



THE **South Street Sentinel**



WESTMINSTER-MA.GOV

Welcome to 2026: A Fresh Start Filled with Community, Connection, and Possibility!

As we turn the page on another year and step boldly into 2026, we're excited for all the moments, milestones, and memories waiting to unfold in our community. A new year brings new energy—and plenty of opportunities to come together, grow, and celebrate what makes Westminster such a special place to call home. In 2026, we'll continue building on our successes, embracing new ideas, and moving forward with optimism and pride. Whether it's longtime traditions or brand-new initiatives, there's so much to look forward to in the months ahead. Be sure to keep an eye on this monthly newsletter for updates, reminders, and a few fun surprises along the way. And mark your calendars—next month's issue will be extra special as we celebrate the 25th Edition of the Sentinel! Thank you for being the heart of our town. Here's to a bright, exciting year ahead—Happy New Year, Westminster!

CONNECTING AND BUILDING COMMUNITY
WESTMINSTER TOWN HALL

11 SOUTH STREET, WESTMINSTER, MA 01473 | COMMUNITY SERVICES: (978) 874-7461 | [EMAIL US](#)



Quarter 3 and 4 Real Estate Taxes will be sent out in January!

The updated tax rate is \$TBD

<https://www.westminster-ma.gov/treasurer-collector/pages/real-estate-personal-property-taxes>

Quarterly Tax Due Dates

First Quarter	July 1 - September 30	August 1st or 30 days after the bill is mailed.
Second Quarter	October 1 - December 31	November 1st or 30 days after the bill is mailed.
Third Quarter	January 1 - March 31	February 1st or 30 days after the bill is mailed.
Fourth Quarter	April 1st - June 30	May 1st or 30 days after the bill is mailed.

DOG LICENSES ARE AVAILABLE FOR RENEWAL!

All 2025 dog licenses will expire on March 31, 2026 and need to be renewed with an up to date rabies certificate. Renewals are now available at the Town Clerk's office at the Town Hall.



BOARD OF HEALTH UPDATE

2026 Yearly Permits – Due January 1, 2026

Letters have been sent out for yearly renewals for Food Establishments, Tobacco Retailers, Septage Haulers, Septic Installers, Title 5 Inspectors, and Trash Haulers. Please contact the office if you have not received this or need an application!

WATER BILLS - ON THE WAY SOON!

Water Bills will be sent out in January and are due back in February! Keep an eye out for more information.

ANNUAL TOWN CENSUS

Our Annual Census will be mailed out after the new year. Please return your forms to the Town Hall through the mail or drop them at the Town Clerk's office in the drop box. Thank you for taking the time to help us keep our information up to date!

Ahead of our 25th issue of the Sentinel, we are calling on YOU to please share your news by reaching out to our Community Service Director, Audra Kirtland: akirtland@westminster-ma.gov.



December's cold temperatures have caused many local ponds and waterways to freeze over, but appearances can be deceiving. Even during sustained cold weather, under-ice water flow and other factors can greatly affect how strong the ice truly is. The guide to the left offers helpful insight into ice safety and outlines when certain activities may be considered safer.



The most important rule to remember: if you have any doubt about ice thickness, play it safe and stay off the ice. Cracks, open water, or visible movement underneath are clear warning signs—steer clear. Our safety departments are always ready to respond in an emergency, but the best protection is avoiding a dangerous situation altogether. Stay safe and use caution this winter.



At a recent meeting of the **Westminister Emergency Management Agency**, we reviewed emergency sheltering. The team inspected cots and blankets, pet crates, medical supplies along with personal hygiene supplies. If the need arises, your emergency management is ready to respond.



You've heard of

FREE LIBRARIES!

***NOW FREE
BLOCKBUSTER!?***

Our Town is full of small, unique treasures tucked into every corner of the community. Many of you may already be familiar with "Free Libraries," built on the simple idea of take a book, leave a book. Now, there's a new twist on that concept—and you can find it right on Knower Road! Introducing Blockbuster Boxes.

Once upon a time, a trip to Blockbuster meant wandering the aisles, hoping the movie you wanted hadn't already been rented. Fast forward to today, and we're just a click away from endless streaming options, available anytime, anywhere. Convenient? Absolutely. Nostalgic? Not so much.

That's where Blockbuster Boxes come in. These little community gems let you borrow a DVD, take it home, and enjoy a movie night—for free (DVD player required!). No subscriptions, no rental fees, just good old-fashioned movie borrowing.

There are currently 5 FREE LIBRARIES in town. In addition to Knower, there are Lighthouse Lane, Bacon Street Farmstand, Davis Road and Fenno Drive! Anyone looking for additional locations, can use the Little Free Library App (details: <https://littlefreelibrary.org/app/>). Or for Blockbuster box locations, go to freeblockbuster.org. Knower Road is currently the only location in Westminster.

Owner of the Knower Road location, Chris Hoey says, "Mine started out of my wife's love of reading and the Free Blockbuster started out of my affinity for Movies. It is a fun kind of passive hobby for us where I will keep an eye out for books and media to add and it's fun to see what gets taken and what gets donated! Each library is unique in design and what is stocked. We usually try to keep a steady flow of crime novels in ours. While others have added great kids specific Library's like Lighthouse Lane recently did." His advice, "If people have newer popular books they are done with, please donate them to the free library's around town!"

It may not be everyone's cup of popcorn, but with Blockbuster Boxes popping up in towns across the region—and across the country—it's clear this throwback trend is winning over both longtime movie lovers and a whole new generation. Technology has its place, but sometimes... old school just hits differently.

Curious to learn more or take a peek at what's available? Check out the [Knower Road Free Library and Blockbuster – Westminster MA](#) on Facebook and see this fun community feature for yourself.

Medicinal Compost Spreading at Academy Hill

Recently, a dedicated group of patrons—supported by compost generously provided by The Good Earth Farm & Garden Center—spread more than 15 yards of compost around several trees to promote their health, maintenance, and growth. This treatment follows the same proven process used six years ago that helped save many of the Academy Hill trees. Consecutive years of drought had weakened the trees, making re-treatment the best option to ensure their continued vitality and resilience.

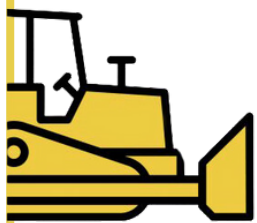
The special compost “recipe” included more than 15 yards of aged wood chips, ground tree roots, and shredded leaves, enhanced with the following additions:

- Azomite: 220 lbs
- Alfalfa meal: 350 lbs
- Chick Grower: 100 lbs
- Gypsum: 280 lbs
- Solucal (calcium and carbon): 200 lbs
- NCO Pro Grow: 200 lbs

Many thanks to Peter, Tom, John, JoAnn, Karen, Margherita, Mary, Carol, Kevin, Jordyn, and the Town of Westminster DPW crew for their hard work and support. Special thanks to Jasmine Nelson for the wonderful photography.

We look forward to watching these trees flourish!





DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS



SAND AVAILABLE FOR RESIDENTS

There is a pile of sand/salt (3:1 sand to salt ratio) available across from the Wellington on Meetinghouse Rd for Town residents to pick up to use on their driveways, walkways, etc. This is just a pile and residents will need to bring buckets or bags and a shovel to load the mixture. This is a great service for our community provided by the DPW! Please respect the Wellington community when accessing the area. Thank you!



Please note that the sand has been replenished since these photos were taken and there is plenty more available!

SOLID WASTE DROP-OFF CENTER

165 Fitchburg Road - Route 31 Westminister

HOURS:

Monday: 7:30am-3pm
Tuesday-Thursday: Closed
Friday: 7:30am-3pm
Saturday: 7:30am-1pm
Sunday: 9:00am-1pm



*Please check the town website or sign up for town alerts in the case of closures due to weather, etc.

FUEL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Town Fuel Assistance Apps will be available at the Senior Center and Town website as of December 1st!

The Westminster Select Board has instituted an Emergency Home Heating Assistance Program (EHHAP) for eligible Westminster residents. Funding for the program is provided from monies available in the Fred Smith Poor Fund as well as the Giles Fund. To be eligible, residents must have lived in Town for the past six months or longer and must meet income eligibility guidelines established by the most recent HUD low-income limits for the Westminster area. Applicants are able to receive a benefit once during the season.

The EHHAP will be administered through the Emergency Home Heating Assistance Committee, appointed by the Select Board. Information provided will be kept confidential.

ADDITIONAL HOME HEATING ASSISTANCE OPTIONS:

New England Farm Workers Council
(NEFWC): 978-342-4520

Salvation Army: 978-342-9407

Joe for Oil: 877-563-4645

MOC LIHEAP: 978-342-4520
fuelassistance@wocinc.org

Please don't hesitate to reach out if you need assistance! We are here to help!



Updates!



ELSIE'S ELVES Toy Drive

Collecting New Unwrapped Toys And
Clothing For Families In The Community



WOW—what an amazing first year partnering with **Elsie's Elves**! This is officially the largest number of gifts we've ever collected. The biggest **THANK YOU** to our incredible surrounding communities for your overwhelming generosity and selflessness. From all of the SROs and the Westminster and Ashburnham Police Departments, we wish you a Merry Christmas and a joyful holiday season. Stay safe and enjoy! ~**Ashburnham/Westminster School Resource Officers**



Thank You!



Join the Lion's Club and Parks & Recreation Department for

BREAKFAST

With Santa

Sunday, December 21st
8AM - 11AM



- ❄ PHOTOS WITH SANTA ❄
- ❄ HOLIDAY MUSIC
- ❄ LION'S CLUB HOLIDAY LOTTERY TREE RAFFLE
- ❄ PANCAKES & SYRUP, HAM, COFFEE & JUICE [\$6 PER PERSON]



Proceeds to benefit the Westminster Food Pantry



Town of Westminster

CHRISTMAS TREE BONEFIRE PARTY

Presented by Westminster
Parks & Rec / VFW / Fire Dept

Saturday, January 10th
Event starts at 5:00PM

@ THE VFW

FOOD & DRINKS
LIVE MUSIC

FIREPITS & S'MORES SPONSORED BY
NEIGHBORS HELPING NEIGHBORS

TREE FIRE STARTS @ 5:30PM

Drop your Christmas Tree in the field behind the VFW!



Forbush
Memorial Library



TUE-THU: 10AM-8PM
FRI: 10AM-5PM
SAT: 9AM-2PM
SUN & MON: CLOSED

SIGN-UP FOR OUR WEEKLY NEWSLETTER ON OUR WEBSITE: FORBUSHLIBRARY.ORG!

HOLIDAY SCHEDULE:

Closing at 1:00PM on Dec. 24th for Christmas Eve & CLOSED Dec. 25th for Christmas Day

Closing at 1:00pm on January 31st for New Year's Eve & CLOSED January 1st for New Year's Day

Mount Wachusett Hiking Guide and History

Tue. Jan. 20th @ 6:00 PM | Eloranta Room
with author **Matt Landry**



Registration is appreciated,
but not required.

Join us for a family
movie matinee!

Tue. January 20
2:00 PM

Bring a friend, pillows,
and snacks.

**FAMILY
MOVIE
MATINEE**



STORYTIME
TUESDAYS

10:30



babytime!

FRIDAYS
@
10:30AM



BOOK CLUB

2
sessions!!



January 7
Wed. 6:00 PM



January 8
Thu. 2:00 PM



Registration is appreciated, but not required.

FISTS & FIENDS

A Martial Arts
Survival Horror
Roleplaying
Game

Tue. January 13 | 5:15 - 6:45 PM | Multipurpose Room

Register to guarantee your spot

GRAPHIC NOVEL BOOK CLUBS

3rd Tuesday
grades 6-8

3rd Thursday
grades 3-5

BOOK BEDAZZLING



Fri. Jan. 2
12:30 PM

grades 9+

Bring your own book, or pick one here.
[Please register](#) to help us plan!



**A FEW OF
OUR
FAVORITES
FROM OUR**

**TREE
LIGHTING**

**December 6th,
2025 @
Academy Hill**



**Thank you
Neighbors Helping
Neighbors, our Fire
Department, Parks
& Recreation
Team, Santa and
Mrs. Claus, and
members of the St.
Edward's Church
Choir for leading
us with songs and
holiday spirit!**



THANK YOU TO EVERYONE WHO JOINED US!

FIRE DEPT NEWS!



Virus Season – Just a friendly reminder that there is a lot of different viruses going around right now. Medford made the news due to a norovirus outbreak this week that closed one of their schools. Just a few tips to mitigate your risks this season:

- Wash your hands for 15 to 30 seconds frequently with soap and warm water.
- If you choose to use hand sanitizer, make sure it has at least 60% alcohol.
- Avoid touching your face (eyes, nose and mouth).

Remember, if you are sick with a fever or stomach issues, please stay home to prevent the spread of illness to friends or co-workers!

Hand washing steps



Wet your hands with clean, running water.



Apply soap and rub your hands together for at least 20 seconds.



Rinse your hands until all the soap is gone.



Turn off the faucet with a paper towel or your elbow.



Dry your hands with a clean paper towel or hand towel.



Christmas Lights – Over the weekend Lt. Lemoine and the shift firefighters put up the lights on the station. Later in the week they were able to assist the DPW putting their Christmas lights up and repairing a few holding clips that had broken over the year.



IMPORTANT SCHOOL ANNOUNCEMENTS

PLEASE READ.



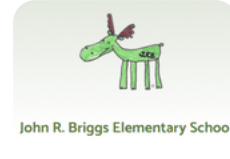
Oakmont Regional High School



Overlook Middle School



Westminster Elementary/Meetinghouse School



John R. Briggs Elementary School

Early Release!

WEDNESDAY, DEC. 24
CHRISTMAS EVE
ALL GRADES!



Support your
Oakmont Spartans
and Overlook Eagles!
View all of the
athletic team
schedules [HERE!](#)

No School

**THURSDAY, DEC. 25 THRU
FRIDAY, JANUARY 2**
WINTER BREAK
ALL GRADES!

REMINDER
NO SCHOOL

MONDAY, JANUARY 19TH
MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. DAY
AND
TUESDAY, JANUARY 20TH
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

A reminder to
MHS and WES
kids, that if your
children would like
to play in the snow
at recess, please
send them to
school with snow
gear (jackets,
pants, boots, hats,
gloves). They'll
still go outside
without, but will
be limited to the
cleared paths and
play areas.



Have an amazing **WINTER BREAK!**



The Oakmonitor is a paper written for students by students including news articles, sports updates, pop culture commentary, and more. Click the image above for a link to the publication. Stay up to date on things happening in our community, and around us!

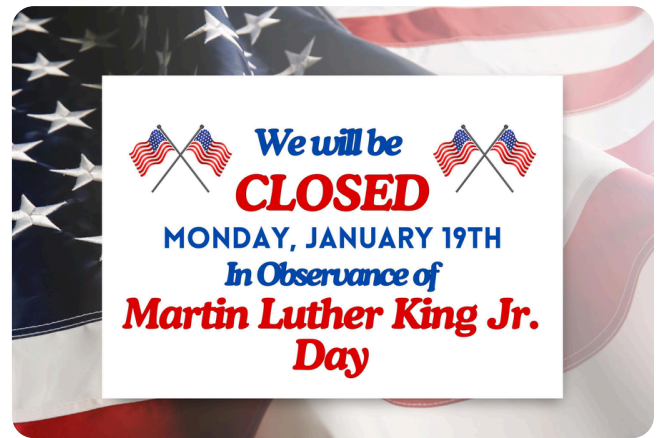


**SKI CLUB STARTS ON
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 7TH!**





All Town Offices will be closing at 12PM on Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve. We will be CLOSED on Christmas Day and New Year's Day! Enjoy the holidays!



In the event of inclement weather, please visit the Town Website for closings or opening delays!



Click below to bring you to our Town Calendar page or (<https://www.westminster-ma.gov/calendar/month>)

Town Calendar						
January						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31



Agendas, Meetings, and Minutes

Stay up to date on our recent meetings and upcoming agendas.

See our job **OPENINGS!**

www.westminster-ma.gov/human-resources/pages/current-positions

BOARD AND COMMITTEE VACANCIES: [CLICK HERE!](#)



TOWN HALL HOURS
Monday: 7:00am–7:00pm
Tue–Thur: 7:30am–4:30pm
Friday: CLOSED



TOWN HALL
11 SOUTH STREET
WESTMINSTER, MA 01473
[EMAIL US](#)

www.westminster-ma.gov

