



SPORTS BONANZA

It's the best sports week of the year, with the Boston Marathon and Bruins and Celtics playoff action. Page B1

Low on Funds?

Finance Your Deductible



WORLD

Iran closes strait

BY SAM METZ AND SAMY MAGDY
Associated Press

The standoff over the Strait of Hormuz escalated again Saturday as Iran reversed its reopening of the crucial waterway and fired on ships attempting to pass, in retaliation after the United States pressed ahead with its blockade of Iranian ports.

The strait is closed until the U.S. blockade is lifted, Iran's Revolutionary Guard navy said Saturday night, warning that "no vessel should make any movement from its anchorage in the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman, and approaching the Strait of Hormuz will be considered as cooperation with the enemy" and be targeted.

New attacks on the strait, through which roughly one-fifth of the world's oil normally passes, threatened to deepen the global energy crisis and push the countries into renewed conflict as the war entered its eighth week.

A fragile ceasefire is due to run out by Wednesday. Iran said it had received new proposals from the United States, and Pakistani mediators were working to arrange another round of direct negotiations.

Iran's joint military command earlier said "control of the Strait of Hormuz has returned to its previous state ... under strict management and control of the armed forces."

Revolutionary Guard gunboats opened fire on a tanker and an unknown projectile hit a container vessel, damaging some containers, the British military's United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations center said. India's foreign

SEE IRAN, PAGE A15

WEATHER

Showers and cooler, breezy in the afternoon.

High: 52°; Low: 33°

EXPANDED WEATHER, B3

Mention Rick's Even if Your Insurance Company Doesn't

ENERGY

Seeing red over 'green' power



A large solar farm is situated across the street from the proposed site of another project on Lloyd Martin's land on Chester Road in Blandford. Most residents of Blandford are against the expansion on solar farms and energy storage in the Hampden County hilltown, according to Select Board Chair Jacqueline Coury. (DOUGLAS HOOK / THE REPUBLICAN)

WMass residents defend rural landscapes as state fast-tracks solar energy, battery storage

BY GRETA JOCHEM
gjochem@repub.com
AND DANIEL JACKSON
djackson@repub.com

Paige Cerulli was shocked to learn a neighbor in Plainfield planned to lease land to New Leaf Energy for a solar and battery project. The project won town approval in December. Even then, solar developers weren't done with this Hampshire County hilltown.

BlueWave, another developer, seeks approval to build a solar and battery storage project in Plainfield. And town officials believe BlueWave has a second project in mind.

"We didn't think we would become ground zero for where these projects get sited," said Peter Lapointe, the town's Planning Board chair. "Almost every landowner in town who owns 40 or so acres has been called or contacted with an inquiry."



Blandford Select Board Chair Jacqueline Coury stands in the former school classroom that now serves as Blandford's Town Hall. (DOUGLAS HOOK / THE REPUBLICAN)

Solar and battery energy projects continue to surface across Western Massachusetts, where opponents in towns like Plainfield, Worthington and Blandford say they threaten rural landscapes. But local residents who oppose these projects face new state policies that weaken or remove local control.

Jacqueline Coury, a Blandford Select Board member, worries the rolling hills of her Hampden County town will end up covered with rows of solar arrays, and that battery storage facilities will litter former farm fields — a change townspeople didn't ask for, but that the Healey

ALSO INSIDE

- Friction amid the green energy transition. Page A9
- Projects hum along in West Springfield, Holyoke. Page A10

administration is pushing to meet green energy goals.

"People want to feel like they have control over their town a little bit," Coury said. "To them, it feels like a government override."

In March, the state rolled out new regulations to implement a 2024 climate bill that favors renewable

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JACQUELINE COURY, A BLANDFORD SELECT BOARD MEMBER

energy. The new rules, which go into effect in July, are designed to speed approval of energy projects — including solar and battery storage. Larger projects bypass local permitting entirely and go to the state's Energy Facilities Siting Board for approval.

Smaller energy projects, which make up the vast majority of proposals in the last two years, can get a consolidated permit from a local municipal board.

But local boards face a tight deadline — just one year — to vote up or down on applications. Officials in smaller towns, where boards are run by volunteers, say that's not enough

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