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Praise for park improvements

To the West Springfield Record:

I am a resident of West Springfield and would like to share my comments regarding Mittineague Park. I walk the trails often with my dog and over the last few months, I must say there have been so many improvements it's beginning to look like a different park.

The new bridge by the greenhouse is

awesome, the community garden rental spaces with their own water at each garden are very cool, and the Unico building and playscape are beautiful. Also, the baseball diamonds look fantastic.

They are doing a wonderful job reclaiming the trail systems that were overgrown. The leaves have been removed and they look great. The park is spotless.

Hats off to the Town and folks who are responsible for all of these improvements!

It's become a true joy to explore the park again. I am very impressed.

Sincerely,
William L'Heureux

Mayor praised for dental plan

To the West Springfield Record:

Kudos to Mayor Ed Sullivan!

Thanks to Major Ed Sullivan, West Springfield town employees and their families will have access to a dental plan. And thanks to Dori Hayes, town retirees will be included. Albeit, that a few retirees, like myself, don't have all of their own teeth, it is a great benefit.

How many Selectman and Mayors did it take for this to happen.

As I whistle through my teeth that are not there, thanks, mayor Ed.

Ernie LaBranche,
25 year retired firefighter

Retired coach thanks all as new season starts

To the West Springfield Record:

Last April, I quietly resigned as Girls Basketball Coach, and decided to end my tenure as a West Side High Coach. After 24 seasons coaching two sports, I feel good about my decision. However, I didn't want the new season to start

School superintendent's message on cancellations, delays

To the West Springfield Record:

While it may not look and feel like winter is around the corner, we know that a lot can change in New England in two weeks — even day to day, and hour to hour! West Springfield Public Schools strive to be prepared for whatever weather comes our way. In the past few years, the district has experienced extraordinary winter seasons, with many school delays or closures. Our hope this year is to get back to a more normal winter with fewer school closures and delays.

Over the next 12-14 weeks, temperatures will fluctuate and we will no doubt experience multiple weather changes. Our goal is to keep our schools operating on schedule as much as possible. If it snows at night, that does not necessarily mean there will be a delay or closing the next day. Road crews in our excellent community are out quickly during a storm, and for the most part our buses are ready to roll on time the next day. When circumstances dictate a change in the schedule, you will receive a call from me regarding a delay or closing. If you don't hear from me via our emergency phone system, hear the news on the TV/radio, or see a notice on our website or social media, then we are opening on time.

The decision to open school during inclement weather is not made lightly. This decision is made with the knowledge that the main roads are open, that buses are able to traverse secondary roads, and that the vast majority of our 4,000-plus students can be transported safely. Prior to any decision being made, I consult with Department of Public Works and the superintendents of surrounding school districts. I am aware that there are families residing on some less traveled roads that may experience more difficulty. If you disagree with a weather-related school opening call by me and my team, feel free to keep your child(ren) home. While the absence will not be considered an excused absence, we certainly respect your wishes.

Unless absolutely necessary, please do not elect to drive your child to school on an inclement weather day. Buses are much heavier than any automobile, more stable on winter roads and are the safest form of transportation available.

Thanks again for your patience. Hopefully this winter will be closer to normal, yet we all know that even a normal winter in the northeast can be challenging.

Michael Richard
Superintendent of Schools

without expressing a huge "Thank You" to the coaches, parents, and most importantly, the players, for the many things they did to make the Terriers number

one. I will miss you all.

Paul Taylor
History Teacher
West Springfield High School

Operation Santa collects \$1,346 in first week donations

Goal.....	\$20,000.00
Total Collected in First Week.....	\$1,346.00
Total Collected to Date.....	\$1,346.00
Remaining Needed to Reach Goal.....	\$18,654.00
DONATIONS RECEIVED IN THE FIRST WEEK:	
Natalie Barbara Pasko from Uncle Jim.....	\$150.00
In Loving Memory of my Husband, Hal McLean & My Dear Friend, Vic Shibley - Love Nancy.....	\$21.00
In Loving Memory of Kacy Burdett.....	\$500.00
In Loving Memory of Ted & Jeannette Dutkiewicz Sr., & Ted Dutkiewicz Jr. - Love Carolyn.....	\$30.00
In Memory of Eric Collins.....	\$5.00
St. Thomas Parishioners Anonymous Donation.....	\$15.00
St. Thomas Parishioners Anonymous Donation.....	\$15.00
In Loving Memory of my husband Bob, & Son Bill-Frances Roberts.....	\$30.00
In Loving Memory of Family & Friends from Cheryl & Al Howard.....	\$25.00
Anonymous.....	\$50.00
Peace On Earth!.....	\$30.00
In Memory of Family Members Who Have Passed.....	\$25.00
Merry Christmas! Bonomi & Associates 1312 Memorial Ave. West Springfield.....	\$250.00
In Memory of Jimmy Emmens.....	\$25.00
In Memory of My Husband John.....	\$25.00
In Memory of Rena and Larry Parent.....	\$100.00
In Memory of Cecelia & Glendon Coburn & Geraldine and William Johnson from Ellen & John Coburn.....	\$50.00

Yes, I Want To Help Santa Help Those in Need

Mail to: West Springfield Park & Recreation Department
26 Central Street - Suite 19, West Springfield, MA 01089
Make checks payable to "Operation Santa"

Enclosed is my/our donation, in the amount of \$: _____
I wish acknowledgement to appear in the W.S. Record as follows:

Please send receipt to: (Information below is for office use only)

Name: _____
Address: _____
Town/Zip: _____
Phone: _____



Council approves zone change

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Riverdale St. within the proposed zone change.

"It's a smart move," she said.

Shield Hotel Management has not yet submitted plans for re-development at the site.

Both the amendment and the motion to approve the zone change passed with a 7-0 vote, with councilors Lida Powell and Angus Rushlow absent. Rushlow, who did not seek re-election in November's municipal election, was chosen to receive a Good Neighbor Award from the Precinct 1 and 2 Neighborhood Committee. Council Vice President Brian J. Griffin accepted the award on Rushlow's behalf.

The council was also expected to vote on an amendment to the zoning ordinance governing off-street parking and loading, but Council President John Sweeney objected to the vote, postponing further action until the council's next meeting on Dec. 21. The proposed amendment, which councilors have been working on for over a year, would allow for greater flexibility in off-street parking regulations through the Planning Board special permit process and provide a general update of the regulations.

Group home concerns

During the public comment portion of Monday's meeting, residents from the Tatham Hill Road area expressed concern over a group home that recently opened there. The house is run by Springfield-based Guidewire, Inc., formerly Sullivan and Associates, a not-for-profit human service agency that provides residential and day supports to individuals diagnosed with intellectual disabilities, autism spectrum disorders and other psychiatric conditions.

Upper Beverly Hills resident Kathleen Cassidy, whose property abuts the Tatham Hill Road property, said she

has heard "guttural" screams emanating from open windows and an open basement hatchway at the group home. Guidewire Facilities Director Dan Lauber told Cassidy, a nurse who trained at the former Northampton State Hospital, that fencing will be erected along the flanks of the property but not along the back where her property abuts. A backyard gazebo will also be added, he said, potentially drawing clients outside.

Town attorney and mayor-elect William C. Reichelt said group homes are licensed by the state. At-large Councilor George Kelly, who lives on Tatham Hill Road, estimated there are between eight and 10 group homes in West Springfield.

Representatives from Guidewire will meet with members of the council's Ordinance Committee next Wednesday, Dec. 16, at 5:30 p.m. That meeting is open to the public. Mr. Sweeney said the representatives are meeting with town officials out of good faith, not because they are mandated to do so.

"They want to be good neighbors, too," Mr. Reichelt said.

Mr. Griffin added, "When you leave that meeting, you'll have next steps. Your concerns are our concerns, collectively."

Board appointment

The council also approved the appointment of Andrew M. Christopher to the Conservation Commission with a term to expire in April 2018. He will complete the term of Dianne Dubois, who resigned in October. Formerly of South Hadley, Mr. Christopher holds a bachelor's degree in environmental science from Westfield State University.

Councilors also approved an inter-municipal shelter lease agreement with the Westfield Animal Shelter, but specifics of the contract were not discussed.

By Rich Wirth