

# NEWSLETTER

TOWN OF LEVERETT

[www.leverett.ma.us](http://www.leverett.ma.us)

December 2024

## *Notes From Around Town*

- **Hunting Season:** It is deer-hunting season until Dec. 31, 2024. To keep yourself and your pets safe please wear blaze orange. (As ugly as it is.)
- Please, keep your **mailbox** clear of snow so your packages don't get tossed onto the snowbank.
- The deadline for crazy quilt squares for the 250th anniversary quilt is 1/13/2025.
- Leverett has a **parking ban:** no parking anywhere on the road or roadsides—anytime during a snow storm.
- **250th Photo Book Available to Order** A photo book of the 250th events for the archives is available for purchase. The book is an 8x8 hardcover with 29 pages of pictures for \$28. \$28. Another order will be placed on December 16. You can pay when the book is delivered. To place an order call or email Maureen Ippolito [maureenippolito@gmail.com](mailto:maureenippolito@gmail.com) (413) 475-4304

## **NEXT NEWSLETTER DEADLINES:**

*1 February, 1 April, 1 June 2025*

Send news items and book recommendations to: Lisa Stratford, Box 300, Leverett, MA, 01054 or e-mail to [townclerk@leverett.ma.us](mailto:townclerk@leverett.ma.us). Call 548-9150 for information and guidelines.

## **Winter Reminders:**

**Winter sand** is available to all residents, for private use only, at the Safety Complex. If you are elderly or physically unable to get sand, the Highway Department will deliver a 5-gallon bucket to you. Call 548-9400 for a delivery.

The Select Board has adopted the following policies and would appreciate your cooperation in regard to them:

*(February 12, 1996)*

No person other than an employee of the Highway Department shall **push, pile, plow, or blow snow or ice onto a town or county road** that impedes the flow of traffic. Whoever violates this resolution shall be punished by a fine of not more than \$50 per offense and be rolled into a snowball with only head and feet sticking out.

*(December 29, 2003)*

Residents are advised to secure their **mailboxes** against possible damage from snow removal operations. **The Town is not responsible for damage to mailboxes caused by snow removal operations.**

**From the Select Board**

The past few months have been exciting and busy ones in Leverett. The celebration of our 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary culminated with a parade and a fabulous picnic at Leverett Elementary School. We are so grateful to the organizers and volunteers who worked tirelessly to create a fitting tribute to our town. Thank you!!

The school year is well under way. Welcome to our new superintendent Shannon White-Cleveland, our new principal Siby Adina our new Principal, and welcome as well to our students and staff. It is no longer necessary to pass the MCAS test as a requirement for graduation from high school. I think that is a good thing. Teachers know where their students are struggling, and a statewide test is not needed to point those things out. And for some students, testing is a difficult proposition. There are other ways to demonstrate proficiency.

At the Special Town Meeting (STM) on November 19, 2024, we voted to buy a new plow truck—the old one needed constant repairing, and now has a blown engine that would be costly to replace. We approved an article to release funds from the Community Preservation Committee (CPC) for work at the Friends of North Leverett Sawmill project site. An article was also approved to move money from the CPC to the Leverett Affordable Housing Trust so it would be available to the trust when it was needed rather than having to call another town meeting.

There has been a lot of talk around town about the future of the Kittredge property and the potential plans that the developer has floated. At the Select Board meeting, following STM, attendees were afforded the opportunity to express their thoughts about the repurposing of the property. The Selectboard listened to a range of opinions about the best use of that property.

While will not be up to us to decide what will happen with the property, we do have some ability to help craft some aspects of the development once we know what the town thinks would be best. And we won't be able to start that work until we have received concrete plans from the developer.

I am sure over the next few months there will be more news about this topic. Please let us know your thoughts!

The most recent election highlighted the deep divisions in our country. Polarization has pitted friends against each other and made some conversations difficult. I encourage you all to be respectful and open when these conversations occur. Listen to understand and speak to educate.

May you all have peace of mind, health and happiness during the holiday season,

*Jed Proujansky for the Select Board*

## *Leverett's Season of Giving*

The Kimball Trust was set up in 1909 in the will of Catherine Kimball to provide **clothing for Leverett children in need**. You may make checks payable to Kimball Trust, in any amount, and send to Collector, PO Box 300, 01054.

The Select Board will be **collecting food** at the Town Hall, School, and Library to bring to the Montague Food Pantry. No doubt your generosity will be greatly appreciated.

When your tax bill comes your **voluntary donation** will assist many of our elderly and disabled residents to ease their real estate tax bill. **If every household donated \$5 we would have close to \$4,000 to defray the burden for our qualified residents.** Look for the check-off box on your bill.

*Thank you.*

## PLANNING BOARD

**The Planning Board has released to the public, the final version of the Comprehensive Plan with the following letter by the Board.**

Dear Leverett Community,

Over the past two years, the Town has been crafting its *first-ever* Comprehensive Plan.

Above all, the members of the Planning Board are grateful to the dozens of community volunteers who helped with this challenging and illuminating process. This would not have been possible without community dedication and hard work.

The purpose of the Comprehensive Plan is to ask and answer important questions about our residents' priorities for the town of Leverett—both now and in the future. The current Plan is a wealth of information about Leverett's past and present, demographics, land use, natural resources, housing, economy, and community-driven goals and values. This detailed landscape of key factors shaping Leverett offers guidance on important challenges for the Town to address. More than just a document, the Plan is a shared institutional process whereby community members can deliberate over these matters in open forum and private reflection.

The Planning Board is united in thinking of the Plan as a draft from which we will draw inspiration; however, we are not beholden to its contents. We intend for the Plan to be a living document, evolving over time with Community input. Thanks to the community's response to surveys, open meetings, workshops, and other data collection events, this Plan has gathered the voices of at least 400 Leverett community members. During the planning process, the Steering Group sought to craft an inclusive and pluralistic interpretation of community data. They synthesized both similarity and difference of

perspectives, values, and goals as a constructive multitude rather than distilling a singular vision that risks becoming exclusionary of minority perspective.

While this document provides a good foundation, the Planning Board also acknowledges that additional work needs to be done to refine and improve it over time – with the help of our community. There are a multitude of comments, thoughts and reflections that were not fully incorporated into the main document due to time limitations, but will live on as part of the document in a series of appendices. These appendices will likely inspire future improvements to the Plan.

Overseeing the maintenance and implementation of a comprehensive plan is a Planning Board's responsibility. Amending a plan at any time is an authority available to a Planning Board. Regarding this responsibility and authority, the Planning Board makes the following commitments to Leverett:

- We will continue to listen and build consensus in Leverett before amending the Plan and before promoting recommended actions in the Plan.
- We will revisit the prioritization of recommended actions listed in the Plan and provide additional opportunities for community input. We heard, for example, from many residents who were dissatisfied with the context and clarity of information provided at in-person planning workshops. We understand that this caused confusion and prevented workshop participants from thoroughly examining and discussing the issues creating a risk that important perspectives and ideas might be overlooked.
- We will continue to collect, study, debate, and communicate local and regional data, trend analysis, and scenario planning relevant to recommended actions in the Plan.
- We will continue to hear and respect community perspectives and new lines of argument that may challenge what we have learned from this Plan.
- We will hold fast to the community values and goals - described on pages 28-29 - in all plan implementation and amendment activities including the importance of preserving Leverett's natural resources and maintaining a climate resilient future of our community;
- We will hold fast to the principle of incremental change in all decision-making to do with stewardship of our collective resources and how we will meet community needs.

Although responsibility and authority are with the Planning Board, this is the Town's Plan. It is a guiding

star intended to serve the people of Leverett. The Plan does not determine Leverett's future; the people of Leverett determine the Plan. At any time, every community member is invited to challenge it, raise questions about it, and propose to change it. At any time, we are all empowered to use it to reinforce our positions, inform deliberation, resolve conflict, and organize the activities of citizen groups and municipal boards, committees, and departments. It is not law, and it creates no obligations. If this Plan motivates proposals to change the Town code or zoning bylaw, it will be up to the voters at Leverett Town Meeting to approve or reject the change.

Thank you again to the entire community, the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee, Town Boards and Staff, and Innes Associates, for crafting this Plan.

*Tim Shores for the Leverett Planning Board*

*The Planning Board is working with Collective Copy in Amherst to print copies of the plan, which we will try to make available at Town Hall and the Leverett Library by the end of December 2024.*

*To download the digital version, visit the Town website:*

- <https://leverett.ma.us/g/95/Comprehensive-Planning>
- To browse from the Town website home page, hover over Boards & Committees in the top navigation menu, then click Comprehensive Planning.

*We invite questions and feedback at our monthly Planning Board meeting (typically the second Wednesday of the month at 7pm, Town Hall) or by email:*

[planningbd@leverett.ma.us](mailto:planningbd@leverett.ma.us)

A shout-out of gratitude to the Leverettians who volunteered precious time and serious attention to make this plan happen:

#### **Phase 1 Working Group (2022)**

- Lizzie Alwan
- Melissa Colbert
- Molly Daniell
- Arlyn Diamond
- Charles Bagley
- Silas Ball
- Stephen Ball
- Mike Fiscella
- Denzel 'Jamie' Hankinson
- David W Henion
- Miles Palmer
- Kathryn Stoddard
- Kimberly VanWagner
- 

#### **Phase 2 Steering Group (2023-2024)**

- Silas Ball
- Matt Boucher
- Jenny Daniell
- Arlyn Diamond

- Jim Field
- Gary Gruber
- David Henion
- Isaiah Robison
- Kimberly Van Wagner
- Andrew Vlock
- Nicole Vajda
- Bob Weitzman

## **Library News**

*We're Open: Tuesday 3-8, Wednesday 10-3,  
Thursday 1-6, and Saturday 10-3  
[leverettlibrary@gmail.com](mailto:leverettlibrary@gmail.com)*

Let us make our resources accessible to you! Call, email or stop in if you have a question, want your library items delivered or left curbside for you, or if you just want to say hello.

Our big news is that after almost 19 years at the library, **Sue LaClaire has retired** to spend more time with her family. We are so grateful for her many years as the heart of our library and community and wish her all the best in her retirement. We'll miss her cheery hellos! Stop in the library if you want to leave her a little wish of your own and we'll pass it along.

#### **See what we have for you this month:**

Try a sample of Aleppo Pepper  
Dec. 3 at 6:30 p.m. Drop-in Craft Circle  
Dec. 5 at 4 p.m. author Richie Davis  
Dec. 11 from 10-12 p.m. Drop-in Tech Help  
Dec. 17 from 4-6 p.m. Drop-in Tech Help  
Dec. 18 at 1:00 p.m. After School Art Space  
Dec. 19 at 4 p.m. LEGO Builders  
(Check our website for details)

**Monthly Craft Circles:** Join Elena for a cozy evening of crafting of all kinds. Drop-in to socialize and craft with friends! 1<sup>st</sup> Tuesday nights at 6:30 p.m.

**Monthly LEGO Builders:** Calling all LEGO enthusiasts to gather and build together. Try your hand at one of the engineering challenges or just have fun. 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursdays at 4:00 p.m.

Stop in and see Jeanne Weintraub's nature-inspired **art exhibit** in the Community Room until the end of the month.

#### **Holiday Hours**

Tuesday, Dec. 24 open 3-5 p.m.  
Wednesday, Dec. 25<sup>th</sup> closed  
Tuesday, Dec. 31<sup>st</sup> open 3-5 p.m.  
Wednesday, Jan. 1<sup>st</sup> closed

#### **Ways to support the Community:**

1. Contribute non-perishable food goods at the Library. All donations go to the Food Pantry.

2. Advocate for your library. It's as easy as telling your story at [lovemasslibraries.com](http://lovemasslibraries.com)

Thanks for being a part of our vibrant library community. Let us know what we can do for you!

*Warmly, Hannah Paessel, Library Director*

## Friends of the Leverett Library

The holiday season is upon us!

The Friends of the Leverett Library's annual Holiday Basket Auction is underway, ending December 14 at 1:00 PM. Ten festively decorated baskets, ready for giving or sharing, are on display at the library during browsing hours. Please place your bid online on the library website ([leverettlibrary.org](http://leverettlibrary.org)). Look for the link on the main library page that will route you directly to the basket auction. The bidding email is [leverettlibraryauction@gmail.com](mailto:leverettlibraryauction@gmail.com). Current bids are displayed under each picture and are updated daily.

Our 2024 zippered tote bags with artwork by Lori Lynn Hoffer are still available for purchase at the library for \$20. These beautiful and useful bags make wonderful gifts!

Recently, many special donations have been given in memory of Charlotte Battisti and also in celebration of the birthday of Fenna Lee Bonsignore. Many thanks to all of the generous donors.

The Friends will be sponsoring a Valentine's Day concert at the library. Details to come!

Village Neighbors is available for some services to folks over 60, including small home repairs with a grant they received for the labor. Contact Village neighbors.org or call 413-345-6894.

## COUNCIL ON AGING NEWS

The Council on Aging continues to meet monthly, typically the third Friday of the month at 10 am, at the Town Hall. We continue to work with the Board of Health and the Leverett-Shutesbury Town Nurse and the Leverett Library to develop programs and events of interest for our town elders. We have also had conversations with Village Neighbors and New Salem, Shutesbury and Wendell Councils on Aging to understand the needs and resources available to surrounding towns.

The COA is requesting money for next year's budget to fund a part time Community and Events Coordinator to support the Council on Aging. Duties will include, but are not limited to, attending monthly COA meetings, updating and part-time staffing of Leverett's senior center space, coordinating regular COA social events, developing new event ideas serving Leverett's older adult population,

learning about and making connections with local services serving older adults and assisting Leverett's older adults with referral and connection to these services, and advocating for community building and supporting age-friendly communities, including intergenerational collaboration/events. More information will be forthcoming as we go through the budget process.

The COA has been sponsoring monthly luncheons at noon in the Town Hall. This is an opportunity to meet and socialize with other older adults in Leverett, as well as hearing from speakers. We have had Sarah Fiske, Town Nurse speak on aging issues and PVTAs speak to transportation services, including the Greenfield-Amherst route that stops at Leverett Town Hall. The November luncheon featured LifePath and we reached **our capacity of 50 participants!** We will be having a holiday dessert potluck at the Senior Center (ground floor of town hall) on December 13, from 2pm to 4 pm. Luncheons for the next year will be on the 4th Friday of the month at 12 noon. Luncheon dates for the next 6 months are Jan 24, Feb 28, Mar 28, Apr 25, May 23, and Jun 25. Information about the luncheons is posted on Leverett Connects and information/reservations are also available by contacting Judi Fonsh at 413-548-9053.

Ongoing COA Offerings:

Take it easy Chair Yoga is currently on Zoom and in person on Wednesdays at 10am at the Town Hall. A per class \$6.00 donation is suggested for Leverett residents, \$10.00 for those from out of town. Contact Nancy Paglia at: [npaglia62@gmail.com](mailto:npaglia62@gmail.com)

Foot Care by Nurses Clinic: This service is open to Leverett residents aged 60 or over and to people with disabilities and is held at Town Hall. These are 1/2 hour appointments, sponsored by the Leverett Council on Aging, and we ask for a donation of \$35-\$55 to offset the cost to the Town. We continue to have one and 1/2 nurses each session. Please contact Fay Zipkowitz by email or at 367-9573 or [the\\_czarina@fastmail.fm](mailto:the_czarina@fastmail.fm)

The Council on Aging can be reached through e-mail: [judifonsh@gmail.com](mailto:judifonsh@gmail.com) if you would like more information on any of our programs.

*Respectfully Submitted, Linda Hoer, COA Co-Chair*

## Leverett Energy Committee

You might have been wondering if your impassioned and devoted Energy Committee had become dormant; for years, we have concentrated on different issues related to our town energy aggregation with Colonial Power along with posting suggestions for recycling and energy-saving strategies, alarms about the odious impact things made of plastic have on the earth, especially the oceans, and a few reminders to consider raking your leaves instead of using heavily-polluting leaf-blowers. But more recently we have been working behind the scenes. Leverett is clever

enough to have created its own internet system, so why we asked, could the town not create its own micro-grid? What is a micro-grid? Crating a micro-grid involves finding a suitable place in town where town residents with a certain know-how combined with concerns for all living things on earth from our steadily warming planet—could take on the very big task of creating our own solar energy to make available—first to the town municipal buildings and later, to town residents.

We are enthusiastic about this project and have spent time discussing what it would involve the first phase of the main work is being attended to by Richard Nathorst, assisted by Margie, our Town Administrator. Basically, the work is applying for grants to fund the varies stages of the project from start-to-finish. More details will follow but for now two of our requests for funding have been accepted and we are seeing a grant to support work on a suitable design.

Meanwhile we are looking for a new member. Please let me know if you are interested.

*Portia William Weiskel for the Energy Committee*

## Leverett Historical Society

The Leverett Historical Society is pleased to announce that a generous donation from a caring Leverett couple was presented at the November Leverett Historic Commission meeting. We are most thankful!

Also, this past summer the Moores Corner Schoolhouse/Museum was open to visitors on most Sunday afternoons during the summer months. Julia Shively and Dave Palmer greeted many interested visitors and informed them of the town's artifacts and documents of Leverett's treasured history in its holdings.

Stop by anytime at 230 North Leverett Road to witness the landscaping donated by the labors of L & F Construction. Larry LaClaire and his men contoured the land and rerouted the rain runoff to prevent further rotting of beams and sill boards, improved the parking area, seeded and mulched the area, and gave support to a falling historic outhouse. Many thanks to the hard-working crew. We are grateful for other in-kind donations of a repaired window and repaired chimney by Dennis Lombardi, his daughter Gina, and other expert workers.

The 1810 Moores Corner Schoolhouse/Museum is a one-of-a-kind historic building in our community of Leverett. It is the only one-room schoolhouse of the ten in town that has not been repurposed. LHS submitted a 2024-25 application to CPC for rehabilitation funds as recommended by the MA Cultural Council grant for a System Replacement Plan. Your support is always appreciated in person, by letter, or donation of any amount. Thank you for caring.

*Sara Robinson, President Julia Shively, Treasurer*

## Community Events/News LEVERETT EDUCATION FOUNDATION SETS NEW FUNDRAISING MARK

Thanks to the tremendous generosity of Leverett households and area businesses, Leverett Education Foundation's **2024 Leverett for LES Challenge** raised a record **\$26,445**, with more donations continuing to come in.

This year's fund drive was substantially assisted by gifts from more local and area businesses than ever before, among them both longtime contributors

Apollo Contracting (Leverett)  
Dean's Beans Organic Coffee (Orange)  
GoBerry 'n Cream (Amherst)  
Grass Roots Landscaping (Leverett)  
Jamrog HVAC (Turners Falls)  
West Branch Capital (Amherst)  
Woodsmith Forestry (Montague)

and new business partners:

Hampshire Meadow Family & Pediatric Dentistry  
Minuteman Pest Control (Northampton)  
Pelham Auto (Belchertown)  
Pioneer Valley Environmental (Ware)  
Rigali & Walder Orthodontics (Amherst)  
Sanctuary Healing Arts Center (Amherst)  
Sexton Roofing (Northampton)  
Sugarloaf Gardens (Sunderland)

Our fundraising efforts this fall were also boosted by contributions from people in towns across Western Massachusetts, including: Amherst; Montague; Sunderland; South Deerfield; Shelburne Falls; Erving; West Springfield; and Pittsfield; as well as from such far-flung places as New London, New Hampshire; Ossining, New York; Denver, Colorado; Oracle, Arizona; and Half Moon Bay California; and a \$4,000 donation from an anonymous donor or donors to whom we wish to express our deep appreciation.

Together, the many contributions we received will make possible grants to Leverett Elementary School this spring to help pay for technology, teacher training, and curriculum resources, along with equipment, materials, supplies, and special projects beyond the school's operating budget.

Thank you to everyone whose gifts – large and small – are each a vote of confidence in the teachers and staff at LES who every school day nurture Leverett's children and sustain educational excellence in our town.

*The Leverett Education Foundation*

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**LEVERETT RESIDENT**

**LEVERETT, MA 01054**

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***Our town needs you!***

In a small community like Leverett, the operation of town government – everything from conducting town business to keeping our water safe to overseeing our library to maintaining and expanding our remarkable network of trails -- depends to a great extent on volunteers.

Altogether, there are some 30 town boards, committees, and commissions that can only function if citizens in Leverett are willing to take an active part in their operation. It has never been easy to fill all of those positions, but in recent years it seems to be getting even more difficult.

And yet, in many cases participation on a town board, committee, or commission amounts to as little as an hour or two a month – or less – of someone’s time. Nor does someone need to have served previously or have special expertise. In most cases, what you need to know or be able to do is clear and straightforward, and there are always people ready to mentor newcomers and show them the ropes. Moreover, it is vital that Leverett draws on the life experiences and perspectives of as many of us as possible. All that is really required is a willingness to contribute to your community.

Those who have joined their neighbors in serving the town have found the work interesting and rewarding, met new people, made new friends, broadened their knowledge of Leverett, gained a deeper understanding of town business, and had the satisfaction of knowing that they played a part in addressing our collective problems, helping one another, and moving our community forward.

**The following board/committees have immediate openings:**

Conservation Commission  
Finance Committee  
Personnel Board  
Capital Planning Committee

Please call/email Lisa if interested ([townclerk@leverett.ma.us](mailto:townclerk@leverett.ma.us) 548-9150)

Thank you.