



Warriors stun Mounties

Wahconah girls' basketball team recovers from a sluggish start and comes back to defeat Mount Greylock, 44-38

Sports — C1

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The Berkshire Eagle

WEATHER WATCH

Today: Mostly cloudy, 26
Tonight: Mostly cloudy, 15
Thursday: Mostly sunny, 33
More weather, Page A6

BREAKING NEWS: www.berkshireeagle.com

Pittsfield, Massachusetts, Wednesday, January 13, 2010

24 pages — 60¢

NBH slashes 19 positions

By Jennifer Huberdeau
New England Newspapers

NORTH ADAMS — Just four months into fiscal 2010, Northern Berkshire Healthcare is trying to stave off another huge operating loss by reducing its current budget by \$1.6 million through a combination of staffing reductions, freezing vacant positions and trimming non-essential expenses from departmental budgets.

A total of 19.1 full-time-equivalent positions from throughout the health care organization, including executive, management, clinical and support staff have been eliminated through layoffs, reductions in hours and the reorganization of staffing

schedules. An additional 13 vacant positions will remain unfilled in the coming year.

"I'm grateful for the service of these individuals, and to all of the staff for their diligence and hard work," Richard Palmisano, NBH president and CEO said in a press release late Tuesday. "Any time hours are reduced or positions eliminated, it is not only a sacrifice for the individuals directly affected, but an additional burden on remaining staff, which must cover those responsibilities. I'm confident our staff can rise to the occasion, and in our collective commitment to

LAYOFFS, continued on A3

Ethics hearing set

■ The commission will hear the Ruberto-Duquette World Series ticket exchange case in early April.

By Dick Lindsay
Berkshire Eagle Staff

PITTSFIELD — The state Ethics Commission has scheduled a two-day hearing for its nearly 18-month-old case against Mayor James M. Ruberto and Dalton native Dan Duquette over the exchange of a pair of Boston Red Sox 2004 World Series tickets.

The "adjudicatory proceeding" scheduled for April 6 and 7 at 10 a.m. for both days in Boston will determine if the men violated the



Ruberto

Duquette

state's conflict of interest law. The 2004 ticket exchange occurred while Ruberto and Duquette were negotiating a lease for Duquette to move his amateur ballclub to Wahconah Park, which is operated by the City of Pittsfield.

The hearing process will be similar to a court trial, according to a description on the Ethics Commission's Web site. A presiding officer will act as the judge

and the ethics panel as the jury.

The commission's enforcement division is the prosecutor, while the respondents — Ruberto and Duquette — are the defendants.

Both sides will present opening and closing statements, evidence and witnesses. The five-member Ethics Commission must issue a majority decision within 30 days of the hearing's completion.

The state Ethics Commission last month voted down the pair's request for a summary decision, an appeal that contests the charges and seeks their dismissal. The mayor and Duquette, a former Red Sox general manager, filed their request on March 20.

The case dates back to June 26, 2008, when the commission issued its version of an indictment against Ruberto and Duquette. Both face

civil fines of up to \$2,000 if found guilty on the ethics law violation.

Ruberto is accused of violating state law when he bought two 2004 World Series tickets, at \$190 each, at face value from Duquette.

The Ethics Commission claims Ruberto and Duquette violated the law because the tickets were sold when Duquette was negotiating the move of his then-New England Collegiate Baseball League team — the Dukes — from Hinsdale to Pittsfield.

The Dukes eventually relocated from Duquette's sports academy in Hinsdale to Wahconah Park in 2005. In 2009, the team's name was changed to the Pittsfield American Defenders. Duquette and his partners last month sold the American Defenders to a group based in Bristol, Conn.

Downside of salt



Ian Grey / Special to The Eagle

David Cornell, of Peru, takes advantage of the milder weather to clean his automobile at the Tyler Street Car Wash in Pittsfield earlier this week.

Winter's wrath: Dirty cars

By Benning W. De La Mater
Berkshire Eagle Staff

PITTSFIELD — Mary Beth Porter thinks the roads look awfully white this winter season.

All that white stuff, she believes, is salt — and salt is the enemy of Mercedes-Benz.

That's why Porter pulled her silver 2009 SL550 into the Golden Nozzle Car Wash on South Street Tuesday afternoon.

"Salt is terrible for the paint and the undercarriage," she said. "And it's everywhere. You gotta get it off right away."

This is the season for snow, and that means road crews are spreading rock salt and sand with every passing storm. Owners of car washes say it all adds up to the busiest time of year for their businesses.

An employee at the Golden Nozzle said the establishment has been averaging 300 to 400 car washes per day. The best day was Monday, when 415 vehicles passed through the tunnel. A typi-

cal August day sees about 65.

Things were especially sudsy at the Elm Street Car Wash and the Tyler Street Car Wash, two businesses owned by Ermino "King" Barbalunga Jr.

"We've been extremely busy," Barbalunga said. "People get concerned about the sand and the salt. There's more of a sense of urgency, and that's why we are busier in the winter. The bottom line is that salt is corrosive."

It can also be expensive.

Cities and states across the Northeast are feeling the pinch of expensive storm cleanups that drain salt and sand reserves.

The cost for road salt has jumped during the last few years, especially since the nation used a near-record 20.3 million tons last year. Salt prices average between \$60 and \$70 per ton, which has doubled since 2005.

While we haven't had a blockbuster snowstorm yet, we have experienced a number of storms that

have dropped a few inches, which can actually drain salt reserves quicker.

Peter Niles, District 1 manager for the Highway Division of the Massachusetts Department of Transportation, said the smaller storms require a treatment on both the front and back ends of the storm.

Adam Hurtubise, a spokesman for the state's DOT, said the state has budgeted \$67 million for snow removal this year. Roughly half goes to salt, sand, and liquid calcium chloride, which is used to pre-treat the roadways and which helps prevent the snow and ice from bonding to the surface. DOT typically uses 220,000 tons of salt on state roads each year.

But while Porter was complaining about what it does to her car, she knows it's a tonic we just have to swallow.

"I guess they have to do something to keep our roads clean," she said. "It's better than paying for a body shop."

Berkshire County

Shoppers will feel effects of Fla. chill

By David Pepose
Berkshire Eagle Staff

The deep freeze in Florida will affect the availability and the cost of some produce in Berkshire County, according to area grocers. A number of key fruits and vegetables — including strawberries and tomatoes — will see a steep price increase.

"There is a shortage of a lot of items. And at least in the short-term, you're going to see a spike in the retail," said Kevin Barry, a senior produce buyer for Springfield-based Big Y supermarkets, which operates four stores in the Berkshires.

Freezing temperatures that swept in on an Arctic front from Canada have been plaguing Florida for a week, with several areas approaching or breaking record low temperatures on Monday.

The cold is extremely tough on the fruit and vegetable growers, with crops such as citrus trees and sugar cane suffering damage when exposed to temperatures below 28 degrees for more than four hours. It was below 28 degrees more than eight hours overnight in the agriculture-dominated area around Lake Okeechobee, Fla.

According to officials from Big Y and Stop & Shop, produce that will be affected include tangerines, grapefruits, green and yellow squash,

CHILL, continued on A3



Caroline Bonniwell Snyder / Berkshire Eagle Staff

Navel oranges are displayed for sale at Harry's Supermarket on Elm Street.

Mayor eases into new job

By Jennifer Huberdeau
New England Newspapers

NORTH ADAMS — At least one Sullivan Elementary School student was initially disappointed with her trip to the mayor's office earlier this week. She had been anticipating a visit with President Barack Obama.

"When do we get to see Barack Obama's office?" asked Paige, a kindergartner in Betsy Elder's after-school program "Our Hometown."

A few minutes later, she was happy to see Mayor Richard J. Alcombright and peppered him with other questions.

"Do you have any animals?" she asked. "I do. I have a cat, a dog and a bunny."

A first-grader piped in that she had voted for

MAYOR, continued on A3



Gillian Jones / New England Newspapers
Mayor Richard Alcombright gives a tour of his office to Sullivan Elementary School students.

Williams is sixth best in value

By Scott Stafford
Berkshire Eagle Staff

WILLIAMSTOWN — Williams College has been named the sixth-best value in private colleges in the U.S. by Princeton Review magazine.

Princeton Review used 30 factors in academics, cost and financial aid in ranking colleges. Cost factors included tuition, room and board, and required fees. Financial aid factors looked at the average amount of aid students received.

Swarthmore College in Pennsylvania ranked first, and Williams' rival, Amherst College, placed ninth on the list.

Including the cost of books, travel to and from home, and personal expenses, the estimated face-value cost of a Williams College education is just under \$50,000 a year, or \$200,000 for four years.

However, about 50 percent of the Class of 2012 received more than \$9 million of

Williams' need-based aid in their first year, with financial aid packages averaging \$37,000, and families picking up an average of \$17,000 of the cost. And starting in 2008, the school no longer required students to take out loans; rather, it provided grants to them.

For the Class of 2013, those figures went up. About 53 percent receive Williams-based financial aid. The average aid package is \$38,400 with the average family contribution for those receiving financial aid at \$12,800.

"It's nice to be regarded as one of the best in the country, but no methodology can support such numerical ranking," said James Kolesar, a spokesman for Williams College. "It is nice though that it draws attention to financial aid at Williams and places like it."

Williams College has been ranked the top liberal arts college in the U.S., or tied for the top ranking, for the past seven years by U.S. News & World Report.



At a glance ...

- The Princeton Review's top 10 best-value private colleges:
1. Swarthmore College (Swarthmore, Pa.)
 2. Harvard College (Cambridge)
 3. Wesleyan College (Macon, Ga.)
 4. Princeton University (Princeton, N.J.)
 5. Yale University (New Haven, Conn.)
 6. Williams College (Williamstown)
 7. Rice University (Houston, Texas)
 8. Massachusetts Institute of Technology (Cambridge)
 9. Amherst College (Amherst)
 10. Wellesley College (Wellesley)

\$15K controversy

Pittsfield's hiring of ex-North Adams Mayor John Barrett III draws outrage. The Berkshires, B1



Quake devastates Haiti

Thousands are feared dead in the largest earthquake to hit Haiti in more than 200 years. World & Nation, A2

Business Classified
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B5 Editorials
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C5 Movies

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C4 Public Notices
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D3 TV

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C3
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For home delivery at less than 47¢ daily, phone Eagle Circulation at 496-6355.

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8 15312 00101 6