Calendar of Events
A complete listing of department, committee, commission, and board meetings is posted: www.royalston-ma.gov

Winter Parking Ban through April 30th
Burn permits available now.

March 1  Friday

March 2  Saturday
10 a.m.  Special Town Meeting. 1 article- To see if the Town will vote to Raise and Appropriate, transfer or borrow a sum of money to reduce the FY2024 Tax Rate, or act anything thereon.

March 5  Tuesday
7 a.m. – 8 p.m.  Presidential Primary Town Hall.

March 8  Friday
6:30 -9 p.m.  Game Night at Town Hall. (Hopefully the first of a series.) Many different card games (whist, hearts, spades, 500 rummy, and scopa), as well as chess, cribbage and ping pong on a portable, nonregulation-sized table. Children over 12 welcomed if accompanied by an adult. Contact Robert Fairchild at 617-460-3544.

March 10  Sunday
2:00 a.m.  Daylight Savings Time begins.  Spring forward.
5:00 a.m.  New Worm Moon
sundown  Ramadan begins
Noon and 2 pm  Willow Basket Making.  Two sessions of 15 people. Bring clippers to cut the willow branches if you have them. $20 materials cost. Waiting list available. Funded by the Royalston Cultural Council and the Friends of the Library.

March 15  Friday
7:00 p.m.  George Bennett will discuss his book, Into the Distance at the Town Hall. Refreshments. Sponsored by the Friends.

March 17  Sunday  St. Patrick’s Day

March 19  Tuesday  Spring Equinox

March 21  Thursday
3:30 p.m.  Library Book Group will discuss The Covenant of Water by Abraham Verghese. Copies available to borrow at the Library. Light refreshments.

March 23  Saturday
8 - 11 a.m.  Chet Hall Scholarship Pancake Breakfast and Rafflepalooza at the Royalston Community School. Item donations for the raffles are welcomed and can be dropped off at RCS at any time. This event supports scholarships to high school students who have attended school in the Athol-Royalston Regional School District.

March 25  Monday  Full Worm Moon

March 25  Monday
6:30-8:00 p.m. – Handwork Evening with Nicole Romer at the Library. Light refreshments. Sponsored by the Friends.

March 29  Good Friday
March 30  Saturday
10 a.m. sharp  Annual Easter Egg Hunt on The Common- rain or shine. Bring a bag or basket to gather the eggs. Hunt followed by chocolate melt inside the Town Hall. Volunteers needed! Contact Sara Dilg at 978-248-9828.

March 31  Easter Sunday

Save the Date
April 1  Monday  April Fool’s Day
10 a.m. – 8 p.m.  Annual Town Elections Town Hall: vote on candidates for Selectboard, School Committee, Library Trustee, other Town offices as well as a question about the future of the Transfer Station.

April 6  Saturday  Rise Richardson Retirement Party – founder and director of the Village School since the beginning. Call the school for information.

April 8  Monday  2:00 – 5:00 p.m. If it’s sunny, come view the solar eclipse at the Library. We will have eclipse glasses and a pinhole viewer.

April 18  Thursday  1:30 p.m.  Kite Flying, kite cake, kite poetry, and Earth Day crafts at the Library

April 28  Sunday  2:00 p.m.  Michael Coffey, sculptor and woodworker, will discuss his life and craft and his book, Michael Coffey: Sculptor and Furniture Maker in Wood. Town Hall.
Select Board Notes
Shelby Bronnes, Selectboard Clerk

Master Planning: It was recommended by the Planning Board, which is spearheading the Master Plan that the Select Board contact Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC) to be the facilitator of our efforts and goals to create a future plan for the town. The Select Board agreed and this process will move forward through community outreach, grant seeking and data collection of various types. Phil Rabino-witz was appointed as the “Community Outreach Czar” for this committee. This is still in development and will be announced by the Planning Board when it is finalized.

Upcoming Election: The Town Election is coming up on Monday, April 1 from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. There are copies of the warrant posted throughout town including the Post Office, Whitney and Town Hall and the Country Store bulletin board. There are several positions being voted on including: one position on the Select Board, one Royalston member for School Committee and more; also the non-binding question regarding the future of the Transfer Station is included. Please come out and vote, your opinion matters.

Budget Season begins: In the coming weeks the Select Board will be meeting every other Tuesday at 7pm in the Town Hall to discuss the FY25 budget with each Department Head, Board and Committee chairs. This will then go to the Finance Committee for review before final decisions are made in time to present at the Annual Town Meeting on June 8.

King St. Bridge: Many efforts towards fixing the King St. Bridge in the South Village continue. After going out to bid a company by the name of Ellana Inc. Construction Consultants will develop a preliminary cost design with intent of changes and function along with developing a quote for the work. After funds are procured with State and Federal help, the actual construction work will go out to bid.

New Order: It was motioned at the last meeting in January that there be a reorganization of order amongst your Select Board. Deb D’Amico who has been the Chair for the last 3 years has stepped down and Rick Martin the new Chair will now hold the reins as Deb will assist in the transition before she leaves the Board once the April 1 election is completed.

Town Clerk News
Town Clerk Barbara Richardson 978-249-0493, Hours: Wednesdays 10 a.m.-2 p.m.; by appt.

Annual Town Election
Monday, April 1, 2024 10AM-8PM, Annual Town Election all vote at the Town Hall. We will elect a member to the Select Board, Board of Assessors, a Moderator, Cemetery Commissioner, a Tree Warden, Member of the Board of Health, a Constable, a member to the Athol Royalston School Committee and a Library Trustee these will be for 3 years. A member to the Planning Board for 5 years, a Cemetery Commissioner for 2 years, and 4 members to the J.N. Bartlett fund for 1 year. Also, will vote a non-binding question—Are you in favor of the Royalston Transfer and Recycling Station remaining operational in Royalston with the possibility of increased fees in order to close the funding deficit?

Selectboard Campaign Statements - Annual Town Election is April 1
Bill Chapman
Hello Royalston residents. Thank you in advance for taking your time to read this. My name is Bill Chapman and I am a candidate for the Selectboard position. I was approached by a number of friends and neighbors in town who asked if I would ever be interested in serving on the Selectboard. My response was: “If the town ever needed me, I would be there for it”. I was encouraged that this would be a good time for me to step up to do my share of the town’s work. I am ready.

I am forever indebted to the town for the tremendous support my family received when we lost our home to a house fire. The response was overwhelming and really showed what a great town we have. My children were taught valuable lessons about taking care and concern for others at their time of need. They will carry these values for the rest of their lives. For this I am eternally grateful.

I also had the honor of serving the town as a police officer for a number of years starting in 2009. I know many people in town through my professional relationships in police work and physical therapy. I know many others on a personal level and greatly value these relationships. I feel the people of Royalston are truly a great group of people that together make up an incredible Town.

If chosen to serve as a Selectboard member, I would do my very best to work with the other board members to make the best decisions for the Town of Royalston and its residents. Royalston is a special place and I feel we all need to step up when needed to keep it this way. I see many who graciously give up their valuable time and energy to provide for the Town.

I would be honored to contribute to the town as a Selectboard member if you, the townspeople, found it fitting for me to do so. Thank you for your consideration.

Gary Winitzer
I made Royalston my home over 40 years ago and want to keep the natural beauty we all enjoy. I am proud of my service for more than twenty years as a member of the Fire Department and Rescue Squad, as a Selectman and Sewer Commissioner. I continue to be interested in serving on the Board of Assessors, Council on Aging, as a Trustee of the J. N. Bartlett Fund and volunteering for the Senior Luncheon Club.

I studied accounting, business management, computer programming and information systems at UMass, Bentley College and Mount Wachusett Community College where I earned my Associates of Science degree in Computer Information Systems.

When elected, I promise to perform my responsibility, in a manner that is fair, open, and consistent with laws, regulations, by-laws and the votes of the Town Meetings. I will suggest that we stay focused on our duty to administer the Town’s business. We must show leadership by setting an example and demonstrating fiscal restraint and completing our tasks in a timely and effective manner. I am aware of the commitment of time and energy required of Selectman.

I wish that everyone would consider that I have the ability to move the Town forward in a financially responsible way, to implement new sources of revenue and to help maintain the character of our Town.

You can trust me to do what I say. You can depend on me to represent you, your family, and our Town with integrity and compassion. I respectfully ask you to vote for GARY L. WINITZER for SELECT BOARD on Monday, April 1st.
Royalston Police Department News
Officer Christopher Deveneau – 978-249-5838 (leave mssg.)

We continue to review the best path for our communities’ policing needs as a result of the restrictions placed onto us by the Police Reform Bill, which has had a detrimental effect on smaller communities as it eliminates the training for those who want to serve their community as part-time officers. In recent years, Royalston has relied heavily on part-time staff. Prior to implementation of the Reform Bill, the Royalston Police Department employed 19 part-time officers. This staff covered daily crime prevention patrols and responded to reports of crimes and medical or other emergencies. Our current staffing level has dropped to 9 staff.

I recently attended a meeting with Western Massachusetts representatives as they are feeling this detrimental impact on their policing services due to the loss of available part-time staff. Communities have considered shared services, regionalization with a larger community or adding full-time staff to ensure the policing needs of the community are met to the satisfaction of the residents. Regionalizing and shared services have been implemented in Western Massachusetts in a few small neighboring communities that are similar in size and population to Royalston. A main point the representatives made clear during the discussion was that communities exploring regionalization (a host community taking over the policing of a neighboring community) leads to no cost savings and costs have increased to the community taken over.

A main take-away from this meeting was you need to have neighboring communities that are interested in regionalizing and/or sharing some basic policing services. I have explored this with our neighboring communities and there is no interest at this time, as all agencies across the Commonwealth are struggling to fill their own staffing needs and taking on additional work (response calls) would only negatively impact and be unfair to their communities. For such a regionalization plan to work, the host community would require hiring additional full-time staffing for all 3 shifts throughout the day, and this expense would be assessed to the non-host community. Collectively it was determined this regionalization would be more costly to our community than if we were to do it ourselves.

The concern our community is facing with its policing needs is having enough part-time staff available to fill daily patrols and responding to emergency calls during non-patrol hours to include overnight. We have been grateful to the Athol State Police for assisting during this transition time, but they also assist other 16 communities, 7 of which operate with part-time staff covering the overnight shifts. Select Chair Deb Demico and I recently met with the State Police Major and Barracks Commander, and they will assist in any way possible, but they are having a staffing issue as well statewide.

A review of the years 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023 (6-months) has determined an average of 996 emergency calls per year, which does not include general calls for service received at the police station. These calls break down into the following shifts: 7am-3pm (61%), 3pm-11pm (34%) and 11pm-7am (5%).

As requested by the Selectboard, I have proposed two budgets for FY25. One budget reflects our policing operation to continue as is, and the second budget reflects what I feel will provide the best policing operation for our community based on call volume, staffing requirements and fiscal cost. I feel providing a patrol from 7am–3pm and 3pm–11pm Monday through Friday will provide the community with a strong visible crime deterrent during the daytime while residents are away from home at work or away on vacation. The 3 to 11 shift will be available to be visible, respond to emergency calls and meet with residents which are more available in the evenings. This will additionally allow our First Responder Medical trained police to quickly assist with emergencies. I have recommended one eight-hour patrol on Saturdays and Sundays from late morning to early evening. Overnight coverage for emergency calls would continue to utilize staff for callouts and if no one is immediately available, the call would be forwarded to the State Police in Athol or to a neighboring community if we should enter into a Mutual Aid Agreement for the overnight assistance when our staff are unavailable or on another emergency call.

The Selectboard and I will continue working to provide the best immediate police service to the Town. Future work will include informational meetings with residents as your thoughts are needed to ensure we continue to live in a safe community.

Royalston Department of Public Works
DPW Superintendent Jaret R. Thiem 978-249-4223 or dpw-admin@royalston-ma.gov

The DPW has taken delivery of the vibratory roller, trailer, and dust control spray tank that was approved at the last Annual Town Meeting. I would like to thank the townspeople for supporting this, as we will be better able to serve the Town with these pieces of equipment. Along with the above purchases, we have been using the heavy-duty automotive lifts, also approved at the last ATM to bring our entire fleet up to date on regular service and preventive maintenance. We are able to accomplish pro-active care, like greasing, and undercoating to prevent rusting.

We are excited to being using the roller for spring grading, which, hopefully, will start in the next few months. Pothole season is here, and we will be continuing to patch when the weather allows.

After doing some research and brainstorming ideas, as well as reaching out to other DPWs, we have been working on setting up designated gravel road plows. The last few years, we haven’t had the depth of frost or deep freeze we would like to plow our gravel roads. We have found a special cutting edge, a rounded edge (see picture) that will not dig into the unfrozen gravel, but instead, will glide on top so we aren’t plowing off good gravel into the ditch. This special edge should keep the gravel on the road, and keep drainage ditches more open to the shoulders.

Board of Health News
Phil Leger, chair

There was a very good turnout at the information session held to discuss the transfer station. Approximately 75 residents attended to voice their support for keeping the transfer station open in Royalston. There will be a non-binding question on the town election ballot on April 1, 2024. The question is as follows: Are you in favor of the Royalston Transfer and Recycling Station remaining operational in Royalston with the possibility of increased fees in order to close the funding deficit? This will give the opportunity for folks that didn’t attend the information session a voice. Our goal has always been to break even- not to make money but to cover operational costs. Given our location, the cost to transport and process materials collected have risen over the years. Thus the invitation to regionalize with Winchendon needed to be considered. That being said, making sure you have a current vehicle access sticker on your windshield driver’s side and that all trash bags have a sticker on them, will help close the funding gap. Recycling is free, but demo is not. You may see from time to time BOH members assisting with stickers especially around new windshield sticker time in June and July.

COVID test kits are still available at the Post Office, Town Hall, and Library as COVID is still circulating around our area. Vaccines for flu, COVID and RSV are available at most local pharmacies.
Phinehas S. Newton Library News
Kathy Morris, Library Director
Trustees: Jeffrey Mangum, Jennifer Basso, Theresa Quinn
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
Sandy and Brian Knight

Donations to the Library
Donald R. Stanton

Thank yous
Stephanie Bennett Rahmat for excellent help with lots of different tasks.
The Royalston Academy for funding the Southwick Zoo Earth Limited Zoomobile.
Christine Cheney, Mary Smith, and Concy Smith for help setting up and cleaning up after the Zoomobile program.
Beth Gospodarek for help setting up and Jim Richardson for getting the chairs organized after the Zoomobile program.
Alice Daugherty for an amazing Lunar New Year program. It was not only fun and educational but a gourmet treat for those attending. We all learned so much about the holiday and its significance. And, to Scott Daugherty for all the work he did carrying in the myriad of dishes, without spilling anything, and transporting everything else.

Into the Distance: The Lost World of Long Distance Trucking Author Talk and Book Discussion
George Bennett, who for the last twenty years has been the fifth and sixth grade teacher at the Village School, has penned a book about his years as a long distance trucker during the 1970s, driving around Britain, then Europe, the communist Eastern bloc countries, and the Middle East as far as Dubai before GPS, before satellite tracking, and before the political upheavals. After seven years of driving, he worked as a journalist, testing and writing about trucks, and later became the editor and owner of two magazines specializing in truck and transport industries. After selling the publishing company he qualified as a teacher and taught 2 years in England before coming to Royalston. A reviewer remarked that the sign of a good nonfiction book is one that you enjoy reading even if the subject itself is not much interest to you. I, who know nothing about trucks, agree. You become caught up in the world and the travel. George is very honest about his adventures and the toll they took on his marriage with him being gone for long stretches of time. Join us on Friday, March 15 at 7:00 p.m. at the Royalston Town Hall to hear this fascinating story. This program is sponsored by the Friends of the Library. Light refreshments will be served. Copies of the book will be available to purchase. The book is also available to borrow from the Library.

Kids’ Art Month and Art Exhibit
With March designated as National Kids Art Month we invited all people aged 1-18 to create a drawing or painting up to 8 ½ “ x 11” in size. Those works will be exhibited at the Library during March and April. If you haven’t completed a piece to display, you are welcome to create a piece and submit it even for a short time. Artwork may be left at the Library or Royalston Community School. Please make sure your name, age, and phone number or email are on the back of the artwork.

Hand Work Evenings
Nicole Romer facilitates an evening of hand work. Bring your knitting, crocheting, rug hooking, cross stitching, hand sewing, or just come for warmth, sharing ideas and help, conversation, and light refreshments. Nicole is an expert craftsperson who can help with many issues that arise while doing hand work. Pick up that project that’s been laying around waiting to be completed or that needs some help getting around complicated instructions and join the group. Don’t have a project at the moment? Stop by to draw in one of our many coloring books. We will continue on Monday evenings from 6:30-8:00 p.m, with the next scheduled for March 25. There will be two more craft evenings on April 22 and May 20.

Library Book Group - All welcome
On Thursday, March 21, the Library Book Group will discuss The Covenant of Water by Abraham Verghese. This evocative book follows three generations from 1900 to 1977 of an Indian family haunted by a medical mystery. Verghese, a medical doctor, delves into the lives of the family dealing with a disease that affects all of the family. Called a hymn to progress in medicine and to human understanding, this novel is a masterpiece of writing. Copies are available to borrow. April’s book, Beartown, by Fredrik Backman, to be discussed on April 18.
### Some of the new materials at your library

#### Adult Fiction
- Anders, Charlie: *Elijah’s Easter Suit*
- Baker, Ellen: *The Hidden Life of Cecily Larson*
- Beaton, M.C.: *Death of a Spy*
- Carr, Robyn: *The Spirit of the Boy Who Knew Too Much*
- Finn, A.J.: *End of Story*
- Greaney, Mark: *The Chaos Agent*
- Hannah, Kristin: *The Women*
- Hurwitz, Gregg: *Lone Wolf*
- Kellerman, Jonathan: *The Ghost Orchid*
- Koontz, Dean: *The Bad Weather Friend*
- Mallory, Susan: *The Summer Book Club*
- Paris, B.A.: *Come and Get It*
- Reid, Kiley: *Leaving*
- Robinson, Roxana: *Everyone on this Train is a Suspect*
- Stevenson, Benjamin: *Burma Sahib*
- Theroux, Paul: *Hard By a Great Forest*

#### Adult Non-fiction
- Brewer, Judson: *The Hunger Habit*
- Duhigg, Charles: *Supercommunicators*
- Oliver, Jamie: *5 Ingredient Mediterranean*

#### Children’s Fiction
- Eggers, Dave: *Soren’s Seventh Song*
- Hartman, Brooke: *All Aboard the Alaska Train*
- Ho, Joanna: *Eyes That Weave the World’s Wonders*
- Holm, Jennifer: *Sunny 5*
- Jackson, Brenton: *Elijah’s Easter Suit*
- Moody, Vanessa: *We Love Our Families*
- Raschka, Christopher: *Tomorrow’s Lily*
- Scott, Jordan: *Are You Big?*
- Willems, Mo: *Ramadan Kareem*

#### Children’s Non-Fiction
- Bolte, Mari: *Backhoes*
- Bolte, Mari: *Concrete Mixers*
- Bolte, Mari: *Forklifts*
- Bolte, Mari: *Wheel Loaders*
- Buckley, James: *Curse of the Bambino!*
- Cusick, Dawn: *The Astro Chimps*
- Henzel, Cynthia: *Powerful Military Drones*

#### Young Adult
- Gratz, Alan: *Heroes*
- Kibuishi, Kazu: *Waverider*

#### Audiobooks
- Connelly, Michael: *Resurrection Walk*

#### DVDs:
- *The Marvels*
- *My Sailor, My Love*
- *Planet Earth III*
- *Retribution*
- *Trolls Band Together*

#### Yoga Classes Continue
Spring is in the air and as many venture outside it’s a great time to join in for an hour of stretching, strengthening your core, and enhancing your balance. This community yoga is adaptable to all levels of ability. The class takes place in the upstairs of the Town Hall on Tuesdays at 6:00 p.m.

#### Preschool Story Time
Join Brooke Coleman on non-holiday Mondays at 2:00 p.m. for an hour of play and socializing, a craft project, a story, and as a way to explore the children’s room at the Library and learn about the Library. Children are invited to participate but may just play or draw or explore on their own.

#### Willow Basket Making Workshop
Mary Lauren Fraser will lead two classes in willow basket making. Mary is known for her work creating willow caskets and burial urns. This workshop will teach the basics of working with willow and how to create a basic willow basket. Currently, there are no more spaces available in the classes but those interested in being on the waiting list can call the Library.

#### Spice of the Month – Sumac
The is the last month for the spice club this year. Stop by and pick up the kit which contains recipes and enough sumac to make them. Sumac is made from the berries of Rhus coriaria shrub which is related to our native staghorn sumac, *Rhus typhina*. Sumac, also called Sicilian sumac, has a citrusy, tangy flavor that adds its red-dish color and acidity to Middle Eastern dishes. Our native sumac was and still is used to make a tea with a lemony flavor. Sumac is high in antioxidants and while its medicinal properties have not been extensively studied, its components suggest it may be useful for managing type 2 diabetes. It has been used as a spice for centuries and has gained popularity here in many dishes. Thanks again to Gina Verrelli for putting together these kits and to the Friends for funding them.
Historical Society News

Peter Kranak, president

To correspond with the 200th anniversary of the Ladies’ Benevolent society, the Society is organizing a big re-opening exhibit at the museum around women’s lives in Royalston. This includes the girls who lived in the school and farm where the Village School is now located and Camp Caravan used to be on Rt 68 in South Royalston. In the first three decades of the 20th Century, this was George and Alice Lemon’s School for the Preservation of American Girlhood also known as The High View Conservation School, where 5 - 20 girls from “broken homes” stayed at the school from several months to years until they finished 8th grade. Everyone helped out with ducks, chickens, cows and horses. These pictures show them in March.

Thank you Walt Thornton for sharing these images and others which we will use in the upcoming Museum exhibition on Women’s Lives in Royalston opening May 19.

The 24th Annual Royalston Egg Hunt, Saturday, March 30th

Volunteers are needed before, during, and after the event! Please contact event organizer Sara Dilg at 978 248-9828 for more information. Mr. Bunny and friends invite you to celebrate the annual Egg Hunt on Royalston Common.

The festivities will start promptly at 10:00 AM on Saturday, March 30th from the steps of the Town Hall. It will be held rain or shine; participants are advised to dress for the weather. Immediately following the egg hunt, the longtime-favorite chocolate candy-making activity takes place in the Town Hall. Plus, children will again be able to enjoy the very popular Easter photo panel created by local artist Gordon Morrison.

Children should bring a bag or basket to hold their eggs during the hunt and to take home their candy afterwards. We ask that everyone please recycle the emptied plastic eggs in the marked bins set up in the Town Hall.

Want to help out? Donations of soft candy are welcome (we have plenty of plastic eggs). All candy must be individually wrapped and small enough to fit into the plastic eggs. From March 9th through the 23rd, please bring donations to the Library and the Post Office during their normal business hours. Cash donations at the event are also welcomed and are used only for candy and chocolate melting wafers.
CONGRATULATIONS AND GOOD NEWS

Got something to crow about? Let us know at the RCN. Drop at the Library or email chasegos2@gmail.com.

The Royalston Community Newsletter is marking an anniversary. The first newsletter went out at the turn of the millenium with a November 1999 issue. The Friends of the Library have kept it up, 10 issues per year, ever since. Thus, this is the 25th March all residents have had the news direct-mailed to their homes.

Congratulations to Ms. Abigail Willhite, who recently achieved Excellence List status through Mount Wachusett Community College, a designation for students enrolled in fewer than 12 credits in a semester and who attain a grade-point average between 3.3 and 3.99. Aby, who celebrated her 18th birthday last month, is an Athol High School senior, and a “Dual Enrollment Student” at MWCC. Aby is the daughter of Jessica (Hopkins) and Chris Willhite, and grand daughter of Brenda and Jeffrey Hopkins, all of North Fitzwilliam Road, and of Candy Willhite of Athol.

Congratulations to Athol High School senior Ms. Savannah Basso, a Mount Wachusett Community College “Dual Enrollment Student” who recently earned Distinction List status through. Students earning between 6 and 11.5 semester hours, and attaining a grade point average of 4.0, with no incomplete grades, are honored with placement on the Distinction List. Savannah, who celebrated her 18th birthday in February, is the daughter of Jenn and Ryan Basso of North Fitzwilliam Road.

Open Mic Update

A large crowd was in attendance in January to pay tribute to Jim Bennett. Jim was instrumental in organizing the Open Mic series as a member of the RCC and as part of the production crew. So many musicians and bandmates came to play that night that we went overtime. Everyone that played that night could say they had played with Jim at one time or another over the years. Jim’s family was in attendance and were touched by the outpouring of love shown.

The night was video-taped and at some point after editing will be released for folks to see. A big thank you to all that came and to the musicians who played. We miss you Jim!

Helpful Hints for Bread Baking

From the LBS” cookbook from 1997 called Mostly Scratch.

1. a dish of water in the oven keeps crust from getting hard.
2. Place bread pans diagonally in the oven for even baking.
3. Potato water quickens action of yeast and keeps bread moist.
4. Rolls will be crusty if placed 1” apart while baking.
5. Lightly grease tops of rolls for a soft crust.
6. To reheat rolls, place them in a paper bag sprinkled with water in a hot oven for 3 - 5 minutes.
7. Bread should be turned out of pans immediately to let the steam escape.
8. Crush cereal to replace NEVER use a wet potholder.

The Ladies Benevolent Society and the Library-200th Anniversary History Lessons

The next meeting of the Ladies’ Benevolent Society is Thursday, March 28th, at 6:30 p.m at the home of Lorraine and Bob Casinghino, 21 On the Common. All are invited to plan a series of programs and festivities throughout this year celebrating the LBS’s 200th year of comradery and service. Also, the hand drawn posters for LBS events from the early 20th Century that have recently been restored by the Historical Society and the LBS will be revealed. Later in the year, the posters will be part of several public exhibits. For more information about the meeting or directions, reach out to secretary Kristi Schelli, e-mail kristischellie@gmail.com.

Over the past 200 years, using the power of the community events, fundraising, and membership drives, the LBS has had a persistent influence on our Town. For instance, while Rev. Lee had begun a subscription library based in the Parsonage, where paying members could use books beginning in 1778, one hundred years later, it was the LBS that was instrumental in beginning the first free lending library open to all in our Town.

In 1878, the Ladies, under the leadership of Almira Woodbury, began targeted fundraising through a series of community suppers and entertainments to buy books for a Library. It had soon raised $250. Joseph Raymond matched the Ladies’ monetary donation. The Royalston Farmers Club donated its small book collection as well. Soon the shelves, located in the Selectboard’s office in Town Hall, were filled with 464 volumes. For the next three years, the Ladies managed the Library, open from 3:30 to 5:30 and 7 - 8 p.m. each Saturday. Books were regularly delivered to South Royalston. The librarians stoked the furnace. The Town took over the Library in 1881 and appropriated a budget of $30 per year. However, it wasn’t long before the Library outgrew this space in the Selectboard office.

The Phinehas S. Newton Library was opened in 1911 and the books and natural history exhibits, originally purchased and curated by the LBS, were moved from the Town Hall to their new home.

The new Library was built on land donated by the Hill family and construction costs largely covered by its namesake, Phinehas S. Newton. Again women’s labors, including those of some LBS members play a large role. Mr. Newton was an entrepreneur with deep roots in Town who had generated a good part of his wealth from the palm leaf cottage industry. He drove a wagon drawn by two horses about Town to homes where he sold raw materials and purchased the finished palm leaf braids, hats, fans and mats local women had created - all at prices favorable to his business. Still, in the late 1800s, there were few opportunities for women to generate cash income in Royalston and many needed and appreciated the chance to earn money or credit at Newton’s store. It was Phinehas Newton’s profits, largely from women’s efforts with palm leaf, which were donated to build our Library.
Preparing beats panic every time! Be informed ~ Make a Plan!

- DIAL 9-1-1
- EvACUATE THE BUILDING
- Keep all “stuff” on risers
- Never keep irreplaceable documents there!
- Elevate heat and electric systems
- Investigate perimeter cut-off trenches for your home

If worse comes to worse, and you have so much water in your cellar/basement that the water is threatening your systems:
- EVACUATE THE BUILDING
- DIAL 9-1-1

Preparedness beats panic every time! Be informed ~ Make a Plan!

At Athol High School, many students involved with the dual enrollment program, where AHS students can take classes for college credits without cost at Mt. Wachusett Community College, won academic accolades in their first semester. Also, some high school seniors are currently taking advantage of the opportunity to explore paid internships in the field of education, thanks to a significant grant from the Mass. Department of Education.

Royalston Emergency Management Agency
Director Jim Barclay ema@royalston-ma.gov or phone 978-249-2904
Deputy Director Tom Musco tgmusco@gmail.com or phone 978-249-9633

Emergency Management’s main goal is to prevent (where possible) predictable situations from turning into emergencies. For example, in the ‘predictable situations department,’ we can pretty well guarantee that March and April will bring melting snow and spring rains. Climate change is intensifying weather systems, and making both drenching rains (and droughts) more extreme. In anticipation of this predictable PRE-emergency, it is now time to limit the amount of water entering your cellar or basement (zero is the desired amount!) by:
- Ensuring your sump pump is working
- Verifying all drains are cleared of debris
- Checking/repairing damaged gutters

Even having done that for years, and you still have a history of a wet cellar/basement, you should:
- Never keep irreplaceable documents there!
- Keep all “stuff” on risers
- Elevate heat and electric systems
- Investigate perimeter cut-off trenches for your home

Royalston Community School PTG
PTGroyalstoncommunityschool@gmail.com

R.C.S.’s D.A.R.E. (Drug Abuse Resistance Education) instructor and School Resource Officer Royalston Police Sergeant Josh Lamarche, was celebrated by our Parent-Teacher Group), students, and staff on Thursday, February 15, for School Resource Officer Appreciation Day. The P.T.G. purchased a new Big Papi wiffle ball set for him to use during recess, and gave him a gift card for some well-deserved treats. We appreciate all that Officer Josh does for R.C.S. and our community. We are so lucky to have his support and positive presence at our school!

World champion bicycle stunt rider and youth motivational speaker Chris Poulos visited RCS in February. He lives his life by a simple motto: “Treat others BETTER than I want to be treated!” He stressed that his success as an athlete was only possible because of his positive interactions with others, his commitment to being an upstander, and his perseverance. He also performed some amazing bicycle tricks. The visit was funded by a donation from the Royalston Academy.

Royalston Community School students are recognized each month for exemplifying core values and beliefs. Staff members nominate students demonstrating Respectful, Cooperative, and Safe behaviors, and administration selects honorees. In January, Wyatt Harris and Bayard Hard were selected.

Students Isla Burnham and Maizy DeCosta were celebrated at the February Athol-Royalston Regional School District School Committee meeting for their high achievement on the Spring 2023 MCAS. The pair received certificates from the MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, gift cards, celebration packets for their guardians, and letters of recognition.

RCS’s Student Council was cited for “exemplifying our core value of collaboration”. The group organized a collection of health and beauty care items for the District’s Family and Community Center. More than 420 items were collected, and Center Director Shirley Mitchell was very excited about the successful drive.

RCS marked Black History Month during February. Each day, morning announcements included a brief biography about a famous black person in history. The selected individuals are scientists, artists, teachers, musicians, athletes, and politicians who have made a positive impact in our world. Following the morning announcement introduction, the person’s image and biography was added to the wall (by the main office) celebrating Black History Month.

Athol Royalston Regional School District News
Submitted by Superintendent Matthew Ehrenworth, mehrenworth@arrsd.org ~ 978-249-2400
Administration at the Athol-Royalston Middle School is working to bring back the tradition of recognizing students in front of their peers for accomplishments as both scholars and leaders in their school community. Several students were recently recognized for their M.C.A.S. scores, growth in both literacy and mathematics testing, school attendance, and the school PRIDE award, which is based on the school’s identified core values of Perseverance, Respect, and Integrity, Done Every Day. Additionally, Ms. Winter’s A.R.M.S. after-school Sewing Club has been active, with students recently displaying some of their works resulting from trying their hands at new skills. Lastly, the Friday going into February vacation, A.R.M.S. faculty challenged their students to a basketball game, and oh, what a game it was—the faculty got off to a big lead before our students came roaring back to tie the lead in the second half! All the staff could do was catch up to the students before the game ended in a tie, 39-39! Fun was had by all, and it was a great way to finish the week before a well-earned break from school activities.
Middle School students! Don’t forget that March 31st is the application submission deadline for incoming Monty Tech freshmen! Your guidance counselor will assist you with the process, providing application materials and working with you to schedule an admissions interview. For more information, go to https://www.montytech.net/admissions. Make sure to check out the videos on the right side of the page.

2024 Attn graduates and their families: We would love to feature your graduate in the Royalston Community Newsletter! Contact s-dilg@montytech.net with information about your graduate. (Include a photo, if you wish!) Graduates will be featured in an upcoming newsletter.

For middle school students, the 4-week after-school VIP (Vocational Interest Program) sessions continued in February to help potential applicants learn more about Monty Tech. Students in the program get to explore a different shop each week.

For current students, Monty Tech is working to ensure that the skills and credentials earned by its graduates are keeping up with industry needs. The current focus is on the masonry program. The school is actively reaching out to employers in the masonry and tile setting field, issuing a survey to obtain guidance on what skills and knowledge are necessary in today’s work environment.

Lastly, Monty Tech now has a permit in hand for the future site of its After Dark MVP hybrid vocational program for juniors and seniors from Fitchburg and Gardner public schools and the Narragansett Regional School District. The program remains on track to welcome students in the fall of 2024.

What’s Happening at the Village School?
K-6th students start swimming lessons at the Athol YMCA this month. Kindergarten and 1st-2nd grade students will put in taps on the maple trees, collecting sap daily. They look forward to quenching their thirst with fresh sap at snack time.

5th-6th students present their science projects on Science Night at 7:00 on March 20.

All the classes have field trips scheduled to Richardson Farm in March and April. Some will see sheep shearing, some will collect sap and visit the sugar house, and some will hang out with newborn lambs. All will enjoy pancakes with fresh made syrup.

Interested in the Admissions process? It starts with a parent visit, observing the classroom that you are interested in. We are scheduling parent visits right now. If you are interested in kindergarten for next fall, email jocelyn@villageschoolma.org or call 978 249 3505.

Marion’s Food Pantry
Appointments Only
Call:

Deb Conrad (978)895-3505
Jeff & Sue Smith (978) 895-7887.

First Friday Open Mics continue March 1 and April 5
arrive early to sign up for a performance slot
homemade light supper
as well as desserts, tea and coffee for sale
sponsored by the Royalston Cultural Council

Scholarships Available
Forms are available through your high school guidance office or Phinehas Newton Library

Royalston Academy scholarships:  Deadline April 19, 2024 -
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 a graduating high school resident of Royalston going on to a higher education.

The Judy Jenkins Musco Scholarship is available for 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. For more information, contact Theresa Quinn 978-855-9148, therauinn@aol.com. Deadline for submissions is May 1, 2023.

Chet Hall Memorial Scholarship is open to those who attended ARRSMD schools past and present. Call Royalston Community School 978-249-2900 for more information. Deadline is April 30. Contact Sheila Hall with questions.
**Garden Notes**  
**February 22, 2024**

My life continues gardening-free. That’s about to change (in a wee way) with the indoor planting of onions and leeks in early March. This may well be the last hurrah for onions. I have tired of the un-diagnosed disease that afflicts them most every summer. The plants remain alive but the leaves die back and the resulting bulbs are a fraction of their potential size. Under the best of circumstances, onion cultivation is a tedious affair (and small yields are the worst of circumstances). Trying to plant hundreds of seeds in such a way as to assure a bit of space between each one is a skill I have yet to master. Transplanting to the garden in early May has a measure of tedium as well, compounded by the fact that black flies are in their ascendancy. Because I plant them so tightly (six rows in a four-foot bed, six inches apart in the rows) applying mulch becomes a difficult task, and running my hoe between the rows becomes an ongoing (but necessary) task. Skip a couple of hoeings and the onions will be overwhelmed by weeds. Stay tuned.

For the second year in a row, maples were tapped in early February (weeks before the more typical time). Five solid days of run followed, but came to a halt as cold weather returned. It is only now that the run has resumed. It’s never been more than a backyard undertaking, providing syrup for our own needs (it is our go-to sweetener), with some left over to gift or barter. Now the undertaking has been reduced to a handful of taps, just to say we’re still in the game (a game that commenced in 1977). I am not prepared to bring closure to yet another aspect of my life.

I have a column to complete and nothing else to fill it in with. How about the plight of the 3-r’s, reading, writing, ‘rithmetic. Reading…we do not read books anymore (actually, I do). Rather, our materials of choice are emails or messages or blogs or X or Instagram or Google news or what-have-you. Writing…I’ve been told that handwriting is no longer taught in the schools. The new ‘writing’ is pressing keys on one’s device. I wrote, and received, my first letters in 1960. I continue to write, and receive, letters to this day. Arithmetic…a while back, I gave three dollars to a clerk for a $2.85 bill. She used her device to determine that I was entitled to fifteen cents in change. Most would refer to this state of affairs as progress. I am not so sure.

**Larry Siegel**

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**Small Signs of Spring**  
**Deb D’Amico**

When does spring begin? The calendar says it comes in March, but I am unconvinced. Last year, a late March blizzard brought a heavy snowfall. It buried our azaleas, snapped the buds off our magnolia tree, and dashed all hopes of early blossoms. So, it would seem, the turn of a season pays little heed to the calendar. I believe it is marked instead by the smallest of changes to light and warmth. For this reason, my spring starts in February, thanks to my mother.

Our parents raised us in New Hampshire’s Mount Washington Valley, where winter renders every other season an afterthought. The Moat Mountain Range loomed to our west. In December, the sun went “behind the Moats” at around 3:30. This was our sunset, no matter what the Farmer’s Almanac said. My winter memories are of doing everything in the cold and dark. We walked to school in the dark, went skating in the dark, played outside in the dark. We puffed little breath clouds just for fun and felt the cold tighten our chests. All of this lent our childhood a certain drama. We were little soldiers of winter - not even the cold and dark could hold us back.

This was a child’s view of course. The relentless cold and dark must have taken its toll on our parents, whose engagement with winter involved keeping the pipes from freezing and making sure the car would start. This could be why our mother, ever the optimist, greeted February with firm resolve. “Winter’s back is broken,” she would tell us. “The sun is higher, the days are longer. It can snow all it wants now, but the snow won’t last.” This was not a mental survival tactic. This was an observable truth, and we began to note the changes as February unfolded.

Banks of snow softened and collapsed beneath our play. More often now, the town’s outdoor rink was streaked with wet ice. Our walk to school became an obstacle course of slush and mud. We saw patches of sodden grass where snow had been just days before. Taking deep breaths, we inhaled the scent of the earth emerging from winter’s cold.

Now I delight in this February spring. The increased sunlight gives snow a crystalline quality that announces the end of winter. The birds, whose migration is signaled not by warmth but by light, begin to return. And the patches of ground that appear and disappear as the temperatures warm smell of earth — and spring.

Last week I heard a Chickadee’s mating call. A bit premature, perhaps. But it made me smile and think of my mother. She would have agreed with that Chickadee: it is never too early to welcome the small signs of spring.
**Royalston South Village Revitalization Committee (RSVR)**

*The mission of the Royalston South Village Revitalization Committee is to revitalize the South Village while building community in the process. For more information, call Janice Trask at 978-249-2510.*

**Dear Neighbors,**

**King Street Bridge Project**

The King Street Bridge Project is a joint project of the North Quabbin Trail Association (NQTA), RSVR and the Town of Royalston. The bridge, which was permanently closed by the state in 2022, transports the waste water pipe that crosses the river from users on King Street to the Waste Water Treatment Plant on Blossom Street. We hope to replace the bridge with a multi-use footbridge that will carry this pipe and also allow residents and visitors to gain access to the 100+ hiking trails maintained by NQTA. RSVR has long hoped to have a “Bloomin’Bridge” over the river which would allow for opportunities for natural, social and recreational experiences. With the store opening during the upcoming year and the Park Committee working on the park at the Pete and Henry’s site (they are waiting for the Conservation Restriction paperwork to be approved by the state), our vision is to have more Royalston residents and visitors to be able to come down to the South Village for a sandwich, a hike, a picnic or an event at the Gazebo.

Thanks to the leadership of SelectBoard Chair Rick Martin, the Town set aside $25,000 for the design cost estimate to refurbish the bridge and put it out for bid late last year. On February 6th, the SelectBoard announced that Ellena Engineering of Wisconsin submitted the lower of two bids at $19,500 and was awarded the contract for the engineering study to see how much it would cost to refurbish the bridge. They will conduct an analysis of using the existing bridge (if it can be used) or putting in a new one, and then provide the town with a design and estimate of the cost of pursuing the most feasible option. At that point, the town would have to look into funding sources and go out and re-bid for the construction phase of the project. Rick said that the fact that the sewer line serving the South Village extends over the bridge may help the project to obtain funding. He said, “Having the sewer line on there – if the (present) bridge collapsed, or if something happened and raw sewage went into the river, that would be an environmental catastrophe that brings this whole project right up to the top of a lot of lists” of possible funding sources.

The contract specifications were for a foot bridge 10 feet wide and 84 feet long. The bridge must also be capable of accommodating a half-ton pick-up truck to allow service for the sewer pipe. Attending the January 18 planning meeting of the three groups were SelectBoard Chair Rick Martin, NQTA officials Bob Curley, Don Shambroom, Jane LaPointe and Robin Ledger, Royalston resident Dick Lawrence, and RSVR Steering Committee members Rose Lawrence, Linda Alger and Kelly Dolan.

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**Next Act**

Sun lights up the stage, bird song, the prelude for the next act, chickadee here, cardinal over there.

In the hushed stillness, behind a frozen curtain Nature prepares Her passion play.

The plot is ancient, The pace, monumental. Cue wildflowers, scampering squirrels In due time.

Meanwhile, the audience checks their playbill. What act’s up next? A wintertime reprise with powdered sugar dusting over emergent ground, green and brown?

Instead, a soggy, limp blanket. I hope it’s the last act. I’m going to have a word with that Groundhog!

**Michael Young, Royalston Poet Laureate**

**North Quabbin Garden Club**

On March 21 at 7 pm at the Millers River Environmental Center, Adrienne Bashista of Passalong’s in Florence will lead a workshop in a pressed flower picture on archival, acid free paper suitable for framing. Attendees will pay $10 for materials and the garden club will pay $10. All are welcome.
The Royalston Community Newsletter
Friends of the Phinehas S. Newton Public Library
PO Box 133
Royalston MA 01368

Royalston Resident
P.O. Box
Royalston MA 01368

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