

2024 Conservation Commission Annual Report

The Conservation Commission started the year with 4 members in 2024, Holly Palmgren (Chair), Brian Keevan, Bonnie Hirsh, and Jennifer Vuona. Associate member Gerry Pellegrini became a full voting member in May but left to take another position on a town board in December.

The Commission is tasked with promoting the conservation of natural resources, and with the care and control of conservation lands owned by the Town. The Commission also enforces the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act (M.G.L. 131 § 40) (WPA) and its implementing regulations (310 CMR 10.00) on behalf of the Town. Meetings are held on the third Tuesday of each month unless circumstances dictate an alternate time or additional meetings. During 2023 the Commission met 17 times and acted on the following items:

Regulatory Activities

Thirteen (13) new Notices of Intent (NOI, formal filings under the WPA for projects within jurisdictional areas) were received in 2024, one NOI was continued from 2023. The Commission issued orders of conditions for all 13 of the new NOIs and the one continued from 2024. The Commission also issued a 3-year extension to 2 existing Orders of Conditions.

The Commission issued 9 Determinations for Requests for Determination of Applicability (a filing whereby the Commission determines if a project or activity is subject to the jurisdiction of the WPA and further review). Determinations of Applicability issued by the Commission may also carry conditions to protect the wetland resources in question.

The Commission issued an emergency certification to address flooding caused by a beaver dam at Goodnow Rd.

The Commission issued 7 Certificates of Compliance (which indicate that a project was completed in accordance with its Order of Conditions).

The Commission received numerous new Forest Cutting Plans in 2024. The Commission reviews such plans as required by the Forest Cutting Practices Act and regulations. No comments were forwarded from the Commission to DCR this year regarding any Forest Cutting Plans.

The Commission issued 1 Enforcement Order in 2024 for work done in WPA jurisdictional areas without a permit.

175 Brooks Station Road Backlot Development Conservation Land

The Commission held numerous site visits and discussed at meetings the backlot development at 175 Brooks Station Road. The Commission voted to accept the proposed conservation land required to be set aside by the backlot development by-law.

Other Activities

- General: The Commission responded to numerous general inquiries for information regarding the WPA, permitting requirements and reports of possible non-approved activities in or near wetland resource areas.
- Building Permit review: The Commission participates in the Building Department permit review system, specifically to conduct initial reviews of projects to determine if further WPA permitting was likely to be required. In 2024 a subcommittee of members reviewed numerous applications, several of which required site visits by one or more commissioners to inspect wetland locations.
- Education and Outreach Grant: The Commission sent out a resident letter and flyers ordered with money from the grant in 2024.

Finances

The Commission receives an annual (FY) budget \$970 for operational expenses, membership dues, and professional development. As of December 31, 2024, there was \$0 remaining from the FY2025 allotment.

The Commission maintains a revolving Wetlands Protection account, which is funded from NOI filing fees and can be used to pay for expenses related to administering the Wetlands Protection Act. The Commission received \$560 in Wetlands NOI filing fees in 2024, and spent a total of \$1,123.17, leaving a balance at the end of December 2024 of \$10,170.50.

The Commission oversees a revolving account for conservation land acquisition and maintenance, funded with lease fees from the Four Corners agricultural fields lease. The balance at the end of 2024 of \$5,028.65.

Respectfully submitted,

Holly Palmgren, Chair
Princeton Conservation Commission

2024 Environmental Action Committee Annual Report

The Environmental Action Committee (EAC) was formed in September 2017 after town residents voted for its creation at Annual Town Meeting in May 2017. The EAC’s overall mission is to implement the Town’s Environmental Action Plan (EAP)—which advises and sets goals and recommendations for the Town with regard to energy and environmental considerations—and to serve as a resource for town residents regarding environmental issues.

In 2024, the EAC continued to work to implement the action items identified in its Environmental Action Plan, meeting at least monthly and working with various Town employees, departments, boards, and committees to move its agenda forward.

In September 2023, the EAC advised the Selectboard about its ongoing efforts and planned initiatives through fall 2024. In 2024, the EAC continued its work on its Climate Resiliency Outreach Campaign: “Considering Our Community.”

In July 2024, the EAC advised the Selectboard as to planned initiatives through Summer 2025. This list of proposed activities generally included a continuation of the EAC’s Considering Our Community Outreach Campaign with participation in community events; at least quarterly Green News Briefs on various topics; other planned initiatives and actions; as well as continued involvement in advisory and liaison roles for the Town and various Town Committees.

EAC 2024 Actions and Initiatives

In September 2023, the EAC kicked off a themed outreach campaign that continued through 2024: “Considering Our Community”. The campaign addressed various topics and activities that impact our community. The campaign’s goals and objectives were to inform and empower community members with regard to the impacts of individual activities on the health of the greater community, including neighbors and the environment.

More specifically, throughout 2024, the outreach campaign addressed the following topics on a near-quarterly roll-out via Green News Briefs and Events: “Protecting the Night Sky;” “Supporting Sustainable and Local Agriculture;” “Avoiding Toxic Chemicals;” “Electric Vehicles Q & A”; “Drought Awareness”; and “Mindful Consumer Choices.”

GREEN NEWS BRIEFS

In 2024, the EAC published the following *Green News Brief*—with topics designated in the Considering Our Community Outreach Campaign:

- Winter 2024: *Considering Our Community: Dark Skies Awareness* (by EAC Members Gerry Pellegrini, Kaitlin Kohberger and Claire Golding)
This newsletter addressed light pollution in Princeton, dark-sky advocacy, and actions residents can take to reduce light pollution.

- Early Spring 2024: *Considering Our Community: The Air We Share (and Water too!)*
(by EAC Members Corey Burnham-Howard and Forrest Iwanik)
This newsletter addressed how products we use and actions we take at home may have toxic effects on the air and water we all share. Specifically, it highlighted the risks associated with, and safer alternatives to: Mosquito and Tick Spraying; Lawn and Garden Chemicals; Laundry Detergents and Dryer Exhaust Fumes; Household Cleaners; and Auto Idling.
- Spring 2024: *Considering Our Community: Eat Local!*
(by EAC Members Forrest Iwanik and Kaitlin Kohberger)
This newsletter addressed the environmental benefits of eating locally grown foods—including soil quality and agricultural sustainability. Specifically, it discussed the Community Supported Agriculture model; the environmental, farmer, and community benefits of supporting local agriculture; and the concept of “seasonal eating.”)
- Fall 2024: *Considering Our Community: Electric Vehicle Q & A*
(by EAC Member Forrest Iwanik)
This newsletter addressed common questions related to electric vehicles and hybrid vehicles, including environmental benefits; cost to buy and maintain; refueling savings; and reliability.
- Fall 2024: *Level 3 Critical Drought: Water Conservation, Wildfire Information, Background*
(by EAC member Claire Golding)
With Princeton in a Level 3 (Critical) Drought, this newsletter shared information about rainfall deficits; the role of climate change; action steps to conserve water; what to do if your well goes dry; and wildfire prevention tips.
- Late Fall 2024: *Mindful Consumer Choices*
(by EAC Members Forrest Iwanik and Kaitlin Kohberger)
This newsletter highlighted the environmental benefits of shopping locally for gifts; ideas for gifting “experiences;” and the environmental issues associated with “fast fashion.”

In 2024, the EAC also began planning Green News Briefs for 2025, including:

- Winter 2025: Night Sky Awareness & Light Pollution
- Spring 2025: Pesticides
- Spring 2025: Local Farmstands

EVENTS

In 2024, the EAC also hosted and/or participated in a variety of events:

- February 2024: Information table at Princeton Parks & Rec’s Winter Fest
EAC shared information about EAC’s mission; night sky awareness; and EAC’s Night Sky Fest 2024.

- February 2024: Night Sky Fest 2024
This EAC-led event held at Krashes Fields involved night sky viewing with amateur astronomers from Aldrich Astronomical Society who shared views of the night sky through their powerful telescopes. EAC estimated participation of approximately 60 attendees.
- April 2024: 5th Annual Princeton Earth Month Cleanup (co-organized by EAC and Open Space Committee)
Eighty households participated in this townwide trash cleanup of 76 miles of road, 4 parks, and 9 trail areas.
- Spring 2024: Coordinated with the City of Fitchburg to offer discounted rain barrel orders through the Great American Rain Barrel Fitchburg Community Event.
- May 2024: Co-hosted “Celebration” for participants of 5th Annual Earth Month Cleanup
Hosted a celebration on the Town Common for Princeton residents in appreciation of resident efforts in the 5th Annual Earth Month Cleanup. Hosted with live music, awards, giveaways, refreshments, and photo displays.
- May 2024: Princeton Farm Day
Participated in the event by hosting a table at Rattle Root Farm, offering potato plants and potato plant growing information sheets to families (in coordination with Princeton’s Agricultural Commission).
- Spring 2024: Princeton Spring Nature Walks
Co-sponsored with the Open Space Committee a series of nine walks led by Princeton Naturalists.
- September 2024: Information table and displays at Touch-a-Truck Event
Information shared about EAC mission; display of battery-powered yard equipment; display of electric and hybrid vehicles.
- September 2024- Information table and activities at Mass Audubon Wachusett Meadow’s “Hey Day”
Information shared included an EAC-created poster “Help Protect the Night Sky!”—with the how and why of how to protect the night sky; display of battery-powered yard equipment; games for public to play including EAC-created Environmental Bingo and Trash Decomposition: How Long Will It Take? EAC offered general information about its mission, and gave away mini pumpkins to game participants.
- October 2024 – Textile Collection Event
EAC hosted a textile collection event, collecting textiles for re-use and recycling in coordination with HELPSY. The EAC collected 3,023 pounds of textiles! (Thanks to PMLD for allowing use of their property for the collection.)

2024 EVENT PLANNING for 2025

In late fall 2024, the EAC announced two events to be held in winter 2025:

- January 2025: Co-sponsor with the Town’s Agricultural Commission an event entitled “Raptors, Rodenticides, Collateral Damage, and Better Options” featuring Jane Newhouse, the founder of Newhouse Wildlife Rescue. The program focused on the risk to predators from use of rodenticides and alternative pest control options. Approximately 30 people attended the event.
- January 2025: Holiday String Light Recycling Collection, collecting non-working, partially-working, and unwanted string lights for recycling. (Thanks to PMLD for allowing use of their property for the collection.) The EAC collected nearly 40 pounds of unwanted holiday string lights.

In 2024, the EAC also began planning additional events and activities for 2025, including:

- March 2025: Information table at Winter Fest
- March 2025: 2d Annual Night Sky Fest
- April 2025: Co-Sponsor with Open Space Committee: Earth Month Cleanup
- Spring 2025: Co-Sponsor with Open Space Committee: Spring Nature Walks
- Spring 2025: Participate in Princeton Farm Day in coordination with Agricultural Commission
- Spring 2025: Host information table and activities at TPS STEAM Festival
- Spring 2025: Host a “Moth Ball” with information on protecting moths and native insects, and offer children’s activities and music

2024 OTHER INITIATIVES

In 2024, the EAC pursued the following other initiatives and actions:

- February 2024: EAC provided written comments to the Master Plan Committee on draft Master Plan chapters
- July 2024: EAC provided written comments to the Selectboard, Town Administrator, and Martin Serman with regard to EAC input on the proposed Bike Park at Boylston Park.
- September 2024: EAC provided written comments to the Selectboard, Town Administrator, and Ecotourism Steering Committee with regard to the draft Ecotourism Economic Development Plan.
- October 2024: The EAC approved funding of, and donation of, books to the Thomas Prince School library in an amount not to exceed \$125 for books related to the environment.
- The EAC received and responded to emails from Town residents on various topics, including Town-led tree removal; use of gas-powered yard equipment at Town cemeteries; textile recycling; concerns regarding illegal dumping.
- Research EV charging station funding opportunities (still in progress)

- Research Tool Lending Library implementation (still in progress)
- Develop online water use dashboard for residents (still in progress)
- Research Community Preservation Act adoption (still in progress)
- Update EAC webpage (still in progress)
- Environmental Action Plan 5-year update (still in progress)

EAC ADVISORY ROLES

Green Community Grant Implementation

In 2024, upon request from Town Administrator Sherry Patch, the EAC assisted in an advisory role with regard to the implementation of the Town’s Energy Reduction Plan and Green Community designation grant funds. The designation and implementation are being primarily handled by Sherry Patch and Phil Connors.

In March 2024, the EAC advised the Selectboard and Town Administrator with regard to the applicability of the Town’s Fuel-Efficient Vehicle Policy on police vehicles, as well as with regard to Princeton’s commitment—as part of its Green Communities designation—to install IdleRight systems in police patrol cruisers.

In March 2024, the Town entered into an agreement for a Weatherization Study of Town buildings—using Green Community Designation Grant funds for the study. In August 2024, the Town received the Weatherization Study Report and had a remaining \$43,577 in Green Community designation grant funds to implement some of the report’s recommendations.

Related, but under a separate grant—an Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant—in October 2024, the Town received a grant of \$18,311 for replacement and weatherstripping of windows at Bagg Hall and Fire Station 2.

In 2024, the Wachusett Regional School District adopted a Fuel Efficiency Policy, which allowed Thomas Prince School to become eligible for Green Community Grant funding for energy efficiency upgrades.

EAC Lead: Corey Burnham-Howard

Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Plan implementation.

In 2024, the EAC continued to help facilitate and assist in an advisory role as to the implementation of the Town’s MVP Report.

EAC Member Corey Burnham-Howard participated in CMRPC-led MVP Working Group meetings, which discussed potential projects for MVP grant applications. Ultimately, the Town provided Expressions of Interest of MVP grants for (1) “the creation of a fire management plan for Mount Wachusett and surrounding forests to protect vital communications infrastructure and old grown forests...”; and (2) “to create a public education and outreach program aimed at town residents...to improve public knowledge on climate change, climate hazards, and opportunities

and actions to take to mitigate climate change and prepare for resiliency and response to climate hazards.”

In November 2024, *EAC member Corey Burnham-Howard* assisted in drafting a Town application for the MVP 2.0 Grant Program, which would provide an equity partners and a planning vendor to help implement Town climate resilience work.

The Town is eligible for MVP Action grant funding to implement projects to reduce risk and build climate change resiliency. Continued MVP actions are being led by Sherry Patch.

EAC Lead: Corey Burnham-Howard

EAC LIAISON ROLES

In 2024, EAC members continued to serve in various liaison roles on other committees—either as appointed liaisons or as full committee members with shared EAC interests:

Town of Princeton Public Safety Building Committee

Throughout 2024, *EAC member Claire Golding* served as the EAC representative voting member of the Public Safety Building Committee. Among other things, in February 2024, the PSB Committee reviewed the EAC’s list of environmental and energy considerations for new construction. In March 2024, the EAC provided to the PSB Committee facts about the economic benefits of incorporating green building components, and advocated for the following to be included in the architect’s scope: “Design and Engineering Services will include consideration and assessment of green building component options and comparison of those options to conventional building components including with regard to projected construction costs, operational expenses/savings, and resource efficiency.” This language was ultimately included in the scope of work agreement with the architect.

Town of Princeton Solar Farm Committee

As an EAC representative, *EAC member Corey Burnham-Howard* served as a member of, and *EAC member Gerald Pellegrini* served as an EAC liaison to, the Town of Princeton Solar Farm Committee through October 2024 when the committee was disbanded by the Selectboard after the Selectboard agreed to not move forward with any aspect of the project at this time “[g]iven the significant anticipated costs to be able to use the former landfill . . . and the projected revenues if the project were to be completed.” The Solar Farm Committee explored the feasibility, costs, and potential benefits of leasing the former Town landfill as a solar energy generating facility. The Solar Farm Committee’s final work culminated in its September 26, 2024 Interim Report to Selectboard on Potential Solar Energy System Installation at the Closed Town Landfill.

Town of Princeton Waste & Recycling Working Group

With initiation from the EAC, the Selectboard formed a Waste & Recycling Committee that first met in September 2020. In 2024, that committee was transformed into a regional working group with participation from the Towns of Princeton, Rutland, and Hubbardston. Throughout 2024,

EAC member Claire Golding served on the Waste & Recycling Working Group. The group's efforts included a (multi-) town-wide survey with regard to a potential transfer station. The survey revealed little interest in use of a transfer station but broad support for a regional hauler if that would yield significant cost savings. The group then began working toward an RFP for an opt-out regional trash hauler contract.

Town of Princeton Master Plan Steering Committee

In 2024, *EAC member Claire Golding* served as a member of the Town of Princeton Master Plan Steering Committee. Working with CMRPC, the Committee led the drafting of three chapters: Economic Development; Land Use; and Natural Resources and Open Space. In 2024, the Committee solicited feedback from other Town committees, reviewed chapters, and then debated next steps.

Town of Princeton Ecotourism Steering Committee

In 2024, *EAC member Richy Bisk* served as a non-voting EAC liaison to the Ecotourism Steering Committee. Working with CMRPC, the committee's mission was to develop a plan to economically leverage visitors to the Town (primarily visitors that come to town for its environment and outdoor activities) while protecting the environment. In October 2024, the Selectboard accepted the committee's Ecotourism Development Plan, and the committee was disbanded.

Town of Princeton Housing Implementation Committee

In 2024, *EAC member Richy Bisk* served as a member of the Housing Implementation Committee. The committee is charged with "implementing the goals and strategies of Princeton's 2022 Housing Production Plan while maintaining or enhancing the rural character of the town." While Richy does not serve on the committee as an EAC representative, he does provide regular reports to the EAC as to the Housing Implementation Committee's work.

Hazard Mitigation Plan Local Planning Team

EAC member Corey Burnham-Howard participated in CMRPC-led 2024 meetings focused on updating the Town's Hazard Mitigation Plan.

PFAS Liaison

EAC Member Forrest Iwanik attended Town PFAS information sessions and provided updates to EAC members.

PMLD Liaison

In 2024, *EAC members Gerald Pellegrini and Claire Golding* volunteered to review PMLD meeting minutes and provide updates to EAC members on relevant issues.

Commonwealth of Massachusetts Climate Action Meeting

EAC member Gerald Pellegrini attended this meeting in March 2024.

EAC MEMBERS/OFFICERS

Appointments and Resignations

In June 2024, members Kaitlin Kohberger and Forrest Iwanik were re-appointed to the EAC for three-year terms.

In December 2024, the following individuals were appointed to the EAC: Mark Horeanopoulos as an Associate Member; Starr O'Malley as a Member.

In December 2024, Gerald Pellegrini resigned from the EAC after being appointed to the Advisory Committee.

In December 2024, Ed Katebi applied for appointment to the EAC. He was appointed as an Associate Member in January 2025 (and has since applied to be appointed as a full member to complete Gerald Pellegrini's term).

EAC Officers

Throughout 2024, EAC members held following officer positions on the Committee:

- Chair: Corey Burnham-Howard
- Vice Chair: Gerald Pellegrini
- Secretary: Forrest Iwanik
- Editor: Claire Golding

Thanks to Our Supporters and Partners

The EAC would like to once again thank the Princeton Selectboard and Town Administrator Sherry Patch for their continued support of EAC initiatives and actions. The EAC also thanks Town Clerk Alissa Horsung for her assistance in many and various administrative matters. The EAC would also like to thank the following town committees and entities for their partnership in implementing environmental and energy initiatives in 2024: Town of Princeton Open Space Committee; Town of Princeton Agricultural Commission; Town of Princeton Parks & Recreation Committee; Princeton Municipal Light Department.

Thanks again also to the residents of Princeton for their continued support, interest, engagement, action, and inquiries on environmental and energy issues.

Respectfully submitted,

Corey Burnham-Howard (Chair), Claire Golding (Member/Editor), Forrest Iwanik (Member/Secretary), Kaitlin Kohberger (Member), Richy Bisk (Member), Starr O'Malley (Member), Mark Horeanopoulos (Associate Member), Ed Katebi (Associate Member)

2024 OSC Annual Report



Princeton Senior Hikers pose by the new kiosk at the Thomas Prince Nature Trails.

We continued with our mission of implementing the 2020 Open Space and Recreation Plan and our Trails Plan (copies on our website). We regularly review status vs planned work and we are on track with nearly all objectives.

Under the general objective of “Maintaining and Improving Princeton Town Parks”, We held a hike at Goodnow Park in the Spring to celebrate the new trails. With the help of an Eagle Scout project by Joseph Zelle the old wooden structures at the Thomas Prince Nature Trails were replaced with a new bridge. Also, the trail kiosk was re-located to the start of the trails. Town meeting approved our request for funds to do a design for converting part of the TPS network to accessible trails, but we did not receive the anticipated Grant. This will be re-addressed in 2025.

Under the objective of “Protecting the Town Resources”, we conducted a seminar on Chapter 61 and conservation options with Sterling Open Space and North County Land Trust which was attended by several Princeton residents. We have also spent a good deal of time reviewing Princeton privately held open space parcels to gauge conservation value, and we are working with the Princeton Land Trust to approach landowners to understand their short and long term plans.

Under the objective of “Promoting Use of the Princeton Resources”, we continued the Princeton Hikes program which has attracted 20-30 hikers for each of the three hikes led monthly. Our series of Nature Walks, done in conjunction with EAC, was a huge success, with 7 Nature Walks and an average of around ten people per walk. This will be repeated in 2025. In addition, we led two children’s hikes, one at Goodnow Park and one at the PLT Russell Corner Trail area, hiking down to the beaver pond and out through Hall’s Field. We will do another children’s hike in the spring. We also published a downloadable booklet documenting many of the Princeton hikes that our guided hikes program has covered.

Under our objective of “Improving Connections in Town”, we continued to improve signage, and we added a new trail connection, the Mirick Trail between the Mirick and Mountain Road (near Echo Lake Trailhead). In February we are planning for a trail summit to collect citizen input to feed an updated trail plan.

For the fourth year, OSC will work with the EAC and PMLD to lead the town cleanup of roads, parks, and trails in the spring. We participated in the Parks and Rec Princeton Day and Hey Day in September, and in Winter Carnival in March.

Special thanks to all of the many people who help with trail building and maintenance!! Thanks also to Karen Rossow who retired from our committee this year after 11 years of great work!

Respectfully submitted,

The Princeton Open Space Committee

Rick Gardner, Chair

Susan Downing

Laura Reynolds

Deb Cary

Annie Charrette, Associate

2024 Housing Implementation Committee (PHIC) Annual Report

PHIC spent 2024 getting informed and getting established. Members immersed themselves in learning about Princeton's housing needs, state level initiatives (Affordable Housing Act and MBTA Communities Act), available resources, and our own bylaws governing housing.

PHIC examined what other towns our size are doing, both online and in person. Members visited a Westminster project, and met with other town boards and state officials to learn about specific issues impacting housing in Princeton, including:

- Planning Board to understand Princeton's zoning and bylaws
- Board of Health for a better understanding of septic restrictions and innovations
- MassHousing to discuss grant opportunities and procedures, and eligibility
- CMRPC to assist with a Technical Assistance grant and to answer questions about the AHA

Winter (January/February/March)

Learning mode. Housing is a large and complex topic with lots of questions: What Princeton bylaws impact housing? Are housing trusts, Chapter 40Y (small houses), public development (Wachusett House), the Community Preservation Act appropriate for Princeton? How does a housing authority work? What is out there in terms of grants and funding? PHIC members had a lot to learn.

Winter was not just about learning. PHIC also started basic research about Princeton, including:

- Parcel review: starting with a raw list of all large parcels in town, the committee developed a list of 12 parcels possibly appropriate for multi-unit housing development (according to the 2022 Housing Production Plan).
- Completed Princeton's first count of permitted Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)

Spring (April/May/June)

Getting into the action. PHIC actively supported a proposed mixed-use development (8,000 sq ft of retail space under 45 single bedroom apartments) on a site in the Village Overlay District (VOD). The committee supported an assistance grant to evaluate septic options in the VOD.

In May, the committee sent a letter to owners of the parcels that could be appropriate for development.

On June 16, PHIC hosted a community meeting targeted specifically to seniors to educate about what options are available now, what changes are coming, and to ask "what types of housing should PHIC pursue for Princeton seniors?"

Summer (July/August/September)

Back to the classroom. Self-education continued and the topics widened: Many small central MA towns no longer have the staff to operate their Housing Authority and have outsourced to

Worcester's. Is this appropriate for Princeton? What alternative building methods might work in Princeton? 3D printed houses?

The AHA included ADUs “by right” with no requirement for owner occupancy, creating the possibility of absentee landlords. PHIC formulated a list of questions about the new regulations so as to be ready when talking to legislators.

On 9/13, members got to ask their questions about the new ADU regulations in a meeting with CHAPA and attended a webinar regarding ADUs.

Fall (October/November/December)

Aligning for the future. It became clear that the committee cannot on its own pursue development of the type of housing asked for in the 2022 Housing Plan. For the upcoming year, the committee's focus will pivot to community outreach/education. To that end, the committee proposed to host a series of workshop/seminars with:

- builders,
- homeowners who have gone through the process,
- accountants/real estate agents to discuss return on investment (ROI) and impact on taxes.

PHIC submitted its first-ever first budget to support the proposed workshops. The first workshop (about ADUs), is scheduled for Spring 2025.



2024 Master Plan Steering Committee Annual Report

The committee met monthly to complete Phase 1 of the 2022 Master Plan Update chapters including; Open Space & Natural Resources, Land Use, and Economic Development.

Comments were solicited from the public, town boards, and committees.

At its 9/16/24 meeting, after learning from Sherry Patch about Community Heart & Soul, a nonprofit dedicated to increasing community engagement and resilience, the committee recommended that the Selectboard apply to CH&S for a grant, to be matched by the town, with the goal of increasing participation in the Master Plan Phase 2 development process.

In September, the committee requested and received funds to engage an outside reviewer to assure that the draft update met state requirements. This review took place in October, and review comments were incorporated in November.

With Phase 1 effectively complete, the committee voted to disband on December 13, 2024.

2024 Princeton Municipal Light Department Annual Report

The Princeton Municipal Light Department (PMLD) is a non-profit public service corporation, whose primary goal is to provide reliable and cost-effective electric service to the residents and businesses of the Town of Princeton, MA. PMLD has operated in Princeton since 1912. PMLD is a Town asset, working as a separate governmental unit under the regulations and oversight of the Department of Public Utilities, with its own elected 3-member Board of Light Commissioners, policies, and budget serving the needs and providing value to our ratepayers.

Reliability

Delivering and maintaining reliable energy to every customer in Princeton is one of PMLD's main goals. PMLD completed many upgrade projects to the electric distribution system, such as new utility poles, wires, and hardware; and the continued conversion of our main distribution lines from 4800 volts to 13800 volts. Also, PMLD is working towards the future with the following:

- 1) An interconnection with the Sterling Municipal Light Department which will provide a more robust and reliable feed for the town and would replace the interconnection with National Grid.
- 2) Currently in the engineering phase of a battery storage project. This project will save PMLD thousands of dollars each year in capacity and transmission expenses. The battery is projected to be online in 2026.
- 3) Implemented a new tree trimming cycle that reduces the time between trimming from five years to four years.

There were not any town wide outages on the National Grid side of the Town meter and no town wide outages on the PMLD side of the Town meter in 2024. PMLD will continue to rebuild and strengthen the distribution system with new equipment and a comprehensive tree trimming program that has proven successful. PMLD is committed to keeping the lights on and on those rare occasions that the lights go out, we are committed to a quick response and restoration of the electric service.

Electric Customers and Rates

PMLD provided service to 1,403 residential, 39 solar residential, 8 Farm, 74 commercial, 2 commercial solar, and 1 municipal customer as of December 2024 (total count = 1,545 increased by 10 from 2023). Residential customers consume approximately 86% of the town's total energy use. All PMLD customers consumed just over 15.3 million kWh of energy in 2024, and the average home consumes approximately 750 kWh per month.

The average home in Princeton spends approximately \$180.00 per month on electricity. PMLD's priority is to maintain the lowest possible rates, while providing the most safe and reliable

electric service possible. PMLD is committed to finding ways to stabilize and/or reduce rates. Our standard residential rate has been maintained at \$0.2475 since 2017. PMLD's Board of Commissioners and management continue to work diligently to keep the rates as low as possible. PMLD has a long-term energy purchase contract (through 2027) with NextEra Energy that provides PMLD ratepayers with consistent, affordable pricing monthly throughout the year, which enabled management to keep to a set budget and anticipate expenses without risk of what the volatile open market pricing could bring. PMLD's power portfolio matches ISO New England's daily fuel mix. PMLD ended the year 10.44% over budget for income and .23% over budget for expenses.

Vegetation Management Plan

PMLD, in conjunction with the Town Tree Warden, has in place a Vegetation Management Plan for the Town. The plan clearly divides the Town into four tree trimming cycles. An individual cycle will be identified on any given year as the area of focused tree trimming and tree removal for that given year. It is our desire that this allows the residents of Princeton to know where PMLD is trimming and give PMLD an organized method for tree removal and maintenance tree trimming. PMLD also hired a local outside contractor, Dillon Tree Service, to perform vegetation management services on cycle 5 in 2024. PMLD was very pleased with the level of work and professionalism provided by Dillon Tree Service.

NextZero Program (previously HELPS)

PMLD offered Princeton residents the opportunity to take advantage of energy conservation incentives, appliance rebates for wi-fi thermostats, new energy efficient refrigerators, dishwashers, clothes washers, dehumidifiers, heat pumps, pool pumps, battery operated snow blowers and lawn mowers; free in-home energy audits; rebates associated with the Cool Homes Program for installation of new energy efficient central AC, mini-duct systems; and rebates associated with the Home Efficiency Incentive Program for improvements associated with home insulation, duct sealing and energy efficient heating system replacement. In 2024 a total of 34 audits were conducted, 6 ASHP Consultations, 40 heat pump/mini split rebates were awarded through the Cool Homes Program, 16 rebates were awarded through the Home Efficiency Incentive Program, 5 Wi-Fi thermostat rebates, and 56 appliance rebates were awarded to customers for various new energy efficient appliance/equipment purchases. PMLD contributed a total of \$63,750 towards homeowner's energy efficiency efforts in 2024, which was an increase of \$11,000 from 2023.

Wind Farm

The Princeton Wind Farm operated at a 14% capacity factor in 2024 producing 3,679 MWh's of energy. PMLD has been utilizing the services of Baldwin Energy, Winchester, MA and O'Conner Corporation, Canton, MA to maintain and repair the wind turbines. PMLD sells wind energy to the Sterling Municipal Light Department, the West Boylston Municipal Light Plant and the ISO-New England Spot Market.

Other Service Benefits to the Town

In addition to providing the lowest cost possible and reliable energy, PMLD provided other services for the Town and for our customers in 2024, such as:

- PMLD installed United States Flags and other banners and signs for the Town Common in observance of Memorial Day, Flag Day, Independence Day, and Veteran's Day
- PMLD is the point of contact and distribution location for the volunteer Welcome Committee in town to present to all new residents a "Welcome to Beautiful Princeton" tote bag that include small, personalized gifts, information, coupons and brochures from organizations, places of interest and businesses in and around town.
- PMLD purchased and distributed to residents PMLD promotional reusable items - reusable shopping bags, LED night lights & flashlights, water bottles, and "who to call" magnets at various community events.
- PMLD installed holiday tree lights on the Town Common
- PMLD staff assisted various Town departments with the use of a bucket truck, tree removals, building repairs, and technical assistance as needed.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sean McKeon, General Manager

2024 Highway Department Annual Report

As I am writing this report there is a light snow squall moving quickly through Town from Northwest to Southeast. It has been somewhat of an easy winter so far as February is going to start at the end of this week. The Department has treated roughly two dozen times since November and we've had to plow on three (3) different occasions. February looks to increase precipitation throughout the entire month.

Early Spring of 2022 the Department lost 2 employees. These positions were not filled until the Fall, with one full-time employee and one part-time employee. Unfortunately, we got behind in catch basin cleaning, flushing drain systems and culverts, as well as roadside mowing. We did hire a contractor to assist us with road side mowing early summer to keep most of the roads safe, but the contractor could only cover so many road miles with only two (2) weeks of mowing.

We were able to tackle a few drainage projects that have been on the Department's radar for a few years. One of those projects was on Beaman Road between Wilson and Hobbs Road. The Department installed a 12" perforated drain line roughly 500' with fabric and back filled with stone. We have had some drainage issues on this section of road for a long time and resolving it was a great improvement. Fighting ice in the winter months and washouts in the spring was a daily task in that area. Another drainage improvement was on Sterling Road just north of the Clearings Way. We believe a spring was the cause of water weeping out of the edge of roadway causing ice to freeze on the road and make it very dangerous for quite a few years. The Department installed a 6" perforated subdrain backfilled with stone for roughly 650'. Both of these projects were time consuming as well as expensive. We were happy to complete them.

Early Spring we received a Complete Streets Grant to construct a sidewalk on Worcester Road. Roughly 1800 feet of sidewalk was installed with granite curbing, ADA compliant ramps, cross walk with flashing beacons, signage, and some drainage improvements with a beautiful rain garden. The contractor was A.F. Amorello out of Worcester, MA and they were a pleasure to work with. Very professional and outstanding work. Looking forward to a wonderful FY25!

Respectfully,

Benjamin D. Metcalf

Highway Superintendent

2024 Cemetery Commission Annual Report

The cemeteries opened in early April as the grounds were suitable for burials. The winter weather was moderate, and there were no major maintenance issues.

Lot Sales: 3 Full (8 graves) and 1 Cremation

Burials: 2 Full and 8 Cremation

Commission and Superintendent updates

The Commission welcomed two new members, Michael Warren, and Melissa Cumming. This was the first time in several years that the Commission had full membership.

It was with much sadness that we announced the passing of Superintendent Bruce Rollins in early August. Bruce spent almost 20 years in his three terms as superintendent. He was passionate about the work, he delivered service with care and compassion, and brought a wealth of knowledge to the position.

The Commission was pleased to hire O'Neill Mazyck as the new Superintendent in September. O'Neill, a 27-year resident of Princeton has an excellent mix of skills, including 3 years as Officer in Charge, Funeral Detail in the U.S. Army, 11 years as Superintendent of Patriot Golf Course, Hanscom Air Force Base, and coursework in turf management at UMass Amherst.

Maintenance and Projects

- The entryway to Woodlawn Cemetery was paved.
- Superintendent Rollins began the layout of new graves in the 1956 section of Woodlawn Cemetery.
- We are in year two of a three-year mowing and trimming contract with Einstein Solutions, Inc., and we continue to be pleased with their work.
- The Highway Department continued to provide burial services, but due to staffing issues HD was not able to assist with other projects. There was an advertisement for seasonal part time help, and we reached out through the Senior Work off program, but there was no response to either.
- The Cemetery Commission proposed and received Selectboard approval for revised Rules and Regulations, effective November 20, 2024. These Rules and Regulations cover all Town Cemeteries. Notable among the changes is an increase in the number of burials allowed per grave which applies to both currently owned lots and new purchases.
- The weather allowed us to keep Woodlawn Cemetery open for auto traffic through the end of December. As a temporary solution the Highway Department provided orange barriers to allow for foot traffic through the winter. A permanent solution will be developed for next winter.
- Princeton resident Charles Albrecht continues to maintain Parker I Cemetery. Mr. Albrecht does a great job, and we thank him for the care he provides.

Respectfully Submitted,

Commissioners Lynne Grettum, Chair, Paul Constantino, Melissa Cumming, Greg Miranda, Mike Warren

2024 WACHUSETT EARTHDAY, INC ANNUAL REPORT

Wachusett Earthday Inc. (WEI) operates the Wachusett Watershed Regional Recycling Center at 131 Raymond Huntington Highway in West Boylston on property owned by the Department of Conservation & Recreation (DCR). The site is partially funded by contributions from the seven towns of Boylston, Holden, Paxton, Princeton, Rutland, Sterling and West Boylston as well as being supported by the MA Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). In addition to the disposal of difficult materials, WEI provides a venue for sharing gently used but still serviceable household items. All work is performed by a dedicated group of volunteers from our member towns and several surrounding towns, under the able guidance of two part time paid staff members and several organizational managers. The organization's mission is to provide local and environmentally responsible solutions to the disposal of difficult items and hazardous substances and materials.

Total collections:	2023 – 120	2024 - 119
Total vehicles served:	2023 – 25,026	2024 - 27,940

Total of materials received in the Reuse Building in FY2024 and kept out of the seven towns' waste streams:

<u>Collection Days</u>	<u>Total Boxes</u>	<u>Total Pounds</u>	<u>Average boxes/day</u>	<u>Average pounds/day</u>	<u>Average pounds/box</u>	<u>No Good</u>
119	16,538	241,065	139	2,027	15	9%

Total waste and recycling volumes:

<u>Year</u>	<u>2023</u>	<u>2024</u>
Tons	590	602

Numbers above do not include any items taken for reuse by residents, 24,838 lbs of books to More Than Words, furniture and 2,432 lbs of household goods to furniture banks, redeemables to the Boy Scouts, 3,109 lbs of chipped/cracked breakables to Letz Rage, and 4,910 lbs of Christmas items to ReStore. Nor does it include the following items recycled: 1230 refrigerants, >2371 gallons of latex paint, 1145 tires, 526 propane tanks, 80 fire extinguishers, or 1936 mattresses.

Special Collections: We held 2 hazardous waste and two shredding events this past fiscal year. In 2025 we'll be holding two hazardous waste days and three shredding events. In 2025 two hazardous waste events are scheduled for July 12 and Nov 8 from 9am to 1pm. Three shredding events are scheduled for July 19, Sept 20, and Nov 1 from 9am to noon.

Sales of premium reuse items continue to provide a revenue cushion which allows WEI to maintain relatively level disposal costs. Fee increases occurred only when necessary to cover an increase in the fees we were charged. Hazardous waste processing and disposal continue to be challenging as most major processors are offline due to safety issues and/or fires. Our tire hauler too experienced a fire which resulted in our fees going up. We anticipate ongoing challenges as places to send our unwanted tons of material dwindle.

We have two part time paid employees: Mark Koslowske continues as our Operations Manager managing all things site related and Norma Chanis as the Executive Director focusing on volunteers, communication, outreach, relationships and education. Both are also working on consideration of new services and improvements.

The partnerships that have been nurtured with multiple local social service and charitable organizations continue to thrive and expand. WEI continues to work with Household Goods (Acton) and Fresh Start (Hudson) Furniture Banks as well as various local groups working with refugees or local homeless, veterans and food pantries. Our 4 textile collection bins continue to filled regularly.

The number of teachers coming from multiple towns within Worcester County continues to expand. We continue to be a location for schools/organizations looking for skill improvement tasks for people with disabilities and significant life challenges. Students from our local high schools, WPI and employees from a variety of local businesses are finding volunteering with us to be a worthwhile use of their volunteer hours.

Public education in the proper disposal and recycling or reuse of still-viable goods and materials will continue to drive our mission.

Holiday closings in 2025: July 3, July 5, November 27, December 25.

2024 Board of Directors:

Holden: William Cronin, Ronaldo Lu, Deborah Maruca Hoak, Mark Koslowske, Operations Manager;

Princeton: Helen Townsend, Clerk;

Rutland: Connie Burr, Michael Kacprzicki, Treasurer;

Sterling: Susan Farr, President;

West Boylston: Norma Chanis, Executive Director.

Pending member Sheila Dibb, Rutland, joined December 2024 to be voted in at the next annual meeting.

Respectfully submitted, *Norma Chanis, Exec Dir and Susan Farr, President*

Site Usage Summary for FY24

- The center was open 119 days in FY 2024 out of a possible 128 days
- 4 holiday closings, 2 closings for heat, 3 closings for cold/snow.
- There were 3 hazardous waste collections, 3 shredding dates and 6 latex paint collections

Total car count increased significantly

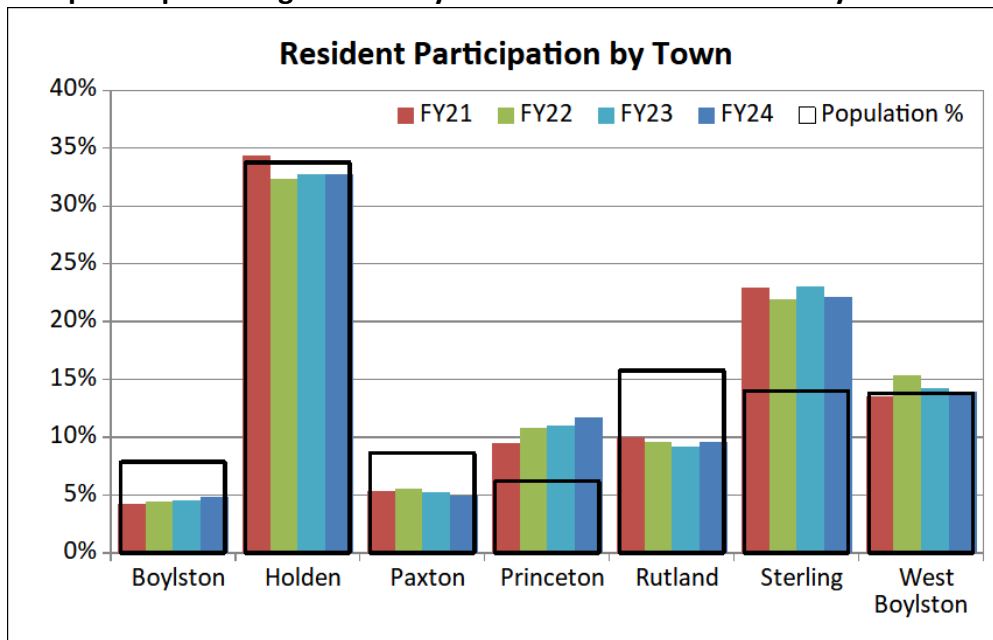
Total Cars by year					
Year	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23	FY24
total cars	23,262	24,698	24,249	25,026	27,940
% change		6.2%	-1.8%	3.2%	11.6%

Breakdown of usage by town against population.

	FY24 Cars	Participation %	Population %
Boylston	1,352	4.9%	7.9%
Holden	9,064	32.8%	33.8%
Paxton	1,373	5.0%	8.6%
Princeton	3,240	11.7%	6.2%
Rutland	2,658	9.6%	15.8%
Sterling	6,129	22.2%	14.0%
West Boylston	3,845	13.9%	13.8%
Total	27,661		

Other	279	1.0%
Total	27,940	

Four year participation percentages are fairly consistent. Princeton and Boylston are trending up.



Material Collection Summary

	FY21	FY22	FY23	FY24	Comments
Disposal (pounds)					
C & D / Bulky Waste	795,580	698,160	610,680	621,980	
Recycling (pounds)					
Solid Waste (HHP)	3,100	7,180	0	2,540	aluminum, brass, copper
Scrap Metal - Lt iron	306,660	254,960	234,740	259,670	
Other Metal (trailer)	7,832	6,874	7,444	8,635	
Paper	29,920	26,800	21,280	28,100	
Corrugated	85,200	84,620	92,780	84,340	
Document Shredding	27,800	16,760	24,566	21,200	
Bulky Rigid Plastics	34,480	37,860	34,860	31,540	
Mixed Recyclables	13,060	5,380	5,960	8,680	
Styrofoam	4,420	5,265	5,265	4,888	
Fluorescents	3,571	3,573	3,037	3,200	
Lead Acid Batteries	8,476	4,856	3,470	7,063	
Alkaline Batteries	3,752	4,469	3,248	5,950	
Other Batteries	515	644	418	651	
Textiles	16,200	14,184	17,417	34,801	
Electronics	123,377	96,325	80,118	80,194	
Total Recycling (pounds)	668,363	569,750	534,661	581,452	
Total Pounds	1,463,943	1,267,910	1,145,341	1,203,432	
Total Tons	732	634	573	602	
Other Items (quantity)					
Refrigerants	1,183	1,022	1,027	1,230	Incl. A/C, dehumidifier
Tires	1,483	1,355	1,168	1,145	all tires
Propane tanks	597	494	457	526	all sizes
Fire Extinguishers	75	64	67	80	
Mattress	1,678	1,643	1,685	1,936	all sizes, incl. box spring
Latex Paint (gallons)	202	1,045	1,230	2,371	

Resource Building Dropoff

- Residents drop off an average of 2,000 pounds of material for the reuse / resource building.

Year	Collection Days	Total boxes	Total pounds	Average boxes/day	Average pounds/day	Average pounds/box
FY21	113	14,756	228,108	131	2,027	15
FY22	118	15,025	232,667	128	1,981	15
FY23	120	14,276	225,665	120	1,884	16
FY24	119	16,538	241,065	139	2,027	15

- Unsuitable material is diverted to trash or recycling. Downstream partners receive good items or excess items to meet their mission.
- Fiscal year 24 saw an increase in the amount of material given for reuse and sent out to trash, recycling or to other organizations. The increase in the material sent out was primarily due to the material sent to other organizations.

Year	Collection Days	total pounds out	Trash %	Recycling %	Down Stream %	Total %
FY22	118	26,411	3.0%	5.4%	2.9%	11.3%
FY23	120	45,176	2.3%	5.6%	12.1%	20.0%
FY24	119	57,741	2.5%	6.2%	15.3%	24.0%

Downstream partners:

Partner	Pounds	Items
Letz Rage	3,109	Breakables usually chipped or cracked
Fresh Start	2,432	Household items
ReStore	4,910	Christmas / Holiday items
MTW	29,372	Books, CDs, DVDs. Overflow

Furniture

Total Saved	Pieces to Residents	Pieces to Furniture Bank(s)	Total	% to Furniture Banks(s)	Other items
2,892	1,767	584	2,351	25%	541

Furniture Type	Saved	Dropped Off	% Saved
Wood	1,814	2,996	60.60%
Upholstered	281	1,427	19.70%
Mattress or Box Spring	43	1,967	2.20%
Metal	213	N/A	N/A
Totals	2,351	6,390	

Wachusett Earthday, Inc.
Consolidated P&L - FY 2024
November 21, 2024

	Actual	Budget	Variance
Revenue			
<i>Collection Fees</i>	280,892	236,900	43,991
<i>Resale of Electricity</i>	698	1,400	(702)
<i>Donations</i>	8,539	4,633	3,906
<i>Grants</i>	80,443	47,250	33,193
<i>Interest</i>	10,077	5,400	4,677
<i>Municipal Donations</i>	36,126	36,126	(0)
<i>All Sales</i>	40,114	35,100	5,014
Total Revenue	456,888	366,809	90,079
Expenses			
<i>Expense of Materials Recycling</i>	185,565	185,483	82
<i>Storage Expenses</i>	112,911	118,219	(5,308)
<i>Office Expense/Wages</i>	80,443	45,000	35,443
<i>Taxes</i>	9,343	8,469	874
<i>Additional Recycling Expenses</i>	13,262	4,291	8,972
<i>Site Maintenance & Utilities</i>	13,737	14,899	(1,162)
<i>Depreciation</i>	13,529	12,946	583
Total Expenses	428,791	389,307	39,484
Total Surplus (Loss)	28,097	(22,498)	50,595

2024 Wachusett Greenways Annual Report

Mass Central Rail Trail Construction and Stewardship

During 2024, construction continued on the new accessible MCRT route traveling 2.3 miles over the hill in Holden between Manning Street and Wachusett Street (Route 31) at Mill Street. Two MassTrails grants and matching funds from Wachusett Greenways donors support completion of this two-year project by June 2025. This construction expands the completed MCRT section between Thomas St., West Boylston and Princeton St., Holden to a distance of 9 miles. In addition, Wachusett Greenways replaced the failed railroad culvert near Miles Road and Thayer Pond in Rutland to restore access to Miles Road and to preserve the MCRT.

Wachusett Greenways stewards the central MCRT with support from eight towns and the DCR. WG works year round on maintenance between Sterling and Barre including ditch clearing, removal of dead trees, mowing, brush removal, regular patrolling and litter removal, parking lot snow removal, restroom provision and maintenance, outreach and hospitality to trail users and restoration when needed.

Wachusett Greenways is following a focused track to complete and steward the central 30 miles of the MCRT with support of our partners: DCR Division of Watershed Protection, eight Wachusett/Ware towns, MassTrails, regional foundations, businesses and amazing members, donors and volunteers. The eight Towns are Barre, Holden, Oakham, Paxton, Princeton, Rutland, Sterling and West Boylston. Future Wachusett Greenways construction projects will connect the remaining approximately 9 miles of the 30-mile MCRT between Barre and Sterling. Completion and stewardship of the 104 mile MCRT as a shared-use path remains a key goal of the Commonwealth.

Wonderful Trail Users, Volunteers, Members and Donors!

Who enjoys the trail? New residents, families, couples, runners, cyclists, longtime supporters, visitors from afar, new moms and dads with babies and friends, folks who need healing from injuries or illness, and seniors staying healthy. Trail users, volunteers, members and donors connect through the Mass Central Rail Trail all year round!

2024 WG Annual Meeting and Now Entering our 30th year

On June 5, 2024, WG held the annual meeting at Trout Brook Reservation, Holden, with a fun outdoor picnic and review of progress. Thus commenced our 30th year, which we are enjoying with lots of trail maintenance events, some ‘pop up’ trail events planned for 2025 and our June 2025 annual meeting. We expect to hold dedications in fall 2025 for the Sterling, West Washacum bridge and for the new MCRT in Holden from Manning to Princeton Street.

First ever employee!

Now in our 30th year, WG welcomed our very first employee who participated in administration, mapping, trail clearing, outreach and more. Scarlett Strom, WPI junior majoring in Environmental Engineering, signed on for the summer of 2024 and will continue with some hours during the school year. Scarlet is an enthusiastic and competent addition to the WG team.

Connections across the Commonwealth

WG participated in two statewide conferences in October. The MassTrails conference in Worcester was full of energy and vision for building new trail connections. The Moving Together conference in Boston offered education and encouragement for active transportation. Site visits and networking were highlights of both conferences.

The Norwottuck Network hosted the N2B Ride (Northampton to Boston) along the MCRT corridor. Wachusett Greenways welcomed the hardy riders in West Boylston to thank them for their commitment to the MCRT and to share a little of Wachusett Greenways' 30 year journey and vision for the 30 central miles of the MCRT.

Pommogussett Tunnel Mural

Artist Margaret McCandless and several volunteer painters developed the Pommogussett Tunnel mural on the MCRT sharing a beautiful vision of nature surrounding the MCRT along Moulton Pond in Rutland. Supporting grants came from Holden, Rutland and Oakham Cultural Councils, local agencies, which are supported by the Mass Cultural Council, a state agency.

Each WG Friend Is Welcome

Thank you to every one of this year's more than 900 donors from 118 towns in 19 states. 141 of these are new donors, while many others are steady supporters. We are still reaching for the goal of 1000 annual donors. Basic membership from \$5 to \$40 is the foundation for annual operating expenses. Three special Mass Central Rail Trail Funds also sustain us: 1) The MCRT Construction Fund helps build new trail sections to reach the 30-mile goal. 2) The Dr. Edward P. Yaglou MCRT Maintenance Fund supports large restoration projects. 3) The MCRT Stewardship Endowment Fund is a permanent fund, and the growth from it will help us to grow in stability as MCRT stewards.

The Mass Central Rail Trail is ready every day for our enjoyment. We are grateful.

Wachusett Greenways Board of Directors: *Colleen Abrams, Chair; Stephen Chanis; Dan Heney (elected 6/24); Troy Milliken, Treasurer; Mike Peckar, Secretary, Christopher Ryan (retired 6/24); Chuck Snow (elected 6/24)*









2024 IT Coordinator Annual Town Report

2024 was another busy year for IT and has become more stable every year. This gives us the opportunity to focus on new projects that will improve productivity between the town employees and residents of Princeton.

The Dell file server in the town hall that replaced the old one in 2019 is currently running very well and with the active directory and all tied to and synchronized to Microsoft 365 has made the whole system much easier to maintain and more dependable and consistent since everyone is running the same software. We are now researching a new server or potentially a cloud server solution, especially since most applications are now cloud based.

The Sophos firewall is giving us a more secure network. The Sophos Endpoint Protection is on each computer for additional protection. We have been adding additional licenses to the Sophos End Point Protection as new computers come on board.

Our backup system has been running very well also. We currently have five USB drives rotated weekly doing a full back-up every week and incremental backups daily. The most current drive is currently kept off site for security. This year we will be going to a cloud solution for backup. Also, local files are being saved to OneDrive, which puts all local files in the cloud for better security. All local files are backed up to the server daily too.

Whenever anyone has a computer or printer problem, I address it as soon as possible, even if it requires coming in off hours or fixing remotely. There are usually a few issues when I am in the office to resolve. As our computers are a few years old now, there are occasional issues causing them to be rebuilt, which is normal after usage, but computers basically running well.

We now have an IT Vendor, Suzor IT, which has been helping us with the IT infrastructure.

We are still using Connect Wise's ScreenConnect for remote computer access, that all town hall employees have access to. It has been really working well for everyone to log onto their work computer and if there is a problem, I can remotely log into anyone's computer, which also really helps me in doing hardware and software updates. This program has been working well for us.

The VOIP (Voice Over Internet Protocol) phone system has been working well into its third year in the town hall.

I've started assisting the Princeton Police and Fire Departments with some of their computer issues.

Respectively Submitted,

Peter Cummings
Town of Princeton, IT Coordinator

2024 BOARD OF HEALTH ANNUAL REPORT

Solid Waste Disposal – Residential trash and solid waste continued to be collected by licensed contractors and may be disposed of at the Wheelabrator Resource Recovery Facility in Millbury.

Sewage Disposal Systems – The board continues to monitor and ensure that any Title V inspections and newly installed systems meet the criteria set forth in the MA Title V regulations.

The BOH inspector witnessed 33 Title V inspections in 2024. Many new homes continue to be built and our inspectors have been very busy with overseeing newly installed septic systems as well.

Food Establishments – Jim Hillis inspects all establishments licensed to provide food to the public, including school lunch services, and investigates any complaint filed against such provider. There are currently a total of fourteen (14) establishments/residential kitchens in town. We appreciate Mr. Hillis' time and expertise that it takes to accomplish this task and wish him well as he has since retired and 2024 was his last term.

Montachusett Public Health Network – The Montachusett Public Health Network [MPHN] is a public health district created under the Massachusetts Department of Public Health District Incentive Grant Initiative. It is a collaboration of the following twelve community Boards of Health: Athol, Clinton, Fitchburg, Gardner, Hubbardston, Leominster, Phillipston, Princeton, Royalston, Sterling, Templeton, and Westminster. The MPHNN pursues its goal of raising the health status of the residents of these communities to the highest levels anywhere in the country. The MPHNN has continued to be a leader in addressing disposal of unwanted and expired medication, sharps disposal, Opioid Abuse Prevention, and other health promotion and prevention initiatives. Through our participation with the MPHNN, we are able to share services and programs between its member towns with our residents.

Sharps Kiosks: The kiosk is located in the Police Department lobby and is open to residents only.

The Board of Health is tasked with ensuring that all protocols and guidance set forth by the Commonwealth are adhered to. We are in constant contact with the MA DPH for the latest updates and information relating to public health and welfare.

Respectfully Submitted,
Lar Greene, Chairman
James Hillis (retired)
Greg Dowdy
Dianna Gubber-Markley RN
Bill Dino
Katie Getchell

2024 COUNCIL ON AGING ANNUAL REPORT

The Princeton Council on Aging continued to expand programming and services for new and returning seniors in 2024 which resulted in a greater overall number of participating seniors. We remained focused on providing programs across as many areas as possible to address the needs, interests, and pursuits of our roughly 1,360 seniors who range in age from 60 to over 100.

Wendy Pape and Mike Warren, the Chair and Vice Chair, respectively, provided experienced leadership to the Board and thoughtful advocacy on behalf of the COA to town government and the community. Susan Stolberg and Donna Mackensie stepped down from the Board and Tim Fleury and Frances Thomas, respectively, filled the vacated seats. The Board also welcomed two new members, Lynne Gordon and Lynne Grettum as Alternates. Sustained support and dedication from the Board, senior tax work-off employees, and volunteers made events as well as day-to-day programming and service provision possible.

Judith Webster, Director, and Kelly Aveni, Administrative/Program Assistant, were onsite four days each week, Monday-Thursday, with additional remote coverage on Fridays. The staff and Board ensured that our seniors were made aware of services available to meet their needs with staff making referrals to home health care agencies including Aging Services of North Central MA, and others providing outreach, clinical and financial evaluation, and in-home support. The COA assisted with food and fuel assistance, as well as directing seniors to legal assistance, VITA tax assistance, public housing, and several other services.

Activities/services provided throughout the year included:

Health & Wellness:

Flu and Covid Vaccination Clinic
Health Screenings
10 Warning Signs of Alzheimer's Disease
Understanding Dementia and Alzheimer's Disease
Falls Prevention Workshop
Reiki and Tibetan Rites
Growing Places Mobile Produce Market

Arts, Crafts & Workshops:

Weekly Needlework Studio
Weekly Open Arts Studio with Princeton Arts Society
Watercolors Class
Weekly Beginning Piano I and II
Weekly Piano Chords
Monthly Coloring Kits to Go
Cardmaking Workshop
Botanical Monoprints

Arts, Crafts & Workshops (cont):

Felting Workshop
Pumpkin Centerpiece Workshop
Stenciled Pots Workshop
Our Time in Princeton Stories

Exercise & Physical Activities:

Senior Hike
Pickleball and Pickleball Clinics
Yoga with Kate
Chair Yoga
Stretch & Flow
Zoom Fitness

Education & Entertainment:

Monthly Book Club
Weekly Men's Group
Weekly Bridge
Weekly Mahjong
Weekly Board & Card Games
Host Site for Town Buzz
Antiques Roadshow
For the Love of Monarchs Lecture
AI Awareness Lecture
Chat GPT Lecture
UFOs and Spy Balloons Lecture
What If I Didn't Plan for Nursing Home? Lecture

Services:

SHINE -Medicare Counseling
Footcare by Nurses
Durable Medical Equipment Loans
SCM Elderbus transportation for seniors and disabled residents
Veterans Referrals
Fuel Assistance
Wood Donations
Fire Safety Inspections with Fire Department
Meals on Wheels
SNAP/Food Stamps
Food Pantry Assistance for Homebound
Farmers' Market Coupons
Holiday Hams Distribution
Holiday Turkey Distribution
Computer Support
Monthly Newsletter (sent to about 650 households and posted on town website)
Outreach (phone calls, Christmas cards, sympathy cards, etc.)

Events:

Holiday Luncheon at Harringtons
Harvey Leonard Presentation
Kickstart Summer Luncheon Party
Chill Chasing Chili Luncheon Party
Ice Cream Sundae Party
Valentine's Day Grab & Go
Blueberry Muffin Grab & Go
Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon

In addition to funding from the Town of Princeton, the COA received population-based grant funds from the Massachusetts Executive Office of Elder Services via its "Formulary Grant" to support programming, activities, and services for seniors. In FY24, this figure was \$14 per senior, or approximately \$16 K. Two grants were awarded from the Princeton Cultural Council for a 6-session watercolor class with Charles Gray and the Our Time in Princeton project to collect audio memories about Princeton from its seniors and share them with the community. We continue to explore the establishment of an independent 501c3 nonprofit "Friends of" group to provide a funding stream to augment town, state, and grant money.

The COA remains creative and dedicated to looking for ways to attract more seniors to the Center by offering unique and interesting programs, and to identify those seniors who are in need of services outside the center as well.

Respectively submitted,

Judith Webster, Director, Princeton Council on Aging, on behalf of the COA Board

Wendy Pape, Chair

Michael Warren, Vice Chair

Barbara Guthrie, Secretary

William Lindquist

Jane Giumette

Frances Thomas

Tim Fleury

Lynne Gordon, Alternate

Lynne Grettum, Alternate

2024 Veterans Services Annual Report

The mission of our office is to connect veterans with benefits for which they're eligible. Primarily we administer Ch. 115 benefits, a financial assistance program for low-income veterans and their dependents, including surviving spouses. We additionally assist veterans with filing their VA disability claims, and reaching out for other resources, i.e. housing, food, employment.

Since our last update:

- Lynette moved on to a position for Executive Office of Veterans Services
- Cory Hasselmann was promoted to Director of Veterans' Services, replacing Lynette
- Nolan Buck joined our team as our full-time Assistant Director of Veterans' Services
- Staff have attended multiple trainings:
 - October EOVS training, in Leominster
 - June MVSOA training, in Hyannis
 - Cory and Nolan passed annual certification to be VSO's this fall
 - Cory and Nolan passed and got VA accreditation through EOVS to continue claims work
 - Cory passed and got VA accreditation through NACVSO as an alternate skills training for claims
 - Cory was appointed President of Worcester County Veteran Service Officer Association
 - Cory was appointed 1st Junior Vice Commander for Massachusetts Veterans Officers Association
 - These two appointments allow our District to be more forward-facing when advocating for Veterans' benefits for our coverage area.

Monthly Interactions	District	Princeton
7/2024	164	2
8/2024	211	6
9/2024	191	2
10/2024	241	3
11/2024	265	4
12/2024	229	8
	1301	25
VA Claims	228	9
Chapter 115	68	3

If a Princeton resident is unable to come to Gardner, Cory Hasselmann or Nolan Buck can come to Princeton Town Hall to meet with the veteran. Or meet the Veteran in their home, whichever is easier for the Veteran.

Our office is located at 95 Pleasant Street, Room 14, Gardner City Hall, Gardner, MA 01440

Phone: 978-630-4017

Fax: 978-630-4057

Office hours:

Monday-Thursday: 8am-430pm

Friday: 8am-1pm

2024 Princeton Public Library Annual Report

At the Princeton Public Library, we strive to offer programs, space, and collections that meet the interests and needs of the community. The support of the Trustees, Friends of the Library, and other community members continued to support us in this effort in 2024. Thanks to the Amy Christine Anderson Fund we have attractive new child-sized benches in the Children's Room. And thanks to the Friends of the Library, we added an "Imagination Station", a bright area rug, and colorful, moveable room dividers to the Children's Room. These elements came together to create a safer, and more cohesive space for young children and their families to gather and spend time together in town.

The FY24 library budget was 1.62% of the Town budget and covered only 33% of the budget used to purchase all of the materials added to the collection: books, DVDs, audiobooks, e-books, e-audiobooks, magazines, cultural & museum passes, online resources, and the Library of Things. In order to meet the State requirement for material expenditure, the Trustees of the Goodnow Memorial Building (the library), and the Friends of the Princeton Public Library provided the additional 66% of these funds. Please visit the library in-person or online to take advantage of the wealth of resources available at the Princeton Public Library.

We strive to encourage and support children and teens to read throughout the year. This is particularly important during the summer, as it helps children maintain their grade-level skills and start the next school year ready to learn. This summer, sixty-seven children ages 0-11, and fifteen teens ages 12 and up, registered for Summer Reading. Children and Teens both had a chance to choose a new book to add to their personal collection. Children earned chances to win a variety of prizes and teens could earn gift certificates generously donated by local businesses.

Many library programs, all of the museum/cultural destination passes, and some of the equipment provided to patrons is paid for by the Friends of Princeton Public Library. This generous volunteer group works year-round through book sales and events to raise funds that substantially supplement what the library offers to the town. Please consider joining this group of volunteers.

The Trustees of the Goodnow Memorial Building provide support, guidance and expertise in maintaining the building, updating policies, and developing the collection and services offered to the residents of Princeton.

Selected Statistics July 2023 through June 2024 (FY24):

	<u>Holdings</u>	<u>Circulation</u>
Books	12,727	21,694
Magazine titles	39	1,092
Audiobooks	753	848
DVDs	1,864	3,278
E-Books	140,083*	3,960
E-Audiobooks	100,763*	5,704
Interlibrary loans received from other libraries		6,194
Interlibrary loans provided to other libraries		3,677

Total Circulation of all materials in the collection: 41,026

Total number of in-person programs	156
Total attendance at in-person programs	2,549
Total number of virtual programs	9
Total attendance at virtual programs	71
Number of registered borrowers	1,814
Total hours open to the public	1,815

Respectfully submitted,

Paula Korstvedt, Library Director

*E-Book and E-Audiobook holdings include items shared by and through the CWMARS consortium.

Library Staff:

<i>Nicole Abady</i>	<i>Youth Services Librarian – Children and Teens</i>
<i>Sara Gardner</i>	<i>Substitute Library Clerk</i>
<i>Paula Korstvedt</i>	<i>Library Director</i>
<i>Annie MacLeod</i>	<i>Substitute Library Clerk</i>
<i>Bethany Monroe</i>	<i>Substitute Library Clerk</i>
<i>Meridith Newell</i>	<i>Library Clerk – DVDs and Magazines/Crafts</i>
<i>Nancy Paige</i>	<i>Substitute Library Clerk</i>
<i>Ginger Toll</i>	<i>Library Clerk – Programming/Home Delivery</i>
<i>Karen Specht</i>	<i>Tech Services Librarian – Books/Website/CWMARS Coordinator</i>

Library Trustees:

Elizabeth Beth

Gay Bouffard, Treasurer

David Caporello

Krista Ferrante

Wendy Pape, Vice Chair

Christina Paradiso, Secretary

Susan Shelton

Deb Simeone

Jane Weisman, Chair

2024 Parks and Recreation Annual Report

The beginning of 2024 was challenging for Parks and Recreation with no director and Addison Barwise the only active Commission member. In Spring, notices were posted to recruit new membership for this committee, and four new members, Deb Faucher, Ed Harley, Martin Sterman, and Sherry Horeanopolous responded and were added in May/June. Deb accepted the role of Chair, Ed accepted the Clerk duties, and Addison moved to an alternate position. Meghan Bodwell (swear in pending) joined the commission in October to fill the last open full position; there remains only one alternate position to be filled.

After re-posting the director position in early summer, several candidates applied and were given screening interviews. Two candidates were interviewed by the full commission, and Nick Abruzzi was hired to the position due to his extensive experience at the P&R position in other towns.

While coming up to speed on the workings and needs of Parks & Rec, the newly energized team focused on three initial objectives: (1) coordinating the standard P&R events, (2) developing a strategic plan, and (3) catching up on field maintenance (driven by requests from the teams using the fields).

Events

Parks and Rec hosted a number of events throughout the year:

- Winter Carnival proved to be a large success once again this year thanks to Addison's huge efforts and help from other volunteers. The event included food and beverage vendors, ice skating, sledding, a box sled derby, a raffle and other family friendly activities. We plan to continue, and hopefully expand, this event in the coming years.
- The Princeton Town Takeover event at the Woo Sox allowed us the opportunity to highlight local heroes and non-profits who are contributing to our community.
- The Library's Teen Advisory Board helped Parks and Rec run the town wide egg hunt.
- Scarecrow Alley returned in an impressive manner with over 30 scarecrows lining the Town Common for a few weeks before Halloween. Judging was very hard, so additional categories/prizes will be created if participation is as strong next year.
- Trunk-Or-Treat was also a great success with 25 trunks full of treats. Following Scarecrow judging and before Trunk-or-Treating, a small ceremony to honor Patsy Mollica was held with Jane Guimette delivering a wonderful tribute. Parks and Rec will purchase a stepping stone for Patsy and will work with her husband, John Mollica, to craft the design. After town board approvals in spring, it is hoped to present the stone at the first Concert on the Commons.
- Parks and Rec members helped to prepare the light strings for Lights in Common.

Programs

- The weekly Adult Pickup Basketball program in the TPS gym ran throughout the year, only pausing for the summer school break. This event has been running continuously for more than 40 years (minus the COVID shutdown), and Parks and Rec has been sponsoring it since 2015.
- The kids Ski Club was facilitated again for the 2024-25 season. We had 28 students sign up for the club, and 14 of those also signed up for lessons. Transportation from school to Wachusett Mountain is currently a parent responsibility. Parks and Rec would like to restart a bus option in future years to potentially increase participation in the program.
- Parks and Rec shared in the purchase of a movie license with the TPS PTA. The movie license allowed P&R and the PTA to publicly show movies. A number of family-friendly movie events were held on Friday night at the school throughout the year.

Parks

Princeton is blessed with an abundance of natural beauty, and our parks are located in some stunning and desirable locations. It is our hope that, with more committee members and a director, we will be able to come up with a plan to take care of overdue maintenance of our wonderful parks and playing fields. A strategic plan is in process and will hopefully be completed in early Spring.

The new director started the maintenance process by cleaning up the second floor of Needham Fieldhouse at Krashes Field. With some additional work, the Fieldhouse could become a community meeting space in the future.

In June, a presentation was given to Parks and Rec with the idea of developing a beginner bike park on the Boylston Park property. A lot of questions needed answers and additional details provided for Parks and Rec to be able to approve the project. In December, a second presentation with additional details was provided by the newly formed Wachusett Trails Collective with a request to move forward with a Phase 1 build and for landowner permission on a February Grant submittal for Phase 2 and 3. The grant would be necessary to fund creation of a master details plan and the professional build of Phases 2 and 3. Parks and Rec provided multiple conditions that would need to be met prior to approval of Phase 1 build, in addition to needing Select Board approval. The grant permission form needs to be signed by the Select Board, so Parks and Rec deferred it to them. Wachusett Trails Collective plans to present to the SB in early January.

Summary

2024 was a challenging year for Parks and Rec, but it is our hope that the new membership and director will bring more enthusiasm, purpose, and direction to this very important committee.

Parks and Rec Committee

Deb Faucher (Chair), Ed Harley (Clerk), Sherry Horeanopolous,

Martin Sterman, Meghan Bodwell, Addison Barwise (Alt)

2024 Historical Commission Annual Report

The Princeton Historical Commission held 8 meetings during the year. The Commission returned to in-person meetings but also made the meetings accessible through remote access. The Commission continued to work on a number of ongoing projects as well as work with new matters of historic concern.

Fragments of carved stones from Meetinghouse Cemetery were placed on display at the Princeton Library Public for public viewing. The library staff provided signage; booklets describing the Cemetery were available for patrons. We hope the display encouraged visits to this beautiful and historic burial ground. The stone fragments were returned to the Cemetery and final storage is under review with the Cemetery Commission.

Harry Pape from the Princeton Historical Society contacted us with information about possible early (possibly 18th century) charcoal kilns in Princeton. In May we met with Harry, the landowner Bob Cummings and DCR archaeologist Jonathan Patton at Bigelow Road and after a hike through the woods to the West we found 3 large mounds of small stones. Traditionally charcoal was created by controlling wood burning by limiting air to the fire. The stones, with earth on top, were probably built up over accumulated logs which were slowly burned to create charcoal and could be sold to ironmakers and blacksmiths. Harry gave us some background on charcoal kilns and the archeologist took bearings and photographed the site. The information will be shared with the Massachusetts Historical Commission and added to their database of historic sites (MACRIS).

The Commission received 3 requests for historic house plaques during the year; two of the signs replaced existing signs that were worn or damaged. After finding a new sign maker the signs were ordered and delivered to the homeowners. Although the signs are not made of wood they duplicate the size and lettering of older ones and will last far longer.

Joyce Anderson, a member of the Commission for over 25 years, has long advocated a review of the properties at 73 and 83 Worcester Road (route 31), including the Boylston Villa, for recognition of their historic significance in Princeton's history. At our November 26 meeting we approved funding of \$1200 for an updated inventory of the properties which is a necessary step before submission of an application to the Massachusetts Historical Commission.

The Princeton Historical Commission continues to work closely with the Cemetery Commission and has an ongoing role in the preservation work at Meetinghouse Cemetery. We continue to consider signage at Parker II Cemetery to commemorate the burial of residents of the Princeton Town Farm.

There has also been collaboration with the Princeton Historical Society, including past research into Civil War records and a future presentation to their group on this subject.

Respectfully submitted:

Tom Kokernak, chair

Carl Soderberg, vice chair

Larry Todd, clerk

Gina Polewczyk

Joyce Anderson

2024 Cultural Council Annual Report

Introduction

The Princeton Cultural Council (PCC) is dedicated to supporting arts, humanities, and science programs within our local community. As a branch of the Massachusetts Cultural Council's Local Cultural Council Program, we aim to enrich the cultural experiences of Princeton residents by funding diverse projects and activities.

Council Members

The Princeton Cultural Council is composed of dedicated individuals committed to fostering cultural growth in our community. Our members currently include:

- Corry Root (Chair)
- Bonnie Hirsh (Treasurer)
- Jennifer Vuona (Secretary)
- Lesley Mozola (Admin)
- Joya Mutti (Publicity)
- Carla Royak-Volturo (Member)
- Michelle Kennedy (Associate Member)

Financial Overview

In the fiscal year 2024, the Princeton Cultural Council received an allocation of \$5,700 from the commonwealth.

Grants Awarded

Throughout 2024, the Princeton Cultural Council reviewed numerous applications and awarded grants to deserving projects that align with our mission. We received 16 applications of the highest quality and are pleased to announce the following grants approved during the fiscal year 2024 cycle:

Manselle, Jafar “West African Drumming Workshop - Come Out to Play”	\$300
Princeton Arts Society, Inc. Music Series	\$1,363
Princeton Council on Aging More Watercolors with Charles Gray	\$600
Princeton Public Library Robert Rivest	\$400
Thomas Prince School School Library World Geography Collection Update	\$550
Thomas Prince School Improv Theater Classes	\$1,500

Wachusett Community Band	Wachusett Community Band Concert	\$700
Worcester Chamber Music Society, Inc.	Worcester Chamber Music Society	Free
Tickets for Town Residents	20th Anniversary Baroque Holiday Celebration	\$500

Local Priorities and Guidelines

In the fiscal year 2024, the Princeton Cultural Council has outlined specific priorities and guidelines to streamline the application process and ensure that funded projects effectively serve our community. These include:

- Requiring online applications
- Participating in the Direct Grant Program
- Requiring a local sponsor or venue for performer/artist applicants
- Encouraging the submission of supporting materials and detailed publicity plans
- Focusing primarily on projects that benefit the local community

Contact Information

For inquiries regarding grant applications or general information about the Princeton Cultural Council, please contact Corry Root at cymackin3125@gmail.com or 508-887-5560.

Conclusion

The Princeton Cultural Council remains committed to fostering cultural vibrancy within our community. Through strategic funding initiatives and partnerships, we endeavor to enrich the lives of Princeton residents by providing access to diverse cultural experiences. We extend our gratitude to all applicants, supporters, and stakeholders who contribute to our mission of cultural enrichment.

Respectfully submitted,

Corry Root
Chair, Princeton Cultural Council

2024 Agricultural Commission Annual Report

Mission Statement

The mission of the Princeton Agricultural Commission is to:

- encourage agriculture in Princeton as a community resource, as a business, and as part of Princeton's rural character;
- promote and provide education for the protection and preservation of farms, farmland and forests;
- help connect farmers to each other and to consumers for their mutual benefit;
- act as mediators on farming issues;
- pursue all initiatives appropriate to creating a sustainable agricultural community.

The year 2024 saw expanded membership on the Agricultural Commission, continued educational offerings as well as establishment of several new initiatives.

These offerings included a presentation on grants and services by the USDA in January; Small Farm Shared Experiences meetings in April and October; Farm Day in May; Hey Day at the Audubon Center in September; a presentation on Raptors, Rodenticides, Collateral Damage, and Better Options by wildlife rehabilitator Jane Newhouse was planned for January 2025 and co-sponsored with Princeton's Environmental Action Committee.

A major focus of the year was determining the feasibility of re-establishing a Farmers Market in Princeton. Ultimately, a lack of critical mass regarding vendors and volunteers to support the market were determining factors leading to the commission's decision to table that initiative until enough support was identified.

In order to organize more support, a Friends of Princeton Agricultural Commission will be created, listing contact information of individuals who are interested in volunteering to support Agricultural Commission activities and initiatives on a limited basis.

Another new initiative was the establishment of a Small Farm Shared Experiences gathering.

The purpose of this meeting is to promote connection between members of the community based on shared experiences related to agriculture. The initial meeting was April 17, and was so enthusiastically received by those present that a unanimous request to make this a bi-annual event was expressed. The second meeting was October 23.

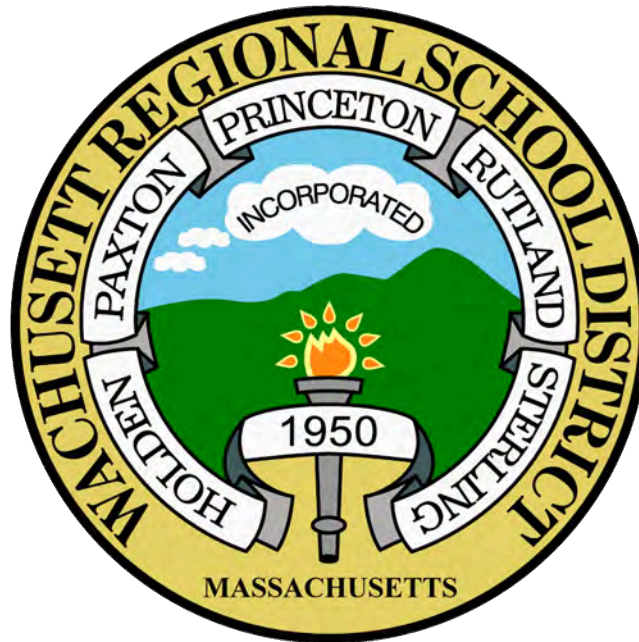
Respectfully Submitted,

Eddie Good, Chair

Members: *Chair Eddie Good, Co Chair Chad Steiner, Clerk John Mirick, Dylan Stimson, Dianna Gubber- Markley*

Alternates: *Lisa Prozzo, Susan Connell, Vicki Braunhardt*

Wachusett Regional School District



Annual Report 2025

Wachusett Regional School District

Serving the towns of Holden, Paxton, Princeton, Rutland, and Sterling



Executive Staff

James M. Reilly, MSW, Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools

Jon Krol, Deputy Superintendent

Michelle Gris , Director of Business and Finance

William Beando, Director of Human Resources

Joan DeAngelis, Director of Special Education and Student Services

Ace Thompson, Interim Director of Student Support

Lara DeRose, Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment

Barry Sclar, Director of Technology and Communication

1745 Main Street

Jefferson MA 01522

508-829-1670

www.wrsd.net

The Wachusett Regional School District does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, age, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, ELL status, housing status, or other protected status in the operation of the educational programs, activities, or employment policies, and no person will be excluded from or discriminated against in admission to its public schools, or in obtaining advantage and privileges in regards to courses of study and extracurricular programs of such public schools on account of race, color, sex, religion, age, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, ELL status, housing status or other protected category.

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A Message from the Superintendent

Dear Residents of Holden, Paxton, Princeton, Rutland, and Sterling

I'm pleased to be writing once again on behalf of the Wachusett Regional School District. Now in my third year as Superintendent, I have been encouraged by the consistent support of our member towns as we strive to improve our systems and improve the experience of all of our students. While our district is not supported at the state level to the degree we would like, our towns have shown an admirable willingness to provide the resources we need.

With the support of our member towns, and the continued dedication of our faculty and staff, we have made important progress throughout the district. We have corrected accounting practices and brought financial reporting up to date, while establishing a more effective and responsible approach to budgeting. We've developed a comprehensive Strategic Plan to guide our work over the next few years and the initial work prescribed by that plan is well underway. A focus on high-quality curriculum, along with the alignment of teaching practices, has already led to measurable improvements. In addition, we have made a great deal of progress in ensuring equitable resources and services across all of our schools.

This year, we plan to bolster the support and programming available to our younger students. Our FY26 Budget includes the addition of Reading Interventionists in grades 1&2. These high-quality educators specialize in identifying and supporting struggling learners. We are also planning to add STEAM teachers in order to improve the educational experience in grades K-5. STEAM instruction emphasizes collaboration, critical thinking, inclusivity, and real-world problem solving. These advancements in our elementary grades will help provide our young learners with much-needed supports and opportunities that are currently lacking.

As always, I am beyond grateful for the contributions of our families, staff, and community members in support of the students of the Wachusett Regional School District. I truly feel that we are beginning to see the impact of this collective effort and that our data will begin to reflect this reality. I remain resolute that the patience and commitment demonstrated by all will pay dividends for our most precious resource, our children.

James M. Reilly, MSW, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

2024-2025 Wachusett Regional School District Committee

Scott Runstrom, Chair	Paxton
Lauren Salmon-Garrett, Vice-Chair	Holden
Brett Beardmore	Rutland
Sherrie Haber	Rutland
Matthew Lavoie	Rutland
Paul DuBois	Princeton
Dana Lorway	Princeton
Jana Brennan	Holden
Maleah Gustafson	Holden
George Kaminski	Holden
Lauren Salmon-Garrett	Holden
Shannon Poole	Holden
Ann Marie Stoica	Paxton
Melissa Wallace	Sterling
Jamie Winters	Sterling
Linda Woodland	Sterling

Our Schools

Central Tree Middle School - 281 Main Street - Rutland, MA



Principal: David Cornacchioli
Assistant Principal: Angela Greene
Enrollment: 369
Grades: 6-8

Central Tree Middle School teachers and support staff remain committed to fostering a safe and orderly school environment while consequently improving the quality of instruction and increasing parent involvement.

Chocksett Middle School - 40 Boutelle Road - Sterling, MA



Principal: Tina Boss
Assistant Principal: Kerrie Flynn/ Lauren Marien
Enrollment: 264
Grades: 5 – 8

Chocksett Middle School is dedicated to delivering a high-quality education within a secure and respectful school setting to equip students for their future educational endeavors. The school fosters a climate marked by mutual respect between staff and students, creating a safe environment conducive to collaborative, relevant, and challenging learning experiences.

Davis Hill Elementary School - 80 Jamieson Road - Holden, MA



Principal: Jay Norton
Assistant Principal: Robert Berthiaume
Enrollment: 431
Grades: K – 5

The Davis Hill Mission Statement and core values of Pride, Respect, Responsibility and Excellence provide the foundation for the school's educational program. The developmentally appropriate curriculum is aligned to the Common Core and is focused on balanced literacy, numeracy, critical thinking and problem solving skills.

Dawson Elementary School - 155 Salisbury Street - Holden, MA



Principal: Joy Wilde
Assistant Principal: Joseph Yaskis
Enrollment: 487
Grades: K – 5

Dawson Elementary School continues its practice of providing educational excellence while also promoting strong social skills and positive values within students. The school continues to engage and challenge students in an environment that fosters the school's core values of Respect, Responsibility, Kindness, Honesty, and Integrity.

Early Childhood Center - 1745 Main Street - Jefferson, MA



Principal: Corinne Balyk (Interim)
Enrollment: 127
Grades: PK

The mission at the Early Childhood Center is to provide a developmentally appropriate preschool education that meets the needs of all children. It is the school's belief that through a differentiated approach to instruction, all children can become active, life-long learners ready to succeed in our ever changing global society.

Glenwood Elementary School - 65 Glenwood Road - Rutland, MA



Principal: Karen Cappucci
Assistant Principal: Matthew Gauvin
Enrollment: 382
Grades: 3 – 5

Glenwood will foster an evolving community in which the whole child is empowered and inspired to be academically curious, innovative, compassionate, demonstrates perseverance and becomes a responsible citizen.

Houghton Elementary School - 32 Boutelle Road - Sterling, MA



Principal: Tina Boss
Assistant Principal: Kerrie Flynn/ Lauren Marien
Enrollment: 318
Grades: K – 4

Houghton Elementary School provides children a strong foundation in basic skills, opportunities to expand the thinking of young minds, appreciation of the Arts, instills social skills, and promotes the societal values of Honesty, Kindness, Respect, Cooperation and Responsibility.

Mayo Elementary School - 351 Bullard Street - Holden, MA



Principal: Carolan Kasper
Interim Assistant Principal: Anthony DeBenedetto
Enrollment: 472
Grades: K – 5

The mission of Mayo School is to educate, inspire, and empower all members of the learning community. Students and staff are committed to enhancing the lives of the school community and the lives of others by upholding the highest standards of quality and integrity. Children at Mayo Elementary School are provided with a solid educational foundation necessary to be successful throughout their academic lives.

Mountview Middle School - 270 Shrewsbury Street - Holden, MA



Principal: Erik Githmark
Assistant Principals: Karen Hughes, Brian McCarthy
Enrollment: 773
Grades: 6 – 8

Mountview Middle School students represent a diverse group of learners. At Mountview, the divergent needs of young adolescents as they experience a wide range of physical, social, intellectual, and emotional growth are recognized. Educational decisions are based upon principles of developmentally appropriate practices for these young people so as to maximize their potential to succeed in tomorrow's world.

Naquag Elementary School - 285 Main Street - Rutland, MA



Principal: Kristina Pelczarski
Assistant Principal: Jaime Wheeler
Enrollment: 353
Grades: K – 2

Naquag Elementary School's administration, faculty and staff are committed to providing every student quality education in a kind, caring, nurturing environment. We are committed to supporting students by building a strong academic and social foundation to inspire them to be lifelong learners.

Paxton Center School - 19 West Street - Paxton, MA



Principal: Katie Miville (Interim)
Assistant Principal: Tara Koziak
Enrollment: 448
Grades: K – 8

Paxton Center School strives to be a community of learners in which individuals reach maximum potential intellectually, socially, emotionally, and physically. Our school motto is simple: Panthers - Be the Three: Respectful, Responsible and Reliable. Every day we reflect on the 3 R's as a "Community Pledge" to drive how we think and conduct ourselves to be the versions of ourselves.

Thomas Prince School - 170 Sterling Street - Princeton, MA



Principal: BethAnne DiFonso (Interim)
Assistant Principal: Eileen Donahue (Interim)
Enrollment: 355
Grades: K – 8

Through collaboration, thoughtful alignment and intentional flexibility, TPS prepares K-8 students for high school, college, career, and thoughtful citizenship using data and evidence-based practices to develop STEAM competencies while respecting the whole child. TPS embraces student voice, diversity, choice, and passion as we ready our students to be well-rounded, global citizens.

Wachusett Regional High School - 1401 Main Street - Holden, MA

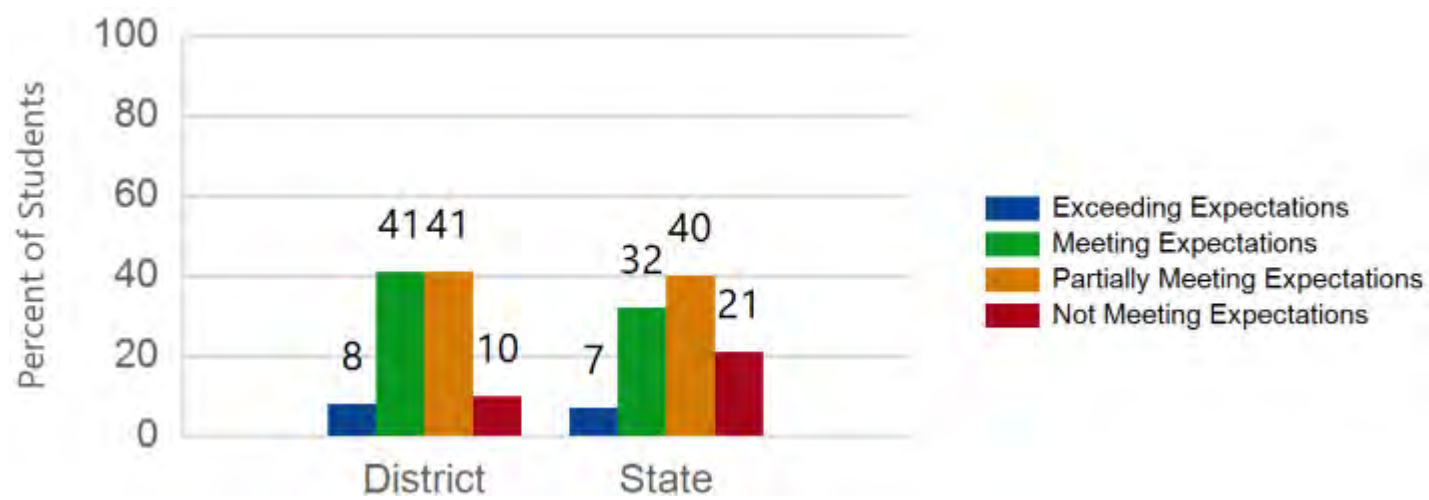


Interim Principal: Michael Pratt
Assistant Principals: Josue (Josh) Delgado, Rebecca DeMarco, Victoria DeSimone, Matthew Lane
Enrollment: 1779
Grades: 9 – 12

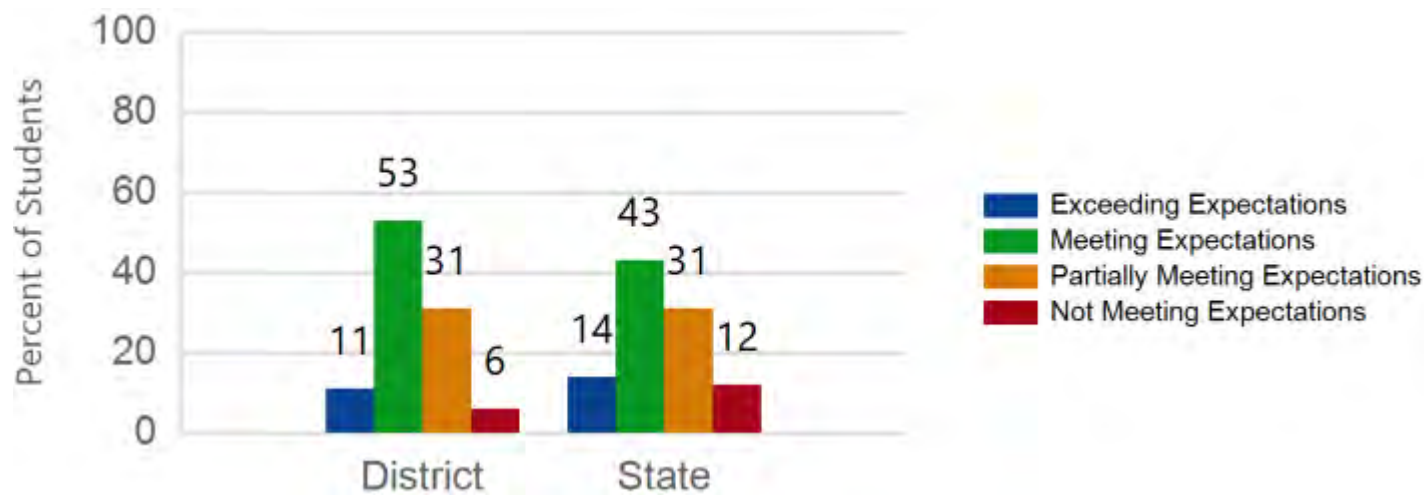
Wachusett Regional High School continues to prepare all of its students for life after high school. Students learn the necessary skills needed to further their education, join the armed forces, or enter the world of work. All students are held to a rigorous set of graduation requirements that ensures they master a common core curriculum.

Student Performance
2024 MCAS Results - ELA

English Language Arts - Grades 3-8



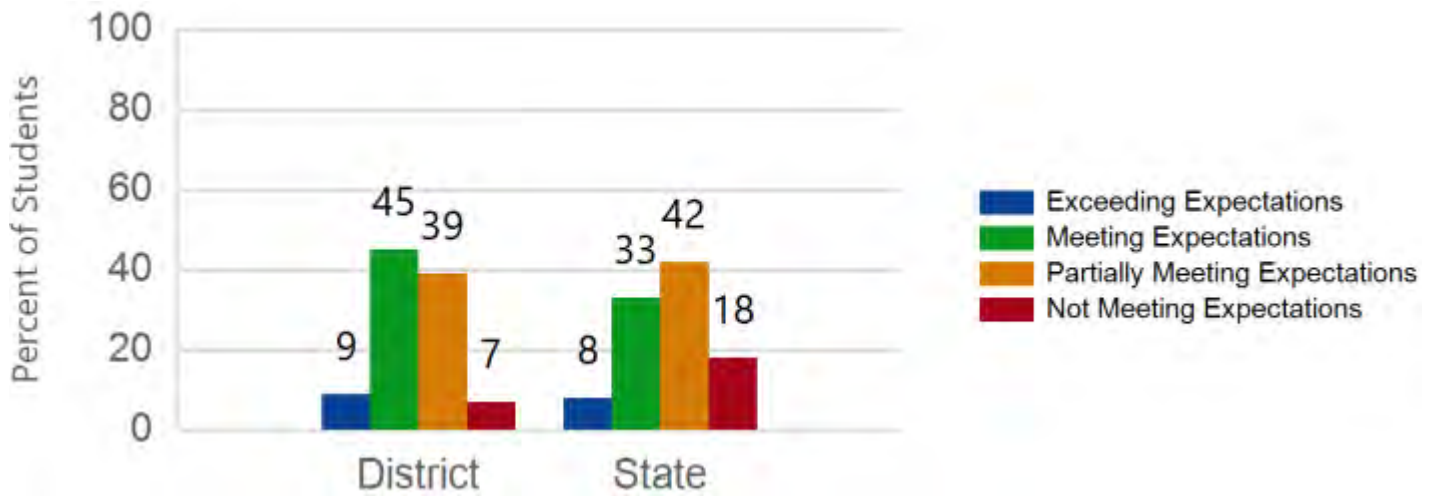
English Language Arts - Grade 10



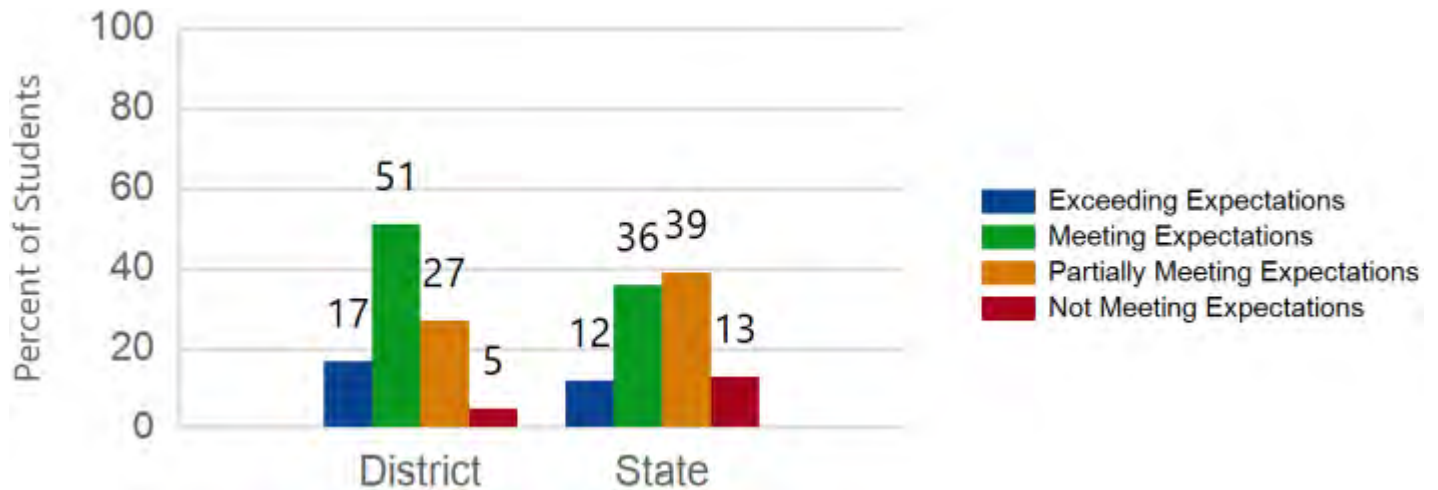
Student Performance

2024 MCAS Results - Math

Mathematics - Grades 3-8

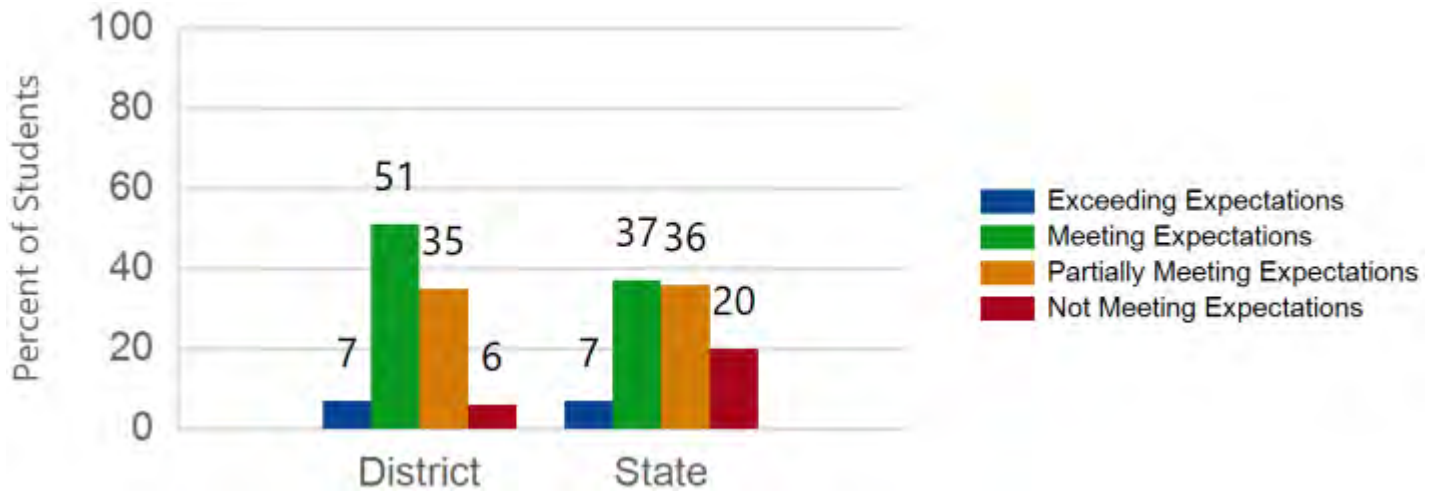


Mathematics - Grade 10

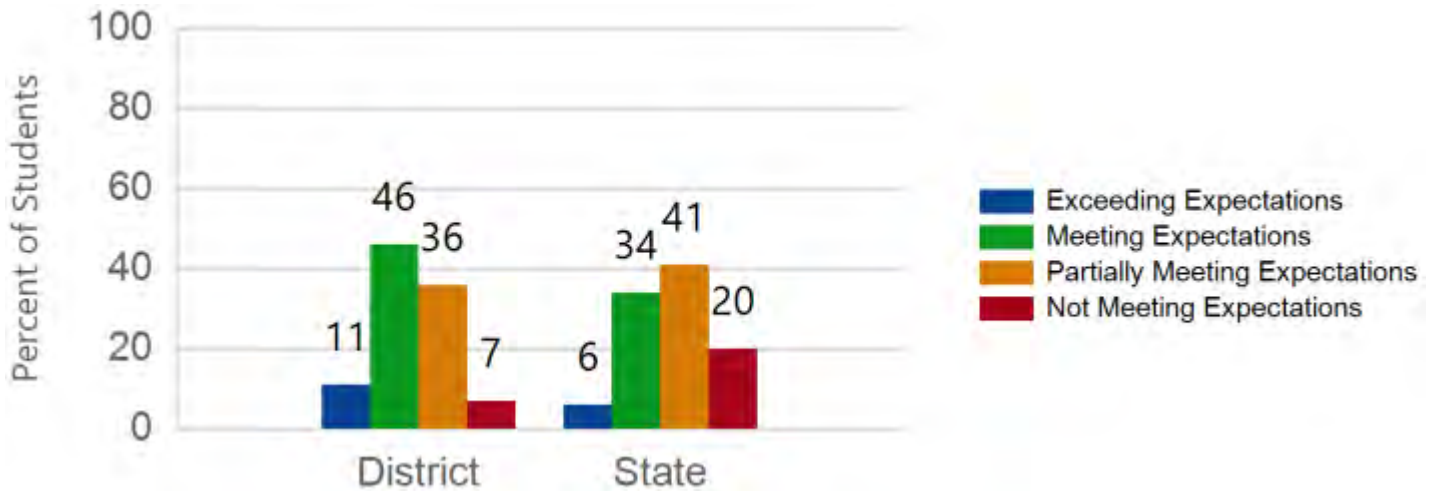


Student Performance 2024 MCAS Results - Science

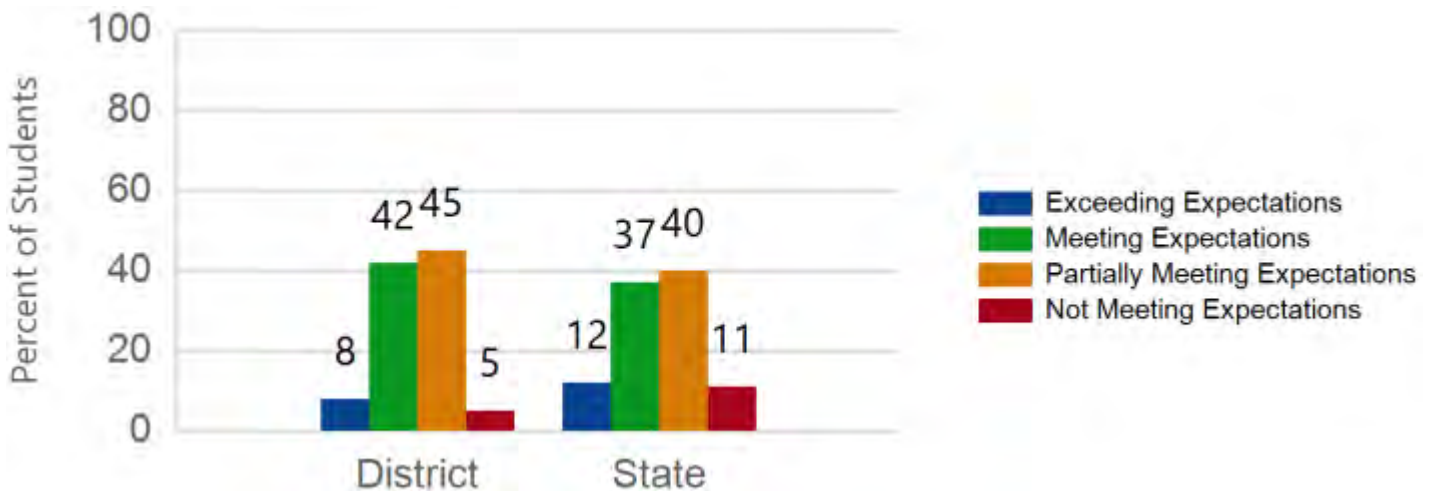
Science and Tech/Eng - Grade 5



Science and Tech/Eng - Grade 8



Science - Grade 10



2023-24 Advanced Placement Performance

NOTE: AP Performance is not reported for enrollments of fewer than 10

Subject Area	Tests Taken	% Score 1-2	% Score 3-5
Arts	8		
English Language Arts	69	12	88
Foreign Languages	39	5	95
History and Social Science	345	15	86
Math and Computer Science	235	15	86
Science and Technology	113	12	88
All Subjects	809	12	87



2025



ANNUAL REPORT

JULY 2023 - JUNE 2024

MONTACHUSETT REGIONAL VOCATIONAL TECHNICAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
1050 WESTMINSTER STREET
FITCHBURG, MA

WWW.MONTYTECH.NET



