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All classes have limited space and can fill up quickly so register today to grab your spot.
Semester begins the week of January 20, 2026. Registration and information at: <https://newburyportadulted.org>. ♦

Newbury Water Bills (Past) Due!

A Message from the Newbury Water Department
The Water Department sent out the fall bills October 1st and they were due December 1st.
If you have not paid your bill please do so to avoid interest and demand

charges. Final Notices will be processed next week.
Water Bills can be paid by check and sent to the West Newbury Water Department, 381 Main Street, West Newbury, MA 01985. In Person: Water Department, 2nd Floor or dropped in the BLUE Water Payments Box in the front lobby. (available 24/7) or On-Line: Town Website <https://www.wnewbury.org> and go to the "Pay Bills" button. ♦



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In loving memory of
Liz Ichizawa, '04-05 Reporter (1956 - 2005)
Jim Wilson, '20-22 Publisher/Editor (1954-2022)

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The old Kmart building (Photo by Stewart Lytle)

Plaza Landing May Be Approved Soon

By Stewart Lytle, Sr. Reporter

NEWBURYPORT – The town's Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) closed the public hearing last week on the proposed Plaza Landing building that will replace the vacant Kmart store with 212 new apartments.
The five-member board, which has little wiggle room to deny approval under state rules, will now grapple with several questions, such as:
Is the proposed building too tall at 55 feet, compared to the old Kmart at 40 feet?

Is it the right architectural design for Newburyport?
Will it be safe for the increased volume of pedestrians and bikers?
Is there a place for residents to walk their dogs?
But maybe the most vexing challenge is whether the ZBA should insist that the developer, Richard Kaplan's Port Plaza Realty Trust, build a left-hand turn lane on Low Street to facilitate vehicles turning into the new building and Shaw's parking lot.
The cost of a 10-foot lane, according to Lisa Mead, the attorney who represents the trust, would be about \$700,000. And the project's traffic engineer Jeffrey Dirk described the turn lane as a something that would be nice to have, but is not required due to the estimated increase in vehicular and pedestrian traffic created by the new building.

"A turning lane is not justified by the project," Dirk, the managing partner and senior engineer of Vanesse & Associates, told the ZBA.
The bottom line, according to the board's discussion, is that this intersection has long been deficient. Vehicles traveling downhill from Storey Avenue are usually in a hurry to get to work and school and often swing around vehicles turning left into the plaza. There is no turn lane now.
Kaplan opposes building the turning lane to solve a traffic problem the project is not creating. As ZBA chair Rob Ciampitti said, "It is a pre-existing condition."
There has been strong public sup-

port for adding the lane, which would increase the width of Low Street in front of Hodgie's Two ice cream shop from 36 to 42 feet. In addition to the proposed standard 10-foot turn lane in the center, there would be two 11-foot wide through lanes on either side of the turn lane and two five-foot bicycle lanes against each curb.
In place of the turn lane, the developer is proposing to add a Hawk Signal, a flashing stop light pedestrians can order, and a well-striped crosswalk to create more safety for pedestrians crossing Low Street to catch a MeVa bus.
Mead also told the ZBA that MeVa has been asked to begin again making a stop inside the plaza in front of the new building.
"This would encourage residents to ride the bus," she said.
The ZBA might also propose that the developer build an island opposite the turning lane, which would calm traffic and give pedestrians a safe zone in the middle of the street to stand while crossing.
The ZBA vice chair Ken Swanson was also worried that unless there is a turn lane, the increased number of bicyclists might be threatened by frustrated drivers sweeping into the bike lane to go around cars backed up to turn left into the plaza.
Dirk dismissed Swanson's concern, saying there are no reported accidents involving a car and a bicyclist at that intersection.
The ZBA began this week to debate

Continued on page 4

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19	Fri	10:43	8.3	11:18	6.9	4:32	1.3	5:13	0.3	7:08	4:13	☾
20	Sat	11:23	8.3	11:58	7.0	5:12	1.3	5:52	0.2	7:08	4:13	☾
21	Sun			12:02	8.4	5:52	1.3	6:31	0.2	7:09	4:13	☾
22	Mon	12:38	7.1	12:42	8.4	6:32	1.2	7:11	0.1	7:09	4:14	☾
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Wreaths Across America Local Ceremonies



Cindy Collins facilitates Wreaths Across America in Georgetown (Photo: Maureen Aulson)



Roger Mercaldi Jr. unloads tubes of wreaths at Georgetown Public Safety building days before the ceremony. (Photo: Maureen Aulson)



Cars begin to cluster on Central Street Georgetown at Wreaths Across America ceremony (Photo: Maureen Aulson)



Tammy and Ron Garron, coordinators for the Wreaths Across America in Rowley (File photo)



Rowley Photos by Stewart Lytle



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Cars turning left off Low Street (Photo by Stewart Lytle)

PORT PLAZA

Continued from page 2d, whether to approve the proposed Plaza Landing apartments that will offer 25 percent of the 212 apartments at a rental reserved for tenants who earn below 80 percent of the area’s median income or about \$127,000. The remainder of the units would be market-rate rentals for at least 35 years. That will make the city’s housing stock about 12 percent affordable, which is over the state’s mandate of 10 percent, that allows the city more regulatory oversight in approving future housing projects. ♦



Stockings, presents, snowmen, and sleighs decorate the inside of the G-Town Café (Town Common Photo)

G-TOWN Café: Nominated for Regional Business Christmas Decoration Award

GEORGETOWN – The G-TOWN Café has been nominated for The Town Common 2025 Business Christmas Decoration Award. The cafe is a hidden treasure, situated on the far corner of the Building Supply, in addition to the best cinnamon sticks, the cafe has real, fresh-baked donuts, muffins, and pastries. Order online at gowncafe.com for rapid pickup of breakfast or lunch! They're open from 4:30- a.m. until 4 p.m!

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Rowley's Wreaths Across America coordinators Tammy Garron (far left) and husband Ron Garron (far right) and veteran organizer Walter Pomerleau (center) shown with some of the many participants at Rowley's ceremony (Courtesy photo)

DEATH NOTICES		Compiled Exclusively for The Town Common by Michelle Leininger		
Name	City/State Live	Funeral Home	City	Phone
John Paul Jones	Ipswich	C.R. Lyons & Sons	Danvers	978-777-7900
Barbara Ann Hagan	Topsfield	Campbell Funeral Home	Beverly	978-922-1113
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David J. Harrison, Sr.	Gloucester	Campbell Funeral Home	Gloucester	978-283-0884
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Nancy F. Buckley	Haverhill	Berube-Comeau Funeral Home	Haverhill	978-373-1158
Elizabeth A. Davis	N Andover	Conte Funeral Home	N Andover	978-681-5000
John P. Slattery	N Andover	Conte Funeral Home	N Andover	978-681-5000
Patricia Cecilia (Mee) Marvin	Prescott, AZ	Conte Funeral Home	Andover	978-470-8000
Maria F. Vieira	Peabody	Conway, Cahill-Brodeur Funeral Home	Peabody	978-531-0472
Dorothy Ann Bonfanti	Peabody	Conway, Cahill-Brodeur Funeral Home	Peabody	978-531-0472
Maria V. Silva	Peabody	Conway, Cahill-Brodeur Funeral Home	Peabody	978-531-0472
Marie I. Gerokoulis	Peabody	Conway, Cahill-Brodeur Funeral Home	Peabody	978-531-0472
Sandra Cwalina	Lynn	Conway, Cahill-Brodeur Funeral Home	Peabody	978-531-0472
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Barbara Ann Driscoll	Exeter, NH	Remick & Gendron Funeral Home	Hampton	603-926-6500
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FLAGS ACROSS AMERICA PLAQUE at their HUGE tree farm in Washington County, Maine. (Photo by Maureen Aulson)



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ARIES (March 21 to April 19) Make your holiday preparations one step at a time in order to avoid being overwhelmed and leaving things undone. That confusing family situation continues to work itself out.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20) Ease this year's holiday money pressures by letting your thrifty side guide you as you look for those perfect gifts that typically reflect your good taste and love of beauty.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20) You'll have a good handle on potential holiday problems if you delegate tasks to family members, friends or co-workers — most of whom will be more than happy to help out.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22) Right now you are especially vulnerable to holiday scams that seek to take advantage of your generosity. Best advice: Check them out before you transfer any money.

LEO (July 23 to August 22) The upcoming holiday season gives the Big Cat much to purr about. Relationships grow stronger, and new opportunities loom on the horizon, just waiting to be pounced on.

VIRGO (Aug 23 to September 22) A changing situation brings conflicting advice about how to go forward with your holiday plans. Your best bet: Make the decision you feel most comfortable with.

LIBRA (September 23 to October 22) Holiday plans get back on track after some confusion about the direction you expected to take. A potentially troublesome money matter needs your immediate attention.

SCORPIO (October 23 to November 21) Your holiday preparations are on track. But you need to confront a personal situation while you can still keep it from overwhelming everything else.

SAGITTARIUS (November 22 to December 21) Tight financial matters ease a bit during this holiday season. But the sagacious Sagittarian is well-advised to keep a tight hold on the reins while shopping for gifts.

CAPRICORN (December 22 to January 19) Don't put off making decisions about this year's holiday celebrations, despite the negative comments you've been getting from several quarters. Do it NOW!

AQUARIUS (January 20 to February 18) The holidays will bring new friends and new opportunities. Meanwhile, be careful to use your energy wisely as you go about making holiday preparations.

PISCES (February 19 to March 20) There's good news coming from a most unlikely source. And it could turn out to be one of the best holiday gifts you have had in years. Remember to stay positive.

BORN THIS WEEK: You are respected for your honesty and loyalty. You make friends slowly — but with rare exceptions, they're in your life forever.

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Helen Hunt Honored as Local Heroine

By Stewart Lytle, Sr. Reporter

REGIONAL – The Newburyport Black History Initiative (NBHI), in celebrating the great liberator, William Lloyd Garrison last week, honored an unsung local heroine who persuaded the school committee in the late 1950s that Black-faced minstrel shows created false stereotypes of black residents.

"This is also a story of an ordinary person's public bravery and action at the local level to make some change in a complicated world," city's senior planner Georgie Vining said of Helen M. Hunt, who died in 1991 at age 80.

A Girl Scout Troop leader, cancer crusader and photographer with her own studio, Hunt was part of the Cousins' family, which includes Frank Cousins, Jr., a former Newburyport city councilor, legislator, sheriff, chamber of commerce president and now co-chair of the Whitier Vocational High School building committee.

Beginning in the 1830, black minstrels were popular around the country including here in Newburyport, Amesbury and North Shore towns. At blackface minstrel shows in theaters, churches, fraternal orders and schools, white performers wore black makeup with big lips, eyes and wigs, outlandish clothing to dance, play banjos and tambourines and crack often racist jokes, frequently using the N word.

"Blackface minstrelsy provided a standardized set of one-dimensional stereotypes that presented Black people as figures of fun: Comical, frivolous, lazy, ignorant, arrogant, dull-witted, fidgety, servile, superstitious, cowardly, lecherous, prone to thievery," Vining said.

In a presentation to a packed room at the Newburyport Public Library, Vining said,

"Whether well-intentioned or not," the minstrels created "potent caricatures of Black people."

In 1959, in the early days of the national civil rights movement, Hunt asked the School Committee to deny a request to allow a Blackfaced Minstrel to be performed in the school auditorium. Considering the popularity of the blackfaced minstrels at the time, the committee granted the request, but did not allow the minstrel performers to blacken their faces.

Vining wrote in an email, that Hunt, who was called "Aunt Sister" by the large Cousins' family, demonstrated the evolution of attitudes about Newburyport race relations. She followed in the footsteps of Frederick Douglass in 1848, who opposed the black-faced minstrels in Virginia, writing: "...the filthy scum of white society... have stolen from us a complexion denied to

them by nature, in which to make money, and pander to the corrupt taste of their white fellow-citizens."

In researching race relations for the NBHI, which he helped found, Vining said there were "so many old stories in the paper about these blackface minstrel shows, they jumped out at me, including the story of Mrs. Helen M. Hunt standing up publicly to stop them and the newspaper editorials against her."

Black-faced minstrels in Newburyport and nearby towns focused heavily on Dixie music and romanticized life on plantations with contented slaves. The popularity was also driven by a false impression of the rigid social order in the old Confederacy.

Various organizations staged minstrels in the Newbury Grange Hall, the Rowley VFW and by the Knights of Columbus in Amesbury. The

Girl Scouts performed minstrels at the Old South Church and at the Belleville Congregational Church, as well as city hall in Newburyport.

In a 1959 Newburyport Daily News editorial, Ed Plante wrote: "We consider it foolishness... when white people are pressured into believing that a minstrel show is derogatory to all Negroes.... the cause of the Negro can only be harmed by the kind of militancy which rejects the warmth and good humor of a minstrel show."

Forty-six years later Plante reversed his views on minstrels, writing: "We don't have minstrel shows anymore, and for good reason."

Rowley and Ipswich, continued blackface minstrel shows, over some objections, until at least 1965, insisting in Ipswich that "the Negro people should be honored." In Merrimac, minstrel shows continued until 2004, but minus the blackface and related parody, Vining said.

At the annual Garrison Week presentation this week, a large number of the Cousins' family, which traces its history in the region more than 150 years, joined the crowd that listened Vining tell Hunt's story.

The Cousins' legacy of service to the nation as soldiers, then as public servants is chronicled on one of the permanent signs that the NBHI erected throughout downtown. It stands on Green Street near City Hall.



Helen (Cousins) Hunt (Photo provided by Georgie Vining)

"One of Mrs. Hunt's nephews wrote to me," Vining said. It read, "thank you for your work and honoring our family history...and to our beloved Newburyport. One of her grandsons gave me a big man-hug afterwards, which I loved." ♦

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