



## PLAYING FOR ALL THE MARBLES



Members of the Municipal Buildings Committee practice their quidditch moves in the sky above the library in preparation for a benefit game on April 3. (Courtesy photo)

## Town unions agree to forego work

In a groundbreaking concession that could save thousands of dollars in town spending, Harvard's union employees have agreed to stop working for the foreseeable future. Most union members resisted the move at first, but came around when they understood that they will still be paid, and will continue to receive full benefits.

According to Town Administrator Slim Bragan, Harvard is the first town in New England to reach an agreement like this with its unions. According to the media, a very small number of municipal and state workers elsewhere have collected full pay and benefits for years without doing much to earn them, but never in Harvard, and this is the first time the arrangement is part of a negotiated contract.

While there are clearly some drawbacks to the new contract, the fiscal and social benefits are undeniable. There will be no layoffs ever, while the town will save thousands in fuel costs, vehicle maintenance, and overtime pay, since overtime will be out of the question. At the schools, parents and kids will no longer complain about homework overload, and all students will finally be free to learn at their own pace and in their own way. Some parents and most teachers have characterized the idea as "insane," while others call it a "brave experiment in individualized learning." The latter group points out that there is nothing in the contract that prohibits students from working.

The new contract will affect the school calendar considerably, since the schools will be closed most of the winter due to impassible roads. On the upside, though, families will have much more "together time," and parents will have a chance to control every aspect of their children's lives and see how that goes.

The school superintendent, principals, police chief, and DPW superintendent were all unavailable for comment. Because they are not union members, they are still obliged to work but they have their hands full thinking of nothing for their employees to do.

## Not your Granny Smith's town meeting

Town Clerk Janet Vellante announced today that Harvard has been selected as one of three municipalities nationwide to pilot a "virtual town meeting" program sponsored by Apple and Verizon. The revolutionary new program, awkwardly titled "Not Your Granny Smith's Town Meeting," will leverage leading-edge technology to facilitate maximum participation by Harvard residents in the local democratic process. Harvard was selected from hundreds of towns across the country that were vetted, using, in part, data from the recent census. Criteria for candidacy

included the town population's average age, eyesight quality, and thumb dexterity.

Verizon Wireless spokesperson Amanda B. Reckinwith said the program is designed to demonstrate the robustness of Verizon's wireless network and its ability to support a high volume of mobile device traffic, like that associated with the iPhone 4. "People are always complaining about cell tower coverage, and we hope to prove them wrong," she added.

Those attending this year's Town Meeting in person will be provided with new, custom-configured iPhone 4 devices

when they sign in at the registration table. Facebook Mobile will already be installed on each device, and will be used to facilitate and organize the meeting workings. Participants will be able to comment on each warrant article during times allotted by Town Moderator Bob Eubank, enabling all perspectives to be represented and considered. When it's time to vote, participants will be asked to "Like" each warrant article they are supporting; opposing votes will be automatically calculated using a complex mathematical algorithm

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## Parking dispute creates havoc in town center

A parking dispute in front of the old library spilled onto the Common late Sunday morning, and it took police officers from three towns to straighten it out. The problem began when a group of senior citizens attempted to demonstrate whether they could, in fact, park 30 cars in the area around the old library. The group managed to get 13 cars successfully parked but then ran into trouble when the fourteenth car took a space long held by a resident of the old Harvard Inn, and inadvertently ran over the incensed resident's foot as well.

The inadequacy of safe parking in that area has been hotly contested in recent weeks as rival factions debate whether the old library could ever serve as the town senior center. According to the Council on Aging, at least 30 spaces would be required, and off-street parking is vastly preferable.

Police were called to the scene and managed to quiet things down, but then started is-

suing citations to the ten cars double-parked on Fairbank Street and Old Littleton Road. In a show of solidarity, one of the half dozen cars still jockeying for space triple-parked next to the police cruiser, obstructing all traffic and resulting in a call for back-up. A further argument developed when a selectman arrived and accused several seniors of taking up more than one space each, significantly skewing the count. Officers from Ayer and Boxborough responded quickly, but not quickly enough to prevent wholesale gridlock when Congregational and Unitarian activists emerged from their respective church services and joined the fray.

In the end, 17 cars were legally parked, three were cited for having expired inspection stickers, four were towed off the Common, one ran out of gas while still looking for a space, and five went home for lunch. There were no arrests and only one minor injury – a badly bruised foot.



Senior citizens' cars parked at the old library on Sunday caused the worst traffic jam in Harvard's history. (Courtesy photo)