

**ISSUES AND PROGRAMMING REPORT**

***This report details community issues programming aired on WBRK AM 1340. This report contains highlights of programming on key community issues, which have been determined through a monthly ascertainment program involving periodic interviews with community leaders and the input of station staff. The specific programs include:***

***NEWS -- daily newscasts of breaking and continuing news hear at the top and bottom of each hour 6am-6pm.***

***SPEC -- Special reports or programs.***

***CBS -- Programming supplied by the CBS radio Network.***

***BERK - The Berkshire Connection is an in-studio public affairs program featuring city and state officials in addition to non-profit and community organizations.***

***RS-- Rensus IT Solutions is a monthly program dedicated to keeping listeners updated on the latest digital device vulnerabilities and how they can best secure their personal data and make their IT lives more efficient. The program is hosted by a local IT and digital security expert.***

***VP-Viewpoints is a magazine style news and public affairs program covering social issues, the environment, history, food and more. Issue: Politics/Government- A new city government has been sworn-in and almost immediately, they were urged by property owners to bring spending under control to stop the continuing cycle of annual double digit tax increases. National Politics are also heating up and the resulting polarization is once again noticeable among the local population. Despite local citizens clamoring to end partisan politics to remain focused on important city issues such as road repair, housing shortages and out of control spending, there seems to remain a lack of initiative from local government. There seemed to be little interest in the presidential primary with the state being a strong democratic stronghold and a lack of a serious challenge to the incumbent. In State politics the influx of migrants is creating problems in local communities and to state coffers.***

**News 1-3 1:00-**The city yesterday officially announced plans for next week's inauguration ceremony that will swear-in Pittsfield's new government, which includes the Mayor, City council and school committee.

**News 1-6 1:00-** With Governor, Maura Healey in attendance the oaths of office were administered to the city clerk, School Committee and city councilors. Councilors then nominated and voted Peter White as their new President and Earl Persip as their new vice president. A drawing was then held for the councilors seating positions and a vote was held approving current council rules. Mayor Elect Marchetti was then escorted into the chambers and was administered the oath of office.

**News 1-9 1:00-** It's the 1st meeting of the new city council tonight, which will address the 1st agenda items submitted by Mayor Marchetti. The most notable of the Mayor's 1st communications is a request that the council accept an 8 million dollar installment from GE, as part of the PCB settlement agreement, which will be placed in to the economic development fund for incentives to new and growing businesses.

News 1-13 1:00 With governor Healey discussing her plan to tackle the housing crunch during her state of state address last night, The city's Affordable Housing Trust is seeking input from owners of multi-family housing to better understand the needs and housing issues relating to rental properties in Pittsfield.

1-20 1:00- Former President Donald Trump will remain on the ballot in Massachusetts. The State Ballot Law Commission met last week to consider objections to Trump appearing on the Massachusetts primary election ballot. On Monday, a judge dismissed the challenge saying there is a lack of jurisdiction. The Civil rights group Free Speech For People and a local law firm argued for Trump's disqualification.

VP 1-24 1:00- We highlight the decades-long political fight to pass state and federal legislation that officially made the third Monday of January Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

VP 1-28 30:00- We cover Mexico's ongoing struggle to maintain a fair and equal democracy and what's at stake within the country and U.S.-Mexico relations.

VP 2-4 30:00- We speak with prominent New York City divorce attorney Jacqueline Newman about the biggest misconceptions people have when it comes to divorce

News 2-7 1:00- The Healey administration expects it will need to spend \$915 million on emergency assistance shelters across the Commonwealth in FY25, according to a report executive officials prepared for the state legislature this week.

News 2-11 1:00- Mayor Marchetti and the Pittsfield Suns released a joint statement yesterday officially announcing the team's absence this year but both promised to offer new opportunities at Wahconah Park over the summer. The statement did not provide any further details of the team's decision only saying that it was one that needed to be made at this time.

News 2-18 1:00- The city's cable advisory Committee yesterday announced the 1st of 2 public hearings designed to gather citizen concerns before it embarks on negotiations with Charter Spectrum Cable on the next 10 year license agreement. During the hearings, the 1st of which is scheduled for March 6th at 6pm in city hall, the committee will hear insight and feedback from city residents and Charter Spectrum Cable subscribers about the quality of their cable service.

News 2-23 1:00- The Governor's council yesterday approved Governor Healey's nomination of her former romantic partner Gabrielle Wolohojian to the state's highest court, despite some concerns about possible conflicts her candidacy raised. But in the end, the council voted 6-1 in favor of elevating Wolohojian from her spot on an intermediate appeals court to a seat on the state's Supreme Judicial Court.

News 3-5 1:00- Less than a week away from Super Tuesday, about 8.1 percent of Massachusetts voters eligible to vote in the presidential primaries have cast their ballots, According to state officials. Secretary of State William Galvin's office.

News 3-8 1:00- After more than a year of enormous, costly demand on the state's family shelter system, House Democrats on Beacon Hill have begun moving to limit how long people can receive emergency services and to accelerate the work placements that help them find stable footing.

News 3-11 1:00- Massachusetts will move some 400 migrant families out of state shelters and into "stable housing" by partnering with eight resettlement agencies. The partnership, intended to help free up room in overcrowded emergency shelters, aims to provide migrants with "permanent housing" and employment.

News 3-13 1:00- Governor Healey is appealing a decision of the Federal Emergency Management Agency to deny the state's request for a major disaster declaration to support Massachusetts cities and towns battered by severe weather and flooding in September.

News 3-17 1:00- Families eligible for state safety-net shelters will need to be recertified each month to remain in the overflow family shelter sites as of May 1, according to Governor Healey's office. The governor announced the new requirements as the overflow sites swell with families in need of housing and unable to secure a spot in the larger Emergency Assistance shelter system that Healey capped at 7,500 families last fall.

VP 3-20 30:00- We cover the unfolding chaos in the capital city of Haiti and why the future looks uncertain for this Caribbean country.

News 3-22 1:00- Massachusetts is spending about \$75 million each month on state-run shelters, a massive jump in expenses that comes as Gov. Maura Healey's administration is expected to run out of cash for emergency services in early to mid-April without another financial infusion. With cash likely running out ahead of an April time window, the Legislature is now locked in negotiations over a new spending plan that could allow Healey to access dollars.

News 3-27 1:00- With restrictions on how long families can stay in state-run emergency shelters now gaining favor from Beacon Hill lawmakers, anti-homelessness advocates argue that if "artificial" time restrictions are imposed, the state also needs to invest in programs to help families exit shelter into housing.

News 3-30 1:00- It's back to work for the city council tonight, which faces a full agenda, including a vote on moving forward with a state funding application for a new school building.

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***Issue: Economy/Development-*** *It's still an unusual dichotomy within the local economic picture that despite rising inflation, businesses closing and continuing tax increases, a workforce shortage persists, creating its own problems on the local and state level. The biggest issues of concern locally are rising taxes, a housing market too cost prohibitive for younger generations, rising utility costs creating hardships for businesses and homeowners. citizens are also questioning where and how the city is spending its millions in Federal Covid PPE funding. The new city administration is vowing to be more responsive to existing and new small businesses and has created a new fund to provide capital to those who need it. However, the mayor has also warned that budget cuts are unlikely.*

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News 1-5 1:00- Governor Healey and her budget team hit the reset button yesterday, announcing a plan to cut \$375 million from the current year's budget amid flagging tax collections, to downgrade the amount of tax revenue expected this budget year by \$1 billion, and to build the next state spending plan on the assumption that even less tax revenue will come in next year.

VP 1-7 30:00-We speak with two experts about this ongoing debate and what challenges lie ahead for these quickly evolving systems.

News 1-11 1:00- Home sales across Massachusetts sank to a 12-year low in 2023, the first year in office for Governor Healey, whose campaign trail was paved with promises to boldly tackle the state's housing crisis. The Warren Group reported yesterday that record high prices and an insufficient inventory made it a tough year for buyers

News 1-13 1:00- The Council's Committee on community and economic development recently voted to recommend a 10 year tax exemption for a housing project at 100 Wendell Avenue to be known as The Pointe.

News 1-16 1:00- The steady expansion of gambling in the Bay State opened a new and steady

revenue stream for Beacon Hill, and Governor Healey, a onetime opponent of casinos, is tapping into it as part of her administration's plan to close a \$1 billion budget shortfall.

News 1-22 1:00- Governor Healy yesterday testified on behalf of her Affordable Homes Act before the Joint Committee on Housing. The Legislation would invest \$4.12 billion over the next five years into creating new housing units, restoring public housing, and turning state-owned land into housing zones.

News 1-23 1:00- The Healey administration wants to tap new revenue sources and keep spending growth somewhat constrained in a \$58.15 billion state budget that officials pitched as putting Massachusetts on a "glide path" toward potentially better financial conditions further down the road.

News 2-2 1:00- The state's historical Commission is apparently not in favor of razing and rebuilding Wahconah Park and instead wants to see one of the oldest municipal ballparks in the nation maintain its historic character, much to the dismay of city officials seeking a new facility.

News 2-7 1:00- More bad fiscal news for Beacon Hill Lawmakers. Having already made mid-year budget cuts and dimmed the outlook for tax collections through June based on six consecutive months of underwhelming receipts, the state reported Monday that tax revenue came in below even downgraded expectations during January and that year-to-date revenue collections now trail actual collections from the same portion of last budget year.

News 2-9 1:00- Despite complaints of an over-saturated market and high taxes, Adult-use marijuana establishments in Massachusetts set a new sales record in 2023, exceeding \$1.56 billion, the Cannabis Control Commission announced yesterday.

VP 2-11 30:00- We speak with two real estate and housing experts about the large-scale increase in housing prices and mortgage loans and if there's any relief in sight this year.

News 2-13 1:00- Gasoline prices in the bay state have risen for the first time in nearly half a year. According to the latest survey by triple-a, the average cost of a gallon of regular is \$3.14, a jump of 3 cents from last week.

News 2-18 1:00- A developer is seeking state housing grant funding to convert the former Polish American club and surrounding property on Linden Street into a 40 unit housing community with an estimated price tag of 20 million dollars.

News 2-23 1:00- The state office Labor and Workforce Development has awarded the MassHire Berkshire Workforce Board a \$2.2 million grant to support behavioral health and healthcare employment programs.

News 3-6 1:00- Initial filings for unemployment benefits across the Commonwealth dropped sharply during the week ending March 2 compared with the previous week, according to a recent announcement by the U.S. Department of Labor. New jobless claims, a proxy for layoffs, fell to 5,395, down from 9,328. Nationwide unemployment claims remained the same at 217,000 on a seasonally adjusted basis.

News 3-11 1:00- The city council meets tonight and will likely refer to committee a tax incentive package for the almost 18 million dollar renovation of the Wright building on North Street. The project actually combines 2 buildings the wright building and the former Jim's house of shoes into a single housing project consisting of 35 units.

News 3-17 1:00- Hospitality workers descended on Beacon Hill yesterday and clashed over the best way to ensure livable wages for restaurant staff, some lawmakers questioned whether a proposed tip-sharing arrangement could wind up inadvertently harming pay for waiters and bartenders.

News -3-20 1:00- The city School Committee has begun discussions with the Superintendent as it prepares to deal with a budget shortfall caused in part by federal grant funding awarded during the pandemic coming to an end.

**Issue: Public Safety/Education-** *Increasing gun violence on the local level remains a primary*

*concern of local residents as with an increase in petty crimes such as home and vehicle break-ins, shoplifting and property damage. Road safety is also a hot button issue with the needs and convenience of motorists often clashing with the need and convenience of bicyclists and pedestrians. Local citizens have also begun questioning the priorities of the school district, which continues to see a decline in test scores, attendance and graduation rates but have offered few solutions to those problems, which remaining focused on national party agenda issues such as gun control, gender dysphoria and racial dynamics. As a result, the district has one of the largest opt-out rates in the region.*

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News 1-6 1:00- The Mass House is expected to vote on a bill that will criminalize what is commonly referred to as revenge porn. The bill would make disseminating nude content featuring another person without their permission, even if they agreed to create the pictures or videos, criminal harassment punishable by up to two and a half years in prison or a \$10,000 fine.

News 1-10 1:00- The Mass House later today is expected to vote on a bill that will criminalize what is commonly referred to as revenge porn. The bill would make disseminating nude content featuring another person without their permission, even if they agreed to create the pictures or videos, criminal harassment punishable by up to two and a half years in prison or a \$10,000 fine.

News 1-14 1:00- Despite millions in last minute budget cuts, impacting many low income assistance programs, Governor Healey yesterday announced plans to pursue about 113 million dollars in new child care spending in her fiscal year 2025 budget proposal, which will also request another \$475 million in grant funding to continue supporting early education providers.

News 1-21 1:00- In a landmark split ruling, the state's highest court declared it unconstitutional for judges to sentence anyone under the age of 21 to life in prison without the possibility of parole.

VP 1-24 30:00- We speak with two education experts about what needs to change and how listeners can get involved.

News 1-25 1:00- The Healey Administration announced yesterday that a total 10 county communities will share almost 2,8 million dollars, which was included in the supplemental budget passed by the Legislature and signed by Governor Healey last month.

News 1-27 1:00- Despite about one-fifth of Massachusetts students being deemed "chronically absent" from schools, the state board of education rejected a proposal this week to give more weight to how many students were missing school in accountability measures, citing concerns about giving out sticks instead of carrots.

News 2-2 1:00- The Healey administration yesterday announced that the Department of Correction will soon conclude operations at MCI-Concord, a medium-security men's prison and the oldest in the state. MCI-Concord currently operates at 50% capacity, with an incarcerated population of about 300 inmates.

News 2-10 1:00- 2 Mass U.S. senators are calling for more disaster federal relief for Bay State farmers who lost crops and suffered damages in the wake of damaging floods last year.

Elizabeth Warren and Ed Markey say that The \$2.8 billion in disaster assistance that President Joe Biden included in a supplemental funding request last fall is "woefully insufficient"

News 2-14 1:00- State Lawmakers are considering legislation to ensure Education Support Professionals in public schools earn a living wage. ESP's sometimes teach, help students with special needs, clean classrooms and more.

News 2-17 1:00- The process of removing the Bel Air dam off of Wahconah Street is expected to begin next week with soil testing. The state department conservation and recreation is

scheduled to perform geotechnical sampling and testing at 18 different locations near the structure for a stream bank restoration stability analysis.

News 2-22 1:00- Bay State students are top of the list when it comes to passing the AP exam. According to data released by College Board, Bay State students had the highest percentage of passing grades. 45.2% of 2023 graduates in Massachusetts took an AP Exam during high school.

News 3-3 1:00- MassDOT Administrator Jonathan Gulliver said roadway safety was at "crisis level" across the bay state. In response to that clarion call, yesterday afternoon, a new task force was sworn in - with the goal of recommending a financial plan for transportation statewide, including road safety funding.

News 3-7 1:00- Berkshire Benchmarks has released its updated Public School Enrollment Projections based on 2024 enrollment data. Based on births and grade-to-grade change for the last 5-10 years for each of our school districts.

News 3-11 1:00- Despite a tightening state budget picture, the Senators on Beacon hill this week plan to take up a pricey early education and child care bill aimed at expanding access to education for the state's youngest learners and making it more affordable for families.

News 3-15 1:00- Governor Healey's plan to pardon all misdemeanor marijuana possession convictions will impact hundreds of thousands of people, she told a crowd gathered at the statehouse yesterday and represents "the most sweeping cannabis pardon ever proposed by any governor in the United States.

News 3-17 1:00- Pittsfield Police have announced that they are partnering with other state, county, and local law enforcement agencies in over 12 states for the "Highway 20 Speed Enforcement Project. The project was started by the Iowa State Police in an attempt to promote traffic safety and reduce crashes across the 12 states that US 20 runs through..

News 3-22 1:00- Department of Higher Education plans to evaluate gaps in financial support as officials consider redesigning the mix of tuition reimbursement, grants, loan forgiveness and tax incentives. The overhaul is meant to expand education access, improve affordability, and ensure that aid delivery is reliable and predictable, according to education officials.

News 3-25 1:00- The state senate yesterday unanimously approved legislation that would make Massachusetts the 49th state to enforceably ban revenge porn, teeing up fresh negotiations on a topic where lawmakers failed to complete their work last term.

News 3-26 1:00- The Mass Teachers Association is again coming under fire for its actions related to the Israel-Hamas war, as Jewish organization blast the union for holding an anti-racism program that boosts "antisemitic and anti-Israel falsehoods.

VP 3-31 30:00- Education expert Natalie Wexler joins us to share important insights on emerging research that shows students are falling behind in reading proficiency and what parents should know.

***Issue: Public Health/Environment-*** *Health issues are not as much of a public discussion as they were during the pandemic but play a major role in the everyday life of a city with an aging population. The state is again changing its mandatory health insurance coverage protocols forcing citizens to reenroll with new coverage providers, which changes their healthcare delivery. The city has increased operation of its mobile and in house free health clinics with the migrant and non-english speaking residents extremely vulnerable and Covid and Flu season in full-swing. The city's health department still has concerns with 5- G cellular radiation with some residents even taking a major carrier to court over health concerns. But there have been few developments on that front.*

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News 1-11 1:00- The new year is ushering in the return of mask mandates at healthcare facilities across the county. Berkshire Health Systems announced yesterday that the new year has brought with it a new wave respiratory illness. In response to the significant levels of respiratory illnesses being seen throughout their healthcare facilities and in the community, BHS has decided to implement mandatory universal masking for all patients, visitors, and staff beginning today.

News 1-16 1:00- The Healey Administration announced yesterday that a total 10 county communities will share almost 2,8 million dollars, which was included in the supplemental budget passed by the Legislature and signed by Governor Healey last month.

News 1-26 1:00- The year-long effort to reassess the eligibility of every single MassHealth member is on track to trim the rolls by 400,000 people by the time it ends this spring, and its director said last week the lower caseload should help save about \$130 million in spending.

News 2-2 1:00- Following a comprehensive review of data from the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, BHS has rescinded its mask mandate. However, patients who have tested positive for COVID-19 in the past 10 days or who have symptoms of respiratory illness must mask when entering the healthcare setting and notify their provider of their symptoms. Visitors under 18 are also once again allowed in all clinical settings.

News 2-10 1:00- The Massachusetts Medical Society is expressing its concern about cases of measles reported in a handful states and in Europe with potential exposures at two large United States airports, and urged people to get vaccinated amid what a federal official last year called a "staggering" number of measles cases and fatalities.

VP 2-17 30:00- Viewpoints speaks with psychiatrist, Dr. James S. Gordon to better understand a person's reaction to trauma and the body's resilience in dealing with these stressful events and situations.

News 3-4 1:00- The city's water treatment facility has received a clean bill of health from the EPA. City officials announced yesterday that the EPA has officially lifted the Administrative Order issued in 2011, mandating that the city address the high phosphorus levels found in the city's wastewater discharge.

