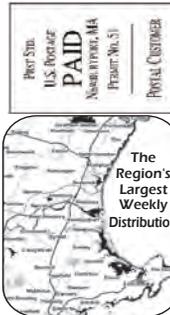


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Celebrating St. Patrick's Day



Sid Tracy of "Music by Uncle Sid" from Marblehead entertains diners at Georgetown's New Life Community Church's St. Patrick's Diner (Photo: Lonnie Brennan)



Pastor Liete Soares Júnior brings life to Georgetown's New Life Community Church's St. Patrick's Diner, giving the international love sign. (Photo: Lonnie Brennan)



Mike Donahue (L) and Jim Bussing Sr. (R) celebrating St. Patrick's Diner at New Life Community Church (Photo: Lonnie Brennan)



The Newbury Fire Department battled a house fire early Friday morning. (Photo Courtesy Newbury Fire Department)

Newbury Fire Department Battled Serious House Fire

NEWBURY – The Newbury Fire Department and mutual aid partners battled an intense house fire that started early Friday morning, with the home and multiple vehicles being deemed total losses.

On Friday, March 13 at 12:58 a.m., the Newbury Fire Department was dispatched to 49 Fruit St. for reports of a house fire. The responding crews arrived to find the home completely engulfed in flames, prompting them to immediately strike a second alarm to bring additional personnel to the scene.

Four residents were home at the time, and all four had been able to leave the home quickly before firefighters arrived. No injuries were reported to residents or first responders. Newbury Fire and mutual aid partners worked throughout the morning to extinguish the large fire, which had spread to several vehicles and gas grills on the property.

The home has been deemed a total loss. The occupants were provided assistance and have obtained tem-

Continued on page 4

Jim Bussing Sr. Donates \$1 Million to Georgetown's Park and Recreation Facilities

GEORGETOWN – The Town of Georgetown has announced a transformative \$1 million donation from longtime community member Jim Bussing Sr. to support improvements to the town's parks and recreation facilities, including the development of a dedicated pickleball facility that will be owned and operated by the town for the benefit of the community.

Pickleball continues to grow in popularity across Massachusetts and the nation, offering a sport that is easy to learn, accessible to all ages, and well suited for both casual and competitive play. The proposed facility is expected to support open play, instructional

programs, youth development, senior programming, and community tournaments.

The gift will help fund the planning, design, and construction of a

Continued on page 4

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Class of 2027
President's List



Newbury: Margaret Wichroski
Class of 2027
Principal's List



Newburyport: Christopher Connors - Class of 2027
President's List



Newburyport: Julia Davis
Class of 2026
President's List



Newburyport: Sophia Davis
Class of 2029
President's List



West Newbury: Olivia Schneider, Class of 2027
Principal's List

Newbury, West Newbury, and Newburyport Students Excel in Bishop Fenwick's Honor Roll

Bishop Fenwick High School has announced its second quarter honor roll, recognizing students who demonstrated outstanding academic achievement.

The honor roll is determined by calculating the unweighted grade point

average across all major courses, with students earning distinction at three levels: President's List (3.90 GPA or higher with no grade below A-), Prin-

cipal's List (3.50 GPA or higher), and Dean's List (3.00 GPA or higher).

Among those earning top honors, students from Newbury, West New-

bury, and Newburyport were represented, showcasing the dedication and academic excellence of local scholars.

Students receiving any failing grade,

a grade below B-, or an incomplete are ineligible for honor roll recognition, making these achievements particularly noteworthy. ♦

Making Plum Island Accessible in Storms

By Stewart Lytle, Sr. Reporter

PLUM ISLAND – The Plum Island Turnpike, which connects the barrier island with the main land, will have to be raised three feet in most places to keep it from being inundated with water from the rising Merrimack River and the Atlantic Ocean.

But improvements to the roadway probably won't happen for decades when the predictions are that by 2050 high tides on the river could be almost seven and a half feet, which will put the roadway under water.

There are already signs along the turnpike that advise travelers and pedestrians to turn around during flooding so they won't drown.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) delivered its latest update on planning for the turn-



The sign on the PI Turnpike. (Photo by Stewart Lytle)

pike to a full house of Plum Island area residents last week. It was the first presentation on the turnpike's future since last May because the research and planning

The bridge is owned by the Department of Transportation and cannot be changed. For that reason, it is expected to allow bicyclists to enter the west-bound lanes on leaving the bridge.

Several options are being considered for the intersection with Sunset Drive. It could have a four-way stop, which might back up traffic entering and leaving the island. The scenario that seemed the most likely was to build a "mini-rotary," raised to 10 feet, to funnel the traffic.

Sunset Drive would be raised to the

by the federal government stopped during the previous government shutdown.

The FWS's Eric Doremus explained that the roadway today is not only subject to being under water during King Tides, but needs to be made safer than it is now to accommodate pedestrians, bicyclists and cars. He offered several scenarios that involved adding a shared path separated from the travel lanes on the river side by a barrier of plantings.

He also outlined several measures that the federal government could not do. It cannot build a wall against the rising tides like the Netherlands did. It cannot elevate the road to 13 feet and higher, which could happen during 100-year storms. Raising the road that high would be cost prohibitive and could harm the Salt Marsh.

Building an elevated road from Ocean Avenue to the bridge would also block access to local homeowners and businesses, such as Bob's Lobster and the Parker River Wildlife Refuge.

The FWS does not have cost estimates for its multiple scenarios. The final report is expected in late summer, Doremus said.



The PI Turnpike. (Photo by Stewart Lytle)

And a sidewalk would be added in front of the businesses as cars enter the island. Doremus said the planning and in the future the permitting process would be very complicated, involving multiple local, state and federal agencies. He predicted that it would ultimately be a model for other regional environment projects.

It is possible that the federal government can do little to nothing to improve the turnpike. In 1970, Congress passed a law restricting changes to wetlands, including the Salt Marsh. "We are afraid it might be a show stopper," Doremus said.

But a provision in the law allows for changes that protect the public. "It is a grey area," he said. And will need legal review. ♦

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20	Fri	12:51	8.9	1:16	8.7	7:06	-0.6	7:24	-0.3	6:45	6:55	☾
21	Sat	1:33	9.2	2:01	8.7	7:52	-0.8	8:07	-0.2	6:44	6:56	☾
22	Sun	2:18	9.4	2:50	8.4	8:41	-0.9	8:54	0.0	6:42	6:57	☾
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24	Tue	4:00	9.3	4:40	7.8	10:30	-0.5	10:42	0.5	6:38	7:00	☾
25	Wed	4:59	9.1	5:41	7.5	11:31	-0.2	11:44	0.8	6:37	7:01	☾
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L-R: Laura Repplier, Mike Donahue, Robert Hoover, Doug Dawes, Orlando Pacheco

Georgetown Public Comments Policy Struggle

By Stewart Lytle, Sr. Reporter

GEORGETOWN – If you want to speak to the SelectBoard here in the future, you can address the five-member board for three minutes, but only if you want to talk on one of the topics already on the board’s agenda.

If you want to speak about a different subject, you must get a Select-Board member to add it to the agenda or wait until the next meeting, usually two weeks later.

Town Administrator Orlando Pacheco is adding instructions to the agenda so potential speakers know what the new rules are.

The issue of regulating public comments was one of the hot topics last week, lasting more than an hour at the regular SelectBoard meeting. Some board members, led by Laura Repplier and Doug Dawes, favored fewer restrictions. Robert Hoover initially favored requiring a four-business-days-notice for any comment. Hoover said that would increase “transparency” and give the SelectBoard more time to determine if it was an appropriate topic, and allow the board to engage in open dialogue at the meeting, other-

wise, the board could risk breaking the open meeting law by discussing a topic which was not on the agenda.

Excerpts of the Initial One Hour and 11 Minute Georgetown Select Board Discussion Regarding Establishing a Formal Public Comments Policy

Georgetown Select Board Chair Robert Hoover navigated his board through an initial discussion last week regarding a desire to establish a formal public comments policy. As Hoover pointed out, the board is faced with a tough balance of finding a way to allow the public to engage the board, in multiple ways (comments, agenda items, full discussions, etc.), while being transparent to the public as to what will occur, as well as enable the board to respond to public comments and not run afoul of public open meetings laws.

In most instances, if someone just shows up to a meeting and makes comments, the board cannot engage in a discussion, for example, to find a solution to their problem, as the issue was

not disclosed to the public before the meeting, as an agenda item.

After the more than hour-long discussion, no formal vote was taken by the board, but the members agreed to do two things: 1. Continue discussing ways to allow the public to engage their Select Board, and 2. Add a note to the formal agenda requesting persons to limit any comments to a listed agenda item (so a member of the board could respond without breaking the Open Meeting Law), and encourage the public to contact the board via e-mail, phone, or in-person in town hall to request that an item be placed on the agenda.

Some excerpts from the discussion and summaries of the discussion follows:

“All public comments and questions should be directed to the Select Board only. All speakers may speak only after first being recognized by the chair,” Hoover stated, explaining in detail that it would be inappropriate to repeat past performances where a member of the audience took an opportunity to speak and call-out an individual on the board or the audience.

Hoover sought to have speakers fill out a form, stating their name, address, contact information, and the topic they wish to speak on. “It’s oftentimes difficult to understand when someone says their names,” and he wanted the board to be able to follow-up with the person. “During regular scheduled Select Board meetings, individuals who previously submitted a public comment form . . . will have their opportunity to speak during the posted agenda’s public comment item,” he proposed.

“The public I think needs to also know, it’s about transparency, I think. The public needs to know what is going to be talked about if we’re going to have the most transparent way of working all of this. And so, in order

Continued on page 7

Groveland Water and Sewer Department Announces New Emergency Notification System

GROVELAND – The Groveland Water and Sewer Department shares that, effective March 13, the town will no longer use the Code Red notification system.

All town departments in Groveland will be transitioning to a new alert system in coordination with North Shore Regional 911. The new system provides residents with more control over the types of notifications they wish to receive and how they receive them.

Residents may choose to receive emergency alerts, non-emergency alerts, or both via email, text message, and/or phone call.

Residents who would like to receive alerts from the Water and Sewer Department must select the non-emergency alerts option.

Groveland Water and Sewer also encourages customers to enter their home address when registering to assist the department with localized

alerts, such as information on water-main breaks or service interruptions to specific areas of town.

Residents can register for the new alert system at <https://tinyurl.com/911groveland>.

For additional questions or concerns, residents can contact the Groveland Water and Sewer Department at 978-556-7220. ♦

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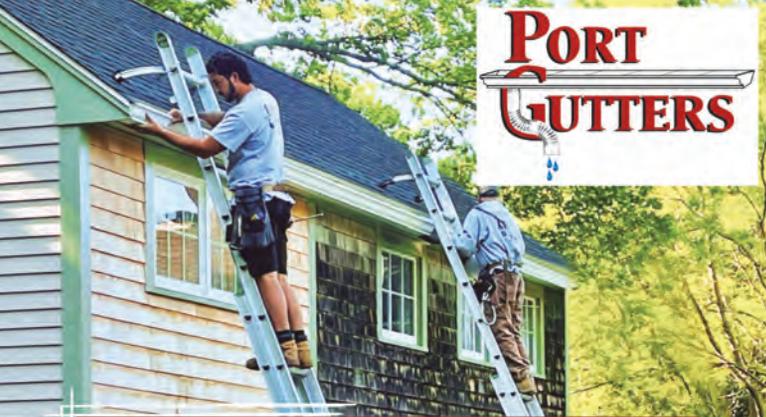


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Upcoming Programs at West Newbury Library

Book Sale Donation Drop Off Saturday, March 21 & Sunday 22, 9 AM -1 PM Old Town Hall Building 491 Main St. West Newbury

Do you have books to donate? Wonderful! Our guidelines are simple guide lines: Yes, please to new, gently used, children's and young adult, fiction, puzzles and games, gardening, cookbooks, travel & nature, art & science, history & biography. No, thank you to the mildewed & smelly, no magazines, no encyclopedias, textbooks, or reference materials. VHS are not accepted. Thank you for contributing to the learning, growth and inspiration of your community.

West Newbury Library Spring Book Sale!

Twice a year the Friends of the Library hold a sale of used adult and children's books, DVDs, CDs, etc. at the Old Town Hall Building across from the library (Town Hall Building, 491 Main Street, West Newbury).
Weds 3/25, 3-7 PM (West Newbury residents only night)
Thurs 3/26 & Fri 3/27: 10 AM-5 PM, Sat 3/28 9 AM -12 PM.

West Newbury Water Woes: Managing Manganese Exposure

The water department last week issued a message regarding changes in taste, odor, or color of drinking water.

These conditions are related to winter ice cover and seasonal mixing in the city's drinking water reservoirs. "While the taste, smell, or color can be unpleasant, the Water Division has confirmed that the water continues to meet all State and Federal drinking water standards."

The department provided extensive details on geosmin, cyanobacteria, and manganese levels.

"Why are manganese levels closely monitored?"

Exposure to manganese, especially to infants, can have associated health risks. State regulations advise that finished water should not exceed 0.3 mg/L for more than 10 days in any calendar year. This recommendation is protective for infants, who are more sensitive to manganese exposure, as well as adults who can be

affected by long-term exposure. The City of Newburyport's Water Division has been monitoring manganese levels daily to ensure levels are well below the regulations. In addition to public health protection, when levels are kept below 0.05 mg/L, staining and color issues are avoided.

In the short term, Newburyport's Water Division will continue to monitor the manganese concentrations in surface water supplies and make appropriate adjustments to potassium permanganate dose at the raw water pump station as needed.

In the longer term, the city is in the planning stages of constructing a new water treatment plant that would include an appropriately designed chemical feed system to treat for manganese with infrastructure at the plant to effectively respond to the changing concentrations rather than relying on operations at the remote raw water pump station." ♦

NEWBURY FIRE

Continued from page 1

porary lodging.

Newbury Fire crews remained on scene to conduct overhaul operations, including monitoring and seeking out hotspots. Crews also searched the scene for a dog and a cat who were in the home at the time of the fire. At this time, it is believed that the pets were unable to escape the fire.

Mutual aid was provided by the Fire Departments of Newburyport, Salisbury, Amesbury, West Newbury,

Georgetown, Boxford and Rowley. The Ipswich Fire Department and Atlantic Ambulance covered the Town while crews were on scene, and responded to two medical calls and a third call, a fire alarm activation.

Newbury Police and the the Massachusetts State Police Fire and Explosion Investigation Unit attached to the State Fire Marshal's Office responded on scene and are assisting the Fire Department with their investigation into the origin and cause of the fire. ♦

JIM BUSSING

Continued from page 1

modern pickleball facility, expanding recreational opportunities for residents of all ages. While the donation represents a significant portion of the anticipated project cost, the Town may pursue additional funding sources to complete the project as envisioned.

Mike Donahue, Chair of Georgetown Parks & Recreation and a first-year member of the Board of Selectmen, expressed gratitude for the extraordinary contribution. "Jim Bussing Sr. has been a longstanding and valued member of our Georgetown community," Donahue said. "His remarkable generosity demonstrates not only his commitment to recreation and healthy living, but also his belief in investing in spaces that bring neighbors together. This \$1 million gift will have a lasting and meaningful impact on our residents."

Georgetown Parks & Recreation, comprised of John Dunlevy, Aly Philbrook, Dave Schauer, and Chair Mike Donahue, looks forward to guiding the project in collaboration with municipal leadership and residents. The facility is envisioned as a welcoming and accessible space that promotes health, social connection, and intergenerational activity.

Town Administrator Orlando Pacheco also praised the contribution and its impact on the community. "This generous pledge reflects the strong spirit of community that makes Georgetown such a special place," said Pacheco. "Mr. Bussing's pledge will help create a space where people can stay active, meet others, and enjoy recreation for years to come."

Bussing said his motivation for the gift is rooted in community pride. "Georgetown has always been home," Bussing said. "I believe in supporting projects that strengthen our town and create opportunities for people to connect. I'm proud to contribute to something that will benefit families and future generations."

The Town will work collaboratively to finalize site selection, design plans, and funding strategy, and public input will be welcomed as the project moves forward. The donation represents one of the largest private contributions dedicated to recreation in Georgetown's history and reflects a shared commitment to enhancing quality of life for residents. ♦

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Georgetown's Hometown Heroes Banner Program Order a Banner Before April 1



by Kay Lee Ogden

Light Department will again proudly display the custom banners throughout the downtown area.

The program displays 24" x 36" banners on utility poles from May 1 through the end of November and

Georgetown's Hometown Heroes Banner Program is a community initiative, led by local resident Jon Pingree who worked with the Georgetown Kiwanis to place banners throughout the downtown to honor local veterans.

The banners were safely stored

for the winter, but as spring approaches the

spotlights local veterans with a link to Georgetown. Banners are produced in minimum batches of five and cost \$195 each (but there are provisions for financial assistance below). For information or to request a banner, contact Jon Pingree at 978.836.8409. You will need to provide the veteran's name, years of service, rank, and the branch of the military the veteran served. Thanks to groups providing financial support,

Continued on page 8

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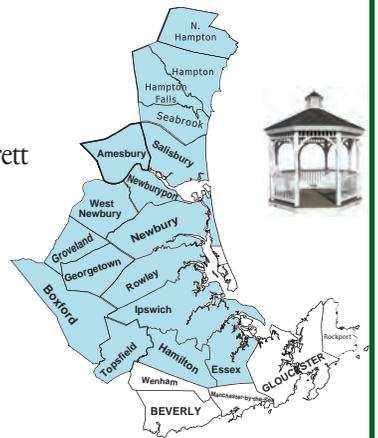
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Lonnie Brennan: editor@TheTownCommon.com

PUBLIC COMMENT

Continued from page 3

for the public to get this information, it makes sense that they know it's coming. And then the same goes with the Board of Selectmen needing to know and not have major surprises over something that is not only not anticipated, but could be very disruptive at that point in time," Hoover said. "It would address these open meeting law complaints so that they wouldn't happen and we wouldn't have to spend the time and the back and forth on an open meeting law complaint ... The goal is to eliminate these open meeting laws showing up and to do that to be transparent and have a well-organized efficient meeting."

Member Laura Replier was concerned with the delay of up to two weeks before an item can be placed on the formal agenda, and sought a compromise.

A long discussion about not wanting to limit speech ensued, with long-time member **Doug Dawes** summarizing: "I think we need to have a public comment policy, but I don't know that it needs to be restrictive in any way. I think that when people come to a meeting, I think they understand they're part of the audience and not a participant in the meeting until they're recognized by the chair."

The question again returned to how/if the board can respond to a comment if it's not on the agenda? And what if someone just uses public comment to speak bad of someone or attack some group, or talk about matters that have nothing to do with the board's business meeting?

"It's not for people to abuse a policy - but someone comes to a meet-

ing because they saw something on the agenda or somebody told them about something that was on the agenda and they want to come to a meeting and have their three minutes," Dawes said. "It's not a discussion. They'll say whatever their three minutes are and then they go back to their seat, because there's no deliberation done by the board."

Member Michael Donahue, a victim himself of a prior, lying attack by an anonymous, masked speaker at a school committee meeting, still advocated the sentiment of limited restrictions and, after weighing the issue, advocated strongly for allowing access to the board by the public. "Mr. Hoover, you brought up a point about violation of open meeting law, and traditionally in the past there have been topics on there - have been public comments - where there's been back and forth, and so if you take public comments in, you don't have to respond to them. You just thank you very much, have a nice day, we'll take that under advisement. There will be no open meeting [violation] if we do that ..." and the board could address a response at a subsequent meeting if appropriate.

Hoover remained concerned that "you're not going to be able to respond in real-time to someone who comes up and starts talking about what they say they're going to talk about, and then they quickly turn their head to someone sitting there in the audience and complain about them, and then they come back and talk to you," Hoover said. "You're going to have people like that all the time doing things, and you're not going to be able to respond to it. And that's not an efficient, that's not an effective, that's not a professional kind of meeting."

Town Administrator Orlando Pacheco suggested that "if there's dialogue, that's where the trigger is in terms of the open meeting law. If somebody just goes up under public comment - I think the AG has opined on this - if you just go up under public comment and the board just sits there and says nothing, then you're probably OK. The problem is: 1. You don't know what they're going to talk about, and 2. You don't know what they're going to say. People don't have to be truthful just because it's public comment. People can say whatever they want. So, I see the struggle there."

"Sure, you want free speech: there's the door go outside and yell at the top of your lungs you know - whatever you want to say - and nobody's going to stop you. That's free speech. You can't walk into any board meeting anywhere and just start hijacking the meeting saying, I want to say whatever I want to say because I'm angry today or I don't like what the president is doing."

"Try to remember that these are also business meetings where the board is trying to get the taxpayers' work done," Pacheco said. "And so that's why I think there needs to be a good balance between what people should discuss here versus what they shouldn't and what you make them do to it."

Replier replied to the members: "I feel like we're weighing two important things against each other your concern about transparency and not falling foul of open meeting laws and our additional concern that we offer access to our residents to address us and participate in a non-dialogical - to make up a good word - way. And for me, the one with the greater value is offering our residents access. And it's up to us, you, sorry Rob, to manage that environment so we don't actually end up in a difficult exchange or an inappropriate exchange or whatever, where it becomes - I don't know - contentious or we're discussing or whatever. That's in your hands, but I would prefer for us to give more weight to giving access to our residents."

Dawes summarized: "When a person comes to a meeting, they're a member of the audience. They're not a participant in the meeting. And that's if

they want to get up and talk in public. Even somebody that submits a form, you don't know what they're going to say. They can get up, they and take 10 to 15 seconds and direct a comment right at somebody or turn around. If somebody snickered in the audience, they turn around and direct their time. You just don't know. But most people have a sense of decorum. There are some that their filters are broken a little. But I don't think that we should overly restrict public comment. I believe that we should have policy on it, but I don't think we should overly restrict it."

"I believe people need to understand that when you have freedoms and rights, they come with responsibilities," Dawes detailed. "Most people understand that. If you don't have that, then as my former pastor said to me, 'a river without banks is a swamp.' So, freedoms and rights have boundaries. And that's what people have to understand. And occasionally you'll get somebody or even a group that goes rogue and is disruptive but that then becomes the responsibility of the chair to issue the warnings and ..." [take other actions].

In the end, the board moved forward with a consensus to request that residents seek to put their concerns on the agenda rather than just spring things upon the board without notice. **Donahue** stood firm that there needs to be a method for residents to address the board, not just make a request which may or may not be granted to be put on the agenda.

The board will continue to work on a formal policy for impromptu comments. **Hoover** cautioned again that just letting someone speak and say something - "thrown out to the public with no response from us leaves an impression one way or the other with some people." He urged methods to ensure the board is free to respond, clarify, amplify, and take action. He concluded by thanking his fellow members after a tense discussion at times, by sharing: "I would like you to know, this is a great discussion, really. Thank you all. It was an excellent discussion. Personally, I don't always find these discussions easy, but they're necessary, and I'm just thankful for you guys." ♦

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"If you want praise, die. If you want blame, marry."

"I won't be wronged. I won't be insulted. I won't be laid a hand on. I don't do these things to other people and I require the same from them." — John Wayne

PUZZLE ANSWERS

7	2	9	1	8	5	4	3	9
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And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love. 1 Corinthians 13:13

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HOMETOWN HEROES

Continued from page 5

the criteria for a free banner are as follows: you work for the town, or have a relative who was killed in action, or you have a financial hardship.

The program is for people that are alive or who have passed. To qualify, they need to have some connection to Georgetown - either they grew up here or have a family member that lives here.

Give me a call or text me for more information, but let's get your banner ordered A.S.A.P. for this year's program. I can be reached at: KAY LEE OGDEN: TEXT 978.771.6884 OR CALL: 978.352.8318 or you may send me a message at: KayLeeOgden4@gmail.com.

We highly respect all our service-members, we salute, and recognize them and their families, who have proudly served our country and communities around the world from the Army, Air Force, Coast Guard, National Guard, Marines, Merchant Marines, Navy, Space Force and all who have served.

Join the American Legion

The Rene J. Gagnon American Legion Post #211 is looking for new members to join, they would appreciate your help, you may join by contacting Doug Dawes at 978.270.3037 or dougdawes@gmail.com. ♦



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