

WARE RIVER NEWS



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Police chief proposes hiring 5 new officers

By Melissa Fales
Reporter

WARE – Ware Police Chief Dennis Healey outlined his proposed staffing plan last week for the police department, including hiring five new officers.

He explained that two senior officers have recently retired and a third retirement will come next month. Two officers have transferred to other police departments. “We are severely short in our staffing,” he said, adding that the department is actually down by six officers because another officer that retired earlier was never replaced. “This is our best chance to increase our staffing levels to what they should be and significantly reduce our overtime costs,” he said. “We’ve been understaffed for years.”

Healey has already hired two new officers who will start the police academy in February.

Healey said that because the retiring officers are currently at the highest pay grade, even with five additional hires, his projected base budget would be approximately \$25,000 less than this year’s budget. With a total of seven new hires, he would be able to staff all shifts and even have a floater to fill in when officers are out on vacation, sick, or personal days. By ensuring that all shifts are fully staffed, Healey said the town would save money on overtime costs which have averaged approximately \$164,000 each year for the past four years. “It’s always been a goal to reduce our overtime costs,” said Healey. “It’s impossible if you don’t have enough officers to fill the shifts. You can’t have it both ways.” He estimated that the town would likely save at least \$50,000 a year by not having to hire officers at overtime rates.

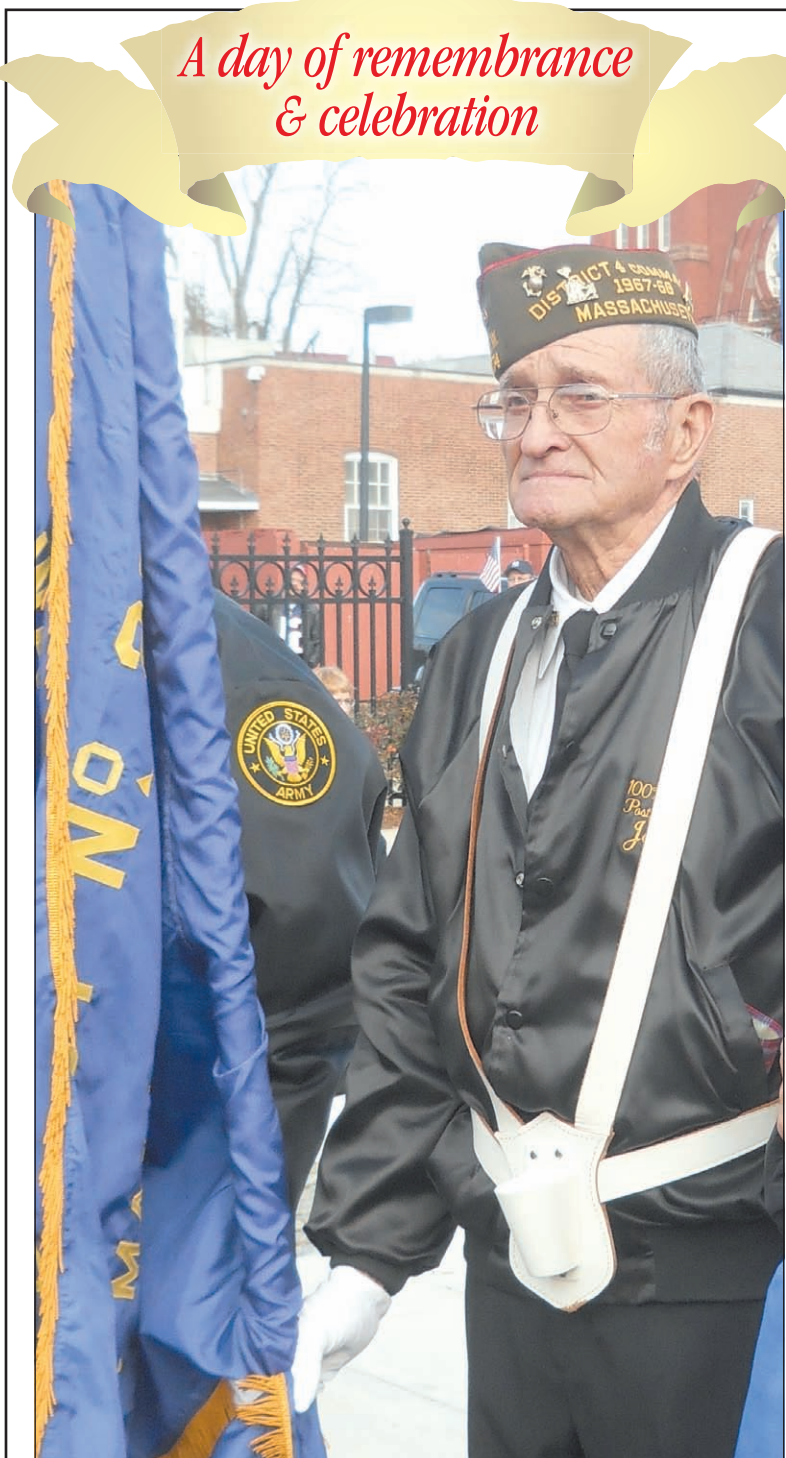
Speaking as the town accountant,

“This is our best chance to increase our staffing levels to what they should be and significantly reduce our overtime costs.”

- Ware Police Chief Dennis Healey

Tracy Meehan said she needed to do more analysis regarding how much the new hires would cost the town in benefits, noting that benefits for three of the proposed five additional new hires are already included in the budget because there are already employees in those positions. The board approved Healey requesting a new civil service list with the hopes of hiring five new officers.

In another effort to help improve staffing, Healey recommended that police commissioners reinstate permanent intermittent officer status within the police department. Healey said the advantage of permanent intermittent officers is that qualified officers would be exempt from the age limit for full-time officers and don’t have to retake the civil service exam each year. “They provide a reserve force who may want to become full time at some point,” he said. Healey said he would like to move forward with the full-time hiring first, then determine how many permanent intermittent officers the department would need. Selectman Bill Braman said the commissioners would look favorably upon reinstating the permanent intermittent status when Healey is ready to move forward with it.



The town of Ware honored its veterans with a parade down Main Street and a ceremony in Veterans Park on Sunday, Nov. 13. The event also marked the conclusion of Ware’s 250th Anniversary Celebration. Here, World War II veteran Jean Salvucci stands at the ceremony. See story and more photos on Page 10.

Turley Publications staff photo by Melissa Fales

United Church ready to set Thanksgiving tables

Dave Gravel seeks donors for annual meal

By Melissa Fales
Reporter

WARE – Once again, the United Church of Ware, located at 49 Church St., is inviting the entire community to come together for a free Thanksgiving dinner to be served promptly at noon on Thanksgiving Day, Thursday, Nov. 24.

“This meal is offered to everyone,” said organizer David Gravel. “There are no income or age limitations. You don’t have to be poor, you don’t have to be hungry, you don’t have to be lonely. We just want to bring people together.”

The menu is a traditional Thanksgiving dinner including turkey with homemade gravy and stuffing, green peas with pearl onions, cranberry sauce and butternut

squash. An appetizer course of sweet breads such as banana, pumpkin and cranberry, will be served. The final course of this Thanksgiving feast will include a variety of homemade pies served with coffee.

Home deliveries are also available. Any Ware resident who would like a meal delivered to their home should contact the church office at 967-9981 or Gravel at 967-6554 before Thanksgiving in order to be placed on the list. If leaving a message on the answering machine, be sure to leave an address and a phone number in case the delivery person has trouble locating your home.

While Gravel has volunteers ready to deliver meals, he encourages everyone who can come to the hall to do so. “We can feed those people who stay home, but they are

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Board declares emergency for storm deficit spending

By Melissa Fales
Reporter

WARE - DPW Director Thom Martens was at the Nov. 15 meeting of the Board of Selectmen to discuss the disposal of the vegetative debris from the Oct. 29 snowstorm.

Martens said his crew has worked tirelessly removing debris from public ways in order to prepare for winter. He acknowledged some frustration on the part of residents regarding what some may perceive as a lack of action regarding debris removal on private property, but explained that the town first needed to determine how much it would cost to remove all the debris and how it would pay for the removal. “I don’t want to incur any costs for the

town that I’m not sure the town is willing to absorb,” Martens said.

Martens said the town simply does not have the resources to clean up the debris from private property. He suggested the town hire firms that are contracted by the state to remove the debris and monitor the process. These firms will grind it up and haul it all away. At a projected cost of \$31 per cubic yard and approximately 20,000 cubic yards of debris, Martens estimated a cost somewhere between \$700,000 and \$750,000.

Martens said he has learned that the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) will reimburse up to 75 percent of the costs of debris removal and that there is some

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Ware breaks ground on new fire station

WARE - On Nov. 14, the Ware Fire Department held a groundbreaking ceremony at the future West Street site of the town’s \$7 million fire station. “I’m still pinching myself to make sure I’m not dreaming,” said Fire Chief Thomas W. Coulombe. Coulombe

thanked the department’s current and past firefighters, the Fire Station Building Committee, the local legislators who helped secure funding, and the residents of Ware who voted at town meeting to approve funding for a portion of the construction. Coulombe

also offered a special thank you to his wife, Kathleen, for her help in writing a successful application for the Assistance to Firefighters Station Construction Grant, which led to Ware receiving \$5 million in Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) money. The proj-

ect is funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. Construction of the building is expected to begin immediately.

See related editorial and photos on opinion page.



Turley Publications photo by Melissa Fales

Shown as the shovels hit the dirt are Lt. Christopher Gagnon, Architect Greg Carell, Bill Jodice of General Contractor PDS Engineering and Construction, Building Committee member Richard Bonnayer, Deputy Fire Chief Daniel Danitis, Building Committee member Richard Towilson, Building Committee member Christopher Desjardins, Senator Stephen M. Brewer (D-Barre) Fire Chief Thomas W. Coulombe, Captain Kathleen Coulombe, Selectman William R. Braman, Representative Todd M. Smola (R-Palmer), Representative Anne M. Gobi (D-Spencer), Board of Selectmen Chair Nancy J. Talbot, Selectman Richard A. Norton and Building Committee member Jack McQuaid.

School committee considers options for make-up days

By Melissa Fales
Reporter

WARE - At the Nov. 9 School Committee meeting, Chair Christopher Desjardins said the district used up all of its remaining scheduled snow days in the wake of the Halloween Nor’easter.

Stanley M. Koziol Elementary School Principal Daniel Somes reported that the district’s leadership team had already met to discuss options for making up those days. “Our consensus was looking at February vacation...,” said Somes, offering Feb. 21, 22 and 23 as potential make-up dates. Additionally, the leadership team suggested rescheduling a professional day scheduled for March 14 for later in June. Somes said the leadership team would prefer to have the instructional time earlier in the year.

Desjardins questioned the impact of losing February vacation for families who might have scheduled travel for that week. He also noted that the International Club will be travel-

ing to Spain during that time. Somes said he thought the students on that trip would be able to count those as school days. Desjardins questioned whether teachers set to chaperone on that trip would be penalized. Committee member Aaron Sawabi said by grouping three consecutive make-up days together over what had been a scheduled vacation made it more likely that some students would miss all three.

Committee member Brian Winslow asked if holding school on Saturdays might be an option. Committee member Michael Meehan noted that half-days on Saturdays would count as full school days. Somes said the leadership team had considered making up school days on Saturdays as well as on non-federal holidays.

Winslow asked if the district had spoken with the bus company to make sure transportation would be available for any of the proposed options. Desjardins said the district should also make sure there would be no extra cost for transportation

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