Town Committee chairs of the Middlesex and Worcester district had not had any correspondence with Cunningham. He said the Harvard Republican Town Committee supported Bisson’s campaign.

Bisson, who has chaired the Sudbury RTC for five years, believes her grassroots experience and strong relationships with the surrounding Republican town committees make her better suited to be state committeewoman, where she would act as a liaison between local and state Republicans.

Bisson is a member of the Massachusetts Freedom Slate, a coalition of over 70 Republican candidates pushing for a more conservative state committee. One of the Freedom Slate’s primary goals is to grow the Massachusetts GOP by electing their candidates to the state committee, which they called “dysfunctional” in its current form on their website.

The Harvard Press was unable to reach Cunningham for comment.

Despite a relatively uncompetitive presidential nomination race, the winners of state and local elections in Tuesday’s primary will shape the next four years of Massachusetts party politics.

Residents can cast their votes on Tuesday, March 5, from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. in the Bromfield School cafeteria at 14 Mass. Ave.