



Town of Wendell

NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER 2025 SPONSORED BY THE WENDELL SELECTBOARD
THE TOWN OF WENDELL IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY PROVIDER AND EMPLOYER

From the Town Crier



On Sept. 18-22 thine Wendell Town Crier, appointed by ye Selectboard and summoned forth by ye Wendell Town Clerk for ye town related ceremonial events, will travel to New Glasgow, Nova Scotia to represent our town in the Guild of International Town Criers Competition held as one of the events celebrating the New Glasgow, Nova Scotia 150th Anniversary. Crier Kathy-Ann Becker will extend your best wishes and present the Mayor of New Glasgow with a gift of a red apron proudly emblazoned with our town flag, bought from the Wendell Country Store.

The 15-20 participating town criers will be judged on 3 cries, each being 125 words, one of which must describe their hometown. The town criers will be bused and paraded from place to place over 3 days to make many civic appearances in full regalia at parks and other public places including a farmers' market, and one church service. In the evenings the convention of fun-loving bell ringers, and their "consorts", judges, dignitaries and the associated filmmakers who are making a movie about it all will make merry over dinner and beyond. Chef Myron will accompany your Wendell Town Crier, along with the family canine supporters. Three American Guild of Town Criers are going, two from Massachusetts. This eclectic event will be a raucous spectacle of pomp and ceremony and living history. Oyez! Oyez! Oyez! Let Freedom Ring!

On behalf of the Selectboard of the Town of Wendell, Massachusetts, greetings to all ye good folks celebrating New Glasgow's 150th Sesquicentennial!

You may not have heard of Wendell. We are a hilltown of 921 souls. Our spirit is as strong as our granite rocks and tumbling brooks. We notoriously possess an unruly ideology and value diversity. Our open town meetings are safe for free debate. Hope is what we hold on to in bad times. We care for each other and our earth as a duty to share.

*The winds of change now blow.
Hang on to your hat.
Hang on to your hope.
Hang on to your goodness.
And let freedom ring!*

**Submitted by your Town Crier,
Kathy-Ann Becker**

Road Commission

The Road Commission has two projects planned for the Farley Road area this fall, and the two projects will likely overlap. We will be repaving Farley Road and the Erving-Wendell Bridge over the Millers River will have all of the timber framing and decking replaced. Each of these projects will necessarily cause inconvenience for travelers, and the bridge repair will also result in the road being closed to through traffic for as long as several weeks. The towns of Wendell and Erving will provide as much notice and signage as we are able, hopefully minimizing the inconvenience.

FARLEY ROAD REPAVING – The Warner Bros. LLC will be paving the entire length of Farley Road soon, with a date scheduled for October 20-22, although that date may need to be adjusted due to

weather and scheduling issues. This year the town will only be able to install a single layer of asphalt, primarily due to limited funding, and other projects. The single layer of asphalt in this case is termed a leveling course, with the primary purpose of binding the existing pavement in preparation of a top course that is planned for next year. Residents should please make every effort to use alternative routes during the repaving as lower Farley Road is very narrow, and the trucks and paving equipment will block the roadway at times. The trucks are not able to cross the bridge at Millers River they will be travelling in both directions - it will be very congested!



ERVING-WENDELL BRIDGE AT THE MILLERS RIVER – The bridge deck replacement is necessary because two layers of pressure treated wood have deteriorated to the point where the timbers are separating and the bridge will have to be repaired or closed. The bridge repair is a joint project with the towns of Erving and Wendell, with the Wendell Road Commission taking the role of Contract Administrator for the project. The two towns began planning for this repair work in 2023 with a grant application to the Rural Development Fund, a program offered by the MA Executive Office of Economic Development. We have hired the FRCOG to perform procurement and contract preparation services. We have had to have this project bid twice as a result of bid pricing exceeding our previous funding projections, and the 2nd bid has been awarded to Warner Bros. LLC, which is a different division than doing the paving at Farley Road. The towns received a \$156K grant from Rural Development and the towns of Wendell and Erving have each committed an additional \$125K, with Wendell using DOT Chapter 90 funds and Erving using reserve funds. Please keep an eye out for road closure notices are expected around the end of September.

FY26 HIGHWAY BUDGET – The town was not able to meet the budget requests for the Highway Department or for the WRATS this year, so there will be adjustments needed in both areas. The Highway Department has a budget this year that is \$68,000 less than recommended, while the WRATS budget was reduced by \$7,000. Asa has addressed the need for increasing the costs on certain items at the WRATS in a separate news article, but the underlying finances of the program is that the town is paying more to dispose of waste than the WRATS is collecting in fees. The town has also accrued smaller amounts in fees for items we are credited for, such as metal waste or providing regional services, e.g., having a trailer for mattress disposal, but those funds are being depleted to make up the current budget shortfall. The Road Commission is committed to closing the gap between revenues and costs so that the balance is not paid for by taxpayers.

On the Highway budget the Road Commission had to make the decision to lay off one full-time employee, as of early July, and may need to lay off our part-time employee as well, in order to make up for an approximate 20% reduction in funding. Unfortunately, our program does not include any revenues, so we are not able to compensate for our funding shortfall, although the State of MA did increase our Chapter 90 funds this year. Also unfortunately, although we can transfer some of our materials expenses from the town funds to the Chap 90 funds, such as gravel or line painting, any use of Ch 90 funds for non-paving expenses means less paving gets done for the town. We cannot pay employees with the Ch90 funds, so we may be in a real bind this winter if we cannot re-hire a driver for snowplowing. If we decide we must replace that person and we have a very stormy winter, we may run out of funds before the end of the year.

The Road Commission understands and appreciates the financial constraints the residents are experiencing, that the never-ending increases in taxes are still not enough to meet our needs. We are also well aware that the residents of Wendell have unfailingly supported the Highway services over the years, so please understand this is not a comment on the budget cuts. It is a comment on the predicament we may be in as the year progresses and about the choices that the Commission has to make.

Phil Delorey, Road Commissioner

Fire Department on Heating Safety

Thank you for supporting the purchase of the 2025 E-One 2,000-gallon tanker/pumper. This new truck is smaller, lighter, and has a shorter wheelbase than the current tanker, resulting in a more nimble apparatus that is safer for your firefighters to operate. Being a tanker/pumper means the new truck has the capability of carrying a large volume of water to an incident as a tanker but can also operate as a pumper and be used as a fire attack/suppression apparatus. This new truck will not only complement and add depth to our current fire response capability, but will also provide a backup apparatus at times when the almost 20-year-old Engine 1 is out of service for maintenance, be used to access emergency scenes on narrower roads and driveways that Engine 1 is too big for, and ensure fire suppression coverage well into the future. We look forward to taking delivery of the new truck in the next couple of months and putting it into service as soon as possible.



Nights are quickly becoming cooler and soon many of us will start turning on our heating systems or lighting our wood or pellet stoves. In 2021, heating fires accounted for 42% of residential home fires in Franklin County, MA. Often these fires are due to creosote buildup in chimneys and stovepipes. Remember that all home heating systems require regular maintenance to function safely and efficiently. If using portable heaters, ensure they are plugged directly into wall outlets and not into extension cords or power strips.

The United States Fire Administration (USFA) encourages you to practice the following fire safety steps when warming your home with a fireplace or wood stove.



Keep Fireplaces and Wood Stoves Clean

- Have your chimney or wood stove inspected and cleaned annually by a certified chimney specialist.
- Clear the area around the hearth of debris, decorations and flammable materials.
- Always use a metal mesh screen with fireplaces.

Leave glass doors open while burning a fire.

- Install stovepipe thermometers to help monitor flue temperatures.
- Keep air inlets on wood stoves open and never restrict air supply to fireplaces. Otherwise, you may cause creosote buildup that could lead to a chimney fire.
- Use fire-resistant materials on walls around wood stoves.

Safely Burn Fuels

- Never use flammable liquids to start a fire.
- Use only seasoned hardwood. Soft, moist wood accelerates creosote buildup.
- Build small fires that burn completely and produce less smoke.
- Never burn cardboard boxes, trash or debris in your fireplace or wood stove.
- Soak hot ashes in water and place them in a metal container outside your home.

Finally, we are currently experiencing region wide ‘moderate’ drought conditions; with this past August being the 8th driest over the past 131 years. Drought conditions are expected to persist for the foreseeable future and are similar to what we experienced last fall when there was a 10-fold increase in brush fire activity across the state. Please ensure all campfires are kept small (no larger than 3 feet in diameter and 2 feet in height), are not left unattended, and are completely extinguished when you are done with them.

Matt O'Donnell

Chief, New Salem and Wendell Fire Departments

News From the COA

Watch for changes in the center of town: the Community and Senior Center is getting ready for a refreshed look, with exterior painting being done by a group of inmates from the county jail doing community service work in late September. Once that is completed, a new sign for the front of the building will make it known that this is Wendell's Community and Senior Center!

We have started a series of informative talks about brain health and dementia, assisted by a year-long grant from Lifepath given to Village Neighbors and the COAs of the four towns it serves: Leverett, New Salem, Shutesbury and Wendell. We have been excited to have great attendance at both in-person and zoom talks designed to raise understanding and skill in helping our community members more comfortably include and support those dealing with memory loss. The next talk is on "The ABC's of Dementia" with many tips on providing failure free Activities, managing Behaviors that may occur, and successful Communication with someone losing language skills. Presented by Linda Puzan, MSW with decades of experience guiding caregivers of those with dementia, these talks and more to come over the coming months will help anyone with friends, neighbors or family members challenged by memory loss. Join us on zoom on **October 7th** at 6:30pm (see link on Village Neighbors website or call 413 345 6894) or in person at the Leverett Library, 75 Montague Rd from 1-2:30 on **October 15th**. We are looking forward to offering more support for care partners and trying out a Dementia Café in coming months. Please contact Village Neighbors as above if you are interested in learning more about these activities. We continue to offer:

Coffee Connection from 8:30 to 10 on first Fridays,
free Health Rides -call Marianne at 978 544 6122,
free Foot Care Clinic- first Wednesdays by appt- call Katie 978 544 2306, pay what you can.

Medical Equipment loans- call Nancy at 978 544 6760

Nancy Spittle, Council on Aging

WRATS Update

Well WRATSters and transfer station enthusiasts. It's been challenging at WRATS as of late. Last Saturday we had a tornado warning for the area. Avelar and I had to scramble to get things moved and under cover before any high winds. A couple of guys with trucks pitched in and we loaded those truck beds up and got much of the stuff into the open tops before the storm. Thanks guys!

Speaking of stuff piling up . . . My Free Store Friends, we need to have a talk. . . . We have had an ongoing problem with way too much stuff accumulating outside by the Free Store. Often these items are left without permission and left without leaving the fee for disposal. Disposal of bulky waste and trash is a significant expense for the town. The WRATS budget was cut by \$7,000 this year. We need people to pay these fees. If your item is taken, you get your deposit back. This system has been working ok, but we still have people leaving things without permission or a deposit. This costs the town, and it is not fair. Avelar and I both have been very frustrated by this issue.

We are going to make some changes at the Free Store to address the ongoing issues. Starting this Saturday 9/13, Dean Bernard will be staffing the Free Store from 9:00 – 11:00 every Saturday to evaluate donations people want to leave. This is the time we have open for donations. You can take things from the Free /Store after these hours, but you cannot leave anything if there is no volunteer to evaluate it. If we can get more volunteers, we can extend hours on Saturday and possibly have hours on Tuesday. I know people may find this frustrating. But the situation now is untenable. We have a small group of amazing volunteers that clean and tidy up the Free Store, but we need more people to manage the donation and deposit part. Avelar and I can do some of this evaluating, but when it gets busy it can get difficult.

Here are some tips for donations that make people more likely to take your offering: Test your items and make sure they work. Plug em in and turn em on. CLEAN them. Make your item look desirable. Take pride in your donation.

If you would like to volunteer and help us make the Free Store work better, talk with Dean, Avelar, or me. We would love to have you!!

Getting back to the financial situation. We haven't raised fees at the WRATS in several years. The Road Commission (that oversees WRATS) has voted to raise fees to better cover our costs.

I know money is tight for everyone. Personally, I have never been a fan of being stuck between a rock and a hard place, but here we are. We are just going to have to get through it together. 😊

Asa de Roode

Starting Nov 1st:
WRATS Bag (30 gallon) \$3.00
Kitchen Bag: (15 gallon) \$2.00
Bulky Waste: \$3.00/cubic foot
Starting Dec 1st
Permits \$30

!! ANNOUNCEMENT!!

Newsletter is Moving to Digital Format

The Town of Wendell is planning to change how we distribute our quarterly newsletter. Rather than being mailed to all households, the next newsletter will be posted on the town website

<https://www.wendellmass.us/>, and paper copies will be made available at the library and town offices. If you would prefer to continue to receive a hard copy of the newsletter via mail, please make this request by contacting the Town Coordinator via email at coordinator@wendellmass.us, via phone at 978-544-3395 ext. 100, or send a letter to PO Box 41, Wendell, MA 01379.

Laurie DiDonato, Selectboard

Dates to put on the Calendar!

October 1st - Mushroom Walk with Jonathan Kranz. Learn basics of mushroom habits, identification, and ecology, and help prepare participants for safe, exciting forages of their own. All ages, Registration Required. Meet at the Wendell State Forest Ranger Station. 4-6 p.m.

October 4th – Introduction to Pickleball, 9:00 am, for adults, on Saturday at the Library. Beginner to experienced welcome.

October 4th – Wendell Fullmoon Coffee House, 7:00 pm, Town Hall, open mic 7:30 p., Boys of Landfill for the Historical Society.

October 10th – Goodness Shakes, Wendell Town Hall, 6:30 – 8:30 pm

November 1st - Ghost Town at Sundown, with rain date of Sunday November 2. Begins at dusk. It's not too early to start brainstorming how you want to be involved!

November 8th - Wendell Fullmoon Coffee House, 7:00 pm., Crop Dusters for the Wendell Meetinghouse

November 14th – Goodness Shakes Dance Elevation, Wendell Meeting House 6:30 – 8:30 pm.

December 6th - Wendell Fullmoon Coffee House, 7:00 p.m., Carol Devine & the Mightyfiners for Wendell No Assault & Battery

December 12th - Goodness Shakes Dance Elevation, Wendell Meetinghouse, 6:30 pm - 8:30 pm.

WENDELL NET whip city fiber

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