



Oh my gourd!



(Left to right) Ahrya Fernandez, a high school volunteer, Dennis Cloutier, the head of maintenance, Peter and Beverly Drayton, husband and wife, co-managers of the pumpkin patch at Central Congregational Church on Oct. 3. PHOTO BY AMBER ANGOVE



The "Selfie Station" at the pumpkin patch. PHOTO BY AMBER ANGOVE



Pumpkins on display at Central Congregational Church, in North Attleborough for the annual pumpkin patch. PHOTO BY AMBER ANGOVE

Residents push back on rate hike

Liberty Utilities seeks 80% increase to gas bills

By Geena Monahan
For the North Star Reporter

Members of the Massachusetts Department of Utilities, representatives from Liberty Utilities and North Attleborough residents gathered at the high school on Tuesday, Sept. 30, for a public hearing on a proposed gas rate hike that could increase homeowners' bills by more than 80% per month.

Hearing officer Elizabeth McNamara led the meeting, joined by DPU Commissioners Staci Rubin and Jeremy McDiarmid. A third commissioner, Elizabeth Anderson, is set to come on board in three weeks to complete the team that will make the final decision on the rate increase.

"I want to begin by acknowledging that the DPU is going to do everything we can to bring down costs to customers," said McNamara. "We plan to thoroughly review all information provided about rate increases, including your comments tonight."

Continued on page 9

GATRA, union end two-day strike

Tentative agreement 'meets the Union's demands' says company

By Max Bowen
max.bowen@northstarreporter.com

After a two-day strike involving 135 employees of GATRA, the union and company have both announced that a tentative agreement has been reached.

The strike began the early morning of Monday, Sept. 29, following months of negotiations, with the union stating that previous offers had not been accepted.

The new tentative agreement, "meets the Union's demands for fair pay, job security, and strong benefits. The members will vote on the deal in the next few weeks," the union said in an announcement sent Tuesday evening by Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 1548-Plymouth, which represents the workers.

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Charlie Kirk vigil held in North Attleborough

By Geena Monahan
For the North Star Reporter

Close to 100 people gathered at the Veterans Park gazebo in North Attleborough on Monday, Sept. 22, to attend a vigil and memorial hosted by Plainville Baptist Church in remembrance of political activist and media personality Charlie Kirk, who was assassinated nearly two weeks ago.

On Sept. 10, Kirk was shot and killed while speaking at a TPUSA public debate on the Utah Valley University campus. Authorities arrested the suspected shooter, 22-year-old Tyler Robinson, in Washington, Utah, on Sept. 12.

The “Jesus is the Turning Point Rally and Vigil for Family, Freedom and Faith” featured speeches from local pastors, prayers and hymns. The event was held to bring the community together in support of freedom of speech, law and order, freedom of religious expression, and to remember an “American patriot and hero to millions.”

Harold Crowell, a founding member of the Plainville Baptist Church, led the vigil and told the North Star Reporter he felt compelled to act as soon as he learned of Kirk’s shooting. After speaking with the church’s pastor, David Meunier, Crowell began organizing the rally and came equipped with signs, flags and Bibles for his congregation to hand out throughout the night.

“We come together rooted in faith, united in freedom and committed to our communities,” said Crowell. “Charlie Kirk was not shot for his opinions, and he was not shot because he spoke out. Charlie Kirk was shot because young people were listening by the millions.”

Gabe Corriveau, a 20-year-old senior at Bryant University, was among the younger faces in the crowd and traveled from North Smithfield, Rhode Island, to speak at the vigil. To Corriveau, Kirk was a role model



Harold Crowell of the Plainville Baptist Church speaks at a Charlie Kirk memorial held in North Attleborough Sept. 22. PHOTO BY AMBER ANGOVE

in how he spoke to people he disagreed with and inspired the college student to participate in Bible studies.

“It wasn’t so much the fact that he was conservative, but rather him being a Christian,” said Corriveau. “He was somebody who not only embodied truth, but showed how to love people you disagree with and give them a platform.”

Shana Figueroa, a veteran who served 20 years in the military and resident of North Attleborough, showed up in protest with a sign that read “North Attleboro should not let racists feel comfortable.”

“I’m here because I’m sad that this is what’s happened to the country that I fought for for 20 years. It breaks my heart to see this,” said Figueroa. “It’s hard to stand here and have people yell at you, but because I was in the military, I feel like it’s my duty to stand out here and do the right thing.”

While the memorial and protests remained largely peaceful, Figueroa did interject at times during the speeches to make her voice heard on topics like racism, religion and equal rights. One attendee of the vigil turned towards Figueroa early on and said, “Why don’t you shut up before someone duct tapes your mouth shut?”

Abigail Addison, another

North Attleborough resident in attendance, walking silently around Veterans Park while waving a rainbow flag in support of members of the LGBTQIA+ community.

“I wanted people to know that everyone in North Attleborough does not support what Charlie Kirk was espousing,” said Addison.

Adam Bailey, an administrator at Grace Baptist Christian Academy in Attleboro, came before the crowd to share the school’s mission and how Kirk exemplified those ideals. To Bailey, Kirk is the voice of this generation, and encouraged his fellow Christians to be bold in their faith and unafraid of backlash from what he called the “woke mob.”

“I was often told when I was in college that as a Christian, we cannot legislate morality — but I never agreed to such a compromise. If we don’t legislate morality, guess what, someone else will. Someone with — I hate to mention it — a rainbow flag is going to legislate morality,” said Bailey, referencing Addison and her flag.

The vigil, which ran for over an hour, wrapped up as the sun began to set, with attendees taking out their phones and shining their flashlights in remembrance of Kirk.

“It seems like the bullet that struck Charlie Kirk pierced the conscience of many in this nation, and hearts are open to hear the truth of the word of God, because that’s what he sought to proclaim,” said Meunier. “God has used this very tragic event to bring people to know Jesus Christ, and to have eternal life.”

Community News

Pumpkin patch returns to Central Church

Central Congregational Church’s annual pumpkin patch will return, from Sept. 28-Oct. 31. The church is located at 115 Commonwealth Ave., Attleboro Falls. The sale hours will be Monday through Friday, 2 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.; Saturday, 10 a.m. to 6:30 p.m.; and Sunday, 11 a.m. to 6:30 p.m.

The church will carry small tabletop to large carving pumpkins and there is usually a selection of white and blue-green pumpkins, with gourds available.

Proceeds allow the church to support local, nationwide and worldwide non-profit agencies and other causes such as Lenore’s Pantry, Christmas Is For Kids, Kids’ Summer Cafe, Project Bread, Relief Aid for the California and the Carolina Wildfires, Angel Flight New England, St. Claire School - a School for Girls in Haiti, The Interfaith Chaplaincy program at Sturdy Hospital, Food ‘n Friends Kitchens sponsor, Homes for Our Troops and much more.

Plainville Church to-go supper

The Plainville United Methodist Church, 16 East Bacon St. in Plainville invites the public to pre-order its first to-go supper of the season – a pot roast supper served with mashed potatoes, gravy, green beans, roll and dessert for \$15 each. Pre-orders must be made by noon on Thursday, Oct. 9, by calling 508-695-9587 or emailing plainvilleumc@verizon.net. When sending an email or leaving a message, please leave name, phone number and number of meals to order. Pick up on Saturday, Oct. 11, between 4:30 p.m. and 5:30 p.m. in the curbside from the parking lot.

Casino Night at Elks Club

A Casino Night celebrating “Service Above Self” with the North Attleborough/Plainville Rotary Club will be held on Thursday, Oct. 9, 6:30 p.m. at the North Attleborough Elks Club, 52 Bulfinch St., There will be table games, food and a cash bar, along with a raffle for a scratch ticket basket. The three highest casino winners by “Fun Money” will receive a donation from the Rotary Club to a North Attleborough or Plainville charity of their choice. Please RSVP to jwbd83@gmail.com.

North Attleborough Fire Department open house

The North Attleborough Fire Department invites the community members to attend its upcoming open house on Saturday, Oct. 18, 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. at the North Attleborough Fire Headquarters, 50 Elm St. Event parking will be available in the Tower Square parking lot, 500 East Washington St.

This event is open to families of all ages. The open house will include a touch-a-truck event and a water-flowing station where firefighters will assist attendees using fire hoses to spray a simulated house. A smoke trailer will allow guests to enter and practice finding their way out by crawling on their

hands and knees.

Inside the headquarters, coloring materials and safety handouts will be available.

In addition to the family activities, station tours will be conducted every 15 minutes. Community members will also be able to take photos with Sparky the Fire Dog.

Final Attleboro Farmers Markets of the season

The Attleboro Farmers Market (AFM) is closing out another season with three weekends of fall fun at 947 Park St., Attleboro, the field behind the overflow parking between Attleboro Springs and Life Care Center. The market runs from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. each Saturday through Oct. 18.

Stock up on farm-fresh produce, baked goods, and local specialties before winter arrives. Don’t miss the last chance to support local growers, artisans, and small businesses until the market reopens next year.

For more information, visit www.AttleboroFarmersMarket.com or follow on Facebook and Instagram @AttleboroFarmersMarket.

Free financial literacy webinar series

Presented by Licensed Financial Professionals, CPAs in partnership with John Wesley A.M.E. Zion Church, through Oct. 20. Join a series of free online webinars designed to help you take control of your financial future. Whether budgeting, planning for retirement, or just want to understand money better—this series is for you.

These courses are free with flexible schedules and community-focused. Reserve a spot at <https://tinyurl.com/FREEFinancialLiteracyCampaign>.

Town Meetings

Tuesday, Oct. 14

Zoning Board of Appeals—DPW Conference Room, 6 p.m.

Wednesday, Oct. 15

Town Council—JoAnn Cathcart Conference Room, 7 p.m.

Thursday, Oct. 16

Bylaw Subcommittee—North TV, 6:30 p.m.

Planning Board—JoAnn Cathcart Conference Room, 6:30 p.m.

Monday, Oct. 20

Licensing Board—North TV, 6 p.m.

Tuesday, Oct. 21

Conservation Commission—JoAnn Cathcart Conference Room, 6:30 p.m.

Wednesday, Oct. 22

Finance Subcommittee—JoAnn Cathcart Conference Room, 6:30 p.m.

NORTH STAR REPORTER

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North Star Reporter
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‘Pride in our town’

Block Party marks fifth year with music and community spirit

By Geena Monahan
For the North Star Reporter

Thousands of locals gathered on North Washington Street on the evening of Wednesday, Sept. 17, to celebrate five years of the North Attleborough Block Party.

The annual event highlights local businesses, artisans and community groups, such as Los Antojitos Restaurant, which served tacos and margaritas in its outdoor dining area. A showcase from Kryptonite Wrestling Klub drew large crowds of children wanting to try their hand at the sport, and the North Attleborough Police Department brought K-9 Yoshi for a demonstration.

The event is presented by the North Attleborough Small Business Collaborative, formerly known as the Downtown North Attleborough Collaborative.

“To me, it’s a night where the whole purpose is to give back – to give awareness to amazing businesses in town, to give back to community members who service and love the business, and a fun time to relax and have pride on our town,” said North Attleborough Small Business Collaborative President Andrea Slobogan.

A cornhole tournament, classic car show, beer and wine gardens and a free Volkswagen photo bus were among the popular attractions of the evening.

Jeff Instasi and Kira Poisson, co-owners of Showcase Reptiles, a new business in North Attleborough, attended their first ever Block Party with four snakes, one spider and one giant millipede in tow.

“It was absolutely fantastic and we got such positive feedback from people,” said Poisson. “Some people didn’t even know we had the store because we’ve only been open for seven months, and everyone was excited to see the animals.”

Poisson said they’re looking forward to participating in the Block Party again next year, and shared plans to expand into the former Kidz World space on Robert F.

Toner Boulevard to open an indoor zoo.

The School of Rock Attleboro’s house band and the Willie J. Laws Band provided live music throughout the night, playing a wide range of classic rock, blues, R&B and everything in between.

School of Rock’s Attleboro location celebrated its 10th anniversary this year, and owner Dave LaSalle said their house band has played at every Block Party since its inception. LaSalle said more than 300 young musicians from North Attleborough and surrounding towns audition to be in the house band, and performing at the event is something they look forward to each year.

“This is one of our favorite performances of the year,” said LaSalle. “We have a very busy house band – we play all over the community – and this crowd is great.”

Slobogan said that not only did the fifth year bring the largest crowds yet, but marked a name change for the organization that runs the event each year. She handed out pins to promote the group’s new name, signifying a shift to include all businesses throughout town who support the Block Party each year.

To Slobogan, the group’s tagline, “Working together, building community,” extends not just to downtown businesses, but to those spread across North Attleborough.

As a self-proclaimed lover of Christmas and gift-giving, Slobogan celebrated the fifth anniversary by distributing 175 T-shirts, gift bags and over 500 stickers to attendees.

“It was a ‘thank you’ to our community for coming out and celebrating,” said Slobogan. “My favorite part is hearing how much people love the event and how much it means to them to have it every year.”

Slobogan credited her “small but mighty” group of volunteers for making the Block Party bigger and better each year, and said she is already planning for year six.



The antique car show was a big hit for all ages at the North Attleborough Block Party. PHOTO BY LINDSEY FLIGER



Cole Monahan, age 6, gets up close to a snake brought by Showcase Reptiles. PHOTO BY GEENA MONAHAN



The whole community came out to celebrate the fifth annual North Attleborough Block Party on Wednesday, Sept. 17. PHOTO BY LINDSEY FLIGER

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Police, fire departments face off in Battle of the Badges



Andy Cook, pitcher for the firefighters, makes it to first base. PHOTO BY AMBER ANGOVE



Matt Schafer rounds the home plate on Monday, Sept. 14. PHOTO BY AMBER ANGOVE



Michael Rouette, of the Police Department, runs toward first base. PHOTO BY AMBER ANGOVE

Fun fall activities to fill the spooky season

By Claudia Rufo
For the North Star Reporter

With October in full swing - and Halloween fast approaching - fun, memorable and picture-worthy fall activities are beginning to open.

From corn mazes to apple picking, to haunted houses, and haunted trails, this list compiles all those stops in one list to get the most out of the season.

Orchards

- Tougas Family Farm, 234 Ball St, Northborough, MA 01532
- Phantom Farms, 2920 Diamond Hill Road, Cumberland, RI 02864
- Adam's Farm, 495 Sumner Brown Road Cumberland, RI 02864y
- Douglas Orchard and Farm, 36 Locust St. Douglas, MA 01516
- Wojcik's Farm, 65 Milk St., Blackstone, MA 01504
- Four Town Farm, 90 George St., Seekonk, MA 02771
- Jaswell's Farm, 50 Swan Road, Smithfield, RI 02917
- Ward's Berry Farm, 614 S Main St., Sharon, MA 02067

Pumpkin patches

- Barden Orchards, 56 Elmdale Road, North Scituate, RI 02857
- The Pumpkin Farm, 72 Milford St., Medway, MA 02053
- Cucurbit Farm, 32 Parker St Acton, MA 01720
- Spring Hill Sugar House, 522 Gardiner Road, Richmond, RI 02892

Corn mazes

- Salisbury Farm, 11 Peck Hill Road Johnston, RI 02919
- Wilson Farm, 10 Pleasant St., Lexington, MA 02421
- Foster Family Farm, 0 Foster St., South Windsor, CT 06074
- Honey Pot Hill Orchards, 138 Sudbury Road Stow, MA 01775
- Back Acre Farm, 194 S Main St. Middleboro, MA 02346

Haunted experiences

- Factory of Terror, 120 Pearl St., Fall River, MA 02721
- Sept. 13 - Nov. 2
- *12+
- \$32.16 standard general admission

- Witch's Woods, 79 Power Road, Nashoba Valley Ski Area Westford, MA 01886
- *6+
- \$52 Tickets online and in advance
- Open Every Friday thru Sunday from Oct. 3 to Nov. 1 (Including Halloween Night).

- Spirit of Plymouth, 1 Cordage Terrace Ext, Plymouth, MA 02360
- Adults: \$20
- Child Under 12 yrs: \$15
- Seniors: \$15

Veterans: \$15

Active Duty Military First Responders: \$15

-Vampire Ghost Adventures, 20 Hawthorne Blvd., Salem, MA 01970

\$26

-Dark New England, 59 Bightridge Ave., East Providence, RI 02914

Oct. 3 - Nov. 2

16+

\$26.50 general admission

Family fun

The Great Jack-O'Lantern Journey Southwick's Zoo

Sept. 26 - Oct. 31

2 Southwick St., Mendon, MA 01756

Free parking

Tickets online

13th World

*Suitable for older children

Sept. 27 - Nov. 1

1701 Park St Palmer, MA OR

4097 Diamond Hill Rd

Cumberland, RI

Free parking

Tickets online

Roger William's Pumpkin Spectacular

From Sept. 26 - Nov. 2

1000 Elmwood Ave., Providence, RI 02907

Free parking

Tickets online

Monster Mini-Golf

Arcade

140 Taunton Ave., Seekonk, MA 02771

Adult-only events

Barrett's Haunted House

1235 Bedford St., Abington, MA 02351

\$40 for both attractions

Tickets online or in-person

Free parking

Fright Kingdom

12 Simon St., Nashua, NH 03060

\$38 general admission

Tickets online

Free parking

Century Sportsman Club

\$20 tickets with fee, \$30 at door

Food trucks at site, 21+ bar

531 Rochdale St., Auburn, MA

Nightmare on the Dance Floor

*Costume party

Reserve tickets online

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Friday, Oct. 31, at 7 p.m. - Saturday, Nov. 1, at 1 a.m.

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Affordable housing sparks School Committee debate

By Geena Monahan
For the North Star Reporter

Two proposed affordable housing projects in North Attleborough have sparked debate among residents, and the School Committee weighed in at its Sept. 9 meeting.

"I put this on the agenda because of concerns in the community on what this could do to our schools," said committee Chair Tasha Buzzell.

The development discussed on that night was the vacant property at 15 John Dietsch Blvd. that Town Manager Michael Borg recently announced could be the site of an affordable housing project. The former Answer Is Fitness property was slated to become a 162,500-square-foot warehouse, but a lack of interest from potential buyers has the owners looking to switch gears.

Dan Donovan, chair of the Bylaw Subcommittee, addressed his fellow Town Council members on Sept. 8 regarding a meeting the subcommittee had with Danielle Blake, a representative from Marcus Partners. This is the same developer behind a 304-unit housing development on Kelley Boulevard.

Donovan reported that the concept pitched by Blake would be slightly larger than the Kelley Boulevard project, with an estimated 366 units. Twenty-five percent of the units would be deemed affordable. Under Chapter 40B law, if 20-25% percent of the units of a development are affordable housing, the town can count the whole building as affordable.

According to Donovan, Marcus Brothers does not yet own the property but is in agreement with the owner, 15 John L. Dietsch Blvd., LLC. Donovan reminded council members that the development is still just a concept at this point and that no site plans, architectural designs or traffic studies have been conducted.

Blake told the Bylaw Subcommittee that 50% of units would be one-bedroom, 43% two-bedroom, and 7% three-bedroom. The high number of one-bedroom units, combined with an

average unit size of 900 square feet, are two factors Marcus Partners cited as reasons why this development would not have a large impact on the North Attleborough Public Schools.

However, School Committee member Sarah Stone said she had a hard time believing that adding 366 units — on top of the Kelley Boulevard and Draper Avenue developments that will be wrapping up in the near future — wouldn't add extra stress on a school system that is already stretched thin.

"The developer said there would be roughly eight kids that would come out of a development of this size, and I just find that hard to believe," said Stone. "I think about class sizes, I think about the capacity of our schools. If we do end up with too many kids in a school, what happens then?"

School Committee member Lyndsey Benharris presented data from the 2020 census to show that North Attleborough's school-age population has grown and will continue to grow, despite recent reports that enrollment is down. She and Stone agreed that families often find ways to make difficult financial and housing situations work, and that people can and will fit multiple children into two-bedroom units if it's their only option.

"All of the current structures are at capacity currently," said Benharris. "If the census is correct, and we continue to increase, then that is a huge concern, because we do not have the space."

Superintendent John Antonicucci echoed these concerns. "We basically are full," he said. "No matter if the development happens or not, we're bursting at the seams."

Affordable housing developments typically come with financial incentives, which Donovan elaborated on at the Town Council meeting. Zoning the development as 40R, instead of 40B, would result in a \$1.3 million payout from the state, and the project's estimated property valuation of \$95 million upon completion would add about \$1.1 million in tax revenue to North Attleborough's yearly budget.

Continued on page 11

Cranston man sentenced in fatal North Attleborough crash

By Geena Monahan
For the North Star Reporter

Joseph Pompei, 52, of Cranston, Rhode Island, has been sentenced to six to 10 years in prison for a 2023 hit-and-run on I-95 in North Attleborough that resulted in the deaths of two people.

Pompei was scheduled to go to trial on Oct. 6, but requested a hearing for a change of plea that took place in Fall River Superior Court on Sept. 19.

At that hearing, Pompei pleaded guilty to two felony counts of motor vehicle homicide by reckless operation and one felony count of leaving the scene of personal injury and death.

Each charge carries a sentence of three to five years in prison, and Judge Renee Dupuis sentenced Pompei to serve both homicide charges concurrently — a sentence of 6 to 10 years at Souza-Baranowski Correctional Center in Lancaster.

Additional misdemeanor charges of motor vehicle homicide by negligent operation and leaving the scene of personal injury were dismissed by Dupuis.

Pompei was also sentenced to five years of probation upon his release.

He was arraigned and entered a not guilty plea on Aug. 29, 2023, in Attleboro District Court, where he was held on \$50,000 cash bail. According to the docket, Pompei has received 753 days' credit for time served.

One of the victims of the hit-and-run, which police responded to on the afternoon of Aug. 28, 2023, was retired state trooper James Griffin, 61, of Providence. Griffin died of injuries related to the crash nearly two months later, on Oct. 6, 2023.

According to the Bristol County District Attorney's Office, Griffin was driving on I-95 in a white Cadillac Escalade when a gray Buick traveling southbound struck him, causing his vehicle to cross the median into the northbound lanes and crash head-on with a black 2015 Jaguar XJ driven by Randall Ricketts, 58, of Foxborough.

Continued on page 11

Knowing North: A North Attleborough photo game

Welcome to Knowing North, a regular game that runs in the North Star Reporter. How well do you know the town? Put that knowledge to the test and be featured in the newspaper.

How to guess
Send your name and location of the subject of the photo, along with your name and contact information, to max.bowen@northstarreporter.com. The winners' names will be published in the next edition.

Last week's photo
Falls Elementary School

Last week's winners
Liz White

Have a photo to submit?
The North Star Reporter is looking for photo submissions for Knowing North. Do you think you have what it takes to stump your neighbors? Email your photo to max.bowen@northstarreporter.com. Be sure to include the location of the image in the photograph and contact information for verification.



Falls Elementary School



This week's photo



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Teacher-turned-candidate challenges Markey for Senate seat

NAHS freshmen receive mental health kits

By Geena Monahan
For the North Star Reporter

A newcomer to the Massachusetts political scene, Alex Rikleen has launched a campaign to challenge longtime incumbent Sen. Ed Markey in next year's Senate race, pledging judicial reform, expanded healthcare and stronger action against climate change.

"I think that Democrats in Washington are playing it safe and their strategy depends way too heavily on waiting and hoping that we win more seats in the next election or even the election after that," Rikleen said on why he has thrown his hat in the ring as Markey's only Democratic challenger so far.

Rikleen, a Massachusetts native, grew up in Wayland before earning a degree in secondary education and history from Boston College. He spent years working as a history teacher, professor at Framingham State University, and as a fantasy sports



Alex Rikleen of Acton has announced his campaign to challenge Sen. Ed Markey in 2026. COURTESY PHOTO

writer and analyst. Rikleen recently settled in Acton with his wife and two young children, spending his free time volunteering at their school as president of the PTO.

Although Rikleen has long been interested in politics – previously volunteering for campaigns and serving as a delegate to the Massachusetts State Convention – he said running for a seat in the U.S. Senate was never part of his plan.

That all changed after the Senate hearings in February to nominate Kash Patel as director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation,

which Rikleen said became his proverbial "last straw" and spurred his entry into politics. While all 49 Democratic senators voted against Patel's nomination, which ultimately passed 51-49, Rikleen said he would have liked to see more of a fight against a nominee he called "dangerous."

"The Democrats went about it like business as usual; they voted against it but didn't try anything different to oppose this nomination," said Rikleen. "They let the Senate adjourn, went on a bipartisan trip to Europe and came back and didn't try anything out of the ordinary to call attention to what a profoundly atypical appointment this was."

Rikleen came before the Attleboro Democratic City Committee at its monthly meeting on Thursday, Sept. 4, as part of a series of speaking engagements across Massachusetts to familiarize residents with his name and message. He said he has been pleased by how

his reception by the Democratic Party has gone so far, and even when the response hasn't been favorable, he found his first campaign informative and exciting.

"It only takes one"

To Rikleen, the Senate is a place where individual senators, even those in the minority, can act boldly and assertively to enact real change and push back against President Donald Trump's administration. As a history teacher, Rikleen said he has studied the poor outcomes and knows what can happen to a democracy when the opposition party plays it safe.

"It only takes one senator to place a hold on a nomination, deny unanimous consent or force a quorum call," said Rikleen. "There are a number of other steps that require more than one senator, but far fewer than a majority, to engage in other tactics that would stall or interrupt Republicans' abilities to appoint these unqualified nominees."

Rikleen acknowledged the challenge in running against Markey, who has held his Senate seat for more than 12 years, and said he launched his campaign early as part of his strategy to increase opportunities to speak to constituents and get his message out. While Rikleen said he doesn't necessarily disagree with the policies championed by Markey and the Democratic Party, he argued that voters are ready for less talk and more action.

When asked what his plan would be if elected, Rikleen said step one is to get Democrats back control of the presidency while keeping Americans safe in the meantime.

"Once we're back in power, we have to start with the structural reforms that will prevent a future authoritarian crisis and enable us to pass the various policy positions that all these other Democrats around the country talk a lot about, but have made very little progress on for many years," said Rikleen.

In 2024 Markey announced his intention to run again for a third term, and has received endorsements from House Democratic Whip Katherine Clark, U.S Rep. Richard Neal and Sen. Elizabeth Warren, among many other high-profile Democrats.

Continued on page 11

NAHS freshmen receive mental health kits

As National Suicide Prevention Awareness Month observed in September, North Attleborough High School is continuing its commitment to supporting student mental health alongside its community partners.

On Thursday, Aug. 21, freshmen participating in the district's annual Step-Up Day received mental health awareness kits, which were provided by the Jed Foundation (JED) and the Red Sox Foundation. The kits included a journal, an adult coloring book, colored pencils, a fidget ring, mindfulness cards, resources from JED and more.

"North Attleborough High School's partnership with JED has helped us ensure our students and families are receiving the most comprehensive support for their mental wellness and any mental health struggles that might arise while they're at the high school," said Philip Alessi, clinical leader and school psychologist. "It's a partnership which recognizes that our student success is just not in the classroom, but also in learning the skills necessary to live a happy and healthy life after graduation."

North Attleborough High School was among a select group of schools chosen to receive the kits through their involvement in the JED High School Program.

"North Attleborough High School's commitment to supporting student wellbeing is clear. These kits are a simple but powerful way to remind students that their mental health matters," said JED School Mental Health Specialist Krystal Skaggs.

The KyleCares Foundation and JED enrolled North Attleborough High School in their JED High School Program in 2021. As part of this initiative, JED works to develop long-term strategies to address mental health and wellness. Since its enrollment in the program, JED and KyleCares have partnered with the district's Active Minds chapter, a student-run organization focused on prioritizing students' mental health, on numerous programs and initiatives.

For resources and information, visit jedfoundation.org or dial 988 for the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline.

SOUR GRAPES

by Tim Jones

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Pomegranates

by Connor Croteau

Hey girl. What's your sign?

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Rate hike

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Rubin and McDiarmid followed McNamara's remarks by outlining the commission's priorities, which include affordability, transparency, equity and justice. Rubin also touched upon "innovative solutions" that the commission is exploring to help residents in the case of a rate hike, such as billing based on a percentage of income or bill discounts based on income.

According to Rubin, the commission will take the next several months to examine cost data, cross-examine witnesses and review public comments. A written decision on the matter is expected before May 1, 2026, which is when the proposed rate hike is set to begin. Rubin said the commission will do its best to address public comments in that decision.

"We're working to provide information more easily and better access to information as we consider these decisions," said McDiarmid. "Our decision will be better when we hear from you and we pledge that your comments will shape the decisions we make."

Legal counsel from both sides was also in attendance, with Kevin Penders from Keegan Werlin LLP representing Liberty Utilities, and Assistant Attorney General Nathaniel Haviland-Markowitz from the Massachusetts Attorney General's Office, appearing on behalf of the ratepayers.

According to Haviland-Markowitz, the petition filed by Liberty Utilities on June 13 seeks to increase rates to generate approximately \$55.8 million in revenue—an average bill increase for ratepayers across southeastern Massachusetts of 55% per month. For North Attleborough residents specifically, the average monthly bill will increase approximately 78%.

The acquisition of Blackstone Gas Company and relocation of its headquarters were two reasons listed in the Notice of Filing and Public Hearings as to why Liberty is seeking this increase.

Liberty also seeks to recover an additional \$50 million to pay for "previously authorized gas system enhancement," collected over a five-year period. A performance-based ratemaking plan is another part of the company's filing, which would allow it to increase base distribution rates annually over five years, up to a 5% cap.

"If all of this gets approved, then distribution rates are expected to increase significantly – by an estimated additional 35% by the end of the five-year rate plan term, in addition to the May 1, 2026, bill rate increases," said Haviland-Markowitz. "If the company's petition is approved, customers will receive a gas rate increase of approximately 90%."

Attorney General Andrea Campbell has filed a notice of intervention in the matter, which includes a retention of experts and consultants to assist in investigating the company's filing. She has requested department approval to spend up to \$300,000, which can be recouped from Liberty Utilities.

Public comments

Of the approximately 30 residents in attendance for the hearing, only one person came forward to voice their opinion on the rate hike: former chair of the Planning Board Marie Clarner.

Clarner delivered her re-

marks directly to the commission, stating that she does not believe North Attleborough residents should be on the hook for the costs of a new headquarters or the acquisition of Blackstone Gas.

"I don't think it's reasonable to expect people to pay this kind of rate increase given today's economy," said Clarner. "I know many senior citizens who choose between heat, electric medicine, or food. . . and just because Liberty made poor business decisions does not mean we have to pay for it."

Clarner also elaborated on how she and her late husband used the Mass Save program to switch from oil to gas years ago to save money. However, she is now paying more for gas each year than if she had stayed with oil. To Clarner, spending anywhere from \$15,000 to \$25,000 to switch to electric heat pumps is not an option, so she instead chooses to heat only a small section of her home.

"I hope you not only reject Liberty Utilities' request, but that you tell them, and any other company, that until they can provide better customer service, they shouldn't get a nickel," said Clarner.

Support from Beacon Hill

State Rep. Adam Scanlon (D-North Attleborough) was in the crowd Tuesday night to express his disapproval for increasing gas rates in his hometown, and announced he has filed a petition with other Beacon Hill representatives to try and stop this from going through.

Scanlon also spoke of the impact this could have on small businesses, which could see rate increases in the range of 43-49%.

"These rate hikes are unacceptable. Residents in my town are already struggling with utility

bills," said Scanlon. "We saw a colder-than-average winter last year, and I received a lot of calls

from people struggling to heat their homes. We help people with the Home Energy Assistance Program, but it can only go so far. This is exactly the wrong time to raise rates for consumers."

Healey also sent an emailed statement to the North Star Reporter, pledging not only her office's resources to stop the increase, but to file energy affordability legislation to reduce the cost of bills and increase accountability.

"Liberty Gas' proposed rate hike is disappointing and deeply problematic," said Healey. "This increase in utility bills could not come at a worse time for families and businesses in southeastern Massachusetts. My administration will be pushing back in the review process and will oppose additional burdens on ratepayers."

A virtual public hearing via Zoom will be held on Tuesday, Oct. 7, at <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/81706654438>. For audio-only access, residents can dial in at 1-309-205-3325 (not toll free) and enter the meeting ID 817 0665 4438.

The deadline for residents to submit written comments has also been extended until 5 p.m. on Oct. 15, and can be sent to dpu.efiling@mass.gov, DPU2585.LibertyRateCase@mass.gov, or to Liberty Utilities' attorneys at Keegan Werlin LLP in Lexington.

Two-day stike

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

"Our members stood strong and united throughout this process," said Local 1548 President/Business Agent Chuck Ryan. "This strike shows that our members are willing to lay it all on the line for justice. I want to thank our International President John Costa, our riders, elected officials, and all our allies for coming out and standing with us. This is a contract that they earned and deserve."

Costa traveled to Taunton to join the strikers on the picket lines, the statement read. He was joined by ATU members from Local 589-Boston, MA, Local 174-Fall River, MA, Local 618-Providence, RI, Local 1037-New Bedford, MA, and Local 1547-Brockton, MA.

"I am proud of our GATRA members who were willing to go to the mat to fight for their contract and a better transit system for their riders. On the picket lines, I saw firsthand their strength, unity, and solidarity," said Costa. "Thanks to our ATU Locals members from across the

region, the elected officials, and allies for coming to support our members and the riders who rely on GATRA. Our members are can now get back to the job of keeping of Taunton, Attleboro and surrounding communities moving safely and reliably. It was an honor to 'Hold the Line' with you!"

The strike impacted several lines of GATRA's service, with disruptions or trips being cancelled. In a statement sent Monday, GATRA had previously said that the union had been presented with a "generous offer that responds in earnest to their concerns about wages, benefits, and the creation of more rewarding job opportunities."

The company said that the offer included a 16% wage increase over three years, while the union wanted 21%. The company added that KOA management had never refused to negotiate and was always been willing to meet. The last meeting between the two sides was held on Sept. 25, and included the 16% wage increase.

"GATRA is pleased that the strike is over and we can get back to providing normally scheduled service for all riders across GATRA's service area," the company said in a statement sent Wednesday morning. "Thank you for the strong leadership from both the GATRA Advisory Board chair and vice chair as we navigated through this situation."



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Public Safety



POLICE LOG

The following is an excerpt from the North Attleborough Police log from Sept. 19-Oct. 1. The full log can be found at the police station.

Friday, Sept. 19

7:45 a.m. An accident without injury on Mendon Road was reported.
8:25 a.m. Suspicious activity on South Washington Street was reported.
9:14 a.m. Fraud was reported on Old Wood Road.
12:32 p.m. Police were called about an erratic operator on South Washington Street.
1:58 p.m. A vehicle accident on East Washington Street was reported. No one was injured.
5:03 p.m. Police were dispatched to Broad Street for a report of an assault.

Saturday, Sept. 20

12:54 p.m. Public intoxication on East Washington Street was reported. Police spoke with the party.
1:18 p.m. Suspicious activity on Landry Avenue was reported.
5:22 p.m. Police responded to a report of a vehicle accident without injury on East

Washington Street.
6:54 p.m. Shoplifting on South Washington Street was reported.
9:53 p.m. A resident of Kendall Street called the police to report a noise disturbance.

Sunday, Sept. 21

2:55 a.m. A suspicious vehicle on on East Washington Street was reported.
8:35 a.m. Police responded to a report of a breaking and entering on Bungay Road.
9:39 a.m. Larceny of motor vehicles on Adamsdale Road was reported.
12:11 p.m. A vehicle accident without injury on South Washington Street was reported.
1:41 p.m. Police responded to a report of a breaking and entering to a vehicle on Limerick Way.
5:04 p.m. A hit and run accident on Sage Road was reported.

Monday, Sept. 22

1:25 a.m. A suspicious vehicle on Elmwood Street was reported.
8:02 a.m. Malicious damage was reported on Broad Street.

12:44 p.m. A larceny on Circle Court was reported.
3:32 p.m. Police were dispatched to South Washington Street for a report of a shoplifter.
7:39 p.m. Fraud was reported by a resident of Shannon Way.
9:59 p.m. Police were called about suspicious activity on South Washington Street.

Tuesday, Sept. 23

3:46 a.m. Suspicious activity on George Leven Drive was reported.
9:57 a.m. Fraud on South Washington Street was reported.
12:37 p.m. A vehicle accident without injury on South Washington Street was reported.
3 p.m. Police responded to a report of shoplifting on South Washington Street.

Wednesday, Sept. 24

12:28 a.m. Police responded to a report of a vehicle accident without injury on Elmwood Street.
10:52 a.m. A larceny on South Washington Street was reported.
10:53 a.m. A resident of Mount Hope Street reported a noise disturbance.
6:55 p.m. Police were called about an erratic operator on Hoppin Hille Avenue.

Thursday, Sept. 25

9:25 a.m. A hazard was reported on Oakridge Avenue.
1:28 p.m. Shoplifting on South Washington Street was reported.
3:19 p.m. Police responded to a report of a vehicle accident with injury on Broad Street.
4:50 p.m. A vehicle accident on Elm Street was reported. No one was injured.
8:56 p.m. Police were called about a larceny on South Washington Street.

Friday, Sept. 26

1:17 a.m. A suspicious vehicle on East Washington Street was reported.
1:39 p.m. A hit and run accident on Juniper Road was reported.
2:52 p.m. Police were called about ATVs on Elm Street.
4:03 p.m. A larceny of motor vehicles on East Washington Street was reported.
6:28 p.m. Police responded to a report of a vehicle accident on Draper Avenue.

Saturday, Sept. 27

10:43 a.m. A vehicle accident without injury on May Street was reported.
12:24 p.m. Police were called about vandalism on Mary Ann Way.
5:05 p.m. ATVs were reported near Ellis Road, but this was determined to be unfounded.
6:08 p.m. Fraud on Jackson Street was reported.
8:34 p.m. A hit and run accident on Cushman Road was reported.
10:18 p.m. Police were called about a noise disturbance on Lisa Drive.

Sunday, Sept. 28

11:09 a.m. Police responded to a report of a vehicle accident on Elmwood Street. No one was injured.

5:27 p.m. Police were called about ATVs near Ellis Road.
5:28 p.m. A case of identity theft on South Washington Street was reported.
6:54 p.m. An erratic operator on North Washington Street was reported.
8:21 p.m. A noise disturbance on South Washington Street was reported.

Monday, Sept. 29

2:30 p.m. A shoplifter on South Washington Street was reported.
3:33 p.m. Police responded to a report of a vehicle accident on Elm Street. No one was injured.
4:21 p.m. A resident of Smith Street called the police to report a case of fraud.

Tuesday, Sept. 30

6:37 a.m. Police were called about a suspicious vehicle on North Washington Street.
11:44 a.m. A shoplifting on South Washington Street was reported.
3:31 p.m. A hazard on Draper Avenue was reported.
8:08 p.m. A suspicious person on South Washington Street was reported.

Wednesday, Oct. 1

9:56 a.m. Police were called about illegal dumping on Lakeshore Drive.
5:34 p.m. Shoplifting on South Washington Street was reported.
6:13 p.m. A vehicle accident on Robert Toner Boulevard was reported. No one was injured.
9:29 p.m. A resident of Mount Hope Street reported a noise disturbance.

FIRE LOG

The following is a report of the North Attleborough Fire Department from Monday, Sept. 22-Sunday, Sept. 28.

Building fire—2
Road freight or transport vehicle fire—1
E MS call, excluding vehicle accident with injury—69
Vehicle accident with injuries—5
Motor vehicle accident with no injuries—1
Gasoline or other flammable liquid spill—1
Gas leak (natural gas or LPG)—2
Service Call, other—2
Smoke or odor removal—1
Smoke detector activation due to malfunction—3
Heat detector activation due to malfunction—1
Smoke detector activation, no fire, unintentional—3
Alarm system sounded, no fire, unintentional—1
Special type of incident, other—3
Citizen complaint—3

ARREST LOGS:

Sunday, Sept. 28

Christine S. Uy, 51, of 56 Joseph H. Leblanc Lane, North Attleborough, arrested and charged with negligent operation of a motor vehicle and operating under the influence of liquor.

Joshua W. Lemaire, 44, of 12 Kilton St., Taunton, arrested and charged with marked lanes violation, negligent operation of a motor vehicle and operating under the influence of liquor.

Monday, Sept. 29
Wayne Edward Turner, Jr., 41, of 356 Ocean Grove Ave., Swansea, arrested and charged with shoplifting by asportation and identity fraud.

Tuesday, Sept. 30

Frank Dominick Benedetti IV, 36, of 22 Commonwealth Ave., North Attleborough, arrested and charged with larceny over \$1,200 by single scheme, disorderly conduct, operating a motor vehicle with a suspended license, motor vehicle operator refusing to identify self, miscellaneous motor vehicle equipment violation and possession of a Class E drug.

Jade Quinones, 26, of 73 South St., Plainville, arrested and charged with shoplifting over \$250 by concealing merchandise.

Travis Casto, 37, of 2 John St., Apt. 2, Attleboro, arrested and charged with shoplifting over \$250 by concealing merchandise and conspiracy.

Wednesday, Oct. 1

Gary Russo, 63, of 301 West Shore Road, Warwick, Rhode Island, arrested on a warrant.

Martzareilly Nathalie Tamarez, 37, of 166 Harrison St., Pawtucket, Rhode Island, arrested and charged with driving an unregistered motor vehicle and driving an uninsured motor vehicle.

Jose Martil Hernandez, 49, of 24 Roccliffe St., Fall River, arrested and charged with not having an inspection sticker and operating a motor vehicle with a suspended license.

Mark R. Beaudet 54, of 6 South Washington St., North Attleborough, arrested and charged with not having an inspection sticker, operating a motor vehicle with a suspended registration and driving an uninsured motor vehicle.

Anthony M. Parrella, 27, of 20 Marigold Circle, North Providence, Rhode Island, arrested and charged with driving an unregistered motor vehicle and driving an uninsured motor vehicle.

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- Cumberland Farms - 103 E. Washington St. North Attleboro
- Effie's Shoppe - 2 Man-Mar Dr. Plainville
- Fitzzy's Pub - 1 Man Mar Dr. Plainville
- Mackie's Family Restaurant - 49 N. Washington St. North Attleboro
- Mad Moose Saloon - 39 N. Washington St. North Attleboro
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- North Star Reporter - 570 Kelley Blvd. North Attleboro
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- Lucky 95 Lottery & Smoke Shop - 1077 Washington St. Attleboro
- North Attleboro Council Of Aging - 204 Elm St. North Attleboro
- North Attleborough Town Hall - 43 S. Washington St. N.A.
- Richards Memorial Library - 118 N. Washington St. North Attleboro
- RT 1 Automotive - 71 Washington St. Plainville
- SHAWS MARKET - Triboro Plaza, 125 Robert Toner Blvd. N.A.
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Alumni Association seeks nominees for annual awards

ominations are now being accepted by the North Attleboro High School Alumni Association for its annual awards program designed to recognize the achievements of graduates, staff and longtime supporters of the North Attleboro Schools. The association will present awards in five categories at its annual event, scheduled for Feb. 7, 2026, at NAHS. The selection committee, comprised of board members, past award recipients, and “at-large” community advisors, is accepting nominations through Oct. 30.

The awards will include the Joseph W. Martin, Jr. Distinguished Alumni Award, named after the distinguished graduate of the class of 1902 who served as Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives. This award will recognize the outstanding professional, personal, and civic achievements of the men and women graduates of North Attleborough High School.

In addition, the Young Alumni Awards will be presented to graduates of the past 20 years who have distinguished themselves by their achievements at a particularly early age in their professional, personal, or civic endeavors.

The Excellence in Education Educator Award recognizes current or past staff members of all North Attleboro Schools, in-

cluding NAHS, for exceptional commitment to excellence in the classroom and/or dedication to the students, staff, and the schools.

The association will also present the Honorary Alumni Award to non-graduates of NAHS who have made positive and substantive contributions to the school.

Finally, the association will present the Community Impact Award that recognizes the accomplishments in and commitment to the North Attleborough community by NAHS graduates.

The association invites the public to offer nominations for any of these five awards by submitting the candidate’s name, address, contact information, and a brief narrative describing the individual’s qualification for one of these awards. Feel free to send additional supporting information if available. Multiple awards may be given in each category based on the decisions of the selection committee.

Nominations may be sent to the selection committee via e-mail to info@nahsalumni.org, or by standard mail to NAHS Alumni Association, ATTN Awards Selection Committee, North Attleboro High School, 1 Wilson Whitty Way, North Attleboro, MA 02760. All e-mails must be sent, and all standard mail must be postmarked no later than Oct. 30.

Cultural Council now accepting grant applications

he North Attleborough Cultural Council (NACC) is now accepting applications for its 2026 grant cycle. Artists, educators, scientists, performers and community groups are encouraged to apply for reimbursement grants to support public arts, humanities and sciences programs that benefit the North Attleborough community.

Community members can access the grant application and other relevant information via the Massachusetts Cultural Council’s online portal. Applicants do not need to be residents of North Attleborough; however, events or initiatives must directly benefit the North Attleborough community. Community members seeking additional guidance can review the NACC’s 2026 Grant FAQ Guide.

To be considered, completed applications must be submitted to the NACC by Thursday, Oct. 16. Once the application deadline closes, the NACC will review all applications and submit funding recommendations to the Massachusetts Cultural Council. Local grant recipients will be notified in early January 2026.

Last year, NACC awarded over \$20,000 in funding to support 20 local programs, including school field trips, live concerts, art workshops, theater performances, and more. These grants are made available through the Massachusetts Cultural Council’s Local Cultural Council (LCC) Program, the nation’s largest grassroots cultural funding network.

“We’re proud to help bring creative, educational, and inspiring events to North Attleborough each year,” said Coucil Chair Ralph DiMarco. “We encourage anyone with a project idea that can make a positive impact in our community to apply.”

Anyone with questions can contact the North Attleborough Cultural Council at northattleboroughcc@gmail.com.

Markey for Senate

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

According to the Federal Election Commission, Rikleen has raised \$29,834 as of July 1 to fund his grassroots campaign, which he described as “free of generational wealth.” Markey, by comparison, reported \$1,399,495 as of the start of the fiscal year, according to the FEC.

“To people who have long supported Markey, Democrats are playing it safe and ‘better than most’ is not good enough in a moment like this,” said Rikleen. “There’s a long time between now and Election Day – you don’t have to decide right now how you want to vote – but if you think that there is truth in my message and you want this message to spread and continue, invest in it.”

Rikleen plans to speak next at the Mansfield Democratic Town Committee on Tuesday, Oct. 14, at 7:30 p.m., and encouraged residents to visit his website, alexrikleen.us, to learn more about his campaign, priorities and ways to get involved.

Affordable Housing

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

Stone acknowledged that stopping development in a growing town isn’t something the School Committee wants to do, but receiving monetary compensation to address a potential influx of new students — and developing a plan for the future — is what the School Committee is ultimately after.

“When I think about swelling in our schools, that scares me for our students and our staff,” said Stone. “However, if we have the funding to take care of all of this, I think that’s an easier pill to swallow.”

Future developments

At the Sept. 8 council meeting, Borg presented a second proposal for an affordable housing complex at 35 Robinson Ave. in Attleboro Falls. The building was recently condemned after a young resident fell through the floor and had to be rescued.

Located behind the Dyer Lake Funeral Home, the former jewelry factory now stands defunct atop contaminated soil. According to Borg, an interested developer has a purchase-and-sale agreement in hand, and is asking the town to provide an abatement on back taxes owed on the property.

Under Massachusetts

North Attleborough Pet of the Week



Tiger Kitty

When Tiger Kitty was brought to the shelter, she was not a happy camper, but when she was brought to the vet for a full examination, it was learned why. She had major dental issues, causing her pain and discomfort. After dental surgery and the removal of some teeth, Tiger Kitty is a lot happier. All she wants now is some love and neck scratches. If you think this sweet girl would be a good fit for your family, then stop by the shelter during visiting hours and meet this lovely lady. Adoption applications are available on-site and online at www.nattleboro.com.



Glacier

Meet Glacier, a 6-7-year-old spayed female that is up to date on shots and microchipped. Glacier has been at the shelter since 2020 and came in as a pregnant feral, and although her kittens are long gone, Glacier is still here, waiting for someone to give her a new home.

She does great with other cats; in fact, we would love for her to go to a home with at least one other cat. The person that adopts Glacier would need to know that she will never be a “lap” cat, but more of a companion for a current cat. Glacier isn’t mean or vicious, but more nervous around people. She’ll come out for her food or treats but will keep her distance from people. If you’re looking to give a home to a long-time shelter cat, then please stop by the shelter to meet Glacier and all her friends in the free roaming cat room. Adoption applications are available on-site and online at www.nattleboro.com.

Fatal crash

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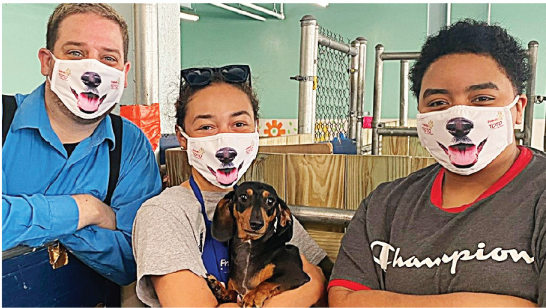
Ricketts was taken to Sturdy Memorial Hospital in Attleboro, where he was pronounced dead shortly after arrival.

“Two innocent people lost their lives because of the defendant’s reckless operation of his vehicle,” said District Attorney Tom Quinn in a statement. “The sentence imposed by the court is appropriate for the defendant leaving the scene and the irreparable damage caused to the victims and their families.”



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