Calendar of Events

Winter Parking Ban in effect through April 30, 2022.

February 1 Tuesday
Lunar New Year 4720 “Year of the Tiger”
12:46 a.m. New Snow Moon
6 p.m. Yoga resumes at Town Hall, sponsored by the Friends

February 2 Wednesday Groundhog Day

February 3 Thursday
No classes at The Village School – Parent Conferences

February 4 Friday
7 p.m. Historical Society meeting at the town hall to discuss restoration of the cove ceiling in Old School House #1.

February 5 Saturday
10 a.m. Friends of the Library meeting at the Library. All welcome to plan library support, programs and this newsletter.

February 6 Monday Noon dismissal for ARRSD students – Professional Development

February 9 Wednesday
6:30-8:30 p.m. Raymond School conversion to Town Offices forum at Town Hall

February 12 Saturday
10 a.m. – noon Village School Open House

February 14 Monday Valentine’s Day

February 16 Wednesday
6:30-8:30 p.m. Forum to discuss conversion of Raymond School to Town Offices in the Second Congregational Church, So, Royalston

February 18 Friday
February school vacations begin at close of school today.

February 19 Saturday
9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Open House at Raymond School/ proposed town offices

February 21 Monday Presidents’ Day

February 24 Thursday
1:30 p.m. Library school vacation program “Nature in Winter”. Weather conditions depending, it might be a tracking program, or a snow sculpture program or a signs of spring hike; regardless, it will be fun and informative. Dress warmly. Hot drinks and goodies served.

February 26 Saturday
10 a.m. Special Town Meeting at Town Hall: Vote on Raymond School conversion to Town Offices, Fire Department and Board of Health funding, and on changing the date of the Annual Town Meeting from Friday to Saturday in early May.

You Know

When the horses’ eyelashes and whiskers are frosted
When the riverbanks are shelved with ice
When a solitary songbird singing seems out of place
When the chickadees tentatively rehearse their springsong
When the resident raven flies overhead, laughing
When rain-soaked snow turns hard, like alabaster
When the outside thermometer reads negative numbers
When a day above freezing is a newsworthy event
When village chimneys are pluming woodsmoke
When the cleats on my boots go clop, clop on the pavement like horses

You know winter is not over in New England.

Michael Young, current Royalston Poet Laureate

Save the date and a sign of spring: Easter Egg Hunt. Mr. Bunny and friends are going to try their best to bring back the annual Easter Egg Hunt, which has been interrupted by the pandemic. The outdoor portion of the event (the egg hunt itself) will be on Saturday, April 16th, at 10 a.m. COVID safety rules will be followed. For the first time, Gordon Morrison’s EGGStaordinary Easter painting, colorfully depicting the egg hunt on the common, will be displayed. The painting is also a photo stand-in with bunny characters, so real Royalston children can become part of the scene.
Select Board Notes
Christine Long, clerk

Special Town Meeting for Renovation of Raymond School
The time has come for the town to grapple with its need for modern, comfortable, accessible space for town officials to work in and for residents to meet with those officials in a convenient, one-stop location.

The Building Committee has already submitted the pre-application for a USDA program that, if successful, will provide a 35% grant of the approximately $2.2 million total and a low-interest 40-year loan for the balance. The only way we can swing the deal is if voters approve the project – contingent on a debt-exclusion – at a special town meeting on Saturday, February 26 at 10 am at Town Hall and at the annual election on April 4.

As a reminder, a debt exclusion means that taxes will go up for the duration of the loan and then go down. At press time we do not yet have estimates about how much the project will cost households, but we hope to have those estimates by the time of the informational meetings.

Questions and Answers. Obviously voters need to know more about the Raymond renovation project. Thus, the Select Board has scheduled two informational meetings for residents to hear about the plans and to have their questions answered. The forums will be held on Wednesday, February 9, from 6:30-8:30 pm at Town Hall and on Wednesday, February 16, from 6:30-8:30 pm in the Second Congregational Church function room on School St. in the South Village.

Residents curious about the interior of Raymond now and the plans for the renovation are invited to an open house at the former school on Saturday, February 19 from 9 am to 1 pm.

The Select Board urges all voters to attend one or more of these events in order to make an informed decision about the project.

Other Items at Special Town Meeting. Special town meeting voters will also consider:
• Changing the date and time of annual town meeting from the first Friday after the first Monday in May at 7 pm to Saturday after the first Monday in June at 10 am, based on a survey conducted by the Select Board.
• Appropriating a small match for a $10,500 grant to the Fire Department in this fiscal year. Chief Eric Jack said funds will be used to replace a 30-year-old hose on Engine 3 and to purchase a new color thermal imager.
• Appropriating $10,000 to conduct a required survey and engineering analysis at the transfer station, based on a recent report from the state Department of Environmental Protection. Board of Health staff and others will address some of the specific issues raised in the report.

Looking Ahead to Fiscal Year 2023. Town departments have submitted their budgets for the fiscal year that runs from July 1, 2022 through June 30, 2023, and in February the Select Board will meet with the major departments. The board got preliminary information about the Athol-Royalston Regional School District budget in late January, after the newsletter deadline.

In March we will report not only on the results of the special town meeting but also of the early budget analyses.

Internet for Royalston – February Update from the Cable Advisory Committee
Royalston’s Cable Advisory Committee (CAC) continues to work on the town’s behalf to secure an agreement with Charter Communications that will bring internet and cable television to our residents. To do so, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) requires Charter to obtain a Cable License from the Town as a first step in the permitting process.

In late December the committee received a draft Cable License for review. On Thursday, January 6, the committee met to discuss the draft and make “counter offers”. Among the concerns the committee is keeping its eye on are the many residences in our town with very long driveways. The committee wants to ensure that the “standard drop” length takes those distances into account. Charter also wants to ensure that the wireless program in the South Village be able to continue to operate for any customers who are interested in continuing with this service once Charter has come to town. Speaking of the South Village Wireless network – the committee is concerned that misinformation about service to that neighborhood persists despite information to the contrary. Here are the facts:

1. All residents of Royalston – including residents in the South Village – will have the opportunity to hook up to Charter’s fiber network. There is no section of the town that is being excluded, despite rumors to the contrary.
2. Pricing for internet service is always “within area pricing”. This means that Charter is required to offer the same packages and price points that are offered to its customers in towns within a specified radius of Royalston.
3. Internet speeds are regulated by the FCC. This means that Charter is required to offer speeds that meet, or exceed, FCC guidelines for broadband service.

The CAC will continue to work with Charter to create a license that is most advantageous to the town. Once this is done, the draft will go to the Select Board for final approval and sign off.

The committee will keep you informed of this process through this newsletter. Committee meetings are open to the public and posted on both My Town Government (www.mytowngovernment.org) and the Royalston Website (www.Royalston.ma.gov).

The Winter Parking Ban will be in effect from December 1, 2021 thru April 30, 2022.

Any vehicles left in the public way may be towed at the owner’s expense. This is enforced 24/7. Thank you for your full cooperation with this request.

A good reminder is to secure your mail boxes for the plowing of these streets. Thank you, Keith R. Newton, DPW-Supt.
**Royalston Emergency Management**

*Director Jim Barclay, e-mail ema@royalston-ma.gov or 978-249-2904*

**Coronavirus Status:** Mid-January – which virologists are hoping was the height of the COVID-19 Omicron variant infections – saw a Heywood Healthcare 7-day positivity rate of 33.88%, far higher than the state rate of less than 23%. The reality is, the more people who are positive (and requiring health care system resources) the more strapped our healthcare system becomes.

The number of COVID-19 positive people, according to Heywood CEO Win Brown, is "...a lot of pressure on the system" at the Damon Building, the “Community Testing Site,” which has just four staff, and limited phone lines, all of whom and all of which are overwhelmed. Our hospitals are not immune, if you’ll excuse the pun. As of January 15th, 54 staff members were out of work, suffering from or recovering from COVID-19. The ICU was full. Elective medical procedures were being postponed. Additional support by way of National Guard personnel has been requested to relieve some of the pressure of non-clinical tasks on clinical staff as they work multiple shifts to cover for those out.

Even with full vaccination, the Omicron variant – extremely contagious – is knocking some people down for days with fever, aches, and other unpleasant symptoms. These people are out of work, and the ripple effect is being felt in many areas. Unvaccinated patients make up the vast majority of those hospitalized with COVID-19, and sadly, make up nearly 100% of COVID-19 deaths.

**GET. THE. FACTS.  GET. THE. VAX.  NOW!**

FACTS on COVID-19 are found at www.cdc.gov and/or www.mass.gov; social media sites are NOT reliable sources of FACTS! Keep up on MA and Worcester County transmission rates at https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#county-view .

**February Readiness:** While cold is the hallmark of January, snow is typically the hallmark of February. The upside is a blanket of snow has an insulating effect and keeps the ground from freezing deeper. Downsides include some safety considerations – like too heavy a snow load on a roof – especially porches – can cause collapse. Snow deep enough to obstruct vents (think heating systems; dryers) can cause toxic gasses to build up in houses; obstructed tailpipes can cause toxic gasses to build up in vehicles. In the event of a February thaw, solid frozen ground means melted snow ends up in basements. Melted snow that re-freezes can turn an otherwise unremarkable driveway into a skating rink.

Before we’re buried, try to find/buy some fighting tools. Make sure you have shovels within reach as you exit the house. It’s not a bad idea to have a couple of shovels in case a handle can’t handle the load and snaps. Locate that snow brush that’s under all the other stuff in the trunk of your vehicle, and put it within an easy reach. A snow brush or scraper for your car inside the house can help keep the inside of your car dry... you can clear off the driver side BEFORE opening the door! Also be sure to keep a few survival goodies in your car in case you’re stranded in the snow – a sleeping bag or heavy blanket, and some high-nutrition foods like nutrition bars or nuts, can live in your vehicle for the winter. Preparedness beats panic every time. Be informed. Make a plan.

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**Board of Health News**

*Phil Leger, chair*

COVID and its variants Omicron and Delta continue to surge across the North Central region. The highest number of cases have been recorded since the pandemic started over 2 years ago. Hospitals are overwhelmed as well as public health departments. If you want to stay out of the hospital, vaccination is the way to go. The vaccine is safe and has been given to millions across the globe proving to be safe and effective. This is not a political statement. It is a factual statement. The vaccine is available at local pharmacies and clinics in the region. Be safe, get the vax. Also, wear a tight fitting mask when out in public whether you are vaccinated or not. We do not encourage attending large indoor gatherings in general at this time. If you do so, please mask up.

We are attempting to purchase rapid Covid test kits for distribution to the general public. This has not been a simple venture and it is still ongoing. We will have a public distribution if and when we acquire some. Most likely a distribution will be on a Wednesday morning and if any remain, the Library has indicated it would be willing to be a site. This would be for residents only. Essential town personnel will be given a supply first. Stay tuned.

Winter operations are in full effect at RRATS, so be situationally aware and watch your step. When dumping in containers, please remove plastic bags, styrofoam, plastic ties and other non recyclable materials prior to disposal. Please dump glass into barrels provided. Do not dump glass directly into a roll off container. We recently received a warning as someone dumped some plastic into the glass roll off. If our load is rejected due to contamination, it is a very costly venture (nearly $900). In order for recycling to remain free to the residents, we must avoid these situations.

**Congratulations to us!**

Royalston has received first place in the 2022 Massachusetts Municipal Association (MMA) Municipal Website Award for towns with populations of 5,000 or less. This annual award honors outstanding town websites.

Royalston’s site scored highest in the categories of ease of navigation, clear organization of material, convenience of information, and overall experience of the website. Royalston was recognized during the MMA Annual Business Meeting which took place virtually on Saturday, January 21, 2022. An awards certificate will be mailed to the Select Board office in the coming days.

A website is only as good as the folks behind the scenes. We appreciate all those departments and committees who keep their information current. If you have not yet visited our award-winning site, we invite you to do so at www.royalston-ma.gov.
Phinehas S. Newton Library News
Kathy Morris, Library Director
Trustees: Jeffrey Mangum, Jennifer Basso, Theresa Quinn
Open and pick up hours: Mondays 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.; Thursdays 1:00 - 5:00 p.m. and 6:30 - 8 p.m.; Saturdays: 9:00 am-12 noon
978-249-3572 www.royalstonlibrary.org

Donations to the Friends
Fair Alice McCormick
The Cornwall Trust
Kenneth and Martha Bouchard
Theresa Quinn and George Krasowski
Norah Dooley and Robert Fairchild
The MacPhee family
Sonja Vaccari
William Brosnan
Grace Belmont
Cliff McNeil

Donations to the Library
Theresa Quinn and George Krasowski

Thank You
Barbara Richardson for a great program and for the spectacular refreshments
Cindy Cook for delicious cookies
Cheryl Mahoney for knitting a new hat for our snowman (to replace one she had knit years ago)

A Way to Support the Library if you Shop on Amazon
Designate Friends of the Phinhas S Newton Library on Amazon-Smile, and 0.5% of your purchases will be donated to the Library at no extra cost to you. Here’s the link:
https://smile.amazon.com/charity/smile/about?encoding=UTF8&ref_=smi_se_uspo_laas_aas
Unfortunately, Phinehas is mis-spelled, but it’s still us!

Winter Reading Program
“Get Your Mitts Around a Good Book”
You still have time to read and win prizes. Anyone can enter. Read books or listen to audiobooks that you’ve borrowed from the Library and win. It’s that easy. Prizes are provided by the Friends of the Library.

Blind Date with a Book
It’s February – take a chance – select one of the brightly wrapped books and maybe learn something new or discover a new author or decide you’ll never read that author again. A brief description of the book under the wrapping will help you decide.

Tax Forms: We hope to have some tax forms available soon. We will also print forms for people for free.

Art Exhibit featuring… you!
This is your chance. We don’t have enough pieces to fill the walls. Bring in one of your favorite creations to hang in the children’s room during February and March. This may be the impetus to get you creating again or more. During April and May, Caleb Chase will have an original show.

February Craft Kits
Two different craft kits will be available to grab from the bins in front of the Library. There’s a heart created with puzzle pieces for crafty young or older children and adults and a fun valentine card to create and activity sheets for younger children. Thanks to the Friends for funding these kits.

When life gives you February in a pandemic ....
Plan a flexible outdoor school vacation program!
On Thursday, February 24 at 1:30 p.m., kids and their grown-ups should come to the library dressed to have an outdoor adventure. Possible programs may be around tracking animal footprints, snow sculpture, or a nature hike to a view spot. Conditions on the ground will dictate the exact program, but regardless, it will be fun and informative. Call the week before and we should be able to give more details. There will be hot drinks and remedies for cabin fever provided. Of course, the library is open to check out materials for all ages too.
Some of the new materials at your library

Adult Fiction

Benedict, Marie  
Braddock, Barbara  
Gonzalez, Xochitl  
Guterson, David  
Harrod-Eagles, C.  
Hawkins, Rachel  
Henderson, Alice  
Henderson, Alice  
Jacobsen, Roy  
Martin, Kimmery  
Morris, Wanda  
Picault, Jodi  
Prose, Nita  
Rosenfield, Kat  
Rozan, S.J.  
Umrigar, Thirty

Adult Non-Fiction

Gluck, Louise  
Gorman, Amanda  
Hanel, Marnie  
Hayes, John  
Hurston, Zora Neale  
King Arthur’s Flour  
Patchett, Ann  
Wilson, Alex  
Wilson, Alex

Audiobooks

Baldacci, David  
Donohue, Rachel  
Groff, Lauren  
Rooney, Sally  
Strout, Elizabeth

Ongoing:

Yoga is Happening
Yoga with Jessica O’Clair will resume on Tuesday, February 1 at 6:00 p.m. and continue each Tuesday at 6:00 in the upstairs of the Town Hall. Masks are mandatory. Bring your own mat. Breath, stretch, relax, and bring balance into your life in this community. This yoga experience suitable for all levels.

Preschool Story Time
Enjoy crafts, stories, play and visiting time, and healthy snacks each non-holiday Monday at 10:00 with Brooke Coleman. No preregistration is required. Masks are not required but are strongly recommended for adults.

Children’s Fiction

Abrams, Stacey  
Arnold, Tedd  
Barnett, Mac  
Collier, Bryan  
Cordell, Matthew  
Dewdney, Anna  
DiPucchio, Kelly  
Engle, Margarita  
Fishman, Seth  
Ford, Ronald  
Hopkinson, Deborah  
Lightman, Alan  
Medina, Juana  
Musgrave, Ruth  
Nebres, Charlotte  
Quigley, Dawn  
Reynolds, Peter  
Reynolds, Jason

Children’s Nonfiction

Hoena, B.A.  
Sutherland, Tui  
Winn, Kevin  
Yang, Kao

Young adult

Nijkamp, Marieke

DVDs:

Dune  
Halloween Kills  
The Last Duel  
Ron’s Gone Wrong  
Venom, Let There be Carnage

March Craft Program – Maybe
Depending on COVID-19 levels, we may have the shamrock program, weaving straw to create a shamrock pin or small ornament. This is the program that was canceled two years ago and we hope to be able to have it this year. If not, there will be grab-and-go kits for other projects available.

Save the dates (and a sign of summer-)
The Royalston Shakespeare Company, free theater workshops for kids will try very hard to happen from June 20 - July 1 on Royalston Common. Just think, the summer will have hardly begun and there will have already been a cool adventure involving magic, mischief, and true love! Contact the library for more information or to express interest in participating.
Historical Society News

Thank you to the donors who responded to our fundraising letter. The list of names is long so I will print them over the next several newsletters.

Thanks to: Virginia Gingras, Sarah and Mike Dilg, Phil Leger, Robert and Lorraine Casinghino, Dana Perkins, Thomas and Lynne Kellner, Diana Lincoln, Nancy Monette, Thomas Musco, Skip Ciccarelli, Walter and Nani Thornton, David Carr, Mary and John Cofflesky, Ken and Andrea Lively.

We have been looking at projects to improve our building, including restoring the upstairs cove ceiling and walkway drainage.

The regular winter meeting was delayed because of cold, so if you would like to attend, you haven’t missed it. Now, we will meet on February 4th at 7 p.m. at Town Hall weather permitting to discuss projects and upcoming programs. All welcome. Homemade desserts!

Royalston South Village Revitalization News

Many volunteers made the Tree Lighting on December 4 at the Gazebo, sponsored by the Royalston Arts Council and RSVR, a fun community event. Thanks to Marlene and Donald Jarvenpaa, who donated the beautiful tree and to Janice Trask, Rose and Dick Lawrence, Maureen Blasco, Luann Simula, and Ruth Suyenaga for decorating it. Thank you to Laurie Deveneau, Nancy Melbourne and the Ladies’ Benevolent Society, who sold ornaments in memory of loved ones and Santa, who arrived on his fire truck to greet the children. Nancy Monette and Rose and Dickie Lawrence donated refreshments. Erin Girouard and Larry Trask led the crowd in Christmas carols, while Scott Monette provided the mic and sound system and Larry Trask for the halogen lights. Thank you to Linda Alger, Marlene Jarvenpaa and Maureen Blasco for organizing the annual RSVR Fall Fundraiser to support our programs. Thank you to Mary Barclay for creating and donating the beautiful quilt that was raffled at the Tree Lighting. If you are interested in volunteering with future events and projects, contact RSVR Chair Janice Trask at 978-249-2510.

Congratulations and Good News

Graduates, newlyweds, reunions, pandemic babies... share the milestones here at the RCN! This is your space.

Ms. Kiowa Judge, a Royalston Community School student inspired by science, took advantage of January’s sub-zero temperatures to demonstrate some scientific principles. She conducted an experiment with the assistance of her dad, and videoed him tossing boiling water into the air, catching some spectacular footage of hot droplets of liquid freezing instantly into snow, and falling out. Kiowa witnessed properties of cold air and boiling water densities, differences in evaporation rates at different temperatures, got a glimpse into how snow-making machines work... and captured some really great images! Not bad for a first grader on a freezing cold Saturday morning!

Colton Newton pulled this beast of a bass from an Athol lake while fishing with his family in January. A first grader at The Village School, Colton “absolutely loves fishing,” reports his mother. It was an exciting day for the six-year-old, who also lost his very first baby tooth that day! Colton is the son of Andrew and Ellee (Bronnes)

Volunteers Dan Monette and Tom Kellner completed the work on the gazebo railings, which are in the style of Finnish sawn balusters. They honor the early Finnish community who worked at the American Woolen Mill that was powered by the Millers River in South Royalston.

Congratulations to Elizabeth Cassinari who traveled to Boothbay Harbor, Maine, and took this photo of Steller’s Sea Eagle on January 15, 2022. She reports, “It is the world’s rarest eagle and it is the first time it has been spotted in the lower 48 states.”
Grace L. Bolton, 78, of Norhtfield, Ma. died in the early morning of January 9, 2022. She leaves behind the love of her life, Alan Bolton. They are both long time Northfield residents. Grace was born in Greenfield, Mass. on May 4, 1943, to George and Grace (Stone) Nichols. She spent her childhood there and in Northfield where she graduated from Pioneer Valley Regional School. She will be missed greatly by her family, including her sister, Doris Laprade of Gardner, and her brother-in-law Michael Francis and his wife Debbie of England, as well as her daughters: Barbara Richardson and her husband James of Royalston and Virginia Ward and her husband Wayne of Keene, NH and her son Craig Bolton and his wife Toni of Bedford, Texas. She was unfortunately predeceased by daughter Alana Gadreault of Northfield, Mass. Left behind also were 5 grandchildren and 5 great grandchildren, and more friends then you can shake a stick at. Grace was a gifted teacher, retiring from Keene High School after teaching special education for over 20 years and went on to the Waldorf School in Keene to share her love of learning with their students. Living a busy full life was her goal, never one to say no to a good time she and her love became boaters and spent weekends and summers in South Portland, Maine. They also spent many years escaping the winters of New England to make many friends in Florida. With such enthusiasm for life, she became a “biker” at the ripe old age of 72. She also had many four-legged companions, her love of Boston Terriers was noteworthy, losing her 7th prior to her death. Please if you wish to do something for the family in lieu of flowers, send a donation to the Arthritis Foundation, 1355 Peachtree St. NE Suite 600, Atlanta, GA 30309 or the Dana Farber Cancer Center, PO Box 849168, Boston, MA. 02284-9168

Llewellyn S. Bolton III died on December 17, 2021 at the Edward M. Poe Care Center in Titusville, Florida. Born in Boston on May 2, 1930, he was the son of Llewellyn S. Bolton II and Harriet (Winters) and grew up in Brookline, graduating from Brookline High in 1948. He later attended Wentworth Institute.

In 1952, Llewellyn joined the United States Army and attained the rank of First Lieutenant, and was a member of the Army Corps of Engineers. He was honorably discharged on December 30, 1960. In 1959, he received his Civil Engineering degree from Northeastern, and then went on to Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1960 on full scholarship and earned a Masters in one year. Llewellyn went to work at Zaldastani Associates in 1962 as a Engineering Manager Associate and oversaw projects including the Logan Control Tower, the Volpe International Terminal and the Massachusetts General Hospital Cancer Management Center. He rose to become Vice President of the firm in 1976. In 1980, Llewellyn opened his own firm of Bolton and Dimartino, Inc.

A resident of Medway from 1956-1973, he moved with his family in 1973 to his great grandfather’s homestead on Bolton Road in Royalston. In 1982, he moved to Worcester where he remarried. In 2002, he retired and moved to Titusville.

Llewellyn loved his home and farm in Royalston and took pride in vegetable gardening, especially tomatoes. He always enjoyed swimming and going to the ocean.

Survivors include his wife, Monika Bolton of Titusville, Florida; a son, Llewellyn S. Bolton IV of Royalston; a daughter, Holly Burnett and her husband, Jason, of Erving; grandsons, Daniel Bolton of Athol, Douglas J. Dupell Jr. of Titusville, Floorida, and Phillip R. Dupell and his wife, Amber, of Orange; a granddaughter-in-law, Trista Dupell of Greenfield; great-grandchildren, Marnie Elizabeth Dupell and Addison Lynn Dupell, both of Orange; and several nephews and nieces.

Melvin L. Talbot Sr., 82, of Warwick Road, died early on Thursday, December 02, 2021 at home following an illness, with loved ones at his side.

Born in Royalston, he was the son of the late Arthur and Davine (Brewer) Talbot and grew up in Royalston and graduated from Athol High School in 1957. A lifetime resident of Royalston, Melvin started working as a logger and later went to work at the Rodney Hunt Company in Orange for 45 years until retiring.

Melvin enjoyed doing carpentry as well as automotive work. He had taught the small engine repair class at Mahar for a number of years. During the winter, he loved to go snowmobiling.

Survivors include his sons, Melvin L. “Mel” Talbot Jr. and Timothy Talbot, both of Athol; a daughter, Suzanne Talbot of Athol; four grandchildren; ten great grandchildren; brothers, Art Talbot and Ralph Talbot, both of Orange, and Steve Talbot of Athol; sisters, Sandra Donahue of Orange, Rosella Talbot and Davine Talbot, both of Templeton; and several nephews and nieces.

He is buried in Maple Cemetery.

First Congregational Church of Royalston Outreach
Marion’s Food Pantry: If anyone is in need or knows of someone in need within the Royalston community, please let us know. No one should be without food. We can deliver or you can come in to pick out what is needed.

Weekly Meals: We are also cooking meals and delivering them to anyone homebound, elderly, physically or medically challenged.

Please contact: Debbie Conrad (978)895-3505, Fred Hodgeman (978)894-4996, and Wendell Kathan (978)939-3990
Monty Tech, Mary C Barclay, representative

Royalston has the dubious distinction of having the lowest percentage of COVID-19 vaccinated 12-15 year olds in the Monty Tech District. Even the surrounding towns are doing markedly better – Winchendon 37%; Templeton 39%; Athol and Phillipston 42%. Royalston does have 71% of 16-19 year olds vaccinated; a substantial improvement from prior months. In addition to the obvious virus transmission ramifications, this also means Monty Tech remains well below the 80% vaccination rate required for the Monty Tech District to even consider allowing unmasking.

Through the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) a supply of KN 95 masks and at-home rapid COVID-19 tests have been provided to faculty and staff in an effort to curb the spread of the virus at school.

Monty Tech staff and faculty are doing their best to continue educating our children. If you haven’t already, please do your part, and see that your children are vaccinated.

In great news, Monty Tech has the distinction of having two teams earn first place at the CyberPatriot XIV State Round Competition! The “Platinum Level Teams” are in the Massachusetts Open Division, and the Massachusetts All-Service Division.

The Monty Tech Foundation Student Scholarship Fund is nearly $10,000 richer, thanks to students and instructors in Culinary Arts, Cabinetmaking, Welding/Metal Fabrication, Auto Body, and Advanced Manufacturing, all of whom created unique gifts sold to benefit the fund!

Monty Tech has applied for $600,000 to expand adult training opportunities in Culinary Arts, HVAC, Property Maintenance, Carpentry/General Construction Trades, and CNC Operation. Applicants – 10 of whom would be accepted to each of the five programs – would be eligible for the $6,000 training programs. If you’re interested in these all expenses-paid opportunities, keep an eye out for coming announcements.

Monty Tech’s 2022-2023 school year freshmen applications are available through your high school guidance counselor, Royalston Library, or Kristen West (c/o Royalston Academy Scholarship Committee, PO Box 35, Royalston, MA 01368).

Scholarships Available

Royalston Academy Scholarships:
Deadline April 16, 2022
Forms are available through your high school guidance counselor, Royalston Library, or Kristen West (c/o Royalston Academy Scholarship Committee, PO Box 35, Royalston, MA 01368).

The Katherine Seymour Bullock Cole Memorial Scholarship (up to $1000) is available to graduating high school resident of Royalston going on to a higher education.

The Judy Jenkins Musco Scholarship is available to Royalston residents interested in pursuing educational activities including college, home-schooling, educational travel, and educational and literacy programs.

The Ladies’ Benevolent Society Scholarships are open to all residents (regardless of age or gender) pursuing higher or continuing education opportunities. Forms are available from high school guidance counselors and the Phinehas Newton Library. For more information, contact Theresa Quinn 978-249-3819, therquainn@aol.com. Deadline for submissions is April 16, 2022.

Chet Hall Memorial Scholarship is open to those who attended ARRS school past and present. Applications are with guidance counselors, the Library or call Royalston Community School 978-249-2900. Deadline: April 16, 2022.

The Kitchen Garden, new newsletter sponsor

The Kitchen Garden country store specializes in expertly prepared baked goods and unique artisan treasures. As you enter owner Joyce Dossett’s homey domain, you’re met with the aroma of home-made pastries. As you find your way to a cup of freshly brewed coffee you may be distracted by the irresistible displays of curious objects that include handcrafted baskets, puzzles, wooden toys, plants, pottery and shelves of books. Curated by Joyce, the objects reflect her passion for community and supporting local artists as well as the influence of her Scandinavian heritage.

We caught up with Joyce after the rush of Christmas to learn more about the history of the Kitchen Garden. Today’s store began 33 years ago as little more than a farm stand to which she and her husband gradually added a kitchen, more floor space, and an outside deck.

While in college Joyce sold pickles, jams and Finnish baked goods at farmers’ markets with her mother. Today she uses the same Finnish recipes from her great-grandmother that she used then.

The Kitchen Garden is the sort of place that easily attracts loyal followers. You may plan to stop by to pick up a unique last minute one-of-a-kind gift, but then, well, you’ll just have to have one of Joyce’s cookies or almond cupcakes and find yourself hooked and on your way to becoming a regular.

The Kitchen Garden is open year round, with longer hours from May to October when fresh flowers and produce are on sale and the ice cream shop beckons. They are located at 268 Baldwinville Road, Templeton.
Classifieds

**Wanted:** Looking for donations of camping supplies, like a large cast iron dutch oven, griddle, and other large pans and cooking utensils, to be donated for our scouting group. Please contact Theresa at 405.885.0650

**Services Available**

**Royalston Dog Walker** - I let the dogs out. Call or text 978-340-2105

**Babysitter available.** Completed Red Cross Babysitter Training. Please call Hailey Dilg at 978-248-9828.


**Horse Help!** You and your horse may find an extra pair of hands, another pair of eyes & experience useful. I can assist at your horse’s home space or my farm, working with your equipment or mine. Book by the day. Call or text Suzanne: (978) 424-8580.

2 matted horse stalls available: round pen, arena, generous turnout, watchful care 24/7. Black Horse Farm is near Birch Hill Dam by horseback. $400 per month. Training or any number of lessons $575 per month. Text Suzanne at (978) 424-8580. Current email: cobbzuzanne4@yahoo.com.

Wildlife woodcarvings and hand-painted ornaments by Laurie Truehart. Three-dimensional, life-like carvings of various animals and habitat, and glass balls (singles or sets) featuring wild birds, ducks, other animals available. In-stock, or custom-designs available. Contact by Facebook messenger or text (978) 939-3962.

**Graphic digital artist.** Websites, print materials - posters, flyers, brochures, business cards, etc. Also photo and slide scanning offered. Barbara 508.364.3339 or brguiney@wildblue.net.

**House cleaning.** 4 hr - $60.00. Royalston resident. Call Fran: home 249-4596 or cell 978-895-0817.

**DTM Landscaping.** spring cleanup, snowplowing. Call Theresa Gates 413-336-1850 or David Plourde 413-336-1593.

**For sale**

Raw Squier Davis Farm honey totally out of honey! Next harvest: end of May 2022 We welcome the return of jars on the bench on our porch.

Sweetwater Sugar House at the LeRays’ has local syrup available. Call 978-249-3464.

**Royalston Maple Syrup from** Divoll’s sugar house. Prices: pints $12, quarts $20, half gallons $32 and gallons $55. Text/Call John 978-894-5109.

Sweets from Teenie’s Sweet Shop: Family-owned Sweet Shop that bakes up large size cookies, brownies, whoopie pies, pocket pies, and many other sweet treats. All items made to order. Special orders welcomed. 413-768-1614 email teeniessweetshop@gmail.com also on Facebook and Instagram


Vermont Castings Vigilant wood burning stove. Great stove; in Royalston. $100. cash. U p/u. Call or text David @ 617-593-0056.

Laying chickens for sale. Large brown eggs. Barred Rocks, Buff Orpingtons and Black Giants. $12.00 each. These beautiful girls are ready to go! Call Deb Nunes, 978-249-4000.

Custom thermal travel cups by Swank K reations. Single pieces or sets; totally kool kids’s cups. Krys and Keith Swan at swankcreations@gmail.com.

Fresh eggs and Royalston maple syrup from Putney’s Sugarhouse - $20/quart; Eggs $4/dozen. Contact Jessica Putney Schanz at 978-939-3329 (cell); 978-249-248-8617; jessputney1989@gmail.com.

Fresh Eggs: $3/dozen, are available when the cooler is at the end of the driveway at 185 North Fitzwilliam Road. Contact Brenda Putney at 978-249-7787 to reserve eggs for pick-up.


Mulch your garden. - Fertilize by the load or by the bag from Black Horse Farm (978) 424-8580 or email suzannagaits@gmail.com.

Birch Knoll Farm - Hay for sale. Contact Helen at 978-249-3163 or 774-239-5062.

Dean’s Beans Coffee - Order fresh roasted coffee once a month through the Village School, ground or whole beans. Order online and pick it up in the hallway at the school the following Friday. Go to https://www.villageschoolma.org/shop/ for coffee order due dates and to put in your order.
**Garden Notes**  
January 22, 2022

Coming up with garden notes in late January is as formidable a task as bringing closure to you-know-what. I have re-read my fifteen prior February columns in the hope of garnering some inspiration. None was forthcoming. Comments about the weather prevailed. (Doesn’t it always?) Occasionally my soap box was hauled out and I ranted about this or that. Garden notes were a footnote. In fact, two were written during escapes to more southerly climes and one just prior to our first trip to Ireland. I am off to nowhere, the world exhibiting a decidedly unattractive tint, especially the Divided States of America.

Winter has finally settled in, at least in respect to temperatures. Our furnace is consuming quantities of wood at a feverish pace. Winter has not settled in, at least in respect to snowfall. I depend on snow shoveling to provide a source of physical activity. I’ve been physically inactive. The same cannot be said for ice; its persistent presence provides a challenge to getting from here to there.

There is just enough snow on the ground to mask any garden activity. Except kale. I continue my love/hate relationship with kale. I find it neither flavorful nor tender. I deal with the former by mixing it with a lot of other ingredients (stews, for instance) and the latter by long, slow cooking. On the other hand, there is nothing else harvestable in mid-winter. Four kale leaves provide a remarkable amount of foodstuffs and any one plant has many leaves. Truth be told, our own kale was stripped to nubbins by the deer. But number four son’s garden, more effectively fenced, provides us with all our needs.

Birdwatching, from the comfort of our kitchen, provides a form of entertainment. The only constant from last winter is the prodigious number of blue jays. There are no evening grosbeaks; that is no surprise, they are rare visitors. What is surprising, is the virtual absence of chickadees and titmice and goldfinches and nuthatches. The sunflowers are overwhelmingly consumed by the aforementioned blue jays, juncos, and doves, ground feeders all. Flashes of color are provided by three types of woodpeckers and a pair of cardinals. A year ago I commented on the total absence of gray squirrels; this morning I counted twelve. As the world turns.

A week or so ago, a bobcat was spotted in the field. Apparently they are very common but very secretive. This was only my second sighting. Their preferred food is rabbit. I can only hope.

Finally, a bit of ‘fessing up’. I’ve been engaging in a fair degree of foot dragging. Except for the garlic, I applied no mulch to the garden. A number of beds remain un-enriched. No leaves were raked. Wood-cutting is always underway (and sometimes completed) by this time. This year I have yet to change the chain on the saw. There’s always tomorrow.

*Larry Siegel*

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**In the Walls**

Winter’s short cold days keep us busy and close to home, stacking firewood, clearing our walks, and keeping the wood stove going. At times this mid-winter rhythm can feel quite isolating. But the sounds coming from inside our walls suggest that we are not alone. A quick scurry, a dry scratch, and an occasional squeak suggest there are others working to keep warm and dry.

We have had seasons of actual mouse sightings at which point we put aside sentiment and get out the traps. But mostly they live their lives in the privacy of our walls. Sometimes we hear one in the corner of the living room scratching in the wall behind the couch. Other times we hear one in the upstairs bathroom wall. We have had seasons of actual mouse sightings at which point we put aside sentiment and get out the traps. But mostly they live their lives in the privacy of our walls.

I wonder about the world they are creating in there. I imagine a vast network of twists and turns leading our mice to safety: a vast network of twists and turns leading our mice to safety: a vast network of twists and turns leading our mice to safety: a vast network of twists and turns leading our mice to safety: a vast network of twists and turns leading our mice to safety: a vast network of twists and turns leading our mice to safety. I am reminded of the chapter in “Wind in the Willows” where Mole visits Badger in his underground home. Mole feels welcome there and he marvels at the soft Turkish rugs and long hallways hung with family portraits. Badger’s vast labyrinth of lamp-lit rooms, bright fires, and warm beds is, to me, the definition of comfort and safety.

Perhaps our walls have become like Badger’s home - an ideal spot for a small creature to spend a cold dark winter night. On a recent afternoon, when I heard the unmistakable soft scrubbling of a mouse in the corner of our sitting room, I did not rap on the wall. Instead, I imagined a tiny cold creature who had finished his day’s work and was, like the rest of us, simply looking for comfort and warmth on a late winter day.

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Winterberry

Maureen Blasco

When the leaves fall and tell us winter is here, our landscape changes to a very gray one. As I move through the winter world, however, my eyes catch some bright spots in the forest – clumps of red berries on the sides of the road and the wetlands. I love this bit of color, or colors, ranging from almost yellow, through orange, to deep red.

What are these plants? My first thought was that they reminded me of holly berries, which definitely appear at this time of year. But where are the characteristic evergreen, pointy leaves? The leaves of these plants all seem to have fallen off.

Well, the trusty Peterson guide to Trees and Shrubs has answered my questions. In fact, these plants are a variety of holly called Common Winterberry Holly (Ilex verticillata). Hollies are many and come in both evergreen and deciduous varieties. The American Holly (Ilex opaca), with its prickly all-year-round leaves are clearly evergreen. But many of the berries we see at this time of the year are deciduous.

Though they look pretty and make a nice winter bouquet, winterberries are not edible for humans. They are eaten by many small animals and species of birds.

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