



WINTER 2023

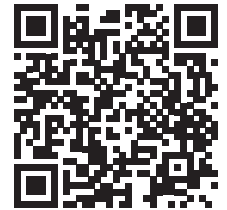


In 2015, Wakefield lifted its December-to-April on-street parking ban and now enforces parking limitations on an emergency basis. The temporary restriction of on-street parking allows plowing crews to perform curb-to-curb cleanup and creates safe access for emergency vehicles.

If your residence does not have a driveway, connect with your landlord for parking options or coordinate with a neighbor who has extra driveway space. Vehicles that interfere with snow operations or emergency-vehicle access may be towed.

Parking ban announcements are made via the CodeRED e-alert system, which delivers messages via phone, email, or text. Public safety leaders also use CodeRED to deliver emergency information like boil-water notices and evacuation announcements.

When enrolling in CodeRED, be sure to choose the "Create a Managed Account" option so that you can update your contact information or remove yourself if you move out of town. Sign up at bit.ly/CodeRed01880.



scan to enroll

DATES TO NOTE

Tax Collector

February 1, 2023
Third-quarter actual real estate and actual personal property bills due

March 6, 2023
Year 2023 motor vehicle excise bill due
(issued February 3, 2023)

Assessing Department

February 1, 2023
Abatement applications due

April 1, 2023
Statutory exemptions due

Did you know that the Town of Wakefield has a 'Snow and Ice' bylaw to protect pedestrians during snow and ice events? This bylaw states that owners of commercial and multi-family (4+ dwelling) properties must remove snow, slush, and ice from sidewalks abutting their land so that sidewalks are reasonably accessible by all persons. The clearing must be done within 24 hours after the precipitation ends.

To promote pedestrian safety, all residents are encouraged to clear the sidewalks near their homes and assist neighbors who may need help digging out. But please don't shovel your snow into the street. Our bylaws state that individuals cannot, "move or remove snow or ice from private land to any public street, sidewalk, or common land of the Town."



FROM THE TOWN ADMINISTRATOR

Each year, the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) announces a word of the year, a word or expression that has attracted a great deal of interest over the last 12 months. For 2022, the OED selected "goblin mode," a term describing "a type of behavior which is unapologetically self-indulgent, lazy, slovenly, or greedy, typically in a way that rejects social norms or expectations." I have since learned that goblin mode debuted on Twitter in 2009 and enjoyed viral status on social media in 2022, as it supposedly captured the mood of those who rejected the idea of returning to "normal" life after the pandemic.

This fall marked 1,000 days since the first COVID case in Massachusetts, and though I agree that we all have adapted and changed, I could never use the phrase "goblin mode" to describe Wakefield and/or Wakefieldians. Our goal going forward (actually, all along) is to learn from our past experiences, improve wherever we can, and enhance the quality of life for all of Wakefield's residents. Not very "goblin mode."

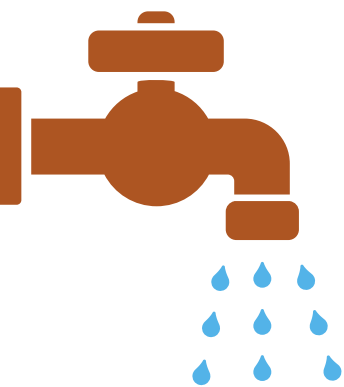
With that in mind, the Town Council recently voted to expend over \$3.8 Million of the Federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds toward improving sidewalks, trails, and Lake Quannapowitt pathways. The Council also supported public tree plantings and improving Lake Quannapowitt's water quality through upgrades in stormwater control. As we face

skyrocketing energy costs this winter, \$400,000 was also allocated for residents who need assistance heating their homes. These projects would have been difficult to fund with our own tax dollars, and I am very pleased that current and future generations will enjoy these improvements.

Speaking of our budget, through the efforts of our Finance Committee's Forecasting Subcommittee, we continue to map out a future that not only answers the current needs and desires of our Town but also allows us to sustain these efforts and positions us for a secure and stable future. The hard work done in this regard by the Town Council, Finance Committee, and School Committee has enabled us to sustain the highest available bond rating (AAA) from Wall Street. I can confidently say that we, as taxpayers, have saved close to a million dollars in interest payments over our last few projects because of this rating. This is money that stays in Wakefield, not in the pockets of the bond portfolio managers and their corporate clients.

We need to remain vigilant and prudent in our budgetary decisions, however. Over the next few years, as the toll of higher inflation and supply chain issues could wreak havoc on our ability to sustain our AAA bond rating, we must maintain adequate financial reserves while delivering services to our citizens. At the recent Tri-Board Meeting, where

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Wakefield's Cross-Connection Control Program protects the public water system from potential contamination resulting from cross connections. A cross connection occurs whenever a potable drinking water line is directly or indirectly linked to a piece of equipment or piping containing non-potable (polluted) water. This could happen when equipment, plumbing fixtures, or attachments (like hoses) contain chemicals or contaminated water. When there is a change in the line's water pressure or direction of water flow, contaminants can be pulled from the equipment and into the drinking water line.

As required by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection, Public Works staff survey industrial, commercial, and institutional facilities annually to ensure that all potential cross connections are identified and eliminated or protected by a backflow preventer. Personnel is also trained on hazard surveys, cross-connection identification, and backflow device installation.

Outside water taps and garden hoses are a common source of cross-connection contamination at home. Backflow from a garden hose submerged in a chlorinated swimming pool or attached to a chemical sprayer poses a risk of contaminating your home's drinking water. Residents can use simple hose-bib vacuum breakers on hose spigots to prevent contamination. These devices are available at hardware and home-improvement stores. Residents should also ensure the correct backflow preventer is installed on their irrigation systems.

For more information and tips on preventing contamination, feel free to contact a Public Works Water Division member at (781) 246-6301 ext. 3.

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the School Committee, Finance Committee, and Town Council met, these qualities of prudence and sustainability were loudly espoused. Even louder, your local elected and appointed officials will demand our fair share of state aid, which is just now a small amount above where it was 20 years ago with no adjustment for inflation. I feel that the State is obligated to better support those communities in the School Building Authority's building pipeline, and better assist with the skyrocketing costs of energy, maintenance, supplies, and education.

We look forward to a more sustainable future as we identify ways Wakefield can reduce carbon emissions and reach the State's net zero goal by 2050. Both the proposed new Wakefield Memorial High School and the new Northeast Metropolitan Vocational School are expected to be heated and cooled electrically. During the State budget process in 2021, and again in 2022, the Town successfully obtained two separate \$50,000 state earmarks for the installation of solar panels on the rooftops of the Public Works water treatment plant and garage. The system on the garage went live in June 2020, and the treatment plant system became operational in August 2022. Together, these two systems have generated a total of 66.65 Mega Watt Hours of power, the equivalent of planting 946 trees and saving 125,257 pounds of CO2 emissions from the

atmosphere. These systems offset costs by using the generated electricity to power the buildings. The Wakefield Municipal Gas and Light Department buys surplus energy back via solar rebate. These systems have been a great way to decrease the Water Division's carbon footprint and pass savings on to the ratepayers.

To bring this writing full circle, I hope all of you found time this season to join with family and friends. If you entered goblin mode, hopefully it wasn't for long. On behalf of the Town Council and all municipal and school department employees, I wish to thank the townspeople for their overwhelming support during the past year and with you, I look forward to a brighter tomorrow.

Steve Maio,
Town Administrator

NEED TECH HELP? HEAD TO THE LIBRARY!

Have a question about a device, app, or software program? Having trouble with your laptop? Drop by the Beebe Library's weekly Open Labs session from 2 to 4 p.m. on Wednesdays in the Lecture Hall and get help from a librarian. Bring your device or use one of ours.

For more in-depth learning, the Library also offers monthly tech classes on a variety of topics, including computer basics, email use, internet security, and word processing tips and tricks. Classes are on the first Wednesday of the month at 1 p.m. Feel free to come for class and stay for additional help at Open Labs.

Novices and the more tech-savvy alike can take advantage of the new Digital Media Lab (DML). With your Beebe Library card, you can reserve time in the DML, a free community resource for digital preservation and creativity. The DML offers various tools for photo and document digitization; audio/visual digitization; and a creativity and editing station with the entire Adobe Suite of software programs.



The Digital Media Lab is available for up to three hours at a time. Learn more about the services at www.wakefieldlibrary.org/dml.



Do you have a neighbor who needs help accessing fuel assistance programs? Is your loved one struggling with food or housing insecurity? Jason Stone, Wakefield's Social Services Coordinator, is an excellent new resource for residents in these and other areas!

As a member of Wakefield's Health and Human Services Department, Jason works closely with Jennifer Waczkowski, our Mental Health Clinician; Tracy Ascolillo Rizzo, Wakefield's Recovery Coach; Mollie Bracken, our Domestic Violence Advocate; MassHousing; and other local service providers to provide compassionate assistance to those who need it.

To get in touch for assistance or to refer a friend or neighbor, reach out at 781-670-4935 or jstone@wakefield.ma.us.

ASSESSING NEWS AND NOTES

Wakefield's annual classification hearing with the Town Council was held on November 14, 2022. This public hearing is a requirement of Massachusetts General Law and necessary in order to establish tax rates. Our fiscal year (FY) 2023 tax rates are \$11.73 per thousand for residential properties and \$22.46 for commercial, industrial, and personal (CIP) properties.



The Assessing Office engaged in a state-mandated interim revaluation of the town for FY 2023 using the calendar year 2021 sales as a basis for most residential sales and 2020-21 for other classes where there were too few sales to analyze. The average sale price for a single-family home in Wakefield increased from \$643,717 to \$738,731 (+14.76%) from 2020 to 2021. The average single-family home valuation increased from \$633,300 to \$701,100. Commercial and industrial properties rose 2.2 percent for the same period.

Property owners must be mindful that the assessments they see on their tax bills due February 2023 are reflective of real estate market activity during 2021. Assessments are one year behind today's market, and sales activity from 2022 will be used for assessments next year.

OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PLAN

Wakefield's Conservation Commission has begun the process of updating the Town's Open Space and Recreation Plan. This update will address the continued need to preserve and protect natural resources as well as enhance and expand recreational opportunities for all. The plan aims to highlight the unique natural amenities and recreational opportunities found in every section of Town.

The community will be able to participate in public workshops and surveys as the project progresses. Questions about the project can be directed to the Conservation Department at (781) 224-5015 or ConservationDepartment@wakefield.ma.us.



NEWS AND EVENTS

Web

Visit anytime for news and information at www.wakefield.ma.us.

Email

Never miss a message! News posted to our website can be sent right to your inbox. Visit www.wakefield.ma.us/subscribe. You can also opt to receive agendas for upcoming meetings of interest.

Community Events

View community events and submit your own on the community calendar managed by the Beebe Library. Access it, and the public meeting calendar, on our homepage.