

S11 P1 B001  
 \*\*\*\*\*CAR-RT LOT\*\*B001  
 00160VAL 03/08/19  
 LUCY WALLACE  
 PO BOX 77  
 HARVARD, MA 01451-0077

"Wild and scenic"

Vol. 12, No. 17

Harvard, Massachusetts, Friday, March 30, 2018

One Dollar



The town election season kicked off Saturday, March 24, at the annual caucus held in Town Hall. From left, Town Clerk Marlene Kenney explains the process to Selectwoman Lucy Wallace, Tree Warden JC Ferguson, and School Committee Chairwoman Mary Traphagen as they prepare to sign their nomination papers. (Photo by Lisa Aciukewicz)

## Town Caucus results in one contested race; four nominees will not run

by Joan Eltyesil

When the gavel came down at 5 p.m. at Town Caucus Saturday, March 24, the action was fast and furious: 19 nominations were made, seconded, and closed within 14 minutes. When it was over, all but one position (Warner Free Lecture trustee) had at least one nomination, and both Parks and Recreation and Library Trustees had more nominations than open positions. One candidate has since with-

drawn from the Parks and Recreation race, leaving only one contested race. Debbie Ricci was voted chairwoman of the caucus, and Mary Jarvis the secretary. The speed of the proceedings caused some confusion, and a few observant residents raised points of order when things went a bit too quickly. Bruce Nickerson expressed the dizzying pace best when he said, "Wait a minute—oh, yeah, we're OK." Jim Breslauer's nomination of Lucy

Wallace to the Board of Selectmen brought a chuckle to the crowd of about 50 people when he said she had "probably survived more Board of Selectmen meetings than any other person in Harvard, and she still has the energy to walk her dog every morning." Warner Free Lecture Trustees received only one nomination for two positions, and as the crowd waited for someone to speak up, Ricci recalled

**CAUCUS continued on page 7**

## Land values drive uneven property value increases

by Joan Eltyesil



In the first installment of this series, printed March 16, the Press reported that last year's increase in property values, and by extension, property taxes, was felt more by lower-end properties than higher-end properties. This installment reports on the role land value changes played in that disparity. In the next installment, the role of building values will be examined.

While most Harvard residents may not feel as if they live in a neighborhood, for assessment purposes, they do. Every property in town is assigned an "economic neighborhood" code, and that code is used to determine each property's land value. This year, dramatic changes to the land values in some neighborhoods caused high increases in property values (and taxes) for some residents and decreases for others.

### The value of land

Harvard's zoning bylaws define the minimum lot size for a single-family house as 1.5 acres. About 300 single-family properties in town have less than that amount, and according to Land-Use Administrator Liz Allard, those lots are "grandfathered in," which means the lots were legal at the time they were created (see Minimum Lot Size sidebar, page 8). Land values of these building lots are defined by assessors in a land table, which defines the relationship of a lot's size to the dollar value per acre, up to 1.5 acres. In Harvard's case, Regional Resource Group Inc. (RRG) in Leominster, the company that the town contracts with for assessments, maintains the land table.

Acreage above 1.5 acres is valued differently. In general, the extra land is called "residual land" and is valued at a rate of \$20,000 per acre. In some cases, land may have site conditions such as steep topography or wetlands that make it undevelopable (see Clas-

**LAND continued on page 8**

## Nashua River could earn 'wild and scenic' designation

by Marty Green

If voters in Harvard and some nearby towns agree this spring, the Nashua River and two of its tributaries could soon become part of the nation's Wild and Scenic Rivers System, joining the likes of the Big Sur River in California and the Allagash in Maine. That's a remarkable tribute to those who helped clean up the Nashua, which was once ranked as one of the most polluted rivers in the country.

Warrant Article 37 at the May 5 Annual Town Meeting will ask Harvard residents to decide whether to accept a voluntary

stewardship plan recommending that the three rivers be designated Wild and Scenic Rivers. As preparation for the decision, a public information meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, April 3, at 7 p.m. in Town Hall, at the beginning of the selectmen's meeting.

It's been 50 years since Congress passed the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968. After decades of national emphasis on hydroelectric dams and industrial use, that law

recognized the value of free-flowing and unpolluted rivers. Since then, stretches of

**RIVER continued on page 6**

Some 8,000 people canoe or kayak on the rivers, while bicyclists enjoy the adjoining 11-mile trail.

## Town boards agree on plan to finance HES project

by John Osborn

Though the project awaits voter approval in May, the selectmen and the School, Finance, and capital committees now have a joint strategy for financing the nearly \$54 million construction of a proposed new elementary school and administrative offices adjacent to the current Hildreth Elementary School. Members of the four boards heard welcome news that a higher state reimbursement rate, support from the schools, and a favorable cash flow schedule promise a lower cost to taxpayers than previous estimates.

The four boards met in joint session in Town Hall Tuesday evening, March 27. With a quorum present for each board and following an hour's worth of discussion led by Town Administrator Tim Bragan, the committees agreed

that paying for the project with a 25-year municipal bond, issued as early as federal law permits, would be best for taxpayers. With interest rates on the rise, "bonding" the project earlier rather than later could save the town hundreds of thousands of dollars, capital committee Co-Chairman John Seeley told the group. "The earlier we can bond this project, the better off we'll be." In addition, he said, the capital committee favored a 25-year bond over a 30-year bond because it would save taxpayers \$4 million to \$5 million over the loan's lifetime. Still up for debate is whether the bond should be "callable," which would allow the town to pay it off early and refinance if interest rates fall, though it is more costly than a

**HES continued on page 10**

www.harvardpress.com • www.harvardpress.com • www.harvardpress.com • www.harvardpress.com • www.harvardpress.com • www.harvardpress.com



0 94922 10418 2

Written in stone?



p. 5

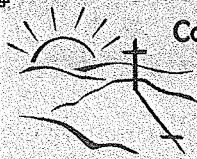
Staff squeaks out a win



p. 11

### INDEX

Calendar .....	16	Movie Review .....	14
Classifieds .....	15	Notice Board .....	3
Consider This .....	7	Obituaries .....	3
Current Events .....	12, 13	Police Log .....	16
Legal Notices .....	14	Senior Spotlight .....	15



**Congregational Church of Harvard**  
 5 Still River Road  
 978-456-8788

**Maundy Thursday**  
 March 29, 7:30 pm

**Easter Sunday, April 1**  
 ECUMENICAL SUNRISE SERVICE, 6:30 am  
 53 Woodchuck Hill Road  
 EASTER WORSHIP SERVICE, 10 am  
 Church Sanctuary


— The community is invited to all services —

★ NICK MOSS BAND THURSDAY APR 5  
 ★ JOY CONNECTOR KARMIC READINGS SATURDAY APR 7  
 ★ PETER YARROW THURSDAY APR 12  
 ★ SUSAN WERNER FRIDAY APR 13  
 ★ STEVE KATZ SATURDAY APR 14  
 ★ MARY BRIDGET DAVIES & MIA DYSON SUNDAY APR 15  
 ★ CARBON LEAF THURSDAY APR 19  
 ★ SHEMEKIA COPELAND FRIDAY MAY 18

Full concert schedule at [tickets.bullrunrestaurant.com](http://tickets.bullrunrestaurant.com)


**The Bull Run**  
 215 Great Road (Rte 2A), Shirley  
 978-425-4311 • [bullrunrestaurant.com](http://bullrunrestaurant.com)

Lunch & Dinner Wed-Sun • Sunday Brunch




**St. Andrew's Episcopal Church**  
 7 Faulkner Street, Ayer

You're Invited  
 this  
 Easter Season  
 Come and See!



Easter Egg Hunt at 9:00am  
 Easter Service at 9:30am

[www.standrewsayer.org](http://www.standrewsayer.org)



**We're in Your Neighborhood**

Since 1992  
 Shepherd  
 Veterinary Clinic  
 has been located  
 on the Harvard/  
 Boxborough town line. Find us on the  
 corner of Massachusetts Ave. (Rt. 111) and  
 Codman Hill Road next to the southbound  
 entrance to Interstate 495.

456.8994  
 263.0995

Mass. Ave. (Rt. 111)  
 Codman Hill Rd  
 495

Timothy S. Foster, DVM  
 Irene Papamitrou, DVM  
 Amanda Halverson, DVM

"The Big White Barn"  
 17 Codman Hill Road  
 Harvard/Boxborough  
 town line

Everything you need for happy, healthy pets.

## Nashua River could earn 'wild and scenic' designation

RIVER continued from page 1 more than 200 rivers and creeks throughout the country have been designated for preservation under the act.

In 2014, at the initiative of U.S. Rep. Niki Tsongas, Congress passed the Nashua River Wild and Scenic River Study Act, to determine whether the Nashua, Squannacook, and Nissitissit rivers qualified for inclusion in the national program (see map). That act led to the formation of a committee with representatives from 11 towns along the three rivers to develop a voluntary stewardship plan and study whether the rivers were eligible for inclusion under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

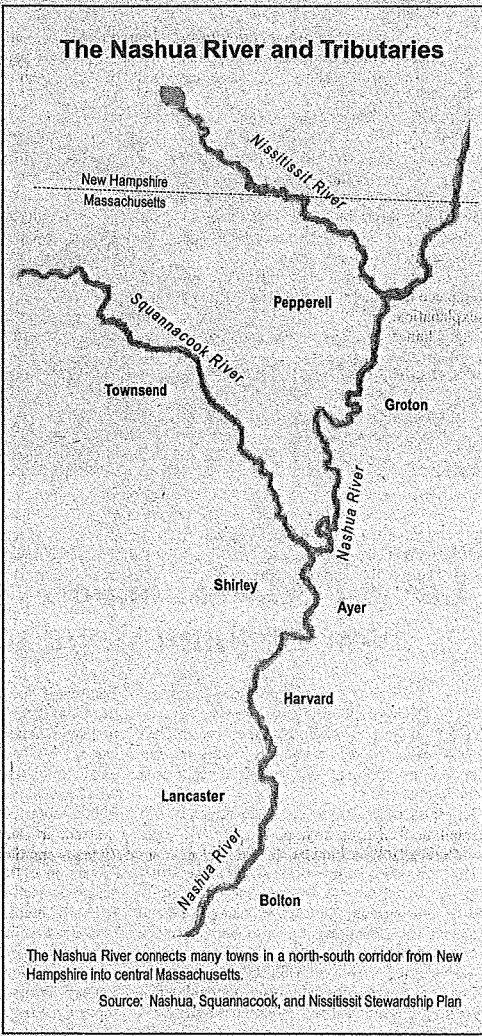
Last month the completed study reported that the Nashua River and its tributaries are noteworthy for the biological diversity they support, including rare dragonflies, freshwater mussels, and Blanding's turtles. With their cool waters, the Squannacook and Nissitissit attract fly-fishing enthusiasts. Some 8,000 people canoe or kayak on the rivers, while bicyclists enjoy the adjoining 11-mile Nashua River Rail Trail. And the oxbows along the Nashua River in Harvard constitute one of the largest freshwater wetlands in eastern Massachusetts. The study recommends that the three rivers be designated Partnership Wild and Scenic Rivers.

### A partnership river

A partnership river in the program is one that flows mainly through land that is privately owned or under state or local control, rather than within federal lands. In New England, nearly all rivers designated wild and scenic fall into the partnership category. In Massachusetts, the Taunton, Westfield, and Concord-Assabet-Sudbury rivers are already designated Partnership Wild and Scenic Rivers.

Should the Nashua River's designation be approved by both local voters and Congress, the study committee would be succeeded by a local stewardship council with members from the 11 towns. While the council would have no regulatory power, it would allow the neighboring towns to cooperate in protecting water quality, wildlife habitat, recreational opportunities, and other issues of mutual concern.

In an introductory letter to



the stewardship plan, Harvard Selectwoman Lucy Wallace, who chaired the study committee, wrote, "Designation will not stop development, rezone private land, or change property rights. Land use controls on private lands continue to be solely a matter of state and local jurisdiction."

While the program generally works to preserve rivers that flow freely, the law allows some existing dams to remain for historic reasons. Harvard's Ice House Dam on the Nashua River near

the border with Ayer and Shirley is among three working dams that are grandfathered into the proposed plan.

If all 11 towns accept the plan at their 2018 town meetings, the proposal then goes to Congress. With congressional approval, the Nashua River and its tributaries would join others throughout New England and the nation as waterways that fulfill "vital national conservation purposes," in the words of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.



## Porn star is signed for Warner Free Lecture

In her old life, Peaches (nee Prudence) DeLish was an exotic dancer and occasional porn star. Now she's a beekeeper, herb-grower, and author of an evocative new book, "Not so Sweet: The Dark Secrets of a Queen Bee." DeLish will talk about her book and its roots in her previous career at an upcoming Warner Free Lecture event, which will be held somewhere in town as soon as a large enough venue can be found.

Due to the possibly controversial content of DeLish's book, the Warner trustees are not sure it's suitable for a lecture. They invited her thinking it would be an entertaining take on honey production, but have since learned it might be quite a bit more entertaining than

expected. DeLish, known professionally in her former life as "The Pick of the Crop," has been called "an arresting new presence on the bookstore circuit" and "a perfect antidote for late-winter boredom." She has not been called a good writer, or even a competent beekeeper, but her appearances are always very well attended. In fact, the size of her audience is a matter of some concern.

If and when she does appear in Harvard, no one under the age of 21 will be admitted, and residents over the age of 70 are advised to consult a healthcare professional before attending the lecture. The chosen venue's occupancy limits will be strictly enforced.