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EDITORIAL

Grave Perspective

Graveyards in our area of New England hold a special fascination for many, particularly during the changeable, tricky season of autumn. As we saw this past week, a day that's humid, near 80 degrees and feels like summer can quickly give way to a night sky of racing clouds, moonlight and a damp chill creeping across the yard, yielding perfect graveyard-at-Halloween vibes.

One season passes into the next and the plants and flowers so tenderly planted and cared for in the spring diminish and die back. Autumn colors seem to pay tribute to this loss - celebrating, rather than mourning - because after all, in six months, the cycle will begin again.

Graveyards in ANY season remind us of this same truth: life begins, ends, begins again, ends again. And with each new generation, problems arise, are struggled with, sometimes resolved, and replaced with new problems. As pessimistic as that may sound, it's also oddly comforting; there is indeed nothing new under the sun.

In our corner of the world, seasons and generations have passed into history for centuries. Those tranquil, ancient graveyards preserve the memories of residents who, like us, worried about weather and politics and the economy and their children and the future. Like us, they had great days when things just seemed to "work". They had other days when nothing went right. But life continued on...THEY continued on.

Perhaps one lesson learned from wandering among the graves is that what connects us as people - past and present - are the things we care about. In our towns and villages, we care about local schools, our community parks and rec centers, our businesses and organizations and our neighborhoods. We care about the price of fuel, getting our seasonal decorations up, finding deals at the grocery stores and the upkeep of our properties. We care about our neighbors and co-workers, our friends and family. We care about making an impact; we also care about preserving history. We hope for change and also embrace our traditions.

The same can likely be said for the names of those in those graveyards, the many who came and went before us. Life goes on.

LETTERS

Extra! Extra! Read All About It!
We think you're important enough to tell all our readers to turn to the Opinion pages and read your Letters to the Editor.

But first, you have to write us!
Mail your letters to the Charlton Villager, P.O. Box 90, Southbridge, MA 01550.

Or e-mail your letters to the editor at ruth@stonebridgepress.news

You'll need to provide your name and place of residence, along with a phone number, so we can verify the letter is yours.

We don't have a set limit, but if you keep it around 600 words or so, you're going to have a better chance at seeing all your words in print.

If you want to write a bit longer about a particular issue, maybe a guest Your Turn column is your cup of tea. If you do that, try to keep it between 700-800 words.

Remember, libelous remarks and/or personal attacks are a no-no and could lead to your letter not being published.

So, what are you waiting for? Start writing!



OPINION

VIEWS AND COMMENTARY FROM CHARLTON, CHARLTON CITY, CHARLTON DEPOT AND BEYOND

TO THE EDITOR

Soobitsky: there are positives

To the Editor:

I have been trying to find out more info on marijuana farms looking to open up in Charlton and see only all the negative news on them, could you please report on the positive points on these projects, we need to have more news on this important business project so our voters can be informed of positive and negative points before they vote. Charlton needs more industry to help our tax base. It's unfortunate we do not get enough people at town meetings to find out about the impact for the town. We rely on your paper for this important news. Thank you for keeping us informed.

After digging a little I found this info on the largest project, bringing 4 to 5 million dollars to Charlton, jobs, increased \$\$ to local business and service companies. We continue to scare business away from Charlton, they will just go to another town and we will miss out on a huge increase to our tax base. We need a new senior center, town buildings and additional school funding, this would happen if we all come to a compromise and allow big marijuana to come to Charlton. I'm sick of the tax increas-

es and not having enough money in our town budget. They proponents have said the smell and traffic is a big issue, truth is no smell and why can't the come up with a traffic solution. The facility will not be seen from the street as its way up on the hill and will be fenced in with hundreds of security cameras. The neighborhood kids will not allowed on the grounds, I know that's a fear of the parents. They should be more afraid of the illegal drugs that come into the schools every day. The current orchard uses plenty of pesticides on the fruit trees, that goes into the ground water that will not happen anymore. No one has had interest in the orchard, potentially risking a rezone to housing that ultimately cost the town more money in support services.

I think about all the positives in attracting marijuana business to town and hope it does not all go to the next town who will welcome them! It is legal now and I feel alcohol is more damaging to our society!

PATTY SOOBITSKY
CHARLTON

Camosse: Powell preserving democracy

To the Editor:

On Monday, October 8th, Joanne Powell, candidate for Worcester County Clerk of Courts signed a two-term pledge agreement stating she would not seek more than two-terms as the manager of the superior courts. By doing signing this term limit pledge, Joanne is preserving democracy within the Commonwealth and of our great county.

Joanne Powell's opponent has already served two-terms as Worcester County Clerk of Courts and is running for his third, which is another six-years. I strongly believe everyone who has been through the Courts system in our coun-

ty or has worked within the superior court system, realizes it can be better, their lives could have been made easier, and the technology is far outdated for a county so large as Worcester.

Joanne is a true fighter for the common good, bipartisan in her thinking and ability to work with others, seeking technological advances and an updated website. Without a doubt in my mind, we need Joanne Powell, who will be able to get the job done within her two terms, a total of twelve years!

HENRY J CAMOSSE JR.
CHARLTON

What the Brett Kavanaugh decision means to me

Men have gotten away with objectifying my body, violating my world, and contaminating my mind with feelings of anxiety and fear since I was a young teenager.



MIND OF A
CURIOUS
GIRL
ANNIE SANDOLI

The first time I was sexually harassed, I was 14 years old and taking classes at Quinsigamond Community College. I was the youngest student at the school, and the man who approached me was 24 years old with tattoos all over his arms and an intense personality. After my experience with dodging his stagnant eyes and trying to ignore his explicit comments, I spent my time between classes each day hiding in the bathroom, a far corner of the cafeteria, or between the rows of books in the library, hoping that no man would see me or try to speak to me.

The first time I was sexually assaulted, I was 17 years old and a student at UMass Amherst. I was studying in the library with a boy from my macroeconomics class who I thought was my friend, but he wanted me and wouldn't take no for an answer. He grabbed me and forced himself on me so quickly that I barely had time to process what had happened. I pushed his hands away and screamed, but all he did was laugh.

My reality as a 21-year-old woman living in the United States is that I am sexually harassed almost every day and have been sexually assaulted multiple times. It is a burden I had bestowed upon me when I was born a girl, because although some men have been in this position as well, it is a fact that women in this country are much more likely to experience sexual hostility than men.

On October 6, a notification from BBC News came up on my iPhone, letting me know that by confirming Brett Kavanaugh to the Supreme Court in a 50-48 vote, my own country made the decision to not take sexual harassment and assault seriously enough. I started crying, not just for Dr. Christine Blasey Ford, Deborah Ramirez, Julie Swetnick, and the anonymous fourth accuser who spoke out against our newest Supreme Court Justice, but for Anita Hill,

who accused Justice Clarence Thomas of sexual harassment in 1991, and every single person who has found the courage to tell their story only to be dismissed.

The Supreme Court is the highest court we have in the country, supposedly made up of justices who are capable of providing the most reasonable judgement and displaying the most honorable behavior. Kavanaugh was formally accused of inexcusable conduct by four women, yet today he is sitting on the bench with the responsibility of evaluating the most law-abiding outcome of some of this country's toughest and cloudiest cases. When we allow it to become acceptable for our country to trust someone who has been accused of multiple cases of sexual misconduct to make our most important legal decisions, we are making sexual harassment and assault an acceptable part of our society and a common happening in the daily lives of American women.

Kavanaugh's appointment to the Supreme Court means that my 14-year-old self was right to hide in the corners of the school instead of speak out, because there was no way for me to prove that a man who was a decade older than me was sexually harassing me and making me feel uncomfortable and disrespected at my own school.

It means that the boy who assaulted me at age 17 will never actually suffer consequences for his actions because too many people would say that he was just young and reckless, and even though his laugh still echoes in my mind, I can't prove that he groped me and put his hand between my legs without my consent.

It means that the man who repeatedly asked me out when I was 19 years old despite being three times my age was just exercising his freedom of speech when he wouldn't take no for an answer, stalking me at my workplace and around Harvard Square for weeks.

It means that being taken advantage of at age 20 was simply a learning experience

How can you become a 'sustainable' investor?



FINANCIAL
FOCUS
JEFF BURDICK

Your values are important to you - and so are your investments. But you don't have to keep these two parts of your

life separate if you pursue sustainable investing.

If you haven't heard of this term, you might know it by other names: socially responsible investing, values-based investing and environmental, social and governance (ESG) investing. Essentially, sustainable investing incorporates non-financial or indirect financial considerations, specifically environmental concerns (climate change, renewable energy, water scarcity), social concerns (human rights, product safety or liability) and governance issues (corporate behavior, executive compensation, lobbying and so on). As a sustainable investor, you would invest in companies that take what you'd consider a positive stance on these issues, or are at least improving in these areas, and you'd avoid businesses that fall on what you perceive as the negative side.

There are many ways to implement a sustainable investing approach that addresses your specific concerns, with varying levels of diversification and control. Some investors select individual stocks of companies they are comfortable supporting. But you might find it more affordable, and more efficient, to invest in mutual funds or exchange-traded funds (ETFs) that focus on sustainable investments.

When exploring sustainable mutual funds and ETFs, make sure you look beyond the name of the fund to assess whether its ESG approach aligns with your personal interests and goals. Also, look for these key elements:

Diversification - By definition, mutual funds that concentrate on sustainable investments might exclude entire industries, which could hurt your portfolio's performance if the excluded investments perform better than the rest of the market. For example, a fund that excludes all oil-related companies might generate poor returns during a period of rising oil prices. Therefore, you may prefer to invest in a fund that integrates environmental, social and governance considerations into the investment process without excluding specific sectors or types of companies. You can further dilute this risk by owning a wide array of sustainable funds that use different approaches or processes to invest in sustainable companies. However, while diversification can reduce the effects of volatility on your portfolio, it can't guarantee profits or protect against all losses.

Track record - As you have no doubt heard, past performance can't guarantee future results, so you may not want to over-concentrate on a fund's historical returns. Still, it might be worthwhile to compare how one fund has performed over time in comparison with similar funds or an index. Many sustainable-investing funds are newer or weren't always invested sustainably, so be sure the track record you are considering is relevant.

Here's something else to keep in mind: The universe of mutual funds is vast, and some funds may not market themselves as "sustainable," but still include sustainable considerations in their investment selections. These funds could provide you with more options.

Finally, consider including charitable contributions in your investment strategy. In some cases, you may decide that's a better way to meet your financial and non-financial investing goals than limiting your investment choices.

By following a sustainable investing approach or incorporating charitable donations in your financial strategy, you can express your beliefs in a tangible way - while still working to achieve your long-term goals.

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