

# Access denied

Public records are treated like private property by many local officials, a survey finds

## How they fared

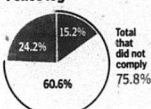
Globe West surveyed 37 communities across the region to see how well they comply with the state's public records laws. The six records sought by the Globe are usually readily available in most municipal offices, and, according to law, should have been provided almost immediately. The law also states that officials are not permitted to ask the identity of the person seeking the records or their reason for the request.

Fully complied

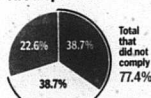
Gave, but asked

Flat out denied

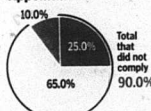
### Police log



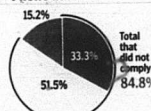
### Fire inspections



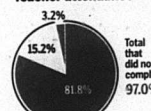
### Appointment calendar



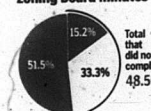
### Phone bills



### Teacher attendance



### Zoning Board minutes



GLOBE STAFF GRAPHIC



ILLUSTRATION/JOHN OVERMYER

By Sean Patrick Lyons  
GLOBE STAFF

William Morris repeatedly asked for copies of plans from a street repair project in front of his Wayland home. For nearly a year, town officials all but ignored his requests.

Donna McDaniel wanted to read through minutes of a public meeting she had missed three months earlier in Southborough. She was told the document was not completed and would not be provided.

And Robert Bogardus, a Wrentham health board member, sought the results of a cancer survey his town conducted. Another board member refused to release the information, claiming the files were confidential.

While all three citizens were ultimately able to obtain the public information they sought — after state officials intervened — their experiences are not unique in Boston's western suburbs.

A Globe West survey of 37 cities and towns across the region has found that nearly three out of four local officials flout state laws designed to allow unfettered access to public records.

Bureaucrats flat out refused to hand over more than a third of all the requested documents, which detail everything from how officials spend taxpayers' money to the types of crimes occurring

within the community.

Roughly 40 percent of the officials insisted on knowing the requester's identity or the reason for the request before providing the files. Police in several departments ordered reporters to produce a driver's license before giving out the log.

State law prohibits such demands because they serve only to discourage or intimidate citizens from obtaining public information, said Secretary of State William F. Galvin, whose office is charged with enforcing the state's public records statutes.

School departments were by far the worst scofflaws.

When reporters attempted to view records showing teacher attendance rates — a growing concern for school districts in the wake of a nationwide shortage of substitutes — only officials in one town, Wellesley, provided the files without no questions asked.

Most school department workers claimed the records were personal in nature and could not be released, although the law makes no exception in keeping the records from public view.

Other education officials candidly acknowledged they prefer to keep the public at arm's length.

"I would do everything in my power to delay the information,"

RECORDS, Page 12

## How to navigate the system

### Q What is a public record?

Any document created or obtained by any state or local agency employee or official. Some examples include books, maps, papers, statistics, recorded tapes, financial statements, etc. There are some common-sense exceptions. Those would include records such as employees' personnel and medical files, or the addresses of people who have gun permits.

### Q How do I make a request?

You can request the records verbally and in person at the appropriate agency during normal business hours, or you can write a letter. In order to appeal an official's failure to provide access to records with the state, your request must be in writing. There is no specific form or wording required in your request. Simply be as clear and specific as possible.

### Q Do I have to state why I want the record?

No. The law specifically states that you are not required to give such information.

### Q How long do I have to wait to see the records?

The law states that officials must provide the records "as soon as practicable and within 10 days." If the records are handy and it would take little effort to produce them, officials should provide them. If you do not get a response to your request within 10 days, you may consider your request denied.

### Q What if my request is denied?

You may appeal the decision to the Secretary of State's office, which is charged with determining whether records are public or not.

File the appeal in writing. If the office determines the records are public, it may order the agency to turn over the documents.

### Q How much can I be charged for copies of public records?

There is no charge to simply view the records, but if you want copies, you can be charged up to 20 cents per page for photocopies, 25 cents for microfilm copies and 50 cents for computer printouts. An agency can also charge some labor costs involved in compiling the records.

### Q Where can I learn more?

You can view the Secretary of State's public records division Web site at [www.state.ma.us/sec](http://www.state.ma.us/sec) or you can call the division at 617-727-2832.

— Sean Patrick Lyons

## The way it is

Last week's vote in Framingham showed remarkably little interest in changing much at all. Which goes to show, somebody must be doing something right. 2



## Developing plan

In Natick, a developer seeks to build a 10-story, 183-unit building for affordable housing, which would bring the town's ratio up to 10 percent from 5 percent. Some voice concern, however, over the size and height of the proposed structure. 9



## Marathon woman

Shayna Ferullo has always loved the Boston Marathon, but this year her family will party as usual while she runs it herself. 17



GLOBE STAFF PHOTO BY GLENN

"We're not perfect," said George King, Framingham's town manager.

## Access denied

A survey shows that many local officials treat public records like private property

### RECORDS

Continued from Page 1

said Mick Janelli, superintendent of Wrentham public schools, in an interview after the survey was completed. "If there were a problem with an employee not showing up for work, I would want to handle it internally. Otherwise, I would still like hell. I am not kidding you."

Many municipal executives said their administrations' failure to comply with the requests during the Globe's survey were aberrations or illustrated their staff's unfamiliarity with the law.

"There are a lot of laws that are constantly changing, and yet we are expected to keep up on them," said Michael Sullivan, Medfield's town administrator. "I would rather have my staff err on the side of caution than hand out something we shouldn't."

Massachusetts, however, has had statutes ensuring public access to government records since 1851, and they have not been revised substantially in more than a quarter century.

"The law has been litigated out," Galvin said. "The parameters are pretty much established."

Of all the towns surveyed, Medfield officials flouted the law most often. Each of the five departments queried demanded to know the identity of the person requesting the information and what she intended to do with it.

Then, all but one official — a Zoning Board clerk — refused to release the records.

"I think the first thought that comes to mind [when a records request is made] is if someone is fishing for a lawsuit," Sullivan said. "We are under threat of lawsuits constantly. When you have a person coming in asking for records, it naturally arouses suspicion."

Wariness was also an issue for Louis J. Celozzi, Milford's town administrator. When asked to see his business appointment calendar, among Celozzi's first questions was: "Are you investigating me?"

The reporter told him no, but such defensiveness is not infrequent with public officials, said Kenneth White, executive director for Common Cause Massachusetts, a citizen's lobbying group that helped design the state's open meeting laws.

"Often times when seeking records you find officials who feel they need to protect themselves or the people who they work with," White said. "But that creates an unnecessary appearance of secrecy. If people are trying to learn more about their community and

take the time to seek out information, it is the obligation of government to be responsive."

### Laws ensure accountability

According to the state law, every document obtained or created by any government official can be viewed by the public.

Over the years, some common-sense exceptions have been made, such as the medical records of employees or the names of people holding gun permits.

Frances Gould, director of the state's public records division, said the statutes recognize the vital role public documents play in the ability of citizens to evaluate their government and learn about decisions that affect their community.

"If a citizen cannot access their government, there is no accountability," Gould said.

### Do I have to provide identification when I ask for records?

No. State law prohibits officials from asking your identity or the reason for your request, so that people seeking information do not feel discouraged or intimidated when they view records.

ability on the part of government," Gould said. "These laws help to create confidence in our democracy."

Much of the conflict over access to public records in recent years stems from the weighing of the public's right to know about their government's operations against an individual's privacy guarantees.

Last year, for example, the state's Supreme Judicial Court shot down a Wakefield resident's attempt to view the disciplinary records of teachers.

The resident requested the information after a seventh-grade instructor was suspended for a month for writing inappropriate remarks on two female students' assignments.

The court ruled the documents were part of the teacher's personnel records, which are private under state law.

A teachers' union spokesman at the time halted the ruling, saying "educators should be entitled to the same rights of privacy of their personnel and medical records as all other citizens."

The resident did not seek the names of any teachers or students. In certain circumstances, you frequently run up against balancing those rights," Galvin said. "From time to time we curtail the law when it makes sense, but we must always be conscious of maintaining a fair balance."

The Globe's survey was based largely on the section of the records law that requires officials to promptly provide files that are readily accessible and have been requested during normal business hours.

For more complex requests, officials have up to 10 days to re-

spond.

In both instances, officials "may not require the disclosure of the reasons for which a requester seeks access to or a copy of a public record [or] require proof of the requester's identity."

White, of Common Cause, said that portion of the law was added to specifically prevent "a climate where if you give the right answer, you can get the information, and if not, you can't."

The survey was conducted mostly during February and March, with roughly 20 reporters fanning out across the Globe West coverage area.

The reporters sought six records in each town: a phone bill, an appointment calendar of the town administrator or mayor, teacher attendance records, a fire inspection, minutes from a recent zoning board meeting, and a police log.

Reporters were instructed not to identify themselves or mention the reason for their requests unless asked, and then only if the official would not provide the files without that information. (For more about how this survey was conducted, see the accompanying article.)

### No community perfect

Not one of the communities surveyed provided all the records in full compliance of the law.

Boylston came the closest. Officials in town hall freely opened to identify themselves or mention the reason for their requests unless asked, and then only if the official would not provide the files without that information. (For more about how this survey was conducted, see the accompanying article.)

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The best any other towns fared was handing over about 60 percent of the requested files without any hassles. That happened in only three towns: Medway, South-borough, and Wrentham.

In a quarter of the towns surveyed, every department violated the law by either denying the request outright or insisting on knowing the reason for it before providing the documents.

A typical exchange between reporters and officials was like this one at the Maynard Police Department:

Police: "Can I help you?"

Reporter: "I'd like to see the police log."

Police: "Who are you?"

Reporter: "Would I have to say in order to see the log?"

Police: "I'm trying to accommodate you. Tell me who you are."

Reporter: "I'm a reporter."

Police: "Can I see some credentials?"

After the reporter produced his Globe identification, the officer promptly copied out portions of the last week's log.

"I'm sorry I was rude to you," the officer said as the reporter was leaving. "We can't just have people walking in off the streets. As you know, we have a right to sanitize the reports."

White, the executive director of Common Cause Massachusetts, said the officer ignored one of the

## Availability of public records

How the Globe West towns fared in making their public records available

### Ashland

	Allowed to view	Asked ID	Asked why	Put in writing	File out paperwork	Incomplete	Waits	Compliance
Police log	Y	N	N	N	N	N	1	Y
Fire inspection	Y	N	Y	N	N	N/A	1	N
Appointment Calendar	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Phone bill	Y	N	N	N	N	N	1	Y
Teacher attendance	N	Y	Y	N	N	N	2	N
Zoning minutes	N	Y	N	Y	N	N/A	1	N
Total yes	3	2	2	1	0			2
Percent yes	60%	40%	40%	20%	0%			40%

### Dover

	Allowed to view	Asked ID	Asked why	Put in writing	File out paperwork	Incomplete	Waits	Compliance
Police log	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	1	N
Fire inspection	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Appointment Calendar	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1	N/A
Phone bill	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	1	N
Teacher attendance	N	Y	Y	Y	N	N	1	N
Zoning minutes	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	1	N
Total yes	3	3	2	1	0			0
Percent yes	75%	75%	50%	25%	0%			0%

### Framingham

	Allowed to view	Asked ID	Asked why	Put in writing	File out paperwork	Incomplete	Waits	Compliance
Police log	Y	N	N	N	N	N	1	Y
Fire inspection	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	1	N
Appointment Calendar	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Phone bill	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	2	N
Teacher attendance	N	Y	Y	Y	N	N	2	N
Zoning minutes	Y	N	N	N	N	N	1	Y
Total yes	4	2	3	2	1			2
Percent yes	80%	40%	60%	40%	20%			40%

### Holliston

	Allowed to view	Asked ID	Asked why	Put in writing	File out paperwork	Incomplete	Waits	Compliance
Police log	Y	N	N	N	N	N	1	Y
Fire inspection	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	2	N
Appointment Calendar	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	1	N
Phone bill	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	2	N
Teacher attendance	N	Y	Y	Y	N	N	1	N
Zoning minutes	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	1	N
Total yes	5	2	3	1	0			1
Percent yes	83%	33%	50%	17%	0%			17%

### Hopkinton

	Allowed to view	Asked ID	Asked why	Put in writing	File out paperwork	Incomplete	Waits	Compliance
Police log	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	1	N
Fire inspection	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	1	N
Appointment Calendar	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	1	N
Phone bill	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	1	N
Teacher attendance	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	1	N
Zoning minutes	N	N	N	N	N	N	1	N
Total yes	4	2	4	1	0			0
Percent yes	67%	33%	67%	17%	0%			0%

### Lincoln

	Allowed to view	Asked ID	Asked why	Put in writing	File out paperwork	Incomplete	Waits	Compliance
Police log	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	1	Y
Fire inspection	Y	N	N	N	N	N	1	Y
Appointment Calendar	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Phone bill	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	2	N
Teacher attendance	N	Y	N	N	N	N	1	N
Zoning minutes	Y	N	N	N	N	N	1	Y
Total yes	4	3	1	0	0			2
Percent yes	80%	60%	20%	0%	0%			40%

### Natick

	Allowed to view	Asked ID	Asked why	Put in writing	File out paperwork	Incomplete	Waits	Compliance
Police log	Y	N	N	N	N	N	1	Y
Fire inspection	Y	N	N	N	N	N	1	Y
Appointment Calendar	N	Y	Y	N	N	N	2	N
Phone bill	Y	N	N	N	N	N	1	Y
Teacher attendance	N	N	Y	N	N	N	1	N
Zoning minutes	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	1	N
Total yes	4	1	3	0	0			3
Percent yes	67%	17%	50%	0%	0%			50%

### Sherborn

	Allowed to view	Asked ID	Asked why	Put in writing	File out paperwork	Incomplete	Waits	Compliance
Police log	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	1	N
Fire inspection	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Appointment Calendar	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	1	N
Phone bill	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	1	N
Teacher attendance	N	Y	Y	N	N	N	1	N
Zoning minutes	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	1	N
Total yes	4	5	4	0	0			0
Percent yes	80%	100%	80%	0%	0%			0%

### Sudbury

	Allowed to view	Asked ID	Asked why	Put in writing	File out paperwork	Incomplete	Waits	Compliance
Police log	Y	N	N	N	N	N	1	Y
Fire inspection	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	1	N
Appointment Calendar	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Phone bill	N	N	N	N	N	N	1	N
Teacher attendance	N	N	Y	N	N	N	1	N
Zoning minutes	Y	N	N	N	N	N	1	Y
Total yes	3	0	2	0	0			2
Percent yes	50%	0%	40%	0%	0%			40%

### Wayland

Way Item	Yes	Asked ID	Asked why	Put in writing	File out paperwork	Incomplete	Waits	Compliance
Police log	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	1	N
Fire inspection	N	N	Y	Y	N	N/A	1	N
Appointment Calendar	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Phone bill	N	Y	Y	N	N	N	1	N
Teacher attendance	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y	1
Zoning minutes	Y	N	N	N	N	N	1	N
Total yes	3	3	3	1	0			0
Percent yes	60%	60%	60%	20%	0%			0%

fundamental aspects of the state's records law. Every request should be treated equally.

"Public records are the same no matter who is asking for them," he said. "There is no special provision for the press."

### Schools flunk the test

The reluctance of school officials to turn over teacher attendance

records was the most alarming finding of the Globe's survey.

Eighty-one percent of the districts failed to provide the records, a refusal rate that was twice as high as the next most frequently denied record, fire inspections.

The reasons school officials gave for their denials were often perplexing.

In Natick, a clerk told a reporter

the files were exempt from public view under the federal Americans with Disabilities Act. She did not elaborate.

In Sherborn, a school worker told the reporter: "I'm sorry, those are records. We can't just give them out."

Lincoln's superintendent of schools, John Ritchie, said the re-

Continued on next page

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## Public records are being kept private

Continued from preceding page  
cords could not be viewed until after union officials perused them. And a Stow secretary berated one reporter, telling her she would not even ask the superintendent if she could release the files unless the reporter identified herself. When the reporter did, the clerk then claimed that office didn't keep the records.

Christopher Martes, executive director of the Massachusetts Association for School Superintendents, said the reaction by school officials may indicate "confusion" over what are considered public documents.

"I'm not surprised," Martes said. "In any type of public work, there's always questions over this issue."

Secretary of State Gavin said that while some officials may be unaware of certain aspects of the law, many plead ignorance in order to delay the release of information. "Some people may not know the full implications of the law, but it's not too hard to find out," he said. "There are those who have an excellent record of foot-dragging."

Wellesley's School Department was the only school district in the Globe's survey that provided the records promptly and without any questions.

"We keep up-to-date records and have nothing to hide," said Matt King, Wellesley's superintendent of schools. "We update our staff from time to time in the rules and expectations with records."

**Others barely pass**  
If most school districts flunked the survey, many other departments barely earned passing grades.

Only about half the towns queried handed out Zoning Board minutes with no hassles — and those were the easiest of all the records to come by.

When the Globe sought police logs, three out of five departments either refused to release the record or demanded to know the identity of the person requesting the information before they would provide it.

Authorities in five towns claimed the log was not for public view. "We usually give them out to the press," a Hopkinton officer told a requester.

In Maynard, Milford, and Northborough, reporters had to produce a driver's license and have it photocopied before police handed over the file.

"That's one of the most important records from a public safety standpoint," said George DiBlasi,

director of the Massachusetts Chiefs of Police Association. "It can show you not only the types of crimes, but what time they are happening and how frequently. It's just vital."

Fire inspection records were only slightly easier to come by. Roughly a third of fire departments that keep inspection records — 15 claimed they did not — refused to release them. About as many required the reporters to say why they wanted the information.

A Waltham fire official said he needed to know the reason for a request in case the person seeking the records was an "enemy" of a business and wanted to file a lawsuit.

In those instances, the department required a written request that would be placed in the company's file, he added.

But perhaps nowhere within city and town halls did reporters get more grief than in the chief executive offices.

Overall, more than 80 percent failed to adhere to the law when requests for phone bills and business calendars were made.

After a reporter asked to see a phone bill in Sudbury, a clerk snapped back: "Our phone bill is ours and private."

Another reporter who sought the same records in Watertown was asked:

Clerk: "What company do you represent?"  
Reporter: "Would I have to represent a company in order to see this information?"

Clerk: "No, but why do you want it?"  
Reporter: "I'm just doing some research. Does it have a bearing on whether I can see the records?"

Clerk: "No, I'm just doing some research."

The clerk then said that she would have the town manager call the reporter back. He never did. "I think the questions we asked were because we just were unclear on precisely what the person wanted," said Michael Driscoll, Watertown's town manager, several weeks after the survey was completed. "We pride ourselves on being cooperative."

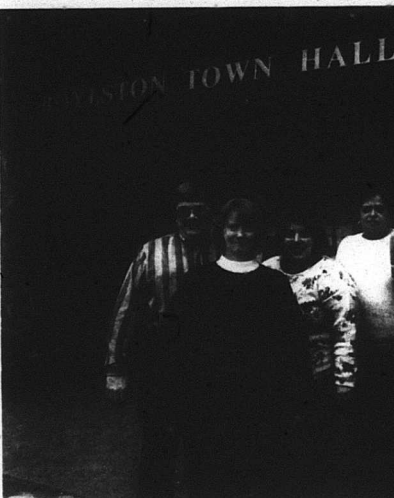
George King, Framingham's town manager and a former town clerk, said he believed the requests for calendars would have naturally raised questions for officials.

"It's a big town and we give out records all the time," King said. "But we're not perfect. A calendar could be seen as a little personal. It's not an excuse, but I think it's a human nature to ask why the request was being made."

**Clearer enforcement, guidelines needed**

During the last five years, the secretary of state's office has logged close to 4,000 appeals statewide by citizens claiming they had been improperly denied records.

Those included people such as Donna McDaniel, the Southborough resident who sought minutes to a meeting of a committee studying whether the town should pull out of the Algonquin regional school district.



Boylston officials opened the files requested without questions: Jim Goodwin (left), Sandy Bourassa, Mary Jasper, Margo Richardson, Jessica Adonteng, Diane Erickson, and Anita Hegarty, the town administrator.

## How the survey was conducted

Globe West's survey was based largely on the portion of the state's public records law that requires officials to promptly provide files that are readily accessible and are requested during normal business hours.

For more complex requests, officials have up to 10 days to respond.

In both instances, officials "may not require the disclosure of the reasons for which a requester seeks access to or a copy of a public record, [or] require proof of the requester's identity."

Kenneth White, of Common Cause Massachusetts, said that section of the law was added to specifically prevent "a climate where if you give the right answer, you can get the information, and if not, you can't."

The survey was conducted mostly during February and March, with roughly 20 reporters fanning out across the Globe West coverage area.

The reporters sought six records in each community: a phone bill, an appointment

calendar of the town manager or mayor, a fire inspection, minutes of a recent zoning board meeting, teacher attendance records, and a police log.

The files, verified as public with the secretary of state's office and Globe lawyers, were selected based upon the comparative ease with which they could be made available and their importance to citizens.

Teacher attendance, for example, is increasingly problematic for school districts. A recent study by the US Department of Education estimated that 5 million public school students nationwide attend classes with substitutes each day, and that number is rising.

Those records are typically held in a school department's payroll office.

Another document sought details of actions taken by zoning boards during their meetings. Those committees are increasingly scrutinized by residents in an area where more building permits have been issued in

recent years than just about any other region of the state.

Most communities keep files of minutes with either the town clerk or in a zoning board office.

And police logs, found at the front desk of most police departments, are a primary source for examining crime patterns within neighborhoods, according to George DiBlasi, executive director of the Massachusetts Chiefs of Police Association.

"That's one of the most important records from a public safety standpoint," DiBlasi said. "It not only shows you the types of crimes, but what time they are happening and how frequently. It's just vital."

Reporters were instructed not to identify themselves or mention the reason for their requests unless asked, and then only if the official would not provide the files without the information.

SEAN PATRICK LYONS

### For more information

To read about reporters' experiences in your community, see [www.boston.com](http://www.boston.com).

## Studying spring's sweet nectar

Group taps students' interest in syrup

By Denise Dube  
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

Vermont isn't the only place that produces fine maple syrup. Weston has its own supply — and a thriving business right behind the town's middle school.

Last Saturday, at the annual Sugaring Off Festival, Steve Cyr of Land's Sake, a local nonprofit organization, and a group of middle school students demonstrated how they take the clear tree sap and turn it into New England's favorite elixir.

Hidden behind the brick middle school in an expansive wooden shack, darkened by a few New England winters, Cyr and his helpers boiled the sap, explained the lengthy syrup-making process to curious onlookers, and served samples of smooth, maple-sugar can-

dy, and sold bottles and bottles of the stuff.

Surrounded by clouds of steam coming from a huge stainless-steel evaporator that boiled the liquid, Cyr explained to each adult and child who wandered through how the juices from the sugar-maple tree become syrup.

The sap is taken from sugar maples scattered around the town. "We have 13 different properties; some of them are private land owners and others are on town-owned land," Cyr, a forester and the director of Land's Sake, said in an interview.

This year, Cyr's Land's Sake staff of four and a crew of middle school student volunteers began tapping the maples on Feb. 10. "It's not the day we go around, drill holes, and actually put the taps in the trees," he said.

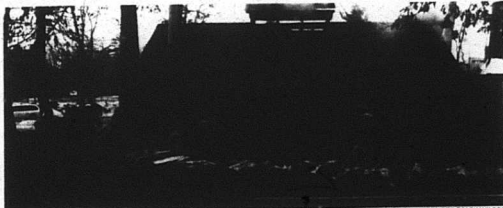
"It has to be done before the spring and before the trees leaf out," Cyr explained. "After the tapping is finished,

Cyr and his crew sit back and let nature take over. Then what you need are freezing cold nights followed by sunny days. The freezing and thawing creates a pumping action that carries the sap from the roots and feeds the buds on the branch tips."

That pumping action also brings the fluid out through the tap and into a steel bucket hanging from the tap. But, Cyr said, the process doesn't deplete the trees of their sap. "We take a very small percentage," Cyr said. "The rest of the sap wood transports the sap to the rest of the tree. Some people compare it to donating blood."

When the weather cooperates, Cyr said, it creates the ideal sap flow. "We try to collect sap as late in the day as possible so that it doesn't freeze in the buckets at night."

The troops then spend the next few weeks gathering nature's offerings. "We have a total of almost 300 taps around town," Cyr said.



Steam rises from a shack behind Weston's middle school, where students make maple syrup.

"We can gather as much as 600 gallons in one day."

The sap is brought back to the sugar shack and put into holding tanks. From there, the juice is put into a wood-fired evaporator and boiled until it reaches about 219 degrees Fahrenheit. "Basically, you're trying to boil the water out of the syrup until it condenses down to a thick syrup," Cyr said.

The fresh sap is about 98 percent water, Cyr said. The re-

maining 2 percent is made up of minerals and sugars. "About 40 gallons of sap will produce one gallon of syrup."

However, Cyr said, that amount can vary due to environmental factors, the time of year, and the location and health of the trees.

When the syrup is ready, Cyr pours it through a white wool filter. It's then poured into bottles or containers and sold at the shack.

The remaining syrup will be sold at Land's Sake's organic vegetable summer farm stand.

By 11:30 Saturday morning, it didn't look like there would be anything left over for the farm stand. Middle school maple-syrup makers and volunteers Maureen French, Jake Merrill, Collin Fahey, Alex Rodday, and Cecilia Lui spent the morning at the entrance of the sugar shack selling the finished syrup to waiting visitors.