



# Town of Wendell

## NEWSLETTER

### JANUARY 2026

SPONSORED BY THE WENDELL SELECTBOARD

THE TOWN OF WENDELL IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY PROVIDER AND EMPLOYER

#### Wendell Community Choice Program

The Wendell Community Choice Program, which provides much of the Town with its electricity supply, has entered into a new contract that will start in January of 2026. Postcards will be going out to residents this week with details.

\*The new rate will be 12.95 cents/kWh and is locked in for almost 3 years (34 months). \*

This is a slight decrease from the 14.35 cents/kWh we have been paying over the past 2 years. This new supply is with First Point Power, and its composition meets Mass renewable energy requirements. A greener option of 100% MA Class I RECs is also available for a slightly higher rate of 15.45 cents/kwh.

Visit [colonialpowergroup.com/wendell](http://colonialpowergroup.com/wendell) or call First Point at (888) 875-1711 for more information, including how to OPT-OUT or OPT-IN.

You may OPT-OUT or OPT-IN at any time in the future with NO CHARGE.

Feel free to reply to me with any questions.

Posted by Laurie DiDonato

#### Library News:

WENDELL  
FREE  
LIBRARY



**ADA Walking Path:** The Wendell Free Library has had a very exciting Fall, with the completion of an accessible outdoor walking path. The path was designed to ADA specifications and provides a safe and level walking loop for all who visit. The path increases the accessibility of the beautiful Stone Circle behind the library, the playground, and peaceful gardens and benches provided by the Friends of the Wendell Free Library. The walkway joins automatic push button doors, closer

accessible parking spot, and accessible additions to the library collection as part of the library's efforts to become more accessible to the entire community and increase Library access. The path was made possible by a grant from the Libraries Transforming Communities: Accessible Small and Rural Communities, an initiative of the American Library Association (ALA) in collaboration with the Association for Rural & Small Libraries (ARSL). Thank you to all who provided feedback on our Accessibility Survey and Community Conversations.

**Playground Improvements in Progress:** In addition to the new pathway, construction began on the new and improved play structures for the town playground. Financed by the Friends of the Wendell Free Library, there will be two new play structures (appropriate for ages 2-5 and 5-12). We will be re-using all parts that were salvageable from the old structure and with the addition of a brand new monkey bar climber and double slide. We look forward to the completion of the project and grand re-opening in Spring! Please consider becoming a Friend of the Wendell Free Library to support all of the incredible work they do to keep our library one of the jewels of Wendell.

**Digital Equity:** The Library also received a large grant from the Massachusetts Broadband Commission for improving digital equity in the community. With this grant we have been able to increase the availability of our free tech help sessions and provide additional monthly tutorials on tech subjects. We will also be using grant funds to upgrade all of the Audio Visual equipment in the Herrick Room to be up to date and include an Assisted Listening system for those with limited hearing, and hybrid meeting technologies so that library programming can be easily accessed by patrons from their homes. Stay tuned for upcoming workshops: Organizing Your Digital Life, Smartphone Skills, Aging in Place, How the Internet

of Things Supports Independence, and an iPad specific series to be launched along with Free iPads for those in need who attend.

**Looking for Community Feedback for New Strategic Plan:** In 2026, The Wendell Free Library will begin reaching out to the community for feedback on library services that we will use to help form our next 5-year strategic plan. We are incredibly proud of all we have accomplished from our previous plan and looking ahead. We are seeking community members who would be interested in participating in a one-time focus group led by a consultant from the Massachusetts Library System, participating in one-on-one interviews, or filling out a digital survey about the direction of library services and offerings. Please be in contact ([wendell@cwmar.org](mailto:wendell@cwmar.org), 978-544-3559) if you are willing to participate in one of these ways.

### Upcoming Library Events:

**Tuesdays January 6 & February 3, 6:30-8pm: Community Resiliency.** Please join Axis Dade and Clarence Richardson to talk and strategize about community resilience as a whole and what that looks like in Wendell.

**Tuesday January 13, 6:30 p.m.: Organizing Your Digital Life.** If your computer or phone is overflowing with photos, downloads, and documents in no particular order, this workshop is for you. Participants will learn simple, practical systems for creating folders, naming files consistently, saving to USB drives or cloud storage, and reducing digital clutter. By the end of the session, attendees will have a clear plan to keep their digital life neat, accessible, and stress-free.

**Saturday January 24, 1-3 p.m. Blood Pressure and Healthy Heart Workshop.** Learn the Basics of Blood Pressure and Heart Health with the North Quabbin Health Collaborative as they introduce their new effort "Libraries with Heart" As part of this initiative the Wendell Free Library is working with the American Heart Association to provide 3 blood pressure cuffs available to lend by the library as part of our "Library of Things" Collection.

**Friday Feb. 13 at 6:30 p.m. "Deforestation, climate, and the future of the Amazon." with Chris Neill.** The Amazon rainforest covers parts of nine countries in South America and is the Earth's largest tropical forest. Across these nations, Amazon loses an area of forest equivalent to more

than half the area of Massachusetts each year. The majority of existing forest, and forest loss, occur in Brazil. Clearing, for both small holder and industrial-scale agriculture, is the main driver of forest loss. However, longer dry seasons, increasing droughts, and more fire now contribute to widespread degradation of forests that threaten to "savannaize" large areas of remaining forests. Chris Neill has been studying the environmental consequences of deforestation and agricultural expansion in Brazil since 1992. Chris will talk about recent changes to Amazon agriculture, deforestation, and climate and some of the interesting ways in which scientists investigate the consequences of deforestation and the effects of fire and drought on remaining forest. He will discuss how these interacting forces will likely affect the future of Amazon forests and what forest protection policies could best slow deforestation and forest degradation. Chris Neill is a Senior Scientist at the Woodwell Climate Research Center in Falmouth. He studies natural and restored ecosystems around the globe. He is interested in how changes in land use affect ecosystem function, particularly water and nutrient cycling, and our ability to restore impaired systems.

**Tuesday February 20 at 6:30 p.m.: Smartphone Skills: Get More From Your Phone.** Beginner-friendly workshop for Android and iPhone users. Learn to adjust settings, use voice typing, navigate maps, and download helpful apps. Bring your phone and questions!

**Don't forget about our weekly offerings!**

**Miriam Warner, Wendell Free Library**

**WENDELL NET      whip city fiber**

**CUSTOMER SERVICE    1-413-485-1251**  
[customerservice@wgeld.org](mailto:customerservice@wgeld.org)

**TECH SUPPORT    1-413-485-1204**  
[techsupport@whipcityfiber.com](mailto:techsupport@whipcityfiber.com)

**INFO    whipcityfiber.com/wendell/**

**Whip City Fiber: Lifeline Subsidy Available**  
The Municipal Light Plant Board is happy to announce that we will be offering a discount for internet service to subscribers that qualify for

Lifeline. Lifeline is a federal program that lowers the monthly cost of phone and internet for eligible low-income subscribers. You can find more information about the Lifeline program here:

<https://www.lifelinesupport.org/>. If you qualify for Lifeline and would like to use the subsidy towards your internet bill, please contact us at: [municipallightboard@wendellmass.us](mailto:municipallightboard@wendellmass.us).

Thank you so much! Please let me know if you have any questions.

Happy holidays,  
**Renee Lazaras**, MLP Manager, 503-334-7142

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## News from the Town Clerk



### 2026 Annual Census

The 2026 Census will be arriving in mid-January. Please complete and return it promptly. Your response provides essential *proof of residence*, which helps protect your voting rights. In addition, compliance with this state requirement assists the Council on Aging with service planning, provides the Swift River School with accurate enrollment data and projections, and supports veteran bonus eligibility.

Our Police and Fire Departments also rely on the accuracy of the annual census to better serve the community. Your timely response helps ensure they have the most up-to-date information—so please remember to sign and return your census as soon as possible.

### 2026 Dog Tags

Thank you to everyone who participated in our color survey! The winning color for the 2026 dog tags is **YELLOW**. The new tags will be available beginning in January.

### Why License Your Dog?

Licensing your dog helps us return lost pets quickly and ensures that all dogs in town are vaccinated against rabies. Our office maintains a database of

names, markings, and owner contact information, which is shared with the Sheriff's Office, our contracted Animal Control Officer, and the Wendell/Leverett Police Department. As required by state law, all dogs over 6 months of age in Wendell must be licensed annually.

**Anna Wetherby**, Town Clerk

## MEMORY CAFÉ, For All, In Wendell

A Memory Café is a free social gathering for people living with changes in their memory or thinking and the people who care about them. Memory Cafes focus on people, not medical conditions. No one is asked if they have a diagnosis. We invite you to join in community and to enjoy some music or other activity, some food, and friendly informal visiting.

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WENDELL COMMUNITY AND SENIOR CENTER  
2 Lockes Village Rd in Wendell Center

This Café is hosted by the Wendell COA, with support from Village Neighbors, and the

Neighborhood Dementia Support Group. Please RSVP to Nancy Spittle at 978 544 6760 so we have food and seating for all.

Support with memory loss, contact Village Neighbors at 413-345-6894 or email us at [generalinfo@villageneighbors.org](mailto:generalinfo@villageneighbors.org).

**Submitted by Diane Kurinsky**

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## A message from the Fire Chief:

In the past few weeks, the Wendell Fire Department has responded to two residences where dangerously high carbon monoxide (CO) levels were present. In both instances, the occupants were able to safely exit their homes after they were alerted to the potentially life-threatening danger by their properly functioning CO alarms. Carbon monoxide is a leading cause of fatal poisoning, and home heating equipment is the primary source of carbon monoxide in the home. The recent incidents in Wendell were caused by 1) improperly installed woodstove pipe, and 2) the malfunction of a modern, wall mounted condensing boiler; two very different forms of home heating.

As we head into heating season, please ensure that you have functioning CO alarms on every

habitable level of your home. Also, as snow will likely start falling in the next month or so, keep in mind that heating appliances like dryers, furnaces, boilers, and fireplaces are all sources of carbon monoxide. If the vent or flue is blocked, this poisonous gas can reach deadly levels inside the home. Know where the vents on your home are, be sure to clear them when shoveling, and be careful not to blow snow onto them if using a snowblower. When smoke or CO alarms are sounding, always exit the building immediately and call 911.

#### *What is carbon monoxide and why is it so dangerous?*

CO is an odorless, colorless, tasteless poison gas that is undetectable by anything other than properly functioning CO alarms and meters. CO has roughly the same density as the air, so when present, it mixes pretty easily throughout the air in our homes. CO comes from anything that burns; such as woodstoves, propane heaters and stoves, and oil burners. The reason CO is so dangerous is that when we breathe in CO, it binds to our red blood cells, just like oxygen. In the absence of CO, oxygen is transported to our cells by our red blood cells, and exchanged for carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>). When we exhale, the CO<sub>2</sub> leaves our red blood cells and is replaced by new oxygen molecules. However, when CO is present, it binds to our red blood cells where the oxygen would normally go, but when we exhale, the CO stays on our red blood cells. So, over time CO accumulates on our red blood cells and takes up the space where oxygen would normally go. Low levels of CO in our blood stream can cause headache, dizziness, and nausea, and higher concentrations can lead to death.

#### *What can we do to protect ourselves from CO?*

We can't see, smell, or taste CO. The best protection against it is to ensure heating equipment is properly installed and maintained, and to have functioning CO alarms on every habitable level of our home. If the CO alarm sounds, exit your home and call 911. CO alarms rarely produce false alarms, rather they only sound when CO is present.

#### *What will the fire department do if a CO alarm is sounding in my home?*

When we arrive, we will use specially calibrated meters designed to detect the presence of CO, as well as other gases, to determine the exact concentration of CO inside the home. If we detect elevated levels of CO, we will exit the building and don air packs prior to reentering. With the proper

personal protective equipment on, we will determine the cause of the CO leak and then use large battery-operated fan carried on our truck to systematically remove the dangerous CO from the home. We will then help the homeowner determine the best course of action to correct the problem.

If you have smoke or carbon monoxide alarm questions, please contact the Wendell Fire Department at: [firedepartment@wendellmass.us](mailto:firedepartment@wendellmass.us)  
**New and old tanker on delivery day.**



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 took delivery of the new tanker/pumper on November 19<sup>th</sup> and it was immediately put into service. Over the past few weeks we have been training with the new truck to ensure all of our firefighters were familiar with its operation. Training will continue throughout the winter, with a day-long training course provided by the dealership in late December. Due to ongoing supply chain issues in the fire service, equipment for the new truck will be slowly arriving over the next few months. However,

so that the new truck can be completely functional, neighboring departments have offered for us to borrow equipment from them until ours arrives. We greatly appreciate their support. The old tanker was recently sold at auction for \$60,300 and was sent to its new home in mid-December.

**Matt O'Donnell**, Chief  
New Salem and Wendell Fire Departments

## Greetings WRATSters!

Here's all the latest news from Wendell's favorite (ok, only...) transfer station.

Very excited to report we got a DEP grant to start a repair program at the WRATS. I have been busy at the moment turning a small room in the barn into a small workshop. Several people have stepped up to volunteer their skills and knowledge, and teach folks repair skills. Don't dump it - FIX IT! So far, we have folks who can teach the following skills:

- PREREQUISITE: PPE (personal protective equipment use) and using tools safely.
- Knife and scissor sharpening.
- Furniture repair.
- Bike Repair.
- Bike Repair for kids.
- Sewing and mending.
- Sewing machine repair.
- Darning socks.
- Earth machine composter repair and plastic welding.
- Safely rewiring lamps and electrical meter use.

If you have a repair skill to share, let me know!

The other part of the grant addresses keeping materials out of the waste stream through fixing and repurposing. When bringing materials destined for the open top, consider separating usable building materials like studs, plywood, usable windows, and doors clean dry insulation. We could use volunteers to separate materials like nailed together studs etc. Then, we could have a free lumber yard!

The overall goal of this grant is to reduce the amount of trash going into landfills by repairing our

broken things and recovering usable materials. A worthy endeavor.

Repair is noble,  
**Asa de Roode**

**Hold the date:  
Wendell Old Home Day 2026  
Saturday, August 8th**

The Town of Wendell Newsletter is posted on the town's website on a quarterly schedule.

All town boards and committees are invited to submit updates, information for residents or upcoming events.

Newsletters are sent in April, July, October and January. Please submit articles NO LATER THAN the 15th of the preceding month.

To submit items for the newsletter, please email to Cecelia Aldrich at [cecelia1@comcast.net](mailto:cecelia1@comcast.net).

The deadlines and newsletter publication schedule:

March 15 Articles Due → April Newsletter published

June 15 Articles Due → July Newsletter published

September 15 Articles Due → October Newsletter published

December 15 Articles Due → January Newsletter published

<https://www.wendellmass.us/town-newsletters/>

**Contact the Selectboard or Town Coordinator at (978) 544-3395 ext. 100  
Or visit the Town Website for town information: [www.wendellmass.us](http://www.wendellmass.us)**