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JANUARY

BEST of the BEST

A Look Back at 2025

It was an eventful year in the city and *The Holyoke Sun* was right in the mix for much of it.

Earlier in the year, we saw the tradition continue as a new Grand Colleen and court were named along with the annual St. Patrick's Day festivities hosted in Holyoke.

As the year progressed, graduations, environmental

issues, political unrest and a surprising election took us through the rest of the year, capped off by an eventful end of the year that included a devastating fire and more controversy on the city council.

Here is a look back at the many things that happened in 2025 and we look forward to an exciting 2026.

JAN. 17

City Council discusses union

By Quinn Suomala
Staff Writer

HOLYOKE – The city council discussed the approval of the appropriation of funds needed to accept a union negotiated contract.

The finance committee had sent the matter to the city council with the recommendation to deny the appropriation.

They had sent a 3-2 recommendation to deny, with Councilors Kevin Jourdain, Michael Sullivan and Carmen Ocasio voting to deny.

Councilors Patti Devine and Kocayne Givner voted to approve the transfer.

Jourdain, Ocasio and Sullivan had all brought up concerns about the union contract containing department heads, the amount of vacation time included in the contract and the flex time

granted within it.

"I certainly will not be voting to expand to yet another massive quantity of people all of these additional vacation benefits that we cannot afford," Jourdain said. "These absolute giveaways of vacation time are just outrageous."

According to Jourdain, the flex time would apply to department heads as well as those working under them. Jourdain did not feel comfortable allowing a transfer that would approve of this.

"No past or future mayor should be required to be hamstrung by that type of expensive requirement that there has to be the payment of flextime," Jourdain said. "If the mayor needs you for 40 hours this week, you are not entitled to automatically five more hours and to create this rule is expensive to the taxpayers."

JAN. 10



See page 3 for this year's contestants!

Erin Gauthier, Abigail Huebner, Moira Reardon, Erin O'Donnell and Maura Joseph were all chosen as the 2025 Colleen Court.

Turley photos by Quinn Suomala

Colleen contestants decided at 2025 pageant

By Quinn Suomala
Staff Writer

HOLYOKE – Erin Gauthier, Abigail Huebner, Moira Reardon, Erin O'Donnell and Maura Joseph were all chosen as the 2025 Colleen Court.

The Colleen Court

was chosen at the end of the 69 Annual Colleen Pageant on Saturday, Jan. 4.

The five Colleen Court members were chosen after an extensive judging process. Each of the nine contestants were interviewed by a judge in the morning and rated based

on intelligence, personality, poise and appearance. Each contestant could get a ranking of up to 10 for each of these qualities based on the answers they gave in their interviews.

Then the Colleen contestants had the pageant section of the process. The

girls each started with a blank slate. During the pageant three judges judged them based on appearance and poise.

After this their scores were totaled and the top five scores were selected to be this year's Colleen Court.

JAN. 24

Merry-Go-Round location for fun SEPAC holiday event

By Quinn Suomala
Staff Writer



Jayden Julke and Geri Leporati from Applebury Behavior Associates enjoyed the SEPAC holiday event.

HOLYOKE – The Special Education Parent Advisory Council held a holiday event at the Holyoke Merry-Go-Round for children and their families to attend.

At this event children and their families could have unlimited rides on the merry-go-round, complete different crafts and snack on some refreshments.

"The kids are just getting to have some fun," Director of Special Education Programming Tammy Seymour said.

One highlight of the event for many in attendance was that participants from the Transitions Academy were volunteering their time to help run this program.

"These remarkable individuals serve as inspiring role models for younger students with disabilities, demonstrating the power of inclusion, perseverance and community engagement," Chief of Pupil Services Marianne Currier said.

The Transitions Academy is a program for people ages 18 to 22 who have completed their high school education but still want or need some support

in navigating day to day life.

"We work on verbal and non-verbal skills, people skills and learning to stay in the present" Director of the Transitions Academy Corrine Moguel said. "We help them learn to be professional."

A variety of teachers and job coaches work with the participants daily to help them learn these skills while still maintaining their independence.

"Transition academy is a good place for independence and growth," Transition Academy Participant Michael Valentien Jr. said.

FEB. 7

Garcia, Soto advocate for rights of immigrants in city

By Quinn Suomala
Staff Writer

HOLYOKE – Superintendent/Receiver Anthony Soto and Mayor Joshua Garcia released a joint statement affirming the rights of immigrants.

On Jan. 21 the Department of Homeland Security announced that schools and churches would no longer be considered sensitive areas,

meaning Immigration and Customs Enforcement as well as Customs and Border Protection would be able to enter those areas.

On Jan. 23 the Massachusetts Attorney General and the attorney generals from California, New York, Colorado, Connecticut, Hawaii, Illinois, Maryland, New Mexico, Rhode Island, Vermont, Minnesota, and Washington released a

statement addressing this issue.

In this statement, they wrote that "it is well-established—through long standing Supreme Court precedent—that the U.S. Constitution prevents the federal government from commandeering states to enforce federal laws."

Additionally, they promised that their states would continue to enforce state laws and investigate

and prosecute crimes, regardless of immigration status.

"We will not be distracted by the President's mass deportation agenda," they wrote.

Garcia and Soto carried a similar sentiment in their joint statement. Within their statement, Garcia mentioned that he had reaffirmed an executive order made by former Holyoke Mayor Alex Morse.

FEB. 14

HHS Theater Company wows crowd with 'Lord of the Flies'

By Quinn Suomala
Staff Writer

HOLYOKE – The Holyoke High School Theater Company put on a wonderful performance

of *Lord of the Flies* on the weekend of Feb. 7.

This play was chosen by the Director Bevan Brunelle, who thought it would be a good challenge for the high school actors.

"It was a really great challenge for our actors," Brunelle said. "We have several seniors graduating this year, so having them take on this challenge before they go to college

and possibly not do any more theater was really important to me."

The theater company has been focusing on adaptations of different books throughout this year.

"It is one of those classic novels that students have been typically taught in school," Brunelle said. "It is no longer part of the curriculum but I wanted to expose the students of HHS to it."

The heavy nature of the play allowed each of the actors to explore new sides of themselves and develop a new skill set. Each of them learned to embody their character to help bring the play to life.

The actors enjoyed getting a chance to work with this new style of play.



Turley photo by Quinn Suomala

Jack (played by Cian Callahan, left) ordered all the kids from his school to fall in line.

FEB. 21

Moira Reardon crowned 2025 Grand Colleen

By Quinn Suomala
Staff Writer

HOLYOKE – Moira Reardon was crowned the Grand Colleen at the coronation ceremony on Saturday, Feb. 15.

She was honored to have been chosen for this opportunity by the judges.

"When my name was read, I was in shock," Reardon said. "I was so happy to have all of the people I love in one place celebrating something so special to us all. It all felt and still feels so surreal."

Reardon has wanted to be involved in the Colleen since she was a kid. A large part of this was inspired by her family.

"My Great-Grandparents were lifelong Holyoke residents and instilled in my mom, sisters, and me what it means to be a hardworking, involved community member," Reardon said. "They loved celebrating Irish heritage, and Holyoke as a whole, as do I."

Additionally, she has always enjoyed celebrating St. Patrick's Day and wanted to do so in a way that would also help the community.

"Celebrating St. Patrick's Day has always been my favorite time of the year, and representing my family, heritage, and com-



Turley photo by David Henry
Grand Colleen Moira Reardon takes her throne.

community is an honor that I am incredibly thankful for," Reardon said.

Holyoke has held an annual Colleen ceremony since the 1950s as a way to highlight young women in the community with Irish heritage who exemplify community values.

The Colleen Court members make significant contributions to the community throughout their reign.

Reardon was excited to become a part of this long standing Holyoke tradition.

MARCH

MARCH 7

Battle of the Bars helps raise money for committee

HOLYOKE – On Friday night, the St. Patrick’s Committee of Holyoke held the fifth annual Battle of the Bars bartending event at the Holyoke Knight of Columbus Council 90 to fundraise for the Committee. Bartenders from six local bars competed for tips to see who wins and will host the trophy celebration.

Facing off in teams of two, Round One was taken by Donovan’s Irish Pub, represented by Trista Kasperowski, raising \$5,997, against Pic’s Pub & Pizzeria, represented by Matt Dulude, who raised \$1,639.

Round Two was captured by JP’s Restaurant, represented by Mary Kate Glasheen, with \$9,416 against Halfway House Lounge, represented by

Colleen Flanagan, who raised \$7,639.

Round Three was taken by Griffin’s Cafe, represented by Ashleigh McNulty, raising \$1,122, against Francie’s Tavern, represented by Chy Clemens, who raised \$779.

In the end, JP’s Restaurant came out on top with \$9,416 raised, and the entire night’s fundraiser brought in over \$26,500, an absolute record total for the event. A trophy celebration will be held at JP’s in the upcoming future. All money raised goes towards the St. Patrick’s Committee of Holyoke Marching Forward fundraising campaign to present the 2025 St. Patrick’s Day Parade Weekend and to preserve the St. Patrick’s Day Parade and Road Race tradition for generations to come.



Submitted photo
JP’s Restaurant won the Battle of the Bars by raising more than \$9,400 for the St. Patrick’s Committee.

MARCH 14

Alternative to MCAS exam

By Quinn Suomala
Staff Writer

HOLYOKE – Superintendent/Receiver Anthony Soto discussed with the school committee Holyoke Public School’s plans for a new competency assessment now that the MCAS is no longer required.

Now that the MCAS is no longer a required competency assessment for students to graduate high school, schools have been working to determine how to move forward.

One district, Frontier Regional School District in South Deerfield, has decided that they will continue to use the MCAS.

“There is one district that I know of that is continuing to use MCAS as that competency determination,” Soto said.

HPS does not want to follow in that decision. During the November election, 10,296 Holyoke voters

out of a total 14,184 voted in favor of getting rid of the MCAS.

Due to this, HPS does not plan to keep the MCAS.

Instead, Soto and other key HPS faculty and staff have proposed that HPS require students to receive a passing grade in grade nine and ten English, algebra one and geometry, and in biology to graduate from high school.

If students do not initially pass these classes, students can apply to pass a course equivalent that is approved by their principal and the superintendent.

Soto also clarified that as HPS is making this transition, students this year who have already passed the MCAS will not have to also make these competency requirements.

After Soto presented this to the school committee, he requested that they send the matter to a subcommittee to discuss further.

APRIL

APRIL 4

St. Patrick’s Parade Committee announces award winners

By Gregory A. Scibelli
gscibelli@turley.com

HOLYOKE – The St. Patrick’s Day Parade always brings out the creative not only in Holyokers, but in the many communities that send representatives to participate in the parade. The committee announced the following

award winners:

The highlight of the parade was the incredible display of themed floats, each competing for top honors. This year’s Grand Prize went to the Springfield Elks #61 for their 50 Years of Jaws theme. The Best Colleen Float was given to the West Springfield “Conlin Bower,”

which wowed spectators with its giant leprechaun and a rainbow wrapping around the Colleens. First Prize in the Irish Theme went to Chicopee for their “Irish Fortune” Colleen float. Second Prize in the Irish Theme was presented to Agawam for their “Rocking with the Colleen” float and

Third Prize to Westfield for “Mike’s Wish” Colleen float.

South Hadley won First Prize in the Patriotic Theme for “Service, Remembering Sacrifice,” a stunning display honoring military service. First Prize in the Open Theme went to United Horizons “Friend for Down Syndrome”, followed by Jericho’s “There is No Place Like Jericho” Wizard of Oz theme. Third Place in the Open Theme went to Holyoke High School South’s Dean Tech Campus for “Dean Tech CTE,” representing the various programs at the school. Completing the list of award winners is the Ancient Order of the Hibernian’s “St. Brigid’s Float,” taking home First Prize in the Religious Theme, a stunning display of Irish heritage.

Marching bands from across the Northeast delivered show-stopping performances. Taking home the Most Outstanding Unit in the Line of March was the Tian Guo band. Worcester Kiltie won Best Pipe Band, and McGann marching band won Best Brass Band.

APRIL 18

Families enjoy mini golf fun

By Christina Gioscia
Correspondent

HOLYOKE – The snowy weather didn’t stop people from taking a day trip to the Holyoke Public Library mini golf event on April 12. With the historical section of the library and the modern portion, there is plenty of room for the mini golf courses that have been set up. Nancy Kocsmiersky, who is in charge of fundraising at Holyoke Public Library, told us about who sponsors the event, the community the library creates, and ways they plan to improve the event in the future.

“This event actually started in 2016 and it was just a few years after we had built this addition. So one of the reasons we wanted this is a lot of people don’t even know that we’ve done all this renovation and that the library has all these extra facilities and extra activities. It’s also a fundraiser. The city covers most of our expenses but for programming, for additional digital access, we have different things for kids. And so all of our fundraising covers the

extra stuff basically. We’re focused on doing a lot of literacy programming and connecting to the community. So a lot of our summer programming is paid for by our fundraising,” Kocsmiersky says.

When asked if these kinds of events bring more people to the library Kocsmiersky responded, “Yes, it does. And we’re always striving to make sure that, you know, we get a lot of people from adjacent communities, but we’re always striving to always make sure that the Holyoke residents really know about it. So, one of the things we’ve done is make it free and also we always send out flyers to all of the Holyoke schools, the public and private schools.”

As we walk around the library Kocsmiersky also shows us an art exhibition by Michelle Falcón

Fontánez, that was on display the same time the mini golf event was taking place. “It’s called

‘Matria’ and it’s about local Hispanic women who are like the matriarchs of their family,” Kocsmiersky says.



Turley photo by David Henry www.sweetdogphotos.com

Jericho’s “There is No Place Like Jericho” took second place in the open theme.

MAY

MAY 2

Devin Sheehan elected president of NSBA

By Gregory A. Scibelli
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HOLYOKE – A former mayoral candidate recently was elected to another big opportunity.

School Committee member Devin Sheehan was elected as president of the National School Board Association.

According to a press release from the NSBA, NSBA is a federation of state associations and the U.S. territory of the Virgin Islands. The organization was founded in 1940. Through its member state associations that represent locally elected school board officials serving millions of public school students, NSBA advocates for equity and excellence in public education through school board leadership.

“It is an incredible honor to serve as president of the National School Boards Association,” Mr. Sheehan said. “As someone who grew up in public schools and has spent my career advocating for students, I know firsthand the power of public education to transform lives. In this role, I remain deeply committed to advancing and protecting our

nation’s public schools—standing up for equitable resources, supporting our educators, and ensuring every child has the opportunity to succeed. Together, we will continue to be strong voices for the future of public education.”

Sheehan ran for mayor in 2021 and was defeated in the primary. Sheehan was then returned to the school committee as an at-large representative to fill a vacancy in June 2024. He previously served on the Holyoke School Committee from 2010 to 2022. He was a longtime vice chair under Mayor Alex Morse. Over the years, he has taken on increasing leadership responsibilities within the Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC), culminating in his role as president in 2019. At the national level, Mr. Sheehan has been an active contributor to NSBA, serving on regional nominating committees, chairing multiple board committees, and



Devin Sheehan

advocating consistently for educational equity. He also serves on the board of directors for the Massachusetts Athletic Association.

Professionally, Mr. Sheehan is the chief of staff to State Senator Jake Oliveira. He holds a Bachelor’s degree from Franklin Pierce University and a Master of Public Policy from the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth.

“Devin Sheehan’s election as president of the National School Boards Association comes at a pivotal time for public education. As schools across the country navigate significant federal changes and evolving challenges, we need steady, experienced leadership more than ever,” said Holyoke Mayor Joshua A. Garcia. “His deep roots in Holyoke, his decades of advocacy, and his proven commitment to students make him the leader we need right now. We’re proud to see him representing our community on the national stage.”

MAY 9

Mother’s Day Market at Wistariahurst

By Christina Gioscia
Correspondent

HOLYOKE – On May 3 Wistariahurst, Holyoke’s Museum of Gardens, held its second annual Mother’s Day Market. It was a sunshine filled warm spring day and the museum was buzzing with joy. Entry to the museum was free and there were staff members as well as vol-

unteers to greet people at the door, ready to direct them to where the event was taking place. Walking through the museum was truly like stepping into a time machine. It is beautifully decorated and extremely well maintained. The Mother’s Day Market was taking place in a couple different areas of the museum. The first was the music room. To get there,

volunteers directed patrons through an art exhibit that was taking place at the same time as the Mother’s Day Market.

The name of the gallery was “Prison Reimagined”. All of the artwork and poetry was done by people who are incarcerated. Each piece conveyed messages about politics and the artist’s own personal experiences. Many attendees at the museum took a look at the art displayed in the gallery before making their way onward to do some shopping in the music room and outside. In the music room local vendors were set up. They were selling everything from vintage dishes, candles and pottery to books, cards, and crochet animals. Many people were in attendance looking for the perfect gift for Mother’s Day or looking for unique pieces in general, just hoping to support the vendors. Some of the vendors were selling things of their own creation, such as Nicole E. Torres with her crochet coasters and pot holders, Patti Bessette with her handmade pottery, and Natasha Mercado with her crochet animals and fun paintings.



Turley photo by Christina Gioscia

Nicole E. Torres running her booth at the Mother’s Day Market, “Knotty Creations by Elaudy”.

Meet the 2026 Colleen candidates



The contestants for the 2026 Grand Colleen. Fifteen ladies will vie for one of five spots on the Grand Colleen Court at a pageant Saturday, Jan. 3 at Holyoke High School.

HOLYOKE – This Saturday, Jan. 3 at 6 p.m. at Holyoke High School, 15 young women will vie to become the 2026 Grand Colleen.

Each year the Grand Colleen Pageant decides the five finalists who then go on to the Coronation Ball to have their Grand Colleen crowned. The Grand Colleen reigns with her Colleen Court on a majestic float over the two-mile parade route. Not only does the honor of being a Colleen represent women who are proud of their Irish heritage and community, but the journey helps them build connections, gain self-confidence, and develop skills that will help in their present and future career paths.

The 73rd Holyoke St. Patrick's Parade will be held on Sunday, March 22.



Bridie Bowler
22 (Holyoke)
Attends Mount Holyoke College



Blythe Bullock
21 (Holyoke)
Works at Holyoke Art



Jady Christy
19 (South Hadley)
Attends Our Lady of the Elms College



Meredith Craven
17 (Holyoke)
Attends South Hadley High School



Kyleigh Dorman
17 (Holyoke)
Attends Holyoke High School



Anna Mary Evans
22 (Holyoke)
Attends Siena College



Leia Halfcre
18 (Easthampton)
Attends Easthampton High School



Marion Hamel
22 (Southampton)
Attends UMass, Amherst



Maeve Judith Healy
17 (South Hadley)
Attends South Hadley High School



Paige Brady Leahy
19 (Holyoke)
Attends Our Lady of the Elms College



Amanda Royland
17 (Holyoke)
Homeschool student through
Classical Conversations



Olivia Royland
20 (Holyoke)
Attends Holyoke Community College



Helen Sanders
20 (Holyoke)
Attends UMass Amherst



Victoria Lyn Santos
19 (Easthampton)
Works at River Valley Co-Op



Caela Callahan Scanlon
21 (Easthampton)
Attends Saint Anselm College

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USDA INSP. FROZEN BABY BACK PORK RIBS	\$3.25 lb	USDA INSP. STORE MADE KOREAN MARINATED BONELESS PORK BUTT STRIPS	\$3.79 lb	USDA INSP. FRESH CHICKEN DRUMSTICKS 10 LB. BAG..	75¢ lb
SLICED IN OUR DELI		USDA INSP. STORE MADE ITALIAN MARINATED 1/2 CHICKEN.....	\$2.99 lb	USDA INSP. HOT POCKETS STEAK & CHEDDAR 18 OZ	\$3.99 ea
USDA INSP. TURKEY BREAST.....	\$4.99 lb			USDA INSP. IQF FROZEN • 12 OZ. BOX TEMPURA BREADED SHRIMP ...	\$3.99 ea
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Guest Column



I'm on SS disability; should I switch to regular Social Security?

Dear Rusty:

Should I take my Social Security now at age 62, or wait till I am 65?

I've been collecting SS disability due to health issues and was curious if I should wait or claim my regular Social Security retirement benefits now.

Signed: Disabled but Wondering

claiming early. At your current age, you would likely get between 75% and 80% of what you are now receiving on SSDI (depending on your exact age in the month you claim and at age 65 you would get about 87% of what you are now receiving on Social Security disability.

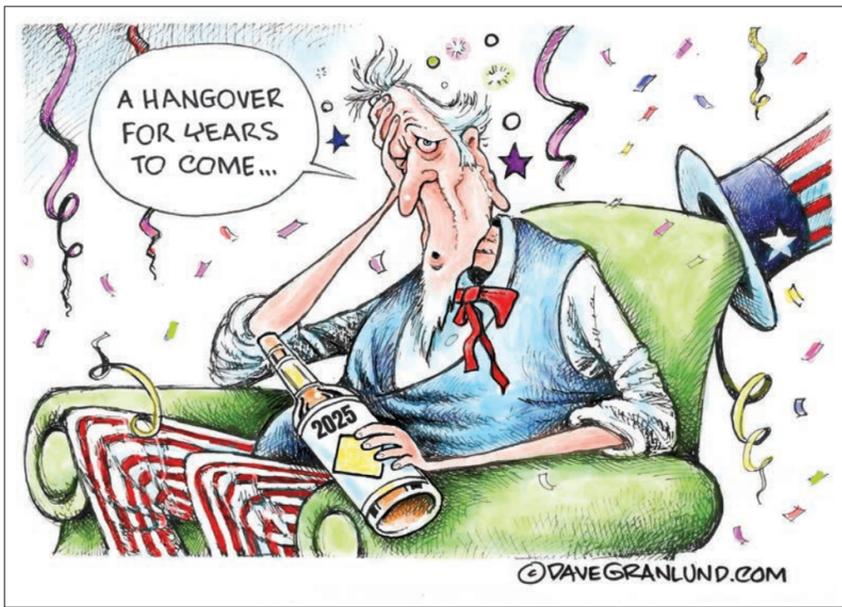
In other words, as long as your disability continues and you remain eligible for Social Security Disability Insurance benefits, you should not switch to your normal SS retirement benefit, because you would get less money. And the resulting benefit reduction would be permanent.

The Association Mature Citizens Foundation and its staff are not affiliated with or endorsed by the Social Security Administration or any other governmental entity. This article is intended for information purposes and does not represent legal or financial guidance. It presents the opinions and interpretations of the Association Mature Citizens Foundation's staff, trained and accredited by the National Social Security Association. To submit a question, visit amacfoundation.org/programs/social-security-advisory or email us at ssadvisor@amacfoundation.org. Russell Gloor is a Social Security advisor for AMAC.

Dear Disabled but Wondering:

If you are now collecting Social Security Disability Insurance benefits and you are still disabled, it would be a disadvantage to claim your SS retirement benefits at this time age 62 or even at age 65. That's because your SSDI benefit is the same as your Full Retirement Age amount, as calculated for you at the point you became disabled. Born after 1959, your FRA is age 67, but you are already receiving your FRA benefit while on SS disability even though you have not yet reached your full retirement age. That full SSDI benefit will automatically convert to become your SS retirement benefit when you reach your full retirement age.

If you were to claim your normal SS retirement benefit any earlier than your SS full retirement age of 67, the amount you get would be reduced for



Guest Column

Testing and taking seed inventory is good practice to start the new gardening season

I don't know about you, but I have been caught up in spirit of the holidays. It's been fun to indulge in family time and try and get caught up on much-needed rest.

I have given myself this last week of the year to continue to take it easy before I hit the "to do" list.

One of the big things I have been procrastinating on at work is taking inventory of all the seeds I have left from the last couple of years. The box holds a hundred or so different varieties of seeds, mostly heirloom, open-pollinated types.

There is something refreshing about accomplishing this task soon into the new year; a seasonal habit I've had for the last four decades give or take. To me,



by Roberta McQuaid

In the herb category dill, caraway, parsley, angelica and chives come to mind. Year old garden heliotrope, feverfew and bell-flowers can be stubborn germinators as far as flowers go.

As a general rule I keep seed that is less than three years old, unless the variety in question is rare. Even spotty germination is better than nothing when it comes to seed that is hard to find.

You can save yourself disappointment at planting time by performing a simple germination test on questionable seed.

Place a few seeds in a moist paper towel. Roll it up and seal it in a plastic bag in a warm location.

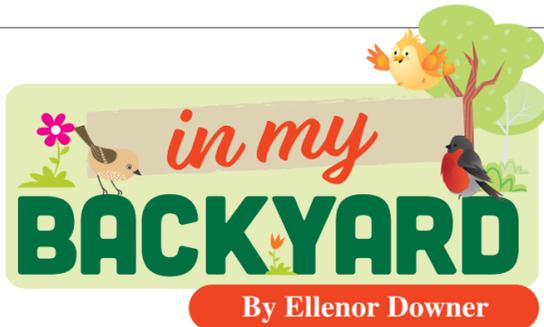
Instructions in the seed catalog or on the pack-

See GARDEN page 5

The Massachusetts Audubon Society reported a sighting of a sora on Nauset Beach in Orleans on Cape Cod between Dec. 10 and 16.

Soras are small, chubby, chicken like birds with long toes and between eight to ten inches tall. Their stubby bill distinguished them from other rails in the United States and Canada, which have longer bills. They also frequently hold their short tail cocked up showing their white patch under the tail.

Soras are mottled gray and brown with white-edged feathers, but the feature that stands out the most is their yellow candy-corn bill. Other field marks include a black



mask, throat patch and vertical white lines on the sides. Females tend to be less brightly colored than males and have less black on the face and throat. Juveniles also lack the black mask.

Soras have a distinct walk pushing their head forward with every step while

nervously flicking the tail upward, exposing the white under tail feathers. They tend to forage in dense vegetation, but also venture into open areas from time to time. Their long toes help them walk on top of floating mats of vegetation. Soras make their homes in freshwater wetlands with emergent vegetation such as cattails, sedges and rushes. During migration and winter, they also use brackish marshes, flooded fields and wet pastures.

The Sora makes its presence known with plaintive whistles and whinnies rising from the marshes all across North America. Despite its abundance, it is not often seen: As with other rails, it spends most of its time hidden in dense marshy growth or wet meadows. Occasionally it will walk about in full view at the edge of a pond, delighting any birders, who happen to

be nearby. Although Soras might seem like weak fliers when seen fluttering over the marsh, they regularly migrate long distances, many going to South America for the winter.

Cape Cod bird sightings
Besides the sora, the following sightings were reported between Dec. 10 and Dec.16. A western tanager was found at Mass Audubon's Wellfleet Bay sanctuary. The male painted bunting continued at a feeder in Brewster. Other bird sightings included a clapper rail and six western willets in South Chatham, two common terns in North Chatham, a blue-headed vireo and a yellow-breasted chat in South Orleans, a common yellowthroat and for northern shovelers in Harwich and a short-eared owl.

Birds seen at Race Point in Provincetown were a black guillemot, 200 razor-bills, 13 dovebies, three common murrets, 45 black-legged kittiwakes, six Iceland gulls, a red-necked grebe and 75 northern gannets.

Other sightings around the Cape included two continuing Eurasian wigeon in Yarmouth Port, two Barrow's goldeneyes at Loop Beach in Cotuit, a great egret at Mass Audubon's Skunknet River sanctuary in Barnstable, a

Nashville warbler reported at a house in Yarmouth, continuing unseasonably large numbers of tree swallows in various places including over 50 in Falmouth, two western willets in Chatham and an American golden plover in North Truro.

Christmas bird count
From Dec. 15 to Jan. 5, the Christmas Bird Count will commence in the U.S., Canada and 18 other countries in the Western Hemisphere. Countries are divided into geographical regions with 35 in Massachusetts and each region will pick a single 24-hour period to count birds. Data from the CBC can be utilized in many ways, including to monitor trends in bird populations, document range shifts over time and examine how climate change may impact the winter distributions of birds.

CBC data has been used in hundreds of analyses, peer-reviewed publications and government reports over the decades.

Birds likely seen in Massachusetts are chickadees, titmice, many species of woodpeckers, bluebirds, Carolina wren and many raptors. Migrants from the north include kinglets, some

See BIRDS page 5



Sora

The Holyoke Sun welcomes election letters to the editor

The Holyoke Sun welcomes readers to participate in this year's election campaigns by writing letters to the editor for publication on these pages. Letters of up to 250 words from local residents endorsing candidates on the ballot or discussing campaign issues should be sent to *The Holyoke Sun*, care of Turley Publications, 24 Water St., Palmer, MA 01069, faxed to 413-289-1977 or emailed to thesun@turley.com. Please include a daytime telephone number for verification purposes (it will not be printed). Letters must be received by noon Monday to be considered for that Friday's

newspaper. No attack letters will be printed. No letters written by candidates supporting their own candidacy will be printed. If the volume of letters received is larger than the space available in the newspaper, or if the letters become repetitive, the newspaper reserves the right to print a representative sample. No endorsement letters will be printed in the last edition before the election.

For more information, call 413-283-8393.

Campaign news

As part of its election coverage, the newspa-

per plans to print stories about contested races for Congress, state Senate, state House, district attorney and Governor's Council during the weeks leading up to the election, as well as a question-and-answer voters guide. In order to ensure fairness to all candidates, no political press releases will be printed, nor will reporters cover political rallies or fundraisers.

Candidates who wish to further publicize their candidacy, beliefs and events may contact advertising, 413-283-8393 about paid advertising in *The Holyoke Sun*.

the HOLYOKE Sun

TEAM



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Letters to the Editor Policy

Letters to the Editor have a maximum of 350 words. We require writers to include their name, address and phone number in order for our office to authenticate authorship prior to publication. Addresses and phone numbers are not published.

Unsigned or anonymous letters will NOT be published.

We reserve the right to edit or withhold any submissions. Libelous, unsubstantiated allegations, personal attacks or defamation of character are not allowed.

Deadline for submissions is Wednesday at noon.

Please email (preferred) letters to thesun@turley.com. Mailed letters can be sent to *The Sun*, 24 Water Street, Palmer, MA 01069.



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Free solar tech training at HCC

HOLYOKE – Holyoke Community College is running a free 16-week training program for people interested in getting a jump start in the clean energy field as solar technicians. The in-person, hands-on program runs Monday through Thursday and on select Fridays beginning Wednesday, Jan. 7, from 5:30 to 8 p.m. on the main HCC campus and at Holyoke High School's Dean Tech campus. It concludes May 1.

Program participants will earn OSHA 30 safety credentials while learning fundamental electrical and construction skills and how those skills are applied in solar photovoltaic systems design, installation, operation, and maintenance. The program also includes job readiness and career development components.

Upon completion, participants will be coached on how to apply for apprentice-

ships as solar installers and electricians or for jobs in building trades or clean energy fields.

Eligible students must be 18 years of age or older, authorized to work in the United States, and have a high school diploma, GED or HiSET. For a complete list of program requirements, or to apply, please go to: hcc.edu/cleanenergy

The program is funded through a grant from the Massachusetts Clean Energy Center and the Massachusetts Executive Office of Education, in partnership with the Coalition for an Equitable Economy, Springfield Works, Holyoke Public Schools, and the MassHire Hampden County Workforce Board.

For more information, please contact Mary Wagner, HCC clean energy training manager, at 413-552-2802 or mwagner@hcc.edu.

Mixed Media Exhibit coming to Wistariahurst Museum

HOLYOKE – Wistariahurst Museum is excited to announce the upcoming exhibit Metamorphosis, opening Jan. 6, 2026. This exhibit features artists who have attended one or more of the artist sessions held at Wistariahurst Museum. These sessions, led by artist and volunteer Linda Devine, serve as a way for local artists to network, share their work with one another, and devel-

op as artists. The artist sessions have been held monthly since January of 2025, and the group of artists has strengthened their skills each session. To celebrate the growth these artists have made over the past year, they will be exhibiting their work in Wistariahurst's gallery. Metamorphosis has a theme of change, which each artist has interpreted their own way through several mediums, from painting and sculpture, to

writing. Artists express themes of personal change, changes in nature, fashion, culture.

Artists featured in this exhibit include J. Arthur Birth, Natasha Colon Ortiz, Linda Devine, Lydia E Freytes Rodriguez, Emily Munsell, Maureen Naff, Catalina Rojas, Whit Kilpatrick Russell, Carolyn Ruzsala, Deborah Skelly, Darlene Swiszczy, Chuck Collins, and Mike Worden.

The opening reception of Metamorphosis will be held on Tuesday, Jan. 6, from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. Wistariahurst is an artist-friendly space that encourages creativity and supports the growth of this region's artists. Open Gallery Hours will be held from Jan. 6 through Feb. 24 on Mondays (10 a.m. to 2 p.m.) and Tuesdays (4:30 to 6:30 p.m.), which will also be free and open to the public.

Cradles to Crayons Gear Up for Winter places local drop box

HOLYOKE – While many children head out to sled or build a snowman with friends, others face clothing insecurity and lack access to coats, warm clothing layers, gloves, and boots to stay warm during these weather extremes.

Cradles to Crayons needs winter weather gear.

Cradles to Crayons

Gear Up for Winter initiative aims to provide 50,000 coats to children living in low-income and homeless situations across Massachusetts so they can stay warm and feel prepared for the winter weather.

"As winter begins, one in three children in Massachusetts don't have the winter clothing they need," said Alicia Kabir, Executive

Director of Cradles to Crayons Massachusetts.

Thousands of families rely on Cradles to Crayons to keep their kids warm during New England's harsh winter weather. These need include clothing items, boots, hats, gloves, and coats.

Cradles to Crayons has donation drop box locations in your area where we accept

new or gently used clothing items:

- Old Navy store in Holyoke - 50 Holyoke Street Holyoke, MA
- Old Navy store in Hadley - 335 Russell Street Hadley, MA
- Lander Grinspoon Elementary School - 257 Prospect St Northampton, MA

GARDEN, from page 4

et should tell you how long it takes for germination to occur, as well as inform you of the initial germination percentage. Once the necessary amount of time has elapsed unroll the paper towel and determine how viable your seeds are by observing the sprouting that has occurred.

Based on the results you may decide to sow the seed more thickly or just start over with a fresh batch.

Last year I did my own version of a germination test by sowing few seeds of questionable varieties in pots, and placing them on a shelf near my wood stove. I learned which seeds were worth the effort of sowing in the garden

and which I needed to discard and order new.

Although viability decreases as seeds age, proper storage can insure that you will get at least three years worth of sprouting out of many of your favorites. It is important to fold over used seed packets and seal them with tape after use, and if you are just getting to it now, it's better late than never. Put them in a location that is cool and dry.

Since temperatures around 37-41 degrees are ideal, many people assume that storage in the refrigerator is preferred. It is, as long as the seeds are first placed in an airtight container along with a desiccant to absorb moisture. Desiccants such as

silica gel are available in the floral section of craft shops, or you can reuse the pouches of silica that come in vitamin bottles or shoe boxes.

If you'd rather not take up space in your fridge, storing the container of seeds in a cabinet in a dry part of the house will also work.

Whatever you do, don't put them in a hot attic or damp basement! It is also not a good idea to purchase seeds from stores that have their seed displays in greenhouses. Temperature and moisture extremes can affect viability even if the seeds are brand new!

Some seed companies sell their seed in foil-lined packets. These are very good at keeping them fresh

for the longest amount of time – especially if they are unopened.

Now that you have inventoried your seeds, it will be a whole lot of fun to order exactly what you need. That's what I will be doing after one more family game night and that last Christmas movie!

Roberta McQuaid graduated from the Stockbridge School of Agriculture at the University of Massachusetts. For 33 years she has held the position of staff horticulturist at Old Sturbridge Village. She enjoys growing food as well as flowers. Have a question for her? Email it to pouimette@turley.com with "Gardening Question" in the subject line.

BIRDS, from page 4

raptors, snow bunting and some sparrows. Waterfowl seen mostly along the coast are dabbling and diving ducks. Irruptive species that are only present in some years are evening grosbeak, red crossbill, white-winged crossbill, redpoll, pine grosbeak and red-breasted nuthatch.

Helping birds

People may help birds by participating in the Christmas Bird Count. It is an important source of data on birds.

People may report a bird sighting or bird related experience by calling me at 413-967-3505, leaving a

message at extension 100, emailing mybackyard88@aol.com or edowner@turley.com or mailing to Barre Gazette, P.O. Box 448, Barre, MA 01005.



Bluebird

Visit us on the web www.turley.com

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CLUES ACROSS

- Lakes
- Electromotive force
- Invests in little enterprises
- Longtime Utah Jazz coach
- Small sailboat
- Actor Idris
- Mild yellow Dutch cheese made in balls
- System that detects objects under water
- Harsh, grating noise
- Steward
- A fencing sword
- Infections
- Actress Ryan
- Sodium
- Swedish castle
- A lump of slime
- African antelope
- Insurance providers
- Choosy

CLUES DOWN

- Ringworm
- Unpolished
- Drenches
- Pant style
- Son of Noah
- Spiritual being
- Upton Sinclair novel
- Journalist Tarbell
- Popular sports highlight show
- Born of
- Rich tapestry
- S. China seaport
- State of being unclothed
- Surrounded by
- Residue
- Away from wind
- Dried-up
- Visionary
- A very large body of water
- Garden tools
- Screen type
- Ancient Scandinavian poet

CLUES DOWN

- Millisecond
- Spanish city
- A sudden very loud sound
- "The Indiana Jones of beer"
- Tin
- Sea eagles
- Volcanic crater
- Type of coat
- Women's apartments in Ottoman palace
- Divulge a secret
- Norwegian playwright
- "It's a Wonderful Life" director
- Poisonous perennial plant
- 18-year astronomical period
- Clothes
- Places to sit
- Family of regulator genes
- New York ballplayer
- Impressive in size or scope
- Jacques __, French biologist
- One from the Big Apple
- Genus of woolly lemurs
- Songs to one's beloved
- Indigenous person of N.E. Thailand
- Supplemented with difficulty
- Farewell
- Investment account (abbr.)
- One from Utah
- Begets
- A male child
- Break apart
- Brief appearance
- Partner to "ooohed"
- A light informal meal
- Fabric with smooth, shiny surface
- One billionth of a second
- Ancient Italian-Greek colony
- Close tightly
- Mail out
- Language
- Computer characteristic

CROSSWORD ANSWER on page 8

Blessed Sacrament Parish

Rev. Duy Le
frduyle@blessedsacramentholyoke.org
 1945 Northampton St., Holyoke
 PARISH RECTORY: 413-532-0713
 OFFICE HOURS:
 Monday - Thursday 8:30 a.m. - 4 p.m.
 Friday 8:30 a.m. - 2 p.m.
 WEEKEND MASSES:
 Saturday 4 p.m.
 Sunday 8:30 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.
 DAILY MASS AND ROSARY
 Monday - Friday: ROSARY 6:15 a.m.
 Monday - Friday: MASS 6:45 a.m.
 Legal Holidays: ROSARY 7:30 a.m.
 Legal Holidays: MASS 8 a.m.
 ROSARY AND MEDITATION
 Monday Evening: 6 p.m.
www.blessedsacramentholyoke.org
 Facebook: @bspholyokema

First Baptist Church

Pastor Theresa Temple
 1976 Northampton St., Holyoke
 (413) 533-7728
firstbaptistchurchhollyoke@comcast.net
 Facebook: First Baptist Church of Holyoke, MA
 HOURS: Sunday worship service (winter hours) at 10:30 a.m. (summer hours) at 10 a.m.
 Wednesday Bible Studies, one at 11 a.m. and one at 5:30 p.m.

Our Lady of the Cross Catholic Parish

Pastor: Fr. Albert Scherer, OFM Conv.
 Email: pastor@ourladyofthecross.com
 Holy Cross Ave., Holyoke
 Parish Offices are located at: 15 Maple Street, Holyoke (413) 532-5661
parish@ourladyofthecross.com
 OFFICE HOURS:
 Monday - Friday 8:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
 WEEKEND MASSES:
 Saturday 4 p.m.
 Sunday 7:30 a.m., 9 a.m. (Polish), and 10:30 a.m.
 DAILY MASS:
 Monday - Saturday 8:30 a.m.
 Legal Holidays Mass 9 a.m.
 Reconciliation (Confession)
 Monday - Saturday 8 a.m.
 Saturday 3:15pm
 Anytime by Appointment
 DEVOTIONS
 Monday - Saturday
 Divine Mercy Chaplet - 7:50 a.m.
 ROSARY 8:05 a.m.
www.ourladyofthecross.com

CHURCH DIRECTORY



Your Community Church

St. Peter's Lutheran Church

Rev. Debora Stein
 34 Jarvis Ave., Holyoke
 Office: (413) 536-3369
 Office: stpetershollyoke@gmail.com
 Pastor: revdebma@gmail.com
 Website: www.stpetershollyoke.org
 Social media:
facebook.com/stpetershollyoke
 OFFICE HOURS:
 Monday and Thursday, 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.
 Wednesday, 8:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.
 Friday, 12:30 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.
 WORSHIP:
 Sundays at 9:30 a.m. (also on Facebook Live) & Thursdays at 6:30 p.m.
 Other: Prayers with Pastor - Wednesdays at 10:30 a.m. - on Facebook Live.

St. Paul's Episcopal Church

The Rev. Canon Joel Martinez
 485 Appleton St., Holyoke
 413-532-5060
Office@StPaulsholyoke.org
StPaulsHolyoke.org
 Instagram:
stpaulsepiscopalchurch_holyoke
 OFFICE HOURS:
 Tuesday - Friday 9 a.m. - 2 p.m.
 Days and Hours of Services:
 Sunday: 8 a.m.
 Sunday: 10 a.m.
 Sunday: 5 p.m. (Spanish)



Principal Lori McKenna joined the Class of 2025 in one last group photo. Below, Mayor Joshua Garcia giving the final remarks before the diplomas are handed out.

Turley photo by Abigail McCoy

JUNE 6

Class of 2025 bids farewell to Holyoke High School

Abigail McCoy
amccoy@turley.com

HOLYOKE – Against the backdrop of cheers, camera flashes, and bitter-sweet goodbyes, Holyoke High School’s Class of 2025 crossed the stage and stepped into the future on Friday, May 30, during an emotional and uplifting graduation ceremony that celebrated not only academic achievement, but identity, resilience, and community.

The ceremony featured powerful speeches from students, educators, and district leaders; each offering wisdom forged through personal

experience, deep pride, and a shared belief in the strength of this graduating class.

Principal Lori McKenna, delivering the staff address, opened her heartfelt remarks with both humor and vulnerability, striking a maternal tone that resonated with students and families alike.

“You’re probably worried, scared, and unsure of what the future will bring,” McKenna said, pausing before adding with a confident smile, “but you are going to kill it.”

McKenna urged graduates not to underestimate

themselves, to live boldly, and to face the unknown with courage. “Be known for being the one who pushes the challenge and stands at the brinkhead of tomorrow,” she said. “Buy the shoes, eat the cake, take the trip, make the memories.”

McKenna’s message, while celebratory, was grounded in sincerity. She paid special tribute to students who had overcome significant adversity, telling them, “Have fun. Be yourself. Life is short.” As cameras clicked and families waved, McKenna grinned and reminded everyone to “get one last pic together.”

Superintendent Anthony Soto, himself a Holyoke graduate, reflected on the symbolism of the day and the perseverance it represents.

“Graduation is more than a ceremony; it symbolizes resilience, commitment, and achievement,” Soto said, expressing pride in the graduates and deep appreciation for the teachers, families, and mentors who supported them.

Quoting a basketball coach, Soto reminded students: “It never gets easier. It always gets harder. But you learn how to handle the hard better.”

JUNE 20

State ‘officially’ announces end of school receivership

By Gregory A. Scibelli
gscibelli@turley.com

HOLYOKE – On Monday evening at the Holyoke School Committee meeting, representatives from the state government announced the formal end to state receivership for the Holyoke Public Schools on June 30.

On Tuesday, July 1, local control of the public schools will return to the city.

The Capacity Building Plan was completed by the school committee, and was part of the conditions set forth by the state.

“Holyoke has worked hard to regain local control of its schools, and this is a great moment for the city, students, educators and families,” stated Gov. Maura Healey. “I’m grateful for the leadership of Mayor Joshua Garcia, the Holyoke School Committee and the educators of Holyoke for partnering with our administration to prepare for this milestone,

and I’m confident that they will continue to successfully move the district forward.”

Lt. Gov. Kim Driscoll praised the fact Holyoke will be the first school district to leave receivership.

“Holyoke is the first school district to exit state receivership, and they should take pride in that accomplishment,” said Driscoll. Education Secretary Patrick A. Tutwiler said the schools will continue to work toward improvements, and the schools will receive support.

“While school improvement work will continue in Holyoke, it is time for local officials to take the lead,” said Tutwiler, who also serves as interim commissioner. “Community stakeholders have consistently shared their input into the district’s decision-making processes, and the School Committee partnered with a Community Advisory Team as part of the capacity-building plan. This experience is a strong foundation for the district’s future.”

JUNE 20

City Councilors seek city’s ‘label’ as sanctuary removed

By Gregory A. Scibelli
gscibelli@turley.com

HOLYOKE – At Tuesday’s Holyoke City Council meeting, Councilors Kevin Jourdain and Linda Vacon introduced an order that a resolution be adopted and sent to the federal gov-

ernment seeking to remove Holyoke’s label as a sanctuary city.

Earlier this year, Mayor Joshua Garcia issued an order instructing the city’s law enforcement officials not to work with ICE agents in the event they come to the city to remove ille-

gal immigrants. However, according to Jourdain and Vacon’s order, Garcia did not instruct law enforcement to impede ICE, and he never designated Holyoke as a sanctuary city.

Further, Jourdain and Vacon are proposing that the resolution includes that the

City Council declares that Holyoke is not a sanctuary city.

All of this is needed to stop issues with federal funding as some funds and grants have been taken away from the city due to the federal government classifying Holyoke as a sanctuary city.

JULY 4

Summer Eats program kicks off

By Gregory A. Scibelli
gscibelli@turley.com

HOLYOKE – The Holyoke Public Schools, like many city school districts in the state, kicked off a summer eating program aimed at assisting low-income students with food during the day now that school is out for the summer.

The Holyoke Public Schools, which regained local control this week, celebrated the start of the its summer program with an event at Heritage Park.

“During the event, kids and teens received free lunch served by Holyoke Public Schools,” a press release from the schools stated. “Families could enjoy free merry-go-round rides, pool pass giveaways, and connect

with local community vendors and partners. It’s a fun-filled day for families to kick off the summer with food, activities, and community spirit”

Summer Eats assists families by providing free meals to children and teens to ensure they continue growing, learning, and thriving over summer break. Project Bread, the leading statewide food security organization, supports Summer Eats providers across MA. Participating meal providers, like Holyoke Public Schools, operate and staff meal sites, often in conjunction with activities and educational programming. Kids and teens are required to eat onsite at most Summer Eats sites. All are welcome. No registration or ID is

required. Another summer food resource is SUN Bucks (Summer EBT), which is a federal food benefit providing additional funding for groceries for low-income families with school-aged children.

Sodexo, a food service company, runs the food services for the Holyoke Public Schools and are operating the summer program as well.

According to the schools, throughout the school year, children in Massachusetts can rely on permanent, free school meals to help meet their daily nutrition needs. Summer Eats closes the gap when the school year ends, helping to ensure children and teens continue to grow, learn and thrive over summer break.

JULY 18

City streamlines community outreach efforts

By Quinn Suomala
Staff Writer

HOLYOKE – Holyoke has officially opened a new office in the War Memorial building in an effort to improve their community outreach initiatives.

This office includes three human services departments from the area. These are: Holyoke Police Department’s Street Outreach Program; the Hampden County Sheriff’s Department’s All Inclusive Support Services for formerly incarcerated individuals, and Holyoke’s Community Response Advocate.

The goal of this new office is to make these different programs and resources more easily

accessible to Holyoke community members.

“What we are trying to build here is a community response division,” Mayor Joshua Garcia said. “It is a cross sector collaboration between organizations that are doing the incredible work that we need to help our most vulnerable people.”

The goal of this office is to allow community members who need support integrating back into society (including adjusting after incarceration, after deployment, or recovering from addiction) to have easy access to the resources they need.

“Why is this building so important?” Sheriff Nick Cocchi said. “Because it has eliminated the trans-

portation issues for people returning back to the city of Holyoke. They shouldn’t have to get on a bus or into a car to go to Springfield for services.”

“You don’t realize how important a drivers license is,” Holyoke Police Chief Brian Keenan said. “For a guy getting out of state prison who lives on High Street who is told he’s got to go Springfield, he can’t think about getting a job, he can’t think about going to his kids’ basketball game, he can’t think about anything because he’s worried about punching a ticket to get on a bus.”

The hope is that by having these resources more accessible, the people of Holyoke who need them will utilize them.

AUG. 22

‘Fancy Steps’ 16th annual fundraiser helps Children’s Museum

By Brendan Rooney
Correspondent

HOLYOKE – On Aug. 14, the Children’s Museum at Holyoke kicked off its 16th annual ‘Fancy Steps’ fundraiser with a reception, marking the start of the event where local celebrities will dance to raise funds for the museum.

Offering a bit of history and insight into how the event came to be was Pam Brough, one of the founding board members of the children’s museum, who has been with the organization since the beginning.

“16 years ago, the museum was struggling to survive, and we realized we needed some kind of fundraiser that

would pique the public’s interest, and so we came up with the idea of ‘Fancy Steps,’” Brough said. Before painting the scene of the very first event being held in the Holyoke City Hall ballroom, which was a ‘magical’ experience, 12 dancers were among the first rendition, and close to 300 people showed up, according to Brough’s reflection.

“They came (the public), the dancers raised money, and we hoped for at least 200 people would show, and tickets were \$5, but we couldn’t believe the success that manifested that night, so from there on we had to go bigger, and for the past 14 years we held the event at the Log Cabin,” said Brough.



Group ensemble photo of all dancers.

Turley photos by Brendan Rooney

SPORTS

Knights offense falls hard against Pope Francis

HOLYOKE – Last Monday, Dec. 22, the Holyoke High School boys basketball team had no answer for a tough Pope Francis team, falling a disappointing 85-31 at home. The Knights fell to 1-2 on the season

with Michael Medina leading the team with just seven points. Holyoke faced Chicopee Comprehensive High School earlier in the week and are back in action on Monday, Jan. 5 against Agawam at 7 p.m.



Devin Fernandez takes a try at the free throw line.



Turley photos by David Henry www.sweetdogphotos.com
Michael Medina takes the open shot.



Cosmo Bond tries to get late layup.



Devin Velez tries to deke his opponent.

Knights host tri-meet

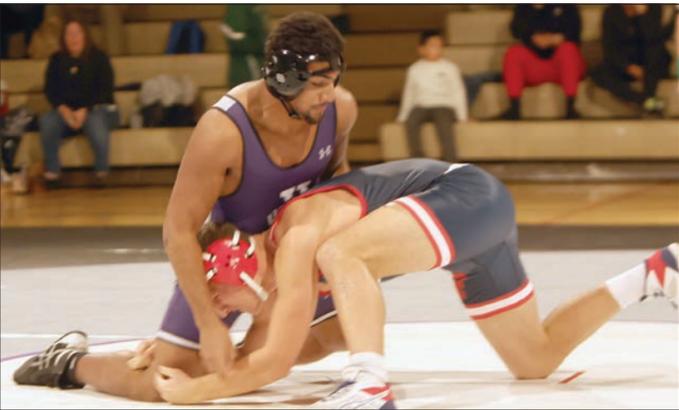
HOLYOKE – Prior to the holiday week, Holyoke High School, coming off its hosted tournament the Knight-Hawk to start the season, hosted Minnechaug and Frontier Regional in a tri-meet down on the mats at Dean Tech. The Knights has historically hosted the three-team event prior to the Christmas holiday each year. Holyoke is back in action following the New Year's holiday.



Josiah Cedeno attempts to get the takedown.



Noah Cintron looks for the early leverage.



Jesus Morales tries to get the leverage in his match.



Jacob Rosa locks up.

Turley photos by David Henry www.sweetdogphotos.com



Johann Lopez goes for the pin.



Lillivette Ramos gets ready to start her match.



Ezequiel Vazquez goes for a takedown of his opponent.

Cougars battle through opening month

HOLYOKE – Men's basketball has fought valiantly through the early part of their season, working relentlessly on the court during their nine November games. The Cougars have displayed class and created memorable moments while working toward their first win.

Holyoke has been led by two of their returning sophomore players, Dylan Rohan (Holyoke, MA / Holyoke HS) and James Fitzgibbons (Hadley, MA / Hopkins Academy). Rohan joined HCC men's basketball's 500-Point Club this year, scoring his 500th career point during the team's home opener (click here for full story). He currently leads the Cougars in points with 142, three-pointers made with 17 and free throws made with 21. Rohan led last year's team in all three categories and was chosen to the All-Region (All-New England) team. Fitzgibbons is Holyoke's leader in rebounds this season with 58 and is second on the team in points with 71. He led last year's team in rebounds.

Men's basketball has a 0-9 overall record and a 0-7 regional record heading into their next round of the schedule.

SEPT. 5

Sewer issues addressed

By Brendan Rooney
Correspondent

HOLYOKE – Interim Department of Public Works Director Mary Monahan is refuting the ongoing allegations and general frustration from Connecticut state lawmakers who have claimed the Paper City has released millions of gallons of raw sewage into the Connecticut River via Controlled Sewage Overflow (CSO).

This comes as it was first reported Aug. 29 through a television report that showed Connecticut State Rep. Tami Zawistowski (R-61) alleged that, “Holyoke alone dumps seven million gallons into the river in just one day, which occurred earlier this month and several times previously. When there is heavy rain, it is more than sewage, and other towns have done it too.” The state representative then included a majority of the Pioneer Valley bearing similar responsibility as she claimed, It’s Chicopee, West Springfield, and Springfield

on different days. They all have issues that have come out in the past years,” she said.

Monahan responded to the allegations, saying the data put forth isn’t being reported accurately.

“I think the legislators in Connecticut downstream from us, misunderstood, what’s happening in their water downstream from us, they specifically called out a heavy rain fall date, in their letter, where they are alleging that Holyoke discharged 7 million gallons of untreated waste water into the CT River, as result of the CSO, and that’s an inaccurate reading of that reporting,” she admitted. Monahan then went on to explain that the 5 million gallons of that originally reported 7 million figure, which has been a point of ire, was actually permitted discharges that received primary treatment via a CSO treatment facility at the Paper City’s wastewater treatment plant, before it was discharged into the CT river.

SEPT. 12

City hosts Sheriff Shuffle 5K at Ashley Reservoir

By Brendan Rooney
Correspondent

HOLYOKE – Last Saturday, Sept. 7, more than 500 people braced the elements to take part in Hampden County Sheriff Nick Cocchi’s ‘Sheriff Shuffle 5K’ to raise awareness and funds for domestic abuse. However, the night before, the Paper City experienced an unforeseen microburst storm that almost led to the initial cancellation of the event, as the extreme weather left the Elks Lodge property and adjacent areas covered in massive downed trees and the facility without power. Despite the challenges, perseverance prevailed as the 26th annual road race carried on, and it was a resounding success.

Reflecting on the Herculean effort put forth by all first responders and calling upon the vast wealth of resources from the Hampden County Sheriff’s office, while spotlighting the leadership of Holyoke’s resources and the part they played in assisting in cleanup efforts, was Cocchi.

“At around 6 p.m.

on Saturday, this road race wasn’t going to happen,” he said. “And I got a phone call, and they said, ‘Hey, I think you have to think about postponing the event’.” Cocchi quickly responded by noting, “The Sheriff’s office doesn’t quit.” Cocchi then revealed he deployed the Hampden County Sheriff’s Office Arborist Program, the Hampden County Sheriff’s

Workforce Initiative, along with the Community Restitution Crew to assist in the ongoing restoration efforts. “They worked around the clock and are still working right now to clear all of the debris, all the brush, and to take down the dangerous trees,” Cocchi said. “And I have to tell you, Holyoke Gas and Electric (HG&E), Holyoke Water, and the Holyoke DPW

were phenomenal across the board.”

Cocchi also touched upon the indomitable spirit of the citizens of Hampden County by revealing that everyone who participated would be part of establishing a ‘movement’ in support of the victims and survivors of domestic violence, while shedding light on the families affected by the initial tragedy.



Turley photo by Brendan Rooney
Startling line with Boomer, Hampden County Sheriff Nick Cocchi delivering remarks as supporters watch on

SEPT. 19

Department of Public Works working to keep city going, address infrastructure issues

By Brendan Rooney
Correspondent

HOLYOKE – Holyoke DPW interim director Mary Monahan is working hard to help further the city’s various infrastructure responsibilities.

She recently discussed some of the working pieces in effect from subjects such as renewed contracts, and the valuable partnership she has built with Holyoke Mayor Joshua Garcia, highlighting

the future of Holyoke going forward, as the element of renewable green energy now is a main driving factor of production and industrial growth, that the Paper City continues to showcase.

“I’ll begin by stating that in my position, it should be noted that in any municipality, nothing works without the DPW,” Monahan admitted. “That includes your roads, bridges, maintenance, public safety, and public health, as each element is tied directly

to the core of the DPW.”

Monahan then put out a call for action to the general public and elected officials to “ramp up” and bring further attention to the acknowledgement of how critical the DPW in all of its functionality truly is, before drawing the realization that when budgets are being proposed to be trimmed, the DPW is the first casualty, something Monahan offered perspective on.

“I think part of it is because we are that unseen

agent of making things happen,” she said. “Our work is generally on the side, but we notice that when we don’t do certain things, such as facilitating trash pick-up, fixing potholes, we are drawn into the spotlight with a negative perception; however, the more important stuff isn’t what always gets noticed.” She did respond to that criticism by highlighting some of the new technology at disposal along with reiterating the pro-

ocols that the DPW must follow saying, “It’s a quiet process that can sometimes involve fixing a sinkhole that the neighbors noticed, that you probably didn’t if you drove down the street, but if the public noticed we are out there, and that can be a big issue depending on what’s underneath the sinkhole,” Monahan said. “And when it comes to figuring out what the deeper issue could be the foreman or supervisor sticks his camera phone into

the hole to take a picture, to highlight how big the issue we’re potentially dealing with is, then based on how big that hole is, we can determine if we need a steel plate over it, to wait to find a funding source to fix it, or holy cow this is a problem right now,” Monahan added. She also noted that in the case of those ‘big’ emergencies, staff will be pulled from other problems to come and assist in digging up the road, and ensure it’s safe to travel.

Public Notices

Holyoke Community Preservation Committee Notice of Public Meetings

The Holyoke Community Preservation Committee will hold two (2) public meetings on **January 14 and 21, 2026 at 6:00 pm over zoom**, for the public to learn about and comment on projects seeking funds. For the zoom link please contact klaymann@holyoke.org. See proposals at <https://holyokecpac.org> 01/02/2026

LEGAL NOTICE CITY OF HOLYOKE GAS & ELECTRIC DEPARTMENT ELECTRIC LINE CONTRACTOR – 15KV Spacer Cable Installation

Sealed proposals for the above contract will be received by Holyoke Gas & Electric Dept until **2:00 p.m., February 3, 2026**, at the Office of the Manager, 99 Suffolk St, Holyoke, MA 01040, at which time proposals will be publicly opened and read.

Prevailing Wage Rates:

Rates which apply to the work shall be paid to all people engaged in work under this contract.

Bid Deposit:

A Bid Deposit equal to 5% of bid must accompany all bids and may be in the form of a cer-

tified, treasurer’s, or cashier’s check payable to HG&E from a responsible bank or trust company; cash; or a bid bond from a licensed surety payable to HG&E.

Additional information may be obtained from:

Chi Wong
Holyoke Gas & Electric Dept
99 Suffolk St
Holyoke, MA 01040
(413) 536-9308
cwong@hged.com

The right is hereby reserved to reject any or all proposals, or to accept any proposal that in the opinion of the Manager may be in the best interest of the City of Holyoke.

Please mark sealed envelopes “**Bid for Electric Line Contractor – 15kV Spacer Cable Installation**” and address them to:

James M. Lavelle
Holyoke Gas & Electric Dept
99 Suffolk St
Holyoke, MA 01040
01/02/2026

Commonwealth of Massachusetts The Trial Court Probate and Family Court Hampden Probate and Family Court 50 State Street Springfield, MA 01103 (413)748-7758 Docket No.

HD25P2677EA

Estate of: Kathleen K Hurley Date of Death: 09/30/2025 CITATION ON PETITION FOR FORMAL ADJUDICATION

To all interested persons: A Petition for Formal Probate of Will with Appointment of Personal Representative has been filed by **Andrew Hurley of Holyoke, MA** requesting that the Court enter a formal Decree and Order and for such other relief as requested in the Petition.

The Petitioner requests that **Andrew Hurley of Holyoke, MA** be appointed as Personal Representative(s) of said estate to serve **Without Surety** on the bond in unsupervised administration.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

You have the right to obtain a copy of the Petition from the Petitioner or at the Court. You have a right to object to this proceeding. To do so, you or your attorney must file a written appearance and objection at this Court before: 10:00 a.m. on the return day of 01/23/2026. This is NOT a hearing date, but a deadline by which you must file a written appearance and objection if you object to this proceeding. If you fail to file a timely written appearance and

objection followed by an affidavit of objections within thirty (30) days of the return day, action may be taken without further notice to you.

UNSUPERVISED ADMINISTRATION UNDER THE MASSACHUSETTS UNIFORM PROBATE

A Personal Representative appointed under the MUPC in an unsupervised administration is not required to file an inventory or annual accounts with the Court. Persons interested in the estate are entitled to notice regarding the administration directly from the Personal Representative and may petition the Court in any matter relating to the estate, including the distribution of assets and expenses of administration.

WITNESS, Hon. Barbara M Hyland, First Justice of this Court.

Date: December 26, 2025
Rosemary A Saccomani,
Register of Probate
01/02/2026

Commonwealth of Massachusetts The Trial Court Probate and Family Court Hampden Probate and Family Court

50 State Street Springfield, MA 01103 (413)748-7758

Docket No. HD25P1051EA

Estate of: Bobby Joe Stovall

Also known as: Bobby Stovall

Date of Death: 03/17/2024 CITATION ON PETITION FOR FORMAL ADJUDICATION

To all interested persons: A Petition for S/A - Formal Adjudication of Intestacy and Appointment of Personal Representative has been filed by **Tyrone Hardnett-Stovall of Amherst, MA** requesting that the Court enter a formal Decree and Order and for such other relief as requested in the Petition.

The Petitioner requests that **Tyrone Hardnett-Stovall of Amherst, MA** be appointed as Personal Representative(s) of said estate to serve **Without Surety** on the bond in unsupervised administration.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

You have the right to obtain a copy of the Petition from the Petitioner or at the Court. You have a right to object to this proceeding. To do so, you or your attorney must file a written appearance and objection at this Court before: 10:00 a.m.

on the return day of 01/21/2026. This is NOT a hearing date, but a deadline by which you must file a written appearance and objection if you object to this proceeding. If you fail to file a timely written appearance and objection followed by an affidavit of objections within thirty (30) days of the return day, action may be taken without further notice to you.

UNSUPERVISED ADMINISTRATION UNDER THE MASSACHUSETTS UNIFORM PROBATE

A Personal Representative appointed under the MUPC in an unsupervised administration is not required to file an inventory or annual accounts with the Court. Persons interested in the estate are entitled to notice regarding the administration directly from the Personal Representative and may petition the Court in any matter relating to the estate, including the distribution of assets and expenses of administration.

WITNESS, Hon. Barbara M Hyland, First Justice of this Court.

Date: December 24, 2025
Rosemary A Saccomani,
Register of Probate
01/02/2026

The Holyoke Sun OBITUARY POLICY

Turley Publications offers two types of obituaries.

One is a free, brief **Death Notice** listing the name of deceased, date of death and funeral date and place.

The other is a **Paid Obituary**, costing \$275, which allows families to publish extended death notice information of their own choice and may include a photograph. **Death Notices & Paid Obituaries** should be submitted through a funeral home to: obits@turley.com.

Exceptions will be made only when the family provides a death certificate and must be pre-paid.



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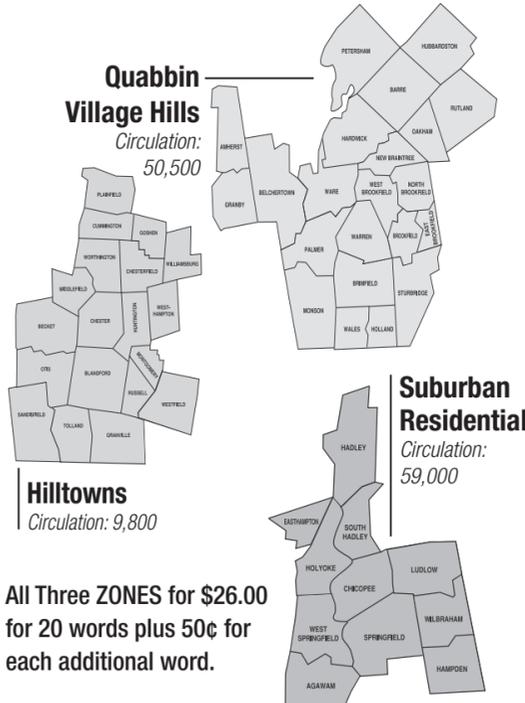
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OCTOBER

OCT. 3

Multi-class, multi-school reunion draws big crowd

By Brendan Rooney
Correspondent

HOLYOKE — More than 100 alumni, comprised of both Holyoke Catholic (HCHS) and Holyoke High School (HHS) representatives from nearly 60 years, gathered from inside Hamel's Summit View Banquet hall to celebrate and rekindle fond memories of a time long past.

The event highlighted achievements of the Purple Knights class of 1965 and 1966 and the Gaels classes of 1965 and 1966, who were once cross-town rivals, many years ago, and now, in the eyes of many, are considered long-time friends, gathered once again to partake in fes-

tivities which culminated over two days, where the first part was a meet and greet gathering, held Saturday, Sept. 27 at the Holyoke Knights of Columbus.

Providing a bit of insight on how the sense of community stayed intact for the past 25 years was Ed O' Connor, HCHS alumnus from 1966 and reunion coordinator.

"I joined to be a coordinator to reintroduce myself to a lot of my classmates whom I didn't know in high school, and it means a lot to get together once in a while and enjoy each other's company," O'Connor said. He also revealed how the element of 'joint reunions' came into reality.



Maddie's family is ready for the event. Turley photo by Brendan Rooney

OCT. 24

'Magic for Maddie' 5K draws huge turnout

By Brendan Rooney
Correspondent

HOLYOKE — Last Saturday, the 4th annual 'Magic for Maddie 5K Family Fun Walk and Carnival' took place from the grounds of the Ashley Reservoir, where history was made.

There were various events set up throughout the Elks Lodge campus, such as the fun run event for kids of all ages, where all participants received medals, to show sportsmanship, which acted as a prelude for one of the main draws being the big 5K, which saw support-

ers gather at the starting line, all decked out in bright pink and purple 'Magic for Maddie' shirts which were provided to each who participated. A shotgun start followed as the runners ran off, then the walkers took their positions, as the Family Fun Walk transpired. Various 50/50 raffles donated



Madeline "Maddie" Schmidt

through the generosity of over 350 sponsors, along with various food trucks from local businesses, providing food and beverages, and an official merchandise stand was offered, with all proceeds going to the non-profit, rounding out the experience.

NOV. 7

Two major political upsets

By Gregory A. Scibelli
gscibelli@turley.com

HOLYOKE — On Tuesday night, two longtime city councilors were ousted from their seats by a pair of newcomers in the municipal election for city council and school committee.

Kevin Jourdain, a longtime city councilor who served Ward 6, was city council president, and more recently, an at-large councilor, was defeated by Mimi Pantich, who served the city for many years on the Planning Board.

Pantich was the lone challenger to win an at-large seat on the council. Incumbents Patti Devine, current Council President Tessa Murphy-Romboletti, Israel Rivera, Michael Sullivan, and Howard Greaney all retained their seats. Devine led the at-large candidates with 3,030 votes while Greaney finished sixth with 2,173 votes. Jourdain was 105 votes off the pace with 2,068 votes.

The other major upset was pulled off by Anne Thalheimer. She won the Ward 3 city council seat from longtime incumbent David

Bartley. She garnered 476 votes in the ward to Bartley's 412. Thalheimer was unsuccessful in her first attempt to win the seat two years ago, but picked up the win Tuesday for her first term on the city council.

Ward 4 has a new councilor as Ricard Purcell defeated Peter Diaz, Jr. Purcell had 274 votes while Diaz only garnered 154.

Jenny Rivera retained her seat in Ward 1 with a victory over Victor Machado. Rivera received 196 votes to Machado's 177.

There were two races for seats on the Holyoke School Committee. Jens Michaelsen defeated Aida Luz Oquendo for the Ward 5 seat. Michaelsen received 609 votes to Oquendo's 402.

There was a "contested" race for the Ward 6 seat following the retirement of William Collamore. Pat Beaudry was set to be unopposed for the seat, but dropped out in October due to a move out of the district. At that point, Patty Lubold and Christian Carde waged a brief write-in battle for the open seat.

NOV. 21

Flag raising held for Puerto Rican Heritage Month

By Brendan Rooney
Correspondent

HOLYOKE — On Nov. 19, community members and local dignitaries gathered outside on the lawn of the Holyoke City Hall campus to unveil and raise the Puerto Rican flag to commemorate Puerto Rican Heritage Month. The social gathering started with the US and Puerto Rican nation-

al anthems being played before Jazmin Acevedo, Assistant Registrar of Voters for Holyoke, took the mic to deliver remarks and offer a point of reflection and pride, citing the resilience of the Puerto Rican culture not only in the Paper City, but worldwide as well.

"Today as our flag waves, let us remember and above all, I congratulate you for being boricua,"

Acevedo said." The crowd then chanted "WEPA!" as a standing ovation and round of applause transpired just moments before Holyoke Mayor Joshua A. Garcia took the podium to reveal and read from a proclamation he drafted declaring the Discovery of Puerto Rico Day on this date of November 19th, in the city of Holyoke.

"Were going to talk

about the history of this day, which to some was the worst day for the island of Puerto Rico in 1493, but just like world history, and any other community, country, nation, and right here in Holyoke there is challenge, opportunity, and it's this same story of resilience, hope, and pride that brings people together to overcome the obstacles put in front of us," said Garcia.



Members of the community stand in front of the raised Puerto Rican flag. Turley photo by Brendan Rooney

DECEMBER

DEC. 5



Submitted photo

A fire breaks out at an apartment building on Tuesday morning.

Pair of fires displace more than 70 families

By Gregory A. Scibelli
gscibelli@turley.com

HOLYOKE — On Tuesday, a pair of fires, one at an apartment complex at 733 High St. started on the second floor and continued spreading to the roof. It took more than 50 firefighters and mutual aid from Chicopee, Westfield, and the Westover Air Reserve Base Fire Department.

The night before, at 131 Clemente St., an apartment building caught fire, displacing 26 families after a fire broke out on the second floor and then spread throughout the building.

According to the Holyoke Fire Department, no one was injured during either of the fires, including all of the firefighters who had a part in combatting the blazes.

"We're relieved that no one was injured in this week's fires, but this has been a terribly challenging week for the community," said Fire Chief John Kadlewicz. "Our hearts go out to all the families who lost their homes and belongings. We ask anyone who wants to help to make donations to Enlace de Familias. This will ensure that your support goes directly to the people who need it most."

Firefighters were challenged due to the conditions at the time of the fires. Especially on Tuesday morning during a snowstorm, which transitioned into sleet and freezing rain.

"Holyoke firefighters did a tremendous job under extremely difficult conditions," Kadlewicz said. "They faced heavy fire with zero visibility at times, with snow and ice making their work even harder. This fire could have spread even further and threatened even more homes, and I want to recognize their extraordinary performance in containing it."

DEC. 19

COMMUNITY DINNER



Turley photo by Gregory A. Scibelli

Lvie Cordero, president of OneHolyoke CDC, with her family, granddaughter, Nevaeh, 5, daughter Amanda, and husband Luis at a massive community dinner celebration held Saturday.

DEC. 19

Associate Solicitor: Complaint filed late, is invalid and should be dismissed

By Gregory A. Scibelli
gscibelli@turley.com

HOLYOKE — A Holyoke City Councilor's Open Meeting Law complaint should be dismissed, the associate solicitor for the city told the Attorney General's Office as well as the mayor and rest of the city council.

Last month, Ward 5 Councilor Linda Vacon filed an Open Meeting

Law complaint with the goal of invalidating a vote to spend \$137,500 on contracted services for a firm that is charged with helping the city get its finances in order and updated with the Department of Revenue.

Vacon believed the vote to spend the funds by the city council was done improperly, saying the meeting had already adjourned due to a council rule that places a time limit on meet-

ings. She sought a legal opinion on the vote, just for Mayor Joshua Garcia to vote the request as the solicitor's office had already deemed the vote valid and the funds have been expanded and the firm is already working with the city.

Vacon's response was to file the Open Meeting Law complaint on Nov. 7. The original vote for the \$137,000 took place on Oct. 10.

According to response to the state from Associate Solicitor Kathleen Degnan, state law stipulates a limit of 30 days to file an Open Meeting Law complaint under Massachusetts General Law Ch. 30A, section 23b.

"Complaints alleging violations of the Open Meeting Law must be filed with the public body within 30 days of the alleged violation," Degnan states.

Degnan said while the complaint was filed with the state within the 30 days, it is also required under the law to file the complaint with the body that made the alleged violation.

"In this case, Linda Vacon did not file her complaint with the public body until Nov. 18," Degnan stated. "As a result, Linda Vacon did not file her submission to the public body (Holyoke City Council) within 30 days

of the date of the violation. It is clear Linda Vacon did file her complaint with your office on Nov. 7, but the Open Meeting Law requires her to submit the complaint the Holyoke City Council prior to submitting her complaint to your office and she did not do so."

Degnan summarized her position that the complaint should be summarily dismissed because it was not properly filed.