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Turley Publications Photo By Mary Mayko

Reader Mary Mayko snapped this snowy view of the mountain from Ashley Reservoir. Turn to page 10 for more winter photos of Holyoke shot by residents.

Residents asked to weigh in on police chief criterion



Turley Publications File Photo

Police Chief Anthony R. Scott.

Survey sent with utility bills

By Dennis P. Hohenberger
Turley Publications Correspondent

HOLYOKE – In the coming days, residents will receive a survey related to hiring a new police chief. Current Police Chief Anthony R. Scott will retire in April when he reaches the state's mandatory retirement age for law enforcement.

The survey will ask residents what qualifications, standards and temperament a new chief should possess.

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April 1 deadline for outstanding tax liens no joke

City attempts to collect \$96,000

By Dennis P. Hohenberger
Turley Publications Correspondent

HOLYOKE – The Holyoke City Council wants Tax Collector Robert Kane to collect more than \$96,000 in outstanding tax liens. The tax liens, which date back to 2008, must be collected before April 1, when the statute of limitations runs out.

City Treasurer Jon Lumbra said the liens are mostly commercial, business and residential property taxes. There are also liens for water and other utility bills. He said once a 14-day notice is given, the city has 60 days to collect the tax liens.

Last fall, Lumbra sent notices to property owners who owed around \$11.4 million in outstanding property taxes. Some of the bills went as far back as 1965.

Mayor Elaine A. Pluta, in a recent letter to the City Council, wants the \$96,000 collected before the April 1 deadline. The mayor requested that an outside firm provide collection services.

Councilor Kevin Jourdain said the mayor painted a "dire situation." He asked Lumbra if he would cooperate with Kane in collecting the money. Lumbra agreed that he would.

Councilor Linda Vacon asked Lumbra if the tax collector attended a recent department head meeting where the mayor discussed the outstanding tax liens. Lumbra said he hadn't. Vacon said he should "do his job."

Councilor Patti Devine said the task of

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City's students receive first-ever 'H' Awards



Turley Publications photo by Dennis P. Hohenberger

Sullivan School students show off their "H" Awards for being "Hardworking Holyoke Heroes."

Heralded as 'Hardworking Holyoke Heroes'

By Dennis P. Hohenberger
Turley Publications Correspondent

HOLYOKE – Students in schools across the City received the first-ever "H" Awards, founded by Community Activist Andrew Melendez. The award honors "Hardworking Holyoke Heroes," or students who put in that extra effort to succeed.

Last Friday, Melendez visited schools throughout Holyoke and presented the

awards to students in classes from kindergarten to grade eight. Each child also received an age-appropriate book. On top of all that, every month a student and their family will have lunch with Mayor Elaine A. Pluta at city hall.

Melendez created the award to honor students who are often overlooked. The recipient does not have to be an "A" student, but an individual who strives to do better. Teachers will nominate students who they feel are deserving of the award.

By the time Melendez arrived at Sullivan School, he had already visited the Kelly, Morgan and Peck schools. He would later make stops at McMahon and E.N. White schools. He said the

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students were excited to receive the awards, which were signed by the mayor, School Superintendent David Dupont and Melendez.

"They worked hard for this whole month. Maybe it was in math or being a good citizen," he said. A number of students at Morgan were recognized as "Honored Citizens."

Melendez said around 60 students a month will receive the award. "This is a way to really impact them directly," he said. Links to Libraries donated the books that were given to the students. J&I Signs created and donated bumper stickers that promote each child's achievements.

Melendez plans to expand the award to include community members and public service employees.

Sullivan School Principal John Breish said Melendez was a student of his at Peck Middle School. Though he believes "great things" are happening in the schools, time also must be taken to

honor students. "Times like this are really important for kids, and to see how their eyes light up and how proud they are to receive recognition for hard work that they do. It's super important to

"Times like this are really important for kids."

John Breish

their self esteem and propels them forward," said Breish.

Krystian Delgado, 10, who is in the fourth grade at Sullivan School, said the award meant a lot to him. "I think my mom will be proud of me and for working so hard," he said. Delgado said he not only makes a strong effort in the classroom, but with his homework, too.

He said reading is his favorite subject and that he becomes engrossed in whatever book he reads. "It feels like I'm in the book," said Delgado. He was excited to spread the good news with his mother, Kathy Vasquez.

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City Council President Joseph M. McGiverin, a member of the search committee created by Mayor Elaine A. Pluta, said advertisements will be placed in police periodicals, industry bulletins and local newspapers for the position. In the beginning, the advertisements will concentrate on candidates from the New England and New York regions.

Eventually, advertisements will be placed in national police magazines and journals, said McGiverin. Recently, the search committee, with approval by the City Council, hired Badge Quest, an outside firm that will aid in the recruitment of Holyoke's next police chief.

In addition to the surveys, which residents will receive with their next utility bills, a series of public forums will be held where residents can provide input. A public comment questionnaire, said McGiverin, is being sent to local news outlets and will be available

on the City's website.

He said rank and file members of the Holyoke Police Department are being polled separately.

McGiverin said 10 years ago, when Scott was hired, the recruitment process was similar, when residents met with and questioned finalist for the job. Then, a series of public forums were held where residents quizzed the candidates.

"We feel we're certainly aren't excluding candidates from within, but we feel that to get a field of good candidates, it's necessary to be all-inclusive and to include the public at-large, to include the department itself, the government and community organizations to make sure that all voices are heard and that we look for the best qualified candidate to replace Chief Scott," he said.

Before coming to Holyoke, Scott worked for the New Orleans Police Department and was police chief in Rock Island, Ill.

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collecting falls on Kane and not an outside firm. Councilor Todd McGee said he would request that the tax collector appear before the Finance Committee and answer questions related to the \$96,000 in outstanding money.

Near the end of the meeting, Vacon introduced a motion to remove Kane from

office. She said the latest revelation was more than sufficient cause to remove him from office. Councilor Anthony Keane asked if sufficient cause to remove Kane had been met.

While Assistant City Solicitor Kara Cunha would not render a legal opinion at Tuesday's meeting, she said the recent Massachusetts Inspector General's report, which was highly critical of Kane's man-

agement style, and the outstanding tax liens, provided some traction for Kane's removal.

Vacon said the report was the "most compelling" evidence of Kane's mismanagement of the office.

Councilor Todd McGee opposed Vacon's motion and said that an application process is in place to hire a new tax collector. He said the city has already

received 16 applications for the position.

Additionally at the meeting, councilors approved a motion that will allow residents to speak 15 minutes before the start of a regular Holyoke City Council session. The topics must be related to city council business. A sign-up sheet will be available before the start of the meeting. The open microphone will be limited to seven speakers.

American Cancer Society kicks off Daffodil Days

REGION – For more than 35 years, the American Cancer Society Daffodil Days program has been making a difference in the fight against cancer and providing hope for those facing the disease.

Although Daffodil Days involves offering daffodils to donors every spring in appreciation for their contributions, it is about more than just giving beautiful flowers - it is an opportunity to share hope for a world with less cancer and more birthdays, where cancer never steals another year from anyone's life.

Flower and product orders can be placed now through March 1 by calling the American Cancer Society at 1.800.227.2345 or making an online donation at www.cancer.org/daffodils. Delivery occurs the week before spring, beginning March 14.

According to the Society, this longstanding program, which historically coincides with the coming of spring, is expected to raise \$1.2 million in Massachusetts to support the fight against cancer.

Daffodil Days offers a bouquet of products:

- o For a \$10 gift, donors receive a bouquet of ten fresh daffodil blossoms.
- o Three mini-daffodil bulbs in a soil filled pot are available for a \$15 donation.
- o A bouquet of ten daffodils and a Boyd's collectable stuffed bear for a \$25 donation.
- o Gift of Hope: daffodils are delivered to a cancer patient undergoing treatment. \$25 and up.
- o Bear Hugs for Hope: special edition, collectable bear is delivered to a child impacted by cancer. \$25

Volunteer opportunities abound – from school children to corporate CEOs – to assist in taking requests for, packing and delivering daffodils during February and March at work, in neighborhoods, in schools, and around town. To help make a difference in the fight against cancer through Daffodil Days, contact your

American Cancer Society by calling 1-800-227-2345 or by visiting www.cancer/daffodils.

Dollars raised through Daffodil Days enable the Society to offer free programs and services that help people fight cancer with courage and optimism, while it provides day-to-day help, emotional support, and 24-hour information to help ease the cancer experience. Additionally, daffodil contributions provide the Society with much-needed dollars to fund groundbreaking cancer research, educate people about the importance of cancer prevention and early detection and advocate for meaningful public health policies that benefit the community.

For more information about Daffodil Days, to request flowers, or to get involved with the program, contact the American Cancer Society at 1.800.ACS.2345 or www.cancer.org/daffodils

The American Cancer Society combines an unyielding passion with nearly a

century of experience to save lives and end suffering from cancer. As a global grassroots force of more than three million volunteers, we fight for every birthday threatened by every cancer in every community. We save lives by helping people stay well by preventing cancer or detecting it early; helping people get well by being there for them during and after a cancer diagnosis; by finding cures through investment in groundbreaking discovery; and by fighting back by rallying lawmakers to pass laws to defeat cancer and by rallying communities worldwide to join the fight. As the nation's largest non-governmental investor in cancer research, contributing more than \$3.4 billion, we turn what we know about cancer into what we do. As a result, more than 11 million people in America who have had cancer and countless more who have avoided it will be celebrating birthdays this year. To learn more about us or to get help, call us any time, day or night, at 1-800-227-2345 or visit cancer.org.

'Change Heroes' needed For 94.7 WMAS Radiothon

Baystate Children's Hospital to benefit

SPRINGFIELD – The Children's Miracle Network Hospitals and 94.7 WMAS are looking for "Change Heroes" to sign up now in advance of this year's annual 94.7 WMAS Radiothon to be broadcast for three days beginning Thursday, March 3 and ending Saturday, March 5.

Change Heroes are volunteers who collect loose change, or even dollar bills, from their family, friends, co-workers and classmates to kick off the 94.7 WMAS Radiothon benefiting Baystate Children's Hospital.

Change Heroes who turn in their collections by March 11, or who have collected donations online through their web

page, will have their name placed into a drawing to win an Xbox 360 and Kinect.

Anyone can become a Change Hero, whether on their own or representing their company, school or organization. Change Heroes collect donations prior to the beginning of the Radiothon. Once signed up as an official "Change Hero," they will receive their Change Hero gear, including a change bag, badge, stickers and more, along with a letter detailing their responsibilities.

Change Heroes can also use the online giving program to easily create their own web page to assist with their fundraising efforts. After creating their own webpage, Change Heroes send emails to friends, family members, and co-workers asking them to support their fundraising effort and to visit their webpage to make a donation.

And, Change Heroes can even create

team web pages, including teams of family members, friends, school groups, businesses or various departments within a company.

To create a webpage or join a team, go to www.baystatehealth.org/radiothon.

Change Heroes who collect their donations early can help to "kick start" the Radiothon beforehand by bringing the money they have collected to the Radiothon Kick-Off Party on Tuesday, March 1 at the Hu Ke Lau restaurant in Chicopee from 5:30 to

8 p.m. The restaurant will be selling their famous buffet for \$9.47 per person, not including tax and tip, and there will be an opportunity to win prizes.

Change Heroes who turn in their money early at the March 1 kick-off party will have their name placed twice in the drawing to win the Xbox 360 and Kinect, or three times if they raise \$100 or more.

Those who raise \$100 or more by March 11 will have their name placed twice in the drawing.

During the emotional Radiothon last March, listeners pledged \$188,968 in support of local health care programs for children and their families at Baystate Children's Hospital.

"The community is fortunate to have a one-of-a-kind resource such as Baystate Children's Hospital close to home when a child needs medical care," said Craig Swimm, general manager, WMAS Radio.

Presenting sponsor for this year's Radiothon is Health New England and Hasbro is the Miracle Maker Incentive sponsor. Change Hero program sponsor is Pioneer Valley Federal Credit Union.

For more information on the Radiothon, visit www.baystatehealth.org/radiothon call 413-794-1486.