

The Montague Reporter

MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD

Police Restructuring Approved; Hoffman New Deputy Chief

By JEFF SINGLETON

The Montague selectboard nearly completed a reorganization of the town’s police department, first proposed by incoming chief Jason Haskins three months ago, at Monday’s board meeting. The process has involved creating and filling a new deputy chief position, filling the positions of lieutenant and three sergeants, and eliminating a staff sergeant position created in 2007.

The board also discussed a financing strategy for the town’s share of the bill for a new Franklin County Technical School, should it pass on October 6; reacted to news

of the planned closure of Lightlife, a significant local employer; and approved the warrant for the November 3 election.

The discussion of the police reorganization was brief, in part because the proposal had been on the table since June.

Detective Joshua Hoffman was promoted to the new deputy chief position. According to an organizational chart included in the meeting materials, he will oversee virtually all of the department’s operations, leaving strategic planning, budget development, and intergovernmental and community relations to the

see **MONTAGUE** page A5

Foes of Widened Corridor Gain Steam With Petition



The WT-11 line passes through 11 western Massachusetts towns.

By SARAH ROBERTSON

FRANKLIN COUNTY – Local environmental advocates are petitioning against Eversource’s proposal to clear 278 acres of forest in order to widen a transmission line corridor that cuts through a number of western Massachusetts communities.

The utility’s tree-clearing plan is part of a “long-term vegetation maintenance initiative” already

complete in eastern Massachusetts, and underway in New Hampshire and Connecticut.

Eversource says the work, which will roughly double the existing width of the corridor, will improve grid reliability by reducing the risk of damage from falling trees. Opponents argue that the extent of the proposed cutting is unjustified, asserting that transmission lines in the

see **POWER LINE** page A5

NEWLY DEDICATED



Anne Jemas reports from Unity Skatepark: “Jeremy Latch permanently installed the memorial board for Jason Page this week... Dion, pictured here, helped clean up the area around the boards, and talked about how glad he is to have some place like this to ride his scooter, though he hopes to have a skateboard of his own someday.”

School Region, Tech Building Votes Tuesday

By REPORTER STAFF

FRANKLIN COUNTY – Next Tuesday, October 6 from noon to 8 p.m., voters in most local towns will weigh in on building a new \$236 million Franklin County Technical School (FCTS) facility, and voters in Bernardston, Gill, Leyden, Montague, Northfield, and Warwick will have an opportunity to form a new five- or six-town school district.

The Six-Town Regionalization Planning Board, convened in 2019, held a short meeting Wednesday. Chair Alan Genovese thanked the member towns’ clerks for “all the work that they’re doing, and the efficient processes that they have set up” to allow both elections to run at the same time. Majorities in every town save Warwick are needed to approve a new regional district agreement.

“If it passes,” he said, “we would start putting in the process for securing the [transition] money that has been appropriated.... If it fails, then our work is done, and the fact that people have done this over a seven-year period is certainly noteworthy. I believe we have moved the needle.”

A simple majority of all voters in the FCTS district is needed to approve a new school building. If it passes, many member towns would need to hold debt exclusion votes to authorize the additional taxation.

The two elections will be held on separate ballots.

Poll: MA Voters On Track to Keep Laws on Cannabis, Guns

By JENNIFER SMITH
COMMONWEALTH BEACON

BOSTON – Massachusetts voters look like they’ve largely made up their minds on two of the highest-profile questions on the November ballot. They seem on track to retain legalized recreational marijuana and a sweeping new gun law passed in 2024, according to a new poll.

In a MassINC Polling Group survey for *CommonWealth Beacon*, attitudes toward the other seven ballot questions were more mixed, with percentages of likely voters saying they expect to vote yes hovering in the high 40s and low 50s.

But the two final questions on the ballot are bucking that trend. Sixty-one percent of likely voters said they would vote no on **Question 8**, which if approved would end legal sales of recreational marijuana and create civil penalties for possessing more than a small amount of recreational cannabis. Twenty-seven percent of respondents said they would vote yes.

see **VOTERS** page A4

REGRETS

Graffiti Mystery Resolving

By MIKE JACKSON

TURNERS FALLS – Friday morning found downtown in an uproar as residents, workers, and business owners surveyed the results of an overnight graffiti rampage. Someone had scrawled dozens of slogans – in red and white spray paint, in blue and red paint marker, large and small – down Avenue A for the better part of a mile, with a side trip onto Third Street.

The themes ranged from geopolitical – a frequent phrase was “Free West Asia” – to more cryptic and at times personal, but a common thread was a furious indictment of conspicuous consumption in a time of war and poverty.

“We make our money off dead kids,” the words in blue marker read on the Town of Montague sign on town hall. “F--k us if we accept the murder of Brown children & or working class homelessness.”

The graffiti addressed two businesses more than any others: Dreamhouse Restaurant on Third Street and the Upper Bend Cafe & Bruncheonette on Avenue A. “No More Brunch” was sprayed in large letters on each, and stray downtown shopping carts were deposited in front of both eateries’ entrances. Red paint covered the heads of the sculptures, carved by local stonecutter Tim DeChristopher, that stood in front of both establishments.

“No More Brunch,” read the wall on the side of the Waterway Arts building, facing Dreamhouse: “Eggs are for people who don’t kill children in Gaza.”

A slowly gathering crowd assessed the situation, and the Upper Bend announced it was closed for the day. Both restaurants set up free coffee service on the sidewalk.

The many other affected proper-



The message on the Avenue A boutique Waterway Arts on Friday.

ties included the town-owned Shea Theater and Carnegie Library, the Peskeompskut Park bandstand, Loot Found & Made, the Shady Glen, the Country Creemee, Swanson’s Fabrics, Greenfield Savings Bank, Food City, and Orla.

Local and state police detectives began to work the case.

By evening, the situation had evolved. With notable exceptions, the majority of the graffiti had been cleaned up. Most of the letters sprayed on windows, it turned out, wiped off easily, and the paint marker could be scrubbed off many surfaces with cleaning solution.

Taking a break from pressure-washing red spray paint off the sidewalk, Dreamhouse co-owner Adrixx Catao shrugged: “I just hope this person doesn’t get in a lot of trouble.”

Over the weekend, a downtown resident turned himself in at the Montague police station.

see **GRAFFITI** page A6

WENDELL SELECTBOARD

Town Weighs Alcohol Liability, Allows Poles, Still Has Logs

By JOSH HEINEMANN

A quick pole hearing, conducted by Zoom, started the Wendell selectboard’s September 23 meeting. Project designer Peter Cochran and Matt MacDonald of National Grid asked for poles, spreaders, and a bracing pole to allow an express wire to run above the local wire close to the Wendell Depot substation.

No abutters came, and no one raised an objection. The board approved the request.

Responding to information about the town’s liability submitted by citizen Gabrielle Freels at a prior meeting, selectboard chair Laurie DiDonato suggested that the town take a closer look at its one-day liquor license policy. The current policy does not mention events that cross over onto town properties and town buildings.

Alcohol is not allowed on town property, and licenses given to the Wendell Meetinghouse have included a requirement that drinks stay on the Meetinghouse property, though the people attending those events are not necessarily confined to it.

Member Paul Doud said he did not see any extra liability for the town as long as the alcohol stays on Meetinghouse property. He said trouble from one-day licenses has been minimal, but his inclination is to deny licenses for events that cross over onto town properties.

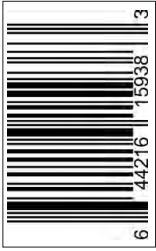
Member Marina Apostol said Pelham requires requesters carry one-day liability insurance. Alison Wight said Northfield also requires insurance.

Linda Hickman, a Wendell resident and president of the Friends of the Great Falls Discovery Center,

see **WENDELL** page A6

Everything Resolving Actually. Problems Over

Not Necessarily Confined.....	A1	Clean and Gently Used.....	B2
Far From Being Interlopers.....	A2	Impossible Due to the Weather.....	B3
Over Steep Terrain.....	A3	Fidgeting in the Roots.....	B4
Exhausting in its Own Way.....	A4	Outnumbered the Visitors.....	B5
Off to a Rocky Start.....	A5	Hit the Turf Hard.....	B5
Too Far Gone for Firewood.....	A6	Great Ghoul's, Gloop, Get Going.....	B6
In a Lonely Box.....	B1	Waste Wars, Wonky, Walk-Ins Welcome.....	B7
Strewn With River Rocks.....	B1	Billowing Outward.....	B8



The Montague Reporter

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August 2002

Letters to the Editors

Burnt Plains Punch Above Weight Class

An article recently appeared in the *Montague Reporter* claiming that the conversion of mature forest into pine barrens at Montague Plains reduces biodiversity. Situated within a broader argument against current practices like prescribed fire, the article claims “artificial barrens” constitute a loss of biodiversity compared with “natural forests.”

The framing is puzzling. Far from being interlopers, humans have inhabited the postglacial northeast longer than pitch pines. As a species, we’ve been wielding fire since the *Homo erectus* days. Anthropogenic burns are no less natural than the burrows of a groundhog.

Framing aside, the claim about reduced biodiversity was presented without supporting evidence. That’s not for lack of available information. Multiple biological surveys of the Montague Plains have been conducted that, taken together, paint a fairly detailed picture of the area’s overall biodiversity. Much of that research has looked at the effects of different management practices, allowing for at least a partial appraisal of the ecological impacts of practices such as prescribed fire and canopy thinning.

That appraisal shows that on a regional biodiversity scale, the thinned and burned portions of the Montague Plains seem to punch well above their weight class. Research out of UMass found that of the 375 native bee species currently known in Massachusetts, 154 are present at the Plains, more than anywhere else in the state.

Those 154 species were not evenly distributed. Bee abundance was greatest in areas of the Plains that have been thinned or recently burned, and most species were largely absent from closed-canopy forests.

Bees are not the only insects well supported there. Nearly one-third of all rare *Lepidoptera* in southern New England rely on scrub oak. Scrub oak has a low tolerance for shade, and anyone who has walked through the closed-canopy forests of the Plains can attest to scrub oak’s lower abundance there com-

pared with the more open areas.

Birds are similarly illustrative of the life-giving power of barrens. A 2011 study from UMass showed shrubland birds were substantially more abundant in thinned or burned portions of the Plains than in areas of closed-canopy forest. This is significant considering shrubland bird species are facing sweeping declines across the East. According to the National Breeding Bird Survey, 77% of shrubland species are declining, compared with 44% of mature forest species. The main threat facing most of them is habitat loss.

Shrublands currently comprise only 3% of Massachusetts, and pitch pine-scrub oak barrens like those at Montague Plains provide some of the highest quality, most enduring examples.

Northeastern mammals likewise benefit, with approximately one-third of terrestrial species inhabiting shrublands. Among reptiles, research at Montague Plains shows Eastern hognosed snakes avoiding closed canopy-forests and spending most of their time in burned and thinned areas. These snakes are listed under the state’s Endangered Species Act, with the main threat being habitat loss.

That habitat is created by fire, and lost when fire is excluded. Like the unique ecosystems born from the activities of beavers, entire webs of life can emanate from the handprints humans leave. When deciding what shape our handprints take, our decisions should be guided by our values and informed by what we know.

The Montague Plains is an infinitely fascinating place, and whatever wealth of knowledge we currently have is surely only a tiny fraction of all there is to learn. We should be humble and not overstate our understandings, but must also acknowledge and reckon with what we *do* know. If promoting biodiversity is a shared value, then based on the information currently available, ongoing stewardship activities at the Montague Plains are successful.

Tommy Stang
Westhampton

NINA ROSSI ILLUSTRATION



Jess arranges some clothing at the Redistro free store at 15 Arch Street in Greenfield. The center accepts donations of everything except food and furniture – and junk – for redistribution. It is open to the public Sundays from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. and Mondays from 5 to 8 p.m. See if they have something you need!

Vote ‘Yes’ On Tech School

As we enter the final week before October 6, our community stands on the brink of a historic, long-awaited decision. Will Franklin County Technical School finally get the modern school building our students deserve?

The answer doesn’t rest with the government, a selectboard, or a school committee. The final say belongs entirely to you.

As a senior graduating this upcoming June, I have fully dedicated myself to this cause. I have shown up to town meetings across the county, engaged with local officials, and urged everyone in my circle to vote. Moments like this are rare opportunities where your individual voice directly shapes the future of our local community.

While this choice is yours and yours alone, I kindly ask that you vote Yes for a new Franklin Tech building on October 6. Let’s invest in our future workforce and empower generations of students to come.

Aidan Pasic
Greenfield

All Schools Need Adequate Funding

In your September 17 issue, STRPB vice chair Greg Snedeker is quoted as saying “To think that the school is defined by the adults in the buildings, and that you should fund them no matter what the enrollment is, is voodoo economics.” (*Planning Board Vents Over Pioneer Opposition To Six-Town District*, Pg. A10).

I disagree. If you’re going to have a school, you should fund it adequately, and you should not assume that its costs are directly correlated with its enrollment.

Consider a school with one room and one teacher. There is a cost for the room and a cost for the teacher, and that is the base cost for the school, whether it has 10 students or five students. There may also be a cost per student – say, you give each student a pencil and notebook – and it will cost less overall to outfit five students than ten students. But the base cost of teacher and room is the same, and they represent a major part of the total.

I think that’s what Superintendent Kinsella was getting at in her quoted remarks, and it’s just common sense. It’s perfectly reasonable to believe that funding a room and a teacher for

five students – or even ten students – is too expensive, but that’s a different matter. If it’s decided that a school is needed, the budget shouldn’t be set twice as large for ten students as it would be for five. It should be set to cover the cost of the room and the teacher, plus the incremental cost for each student; in other words, the actual cost of operating the school.

This might be an academic discussion except for the fact that Massachusetts’s Chapter 70 public school aid is based on budgets that are built on an assumed cost per student. Very roughly, a school with 10 students is calculated to need a budget twice as large as a school with five students, other factors being equal, and state aid is allocated based on those budgets. In the real world, that doesn’t make sense, but that’s how we’re doing it.

It has taken a while, but years of advocacy by local educators and state legislators, especially Sen. Jo Comerford and Rep. Natalie Blais, have managed to shine a spotlight on the problems caused by this approach. In response, the state legislature recently revived the Foundation Budget Review Commission, which is tasked with studying the adequacy of the budget calculations, and this issue should be a major focus.

It is reasonable to question whether the Commonwealth can afford to fund every school that is currently funded, and reasonable people may disagree on both the answer and what we should do about it. But it’s not reasonable to argue that smaller schools should not be adequately funded, or to dismiss advocacy for that funding as “voodoo economics.”

Mike Naughton
Millers Falls

CORRECTION

Last week’s Letters to the Editors included an item, titled *Allegations Denied*, sent in by Grumpy of Turners Falls. (This was a real nickname and not an anonymous author, by the way, which would be against our policy.)

It included the sentence: “I’m always at the library, am a member of the Senior Center, and know people from the Catholic church up the street because their deacon used to live in elder housing.”

This was a typist’s error! The sentence in his letter originally read: “I’m always at the library, am a member of the Senior Center, and know people from the Catholic church up the street because their deacon used to **visit people where I** live in elder housing.”

We apologize to anyone who may have gotten the wrong impression – and, naturally, to Grumpy.

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PHONE: (413) 863-8666

EMAIL:
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ads@montaguereporter.org
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TURNERS FALLS AND VICINITY.

Compiled by MIKE JACKSON

Well, first and foremost the *Montague Reporter* wishes a **very happy 100th birthday** this Saturday to Mr. George Frank Bush, seen here in our office several years back:



In case you're new: Mr. Bush was born on Fifth Street, but moved to Fourth Street in the early 1930s and has been there ever since, besides a little tour of the Pacific just out of high school and some time spent in college not too far away. (His mother had immigrated here as a teenager from the *Austro-Hungarian Empire*.) He was the youngest player on the famous Turners Falls High School baseball team that won the 1942 state championship at Fenway Park, and was greeted by a thousand cheering fans when the train pulled into the Greenfield station around 3 a.m.

Mr. Bush commuted to get his master's in education at UMass, taught and coached in Turners Falls schools for three decades, and then retired – at age 55. (This writer was... 0.) That's right, he's well into his fifth decade of retirement. If you see him, maybe out on one of his regular walks on the bike path or maybe in the stands, tell him Hi, and tell him Happy Birthday, and tell him Thank You for being such a good example for the rest of us.

Speaking of Fenway.... Back in July 2017 we covered the installation of a mural in Millers Falls – under an out-of-the-way rail bridge – **honoring Douglass Smith**, the young Millers Falls man who played as a relief pitcher for the Red Sox for part of the 1912 season, up until someone from this vicinity called up the team and tipped them off that Doug wasn't really completely "white"...

The Montague Public Libraries, the Millers Falls Community Improvement Association, and RiverCulture have been quietly collaborating on a project to restore the mural and install it on the side of the Millers Falls branch library, a *much* more visible spot. Check out the MFCIA's Facebook page for process pics, featuring work by Sunshine Sign, and hey, maybe go check the mural out in person. We're hearing it's done!

Every Saturday from now into December, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., weather permitting, the reading public is invited to stop by Big River Chestnuts down on River Road in Sunderland to enjoy **"roasted and fresh chestnuts**, forest foods and drinks, pawpaws and persimmons, and seasonal treats..."

Next Saturday in particular, October 10, they're having a *Chestnut Festival*, the sixth annual, with farm tours and cooking demos and vendors and live bluegrass by Ragged Blue, and much more.

Big River is a big node in a regional network dedicated to bringing back this continent's once-abundant edible forests landscapes... we'll be thanking them in 20 years when all the survivors are living on chestnuts and bugs. Get in on the ground floor. Get the ground flour.

The League of Women Voters of Franklin County is going full force as the political season hits. On Wednesday the 14th they're hosting a forum for the **1st Franklin District state rep candidates** – that's Lora Wondolowski, coming in with the momentum of the Dem nom, and Amy Lavallee, who enjoyed a first-round bye as an Independent. If you have burning questions for them, email them to lwvfranklincounty@gmail.com by noon on Monday the 12th. The forum, co-sponsored by Greenfield Community Television (GCTV) and the *Recorder*, will be held at 6:30 p.m. at the GCTV studio and streamed live over their YouTube channel.

And then on Thursday the 15th they're hold-

ing a "speed dating" event at the Greenfield Community College Library Solarium, free and open to the public, refreshments provided, where attendees can experience a rotating stream of five-minute "dates" with info about the nine **Massachusetts ballot questions** on the November 3 election. This one is also at 6:30 p.m. Comb your hair and consider showing up with flowers – but nothing ostentatious, just a small wrist corsage or *boutonnière*; it's just the ballot questions.

Early Sunday evening, which was rainy, the Montague Center, Turners Falls, and Amherst fire departments and EMS crews and the Western Mass Regional Technical Rescue Team were called in to "stabilize and subsequently extricate" **an injured hiker on a trail** off Dry Hill Road.

And they did, according to a multi-agency press statement later that evening, "over steep terrain and slippery conditions." We're incredibly lucky to have these people working for our community. I hope the hiker recovers quickly!

On the topic of emergency help: I've been thinking a lot about that *Politico* study that determined the feds have approved 89% of **FEMA requests** from Republican-led states and 23% from Democratic-led states. Just, you know, thinking.



Readers and vicinity-dwellers Brian "Bryan" Zayatz and Marie Bloomgarden report that the **Lattice-Top Leek Pie** recipe from Claire Hopley's September 17 column (*Recipes: The Vegetable Pies: Civilization's Other Pies*, Page B1) is, and this is a direct quote, "v good."

If others of you are doing the recipes, please send us in your observations.

That's all for now – see you next week!

Send your little bits of news to editor@montaguereporter.org.

Another Letter

Franklin County Needs AI Judgment Tests

MassMEP's new federal award will put nearly \$3 million behind efforts to help smaller Massachusetts manufacturers adopt advanced technologies including artificial intelligence, robotics, and automation. Franklin County has a timely chance to make sure that investment strengthens human judgment rather than obscures it.

That matters because Greenfield Community College's Pathways to Advanced Manufacturing program began September 14, with hands-on training at GCC and Franklin County Technical School in Montague. Students learn manufacturing math, blueprint reading, metrology, CAD, and CNC operations, with job-placement support and the possibility of paid on-the-job training.

As AI enters those workplaces, training should add one more competency: knowing when the machine is wrong.

A practical assessment can have

four parts. First, ask workers to perform a task without AI so instructors can see what they understand. Second, let them use AI to improve speed or quality. Third, require independent verification against measurements, procedures, or physical inspection. Fourth, deliberately introduce a plausible AI error and see whether the worker catches and overrides it.

This would give employers a better signal than simply counting who used an AI tool. A worker who accepts every recommendation quickly may be less prepared than one who knows when to stop, check, and challenge the system.

Franklin County already teaches people how to make precise things. Its next manufacturing advantage should be teaching them how to question automated advice with the same precision.

Gleb Tshipursky, PhD
Columbus, OH

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

FirstLight Statement on Turners Falls Power Canal Drawdown Safety Measures

TURNERS FALLS – Last week, between September 21 and September 26, FirstLight conducted its annual power canal drawdown in Turners Falls. This is done to perform important inspections and maintenance activities that ensure the continued safety of the canal and the multiple hydroelectric power plants that it serves. The safety of FirstLight employees, contractors, and the public during the drawdown is paramount.

On the first day of the drawdown, FirstLight partnered with the Connecticut River Conservancy, the Silvio Conte Laboratory, and a team of volunteers to collect thousands of stranded juvenile sea lamprey from the canal and survey other species – an effort we have supported for many years.

It is important for the community to know that FirstLight works with our partners to conduct this event safely, which includes limiting access to a certain area and time period,

specific locking procedures for the canal gates to prevent sudden releases of water, high-visibility personal protective equipment, and sign-in/sign-out procedures to track the people we have authorized to enter the canal and ensure that they have exited safely at the end of the event.

This year, it has come to our attention that individuals were accessing the canal outside of the organized volunteer effort.

For safety reasons, we only allow access to the canal for the public during the organized collection effort. The canal should be considered an active part of FirstLight's hydro-power operations, even during the drawdown, and people should never cross barriers or enter fenced areas around any of FirstLight's facilities without prior authorization.

We appreciate the public's understanding of the need for, and the importance of, complying with safety precautions at and around FirstLight's facilities.



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NOTICE OF PUBLIC APOLOGY

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that CAPTAIN’S COMMAND AT BLUEBEARD’S BEACH CLUB OWNERS’ ASSOCIATION, INC. hereby publicly apologizes to Terri Sevene Cappucci, Michael Sevene, and James C. Sevene, Jr. for incorrectly naming them as the heirs of Barbara L. Sevene and as having an interest in Week Number 10 in Villa Unit Number 225 in Captain’s Command at Bluebeard’s Beach Club, St. Thomas U.S. Virgin Islands.

Captain’s Command further publicly apologizes for foreclosing upon the above-referenced property in their names and publicly identifying or announcing Terri Sevene Cappucci, Michael Sevene, and James C. Sevene, Jr. as having defaulted on obligations associated with that property. They were not responsible for the property, did not owe the debt or obligation that was the subject of the foreclosure, and should not have been publicly identified as having defaulted upon such an obligation.

Terri Sevene Cappucci, Michael Sevene, and James C. Sevene, Jr. are not heirs of Barbara L. Sevene and do not have, and did not have any debt or obligation to Captain’s Command arising from the above-referenced property.

Captain’s Command further acknowledges that the responsible parties have been identified and that the information that resulted in Terri Sevene Cappucci, Michael Sevene, and James C. Sevene, Jr. being incorrectly named was provided or directed to Captain’s Command by those responsible parties.

Captain’s Command has been informed that the heirs are Rodney and Sheri Demers; Russel and Joanne Demers; Paul and Deborah Demers; Ed and Carol Demers; and Melissa and Arthur Patenaude.

Richard H. Dollison, Esq.
Attorney for Plaintiff,
Captain’s Command at
Bluebeard’s Beach Club

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OP ED

When We Say It’s a ‘Shame’...

By BRENDAN TANG

TURNERS FALLS – I had an unexpected day off today. I work at the Upper Bend, which, along with a few other businesses on the block, got covered in graffiti last night or early this morning. The sentiments were mostly ones that I agree with: the US is responsible for genocide in Palestine; nice coffee and breakfast is one of the luxuries some Americans get to enjoy while turning a blind eye to miserable poverty around the world and at home; this privileged bubble wouldn’t exist without extreme economic exploitation and inequality, and the military brutality that underpins the value of the dollar.

We decided not to open the kitchen, and instead just made a pot of coffee to share with whoever wandered in while we were cleaning up. People did wander in, and they gave us kind words and helped with the cleanup.

If we’re to assume best intentions, we might say our mischievous graffiti writer hoped to provoke some discussion, and in that sense they succeeded. But the discussions revolved around the gesture of the graffiti, not its content. Consensus was that the gesture felt misplaced, and perhaps self-indulgent, even if the frustration behind it was understandable. “It’s such a shame,” was the refrain I heard throughout the day.

When a protest is well-conceived, we want it to be inconvenient. The point is to disrupt the rhythm of daily life, to jolt us awake, to make some room for reflection. I think this protest was pretty ill-conceived, but I still ended up with some reflections to share.

First off, I really hope the cops don’t nail this person. The café lost a day of revenue and we were a little freaked out. But it only took us about an hour to scrape and scrub everything off, especially thanks to the kind help from our neighbor, Angelo, whose partner Cindy runs Ritual Bowl. Relatively little harm was done, especially when

weighed against how quickly and unexpectedly even a misdemeanor charge can snowball into life-ruining consequences for someone already vulnerable.

It’s nearly impossible to make this point without being asked to lay out a comprehensive ethical framework that determines where, if anywhere, to “draw the line” and seek police intervention, but that’s not the discussion I’m looking to have. The only thing this graffiti tells me about the person who wrote it is that they seem confused. I doubt police involvement will do anything to help with that, much less recoup any of the damage that was done.

Second, I would hate for all our discussion to begin and end with something like “it’s a shame.” It’s a phrase that marks the end of a conversation, or a transition to a different topic. It’s a passive, defensive posture, exhausting in its own way, like a perpetual shrug.

I found myself in that posture this morning when I saw the graffiti, and it rhymed with how I felt when I heard about the vitriol directed at Last Ditch in Greenfield over social media. There’s a certain flavor of immobilizing despair that hangs around the word “infighting,” though I’m skeptical of the term’s utility, and unsure if it applies in either instance. I’m only using it to try to evoke this posture we seem to find ourselves in, so that maybe we can think about how to start twisting ourselves into a more useful one.

What do we mean when we say “it’s a shame?” We don’t just mean “it’s a bummer.” We also mean that we’re embarrassed, that a mistake has been made – potentially by someone with whom we might be associated. An identity crisis arises when you confront someone who agrees with you on many things but disagrees with you on some key things. It’s an uncanny feeling, like seeing yourself in a funhouse mirror.

The graffiti felt indulgent and naive, despite echoing some values that I hold dear. On a prac-

tical level I worry – if only a bit – about people being alienated from our values by associating them with indulgent, naive stunts. But if I probe a little deeper, I find that what really spooks me has more to do with identity and belonging – do I belong to an indulgent, naive community? Am I, therefore, indulgent and naive?

I have a feeling that this kind of psychology has something to do with the obsession, among the politically aware, with finding the exact sect where they feel most aligned: “I’m a socialist, but not a communist,” or, “I’m a communist, but not a Leninist!” It can feel as though any two groups will argue more fiercely the more they overlap in ideology. The more alike we are, the worse the feeling of betrayal when we deviate. This might go some way toward explaining the scathing backlash Last Ditch faced for lifting its mask requirement for only one night of the week, even though almost no other business in town requires them at all.

Conflict within a community provokes insecurity about one’s place within it. A tempting defense mechanism is to redraw the community’s boundaries to exclude what embarrasses us – “this isn’t legitimate left practice,” or even or “this was a right-wing false flag.” When someone who otherwise reminds us of ourselves transgresses, we scramble to describe the line they crossed, so that we are sure we remain on the right side. But these methods of subdividing and severing insulate our egos in a way that harmonizes with the promise of consumerism, individualism, and social media: you’re entitled to a custom-made, drama-free micro-niche – though you may be its only member.

There have to be healthier ways to metabolize conflict. I’m grateful to be reminded of this today, even though our mischievous comrade could have delivered the reminder in a more thoughtful manner.

Brendan Tang is a cook. He lives in Gill.

VOTERS from page A1

Question 9, a referendum on whether to keep the state’s sweeping 2024 firearms law, looks set for a resounding affirmation of the law, with 70% of respondents saying they would vote to keep it and 18 percent saying they would repeal it.

These two are also the questions voters seem most sure about, with just 11% of voters undecided on each. That is the lowest undecided share of any of the nine questions on the ballot.

“People don’t want to go backwards on these two things,” said Steve Koczela, president of the MassINC Polling Group.

“They might not love the Legislature,” Koczela said of voters, pointing to their strong support two years ago for a ballot question to audit lawmakers. “But they approve of what the Legislature did on firearms, at least.”

The survey of 800 likely voters was conducted online September 14 through 22. It has a credibility interval of plus or minus 4 percentage points.

Question 1, which would apply the public records law to the Legislature and governor’s office, has the support of 63% of respondents with 14% opposed. That’s lower than the support seen in a UMass Amherst/WCVB poll in August, which found 84% support for the measure with just 7% opposed.

The public records question is considered a natural heir to state Auditor Diana DiZoglio’s successful ballot push last cycle to allow her office to audit the Legislature.

That audit attempt, which the Legislature has vocally resisted, is stuck in a political and legal morass at the moment.

The Commonwealth Beacon survey asked voters to name their top issues at the ballot box in their own words. When the polling group reviewed those answers, guns and marijuana were the only ballot questions people cited as reasons to get out and vote.

“Those are your two marquee ones that were actually drawing people out,” said MPG vice president Rich Parr.

In 2016, nearly 54% of Massachusetts voters approved legalizing recreational marijuana. A decade later, they are being asked to become the first state to dismantle the market. The repeal campaign is led by the Coalition for a Healthy Massachusetts and is backed by the national anti-legalization group Smart Approaches to Marijuana, which is funding a similar effort in Maine.

The ballot question would still allow adults 21 and older to possess up to one ounce of pot without criminal penalty, and it would leave the state’s medical marijuana law in place.

Question 9 is a veto referendum, a mechanism that lets voters decide whether to keep a law the Legislature has already passed. The 2024 law cracked down on ghost guns and 3-D printed guns, strengthened the state’s red flag law, and expanded the definition of assault weapons, among other changes. Gun rights groups gathered enough signatures to force a referendum but missed the window for the 2024 ballot.

Most of the other seven questions still lean toward a win, but by less, and with 20 to 25% of voters still undecided. That puts them in “kind of a gray area where it really could move,” said Parr.

Question 6, which would create a conservation fund that would still depend on legislative appropriation, has 56% support to 24% opposition.

Four questions failed to crack 50% support in the poll, or just made it over that line, which public opinion experts and ballot question veterans agree leaves the campaigns on shaky ground.

“It’s different than a candidate poll where the margin is the best predictor,” Koczela said. In ballot questions, “the yes percent tends to be the best predictor. And if you have a yes percent that’s right around 50, then you’re watching nervously.” What’s more, pollsters generally expect undecided voters on ballot questions to break toward the status quo.

Most of the ballot campaign money tends to be spent between Labor Day and Election Day, Koczela noted, and “you do kind of see support move the most just in the last eight to 10 weeks.”

On Question 4, allowing Election Day voter registration, yes holds the lead, 53% to 33%. Question 7, which lowers the lot size requirements to build single-family homes, has support at 51% and opposition at 24%.

Question 2, letting Committee for Public Counsel Services employees unionize, fell below half support, with yes in the lead, 48% to 25%. Question 5, rewriting the state’s revenue cap, is also narrowly below majority support, with 47% in favor and 26% opposed.

Apart from the two repeal efforts, Question 3 to create all-party primaries looks most endangered, even as the margin stays close. It had the support of 43% of likely voters, with 36% opposed and 20% undecided.

Despite the record-tying number of questions, and the irritation from Beacon Hill with advocates doing an end-run around the usual legislative process, voters aren’t eager to hand over their direct democracy leverage.

More than three-quarters of respondents said “it is a good thing for the voters to decide these issues” and just 15% said lawmakers should be deciding more of them.

With nine questions on the ballot, the pollsters said the usual rules may not apply. Campaigns will compete with one another for attention, which could blunt opposition spending.

“The numbers may be more sticky than they usually are,” Koczela said. “Or some of these undecideds might just not have heard about the ballot question and might be very persuadable.”

Many of those undecided voters face unfamiliar subjects, he noted.

“Some of these are esoteric issues,” Koczela said. “They’re not all things like marijuana legalization.”

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MONTAGUE from page A1

chief. Hoffman’s promotion, which the board unanimously approved, is contingent on successful contract negotiations, and will begin with a six-month probationary period.

The board then voted to promote current sergeant Peter Lapachinski to the vacant position of lieutenant, and appointed staff sergeant James Deery and patrolmen Jacob Lapean and Cody Wells as full-time sergeants.

According to a memo, these promotions were determined by a four-step process. The vacancies were posted on August 7 and a board consisting of policemen from the region and Montague Center resident Ariel Elan conducted interviews on September 10. Then final candidates for the top position made presentations to a “promotional” committee that included town administrator Walter Ramsey. Finally, chief Haskins reviewed and confirmed the findings from this process.

Selectboard chair Rich Kuklewicz thanked those who had served on the two hiring committees, then proposed that the police be sworn in to their new positions at the next meeting, even though it would be almost a week before their official starting dates.

“That sounds good,” said Ramsey, adding that he hoped to have the new contract with Hoffman ready for the board’s approval by then.

A Million a Year

Ramsey presented a proposal addressing how the town should finance its share of the funding for a new Franklin County Technical school, should the measure to build it pass in the election next Tuesday, October 6, which will be held from 12 to 8 p.m. at the town’s regular polling stations.

Ramsey said Montague would be required to fund approximately 12.8% of the project’s local share, at a cost of just under \$16 million. If this were funded by a 30-year bond issue, he said, the total cost of principal and interest would be roughly \$29 million, or about \$1 million annually added to the town’s debt service. This amount could not be funded under the town’s levy limit as imposed by Proposition 2½, and would therefore require a debt exclusion to be approved both at town meeting and by an additional election at some point over the next year.

Ramsey also referred to a memo he had shared in February estimating that the annual combined debt service for a new library, which was endorsed by voters in June, plus the local portion of the tech school project would increase from its current \$1 million to over \$2.5 million annually.

Tempeh Maker Closing

The town may also experience some revenue loss, as well as employment losses, from the closure of Lightlife Foods next year, as announced last week by its parent company Maple Leaf Foods. The company, which makes plant-based high-protein food products at a large facility in the airport industrial park, employs between 120 and 150 local workers, according to its website. It is also “a large customer of the Clean Water Facility,” according to Ramsey.

Ramsey said town staff have made sure the parent company is working with the MassHire Franklin Hampshire Career Center to help employees find new jobs, and have talked with state senator Jo Comerford’s office about working to facilitate reuse of the property.

Selectboard member Nate Card suggested the facility could be used to process local produce, which he called “a missing piece in the local food ecosystem.” He also wondered if tours of the building would be given.

Ramsey said he did not feel qualified to comment on the regional produce industry, but that tours of Lightlife would definitely be organized.

Midterms Loom

The board approved the warrant for the November state and national midterm election after a reading by chair Kuklewicz of the polling locations, the hours, and the positions up for grabs.

The ballot also contains nine questions, including one validating a 2024 law regulating so-called assault weapons; another limiting increases in state taxation; and another that would virtually eliminate the production and sale of cannabis.

The reading got off to a rocky start when it was revealed that the warrant had the wrong dates and times for the election, but this was quickly rectified by Kuklewicz. The election will take place on Tuesday, November 3 from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m., though early and absentee voting will also be allowed.

Other Business

The selectboard approved a memorandum of understanding with the National Association of Government Employees (NAGE) concerning how overtime and paid leave for four members of the public works and clean water departments, who are covered by that staff union, are calculated. Ramsey said that these employees had informally been treated like their colleagues in the United Electrical Workers (UE), but that those terms had not previously been

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NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARINGS
MONTAGUE ZBA #26-10

Notice is hereby given that the Montague Zoning Board of Appeals will hold a public hearing on Wednesday, **October 14th, 2026, at 6:30 p.m.** VIA ZOOM and IN PERSON at the Montague Town Hall Upstairs conference room, One Avenue A, Turners Falls, MA for a Special Permit Request from PV Squared Solar to allow the construction of an accessory ground-mounted solar energy installation consisting of approximately 696 sq. ft / 15.9 kW, Under Sections 8.9.4 and 9.2, located at **79 East Taylor Hill Rd (Parcel 48 Map 0062)), in the AGRICULTURAL FORESTRY 2 (AF2) District.**

The filing is available for review at Town Hall.
In-person meeting details and remote meeting login information can be found at www.montague-ma.gov/calendar.

Joshua Lively, Chairman
Montague Zoning Board of Appeals

POWER LINE from page A1

region have a limited history of outages due to falling trees, and that annual vegetation management plans are already in place.

“They haven’t demonstrated a need, so why would the state approve such extensive cutting?” Shutesbury resident and planning board member Michael DeChiara told the Reporter. “We all know climate change is here, and we all want a resilient grid, but that does not mean you clear-cut acres of trees without a good reason to do it.”

After the Northeast blackout of August 2003, which affected 55 million people, a joint US-Canada Power System Outage Task Force concluded that one of four root causes of the outage was that a utility in Ohio, FirstEnergy, “failed to manage adequately tree growth in its transmission rights-of-way.”

Following that event, Congress required the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) to mandate and enforce vegetation management programs along transmission lines. After another major storm outage affected New England in October 2011, a FERC report recommended that utilities “should work toward reclaiming the full right-of-way width where feasible” in order to reduce the risk from “danger trees.”

In 2016 Eversource announced it was beginning an ambitious project named the Transmission Right-of-Way Reliability Program (TRRP), involving improvements to 2,300 miles of transmission lines in three states.

If approved, the next phase of the project would be the WT-11 corridor, along which high-voltage transmission lines stretch for 29 miles from substations in Northfield and Erving to a substation in Ludlow. The line passes through Wendell, Montague, Leverett, Shutesbury, Pelham, Belchertown, Amherst, and Granby.

Trees and shrubs taller than 15 feet would be removed to increase the width of the corri-



The WT-11 line, as seen from Mormon Hollow Road in Wendell.

dor, which currently ranges from 125 to 335 feet, to 252 to 576 feet. The WT-11 section includes wetland and riverfront areas, vernal pools, and 86 acres of state-designated “priority habitat” for certain protected species, according to the draft environmental impact report filed by the company in August 2025.

“The proposed work is based on an analysis of vegetation risks within an existing transmission right-of-way,” Eversource spokesperson Olessa Stepanova told the Reporter. “The proposed approach allows for narrower clearing where tree-fall risk is low and manages the corridor for grasses, shrubs and other low-growing vegetation that can support wildlife and pollinators.”

Alarmed by this plan, a small group of environmental advocates joined together last year under the name Western Mass Towns for a Responsible Grid. The group started an

online petition last week asking Governor Maura Healey and Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) Secretary Rebecca Tepper not to approve the plan. Instead, the petition recommends that the company continue selectively pruning, topping, and cutting trees that threaten electrical wires.

Stepanova said the company is sensitive to the group’s concerns and looks forward to “continued engagement with residents.”

“We understand why residents care deeply about the forests and natural resources in their communities, and we take seriously our role to be responsible environmental stewards while providing customers with safe, reliable access to the essential electric service they need,” she wrote in an email.

As of Wednesday afternoon, DeChiara reported that 605 people from 73 different towns and cities had signed the petition. While the

majority live in western Massachusetts, people from 25 municipalities in the eastern part of the state had signed on, DeChiara said, suggesting a “broad-based concern and interest” in Eversource’s tree-cutting strategy.

“Not a single tree has caused an outage, ever, on the line that makes up 28 of this project’s 29.3 miles,” the petition argues.

The proposed clearing would fall within Eversource’s existing easement, but requires permits from the Massachusetts Energy Facilities Siting Board and the EEA. Eversource is currently working on a final report for the WT-11 section of the project, which DeChiara said he expects to be submitted in December or January. DeChiara said he is concerned the plan may bypass review by local conservation commissions, and that he wants to make sure the company includes selective cutting and pruning practices in its plan wherever possible.

DeChiara and Jeff Weston, a fellow member of the advocacy group, told the Reporter they are especially concerned about tree clearing near a sensitive wetland area at Buf-fam Falls in Pelham, where the Nurse Brook meets Dean Brook.

Western Mass Towns for a Responsible Grid is also focused on a proposal by National Grid to replace transmission line poles along a 67-mile corridor through the region. The project would involve clearing about 130 acres of trees, and would be completed between 2029 and 2035. The company submitted its final environmental impact report in August, and the EEA is accepting public comments on those plans until October 23.

“Eversource’s plan is really egregious, wide, and uncalled for,” DeChiara said. “National Grid, at least, is legitimately putting in new infrastructure.”

Mike Jackson contributed additional writing.



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GRAFFITI from page A1

On Monday the man approached the *Montague Reporter* to discuss the incident, and to ask about publishing a public apology in our pages. (The newspaper office's front step was also tagged: "Free us & free West Asia. We are not free.") The early-morning spree, he said, was a mistake, a reaction to personal setbacks in the context of feeling distraught at the state of the world. He claims to have acted alone.

With the understanding that legal charges may be pending, and the man's stated intention to first discuss his actions with the those directly affected and then identify himself publicly, the *Reporter* is withholding his identity from publication as of this coverage.

"It's still under investigation," Montague police chief Jason Haskins confirmed when reached for a statement on Wednesday. "We have identified a person of interest. We believe it's an isolated incident, and don't expect it to continue."

Upper Bend co-owner Billy McKerchie said he had received an apology. "He expressed to me that he doesn't want people who work here to be worried something like this is going to happen again," McKerchie told the *Reporter*. "It was a bad episode."

Red coloration on DeChristopher's sculpture was the most visible lingering mark.

"We washed it off and moved past it," McKerchie

said. "I don't necessarily disagree with the underlying sentiment, but it felt very misdirected."

"It cleaned up really quickly," said Dreamhouse co-owner Jill Fishman. "We were able to have a full day of service on Friday... everyone was there, checking in. Saturday was business as usual."

Fishman said she hadn't yet "heard personally from this person," but had "heard that they have intentions to work on repair with us specifically."

"I feel really grounded in our decision not to press charges," she added. "I don't think that's what this situation warrants."

"The investigation remains ongoing, so I cannot comment on its details," town administrator Walter Ramsey wrote when reached for comment Wednesday. "I can confirm, however, that the individual responsible has met with me, Selectboard Chair Kuklewicz, and Library Director Kelley to apologize for their actions... I believe that acknowledgment is an important early step toward accountability and reconciliation."

"I am disappointed and disheartened by this incident of misdirected anger," Ramsey added, "but our community is resilient, and I am proud of the response."

Attempts to reach DeChristopher were unsuccessful as of press time. Multiple property owners said they would withhold comment until after they have spoken with the individual responsible.

**WENDELL** from page A1

cautioned that liability insurance is building-specific, and does not cover individuals. She said the Department of Conservation and Recreation requires any private event on public property, such as the Discovery Center, to take out \$1 million in liability insurance. A liability policy for one-day licenses, valid for one year, costs \$800.

DiDonato said that officially, the town requires Training for Intervention Procedures (TIPS) training for one-day license holders, but does not typically insist on seeing the certification. Town coordinator Kelly Tyler reported that TIPS is a four-hour online course, costing \$38, and awards a certificate valid for three years.

Representing the Friends of the Wendell Meetinghouse, Court Dorsey said alcohol is not essential for Meetinghouse events, but is a useful adjunct to many events, and argued that not being able to offer it would be a real loss for the town. He said alcohol was not a real money maker for the Meetinghouse, and that the \$25 fee for a one-day license was an amount the Friends had to consider seriously.

Dorsey said the amount of trouble caused by alcohol consumption at the Meetinghouse has been minimal, and no one disagreed. He said that one recent user who had offered beer and wine at a Meetinghouse

event but stored the beer in the town hall kitchen had done so through ignorance. Dorsey deferred questions of insurance to the Friends' treasurer and economic advisor, Don Stone, and said he could imagine that Stone did not take alcohol into account. At some point, Dorsey said, insurance would become too costly for Meetinghouse events.

Dorsey asked if the Friends could make simple requests for one-day licenses through email instead of in person. Board members were sympathetic, and agreed to postpone making a change in the town policy to allow more insurance information to come in.

Of Mice and Logs

Tyler said Eric Quinlivan of the Shutesbury-based company Zero Tolerance Pest Control quoted a price of \$125 to inspect both the town hall and the office building for possible mouse entryways.

Wight said volunteers can plug the holes, and volunteered to buy the traps. Good Neighbors has offered peanut butter. Wight said she thought it made sense to block the entries and start trapping at the same time, and warned it is often necessary to change bait and change methods, because mice learn.

The selectboard agreed to have Quinlivan help site the traps to start. Good Neighbors volunteer Kevin Skorupa said he would check the

ones in the town hall twice or three times a week, and Doud agreed to check traps in the office building. The library staff will take responsibility for that building.

DiDonato reported that logger and cordwood worker Jake Doudy had assessed the pile of logs on town-owned property next to Montague Road, and said they were too far gone for firewood. The conservation commission wants them gone, and hiring a truck to haul them away would cost \$8,000.

Hickman said that the Millers Falls Road and Gun Club burns piles of wood at their clam bakes, and might be willing to take a look at the pile. The Turners Falls Rod and Gun club also has clam bakes.

Other Business

DiDonato said she thought not enough information was out for a proposed forum about parking in the center of town, originally planned for September 30. She suggested postponing the forum a month to October 28.

The town administration has ideas about the parking, but not fully developed ones, and no mechanism for enforcement.

Skorupa said the Good Neighbors organization would like some guidance about safety and enforcement. The town center is overfull with parked cars on their distribution days.

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DON PLANTE PHOTO



WEST ALONG THE RIVER

AUTUMN COMES
TO THE OLD PASTURE

*You know how the path leads to the woods
the one you see from the kitchen window.
the one that leads you to the river....*

*And you know how if you leave the path
and walk into the trees you come
to a grove of tall hemlocks, dark green now
against the light-brown fallen leaves?*

By DAVID BRULE

THE FLAT, ERVINGSIDE – Well, the path that leads to the woods once led to a rolling green pasture along the river called the Millers. This river was known as the *paguag* for thousands of years, named by the first peoples who lived here.

The road down from the village ends here at the edge of the dark woods. It’s at the end of the sidewalk too, a place where Nature takes over. The path I mention begins just beyond a protective growth of maple saplings and random hop-hornbeam. You actually have to know what you’re looking for.

I like it like that.

Few of us are left who still call this place the Pasture. Once upon a time, great-grandfather farmed and hayed this stretch, first cleared by the Indigenous people.

But all that changed one stormy week in September almost 90 years ago, when all of New England lived through seven days of terror during the Hurricane of 1938.

That storm changed the landscape forever.

This green pastureland along the river, its banks lined with weeping willows and sugar maples, was flooded by the raging river that rose 20 feet up to the foundations of this house.

When the waters receded, all

was desolation, the pasture strewn with river rocks and stones, the topsoil ripped away.

Thus began a transformation of the Old Pasture, now grown to woodlands.

These days, soon to be nine decades after that hurricane and flood, the above-mentioned path leads you into a deep, shaded world of tall trees and forest canopy.

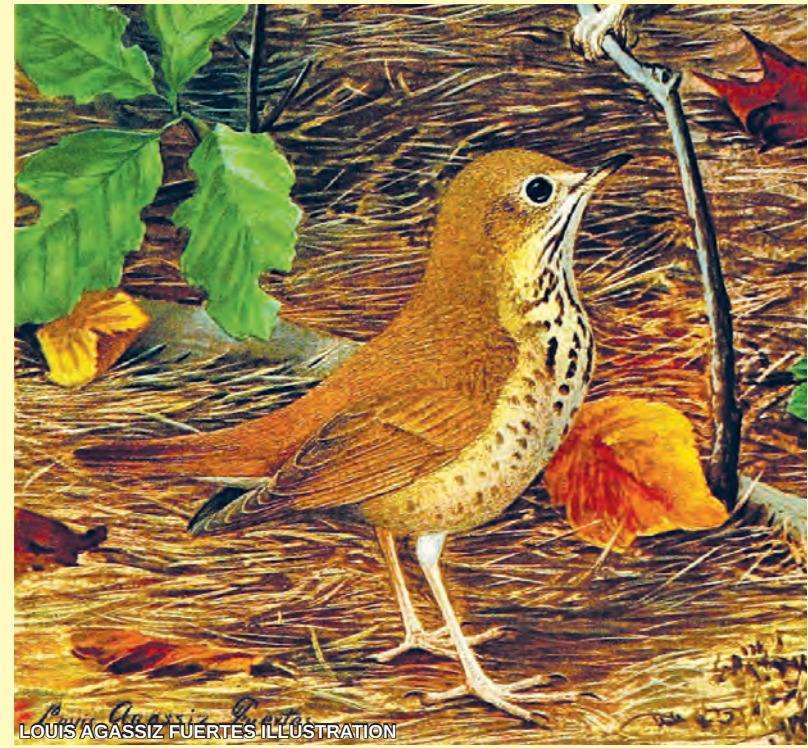
Sometimes in the spring, being there can be likened to moving under the waters of a tranquil pool of green light. The growth of trees over the decades has created a luminous pale green world, a home to brilliant wood warblers and musical thrushes where meadowlarks once sang from the fenceposts.

But now in early October, with autumn coming on, the tender green of springtime and the lush river-bottom growth of summer has been transformed into a woodland world of warm golden light, with a dash of red from the maples for accent.

In October, the Old Pasture has become an abode for the gray fox family, joined by the great horned owl who hoots and haunts the autumn woods.

The delicate white springtime flowers of the mapleleaf viburnum have become dark blue drop-let berries, food for warblers on their way south.

see **WEST ALONG** page B4



The hermit thrush, Catharus guttatus.

Above: The General Pierce Bridge, emerging through the mist on a recent early Tuesday morning.

The Week in High School Sports Volleyball Season Is Heating Up

By MATT ROBINSON

TURNERS FALLS – This week the first Nor’easter of the season stalled over Massachusetts, dumping almost a foot of wind-swept rain onto the South Shore. When it reached the Valley, the rain was coming straight down, but it managed to cancel every field sport on Monday.

The volleyball wars heated up this week, with Franklin Tech attempting to hold onto their lead in the Western Conference and Turners Falls High School striving to keep their heads above the 50% mark.

Meanwhile, the football Eagles needed every player to knock the Golden Pioneers down a rung.

Volleyball
TFHS 3 – Greenfield 1
FCTS 3 – Mohawk 0
Pioneer 3 – TFHS 1

Last Wednesday, September 23, the Blue Thunder and their entourage traveled over the river to take on the Green Wave. Though Turners no longer has a football team, there still seems to be a Blue-Green rivalry in volleyball. The game was a topic of discussion throughout the school as students encouraged the girls to beat Greenfield.

With the Green Bridge out and Deerfield Road dug up, you wouldn’t expect a lot of Turners folks to go to the match. But the bleachers were filled with blue-clad students and their families. The crowd was loud, and families and students from both schools sat together, at times giving dueling clapping and cheers.

After the middle school and JV matches finished, the varsity girls started their warm-up dance routine. Some of the routines include synchronized air spikes over the net. On the other side of the net, three Green players pantomimed blocks as the Turners players swung.



Franklin Tech’s Sarah Beckwith sends the ball over Mohawk Trail’s Riley Dyer as the Eagles hosted the Warriors on Tuesday. At right, her teammate Laura Fness watches.

The Thunder’s first serve was an ace, and they never looked back. Green called a few timeouts trying to cool the Thunder off, but to no avail as Blue took the first set handily. Green made it a game by taking the second set but in the next two Turners refused to let the ball hit the floor: players dove for loose balls, and

see **SPORTS** page B5

REFLECTION

An Uncanny Synthesis of Food

By MACKENZIE ARGYLE

GREENFIELD – I consider myself a very blessed individual when I walk the streets of downtown Greenfield. There is an immense amount of humanity to experience, something that is increasingly sought to be stolen from us.

The past half-decade has seen this social theft and communal fracturing reach levels once reserved for impossibly dystopian works of fiction. Never before has there been such a great effort to put each person in a lonely box, where their phone is God, feeding them synthetic emotions and experiences to make them purchase and gamble.

Up until very recently, one could escape this somewhat easily. The devices could be put down; the bars of captivity could be broken. One could walk into the sunlight and there would be no way for one to be



ARGYLE PHOTO

The latest mutations in our visual environment.

digitally lied and cheated upon.

However, I do believe those days are over.

As I embarked on a wandering around this wonderful town recently, I spotted a strange sign on a newer restaurant nearby the co-op – a sign that immediately drew horror.

On a blue background there were two foods, a panini and a hot dog, both of which bore every single mark of artificial generation.

Viewed from a distance, everything appears a little too perfect. The panini, its bread bearing

see **SYNTHESIS** page B8

Pet of the Week



‘MISU’

Say hello to Misu. This two-year-old explorer arrived at Dakin with her kitten, Ash, who is also looking for a home. Misu is a sweet, friendly, and affectionate girl. She’s an active, playful kitty, who enjoys little adventures. She also likes to be part of whatever you’re doing and is happiest by your side.

Misu lived with another adult cat who bullied her, and will do best with slow and patient introductions to any cats in her new home.

If you’re looking for a loving companion with a sweet personality and an adventurous spirit, Misu may be the perfect one for you.

To adopt her, start the process by calling the Dakin Humane Society in Springfield at (413) 781-4000 to be sure she is available. There is a \$299 adoption fee. Open adoption hours are Tuesdays through Saturdays from 12:30 to 3 p.m. Visit www.dakinhumane.org for more information.

Senior Center Activities OCTOBER 5 THROUGH 9

GILL and MONTAGUE

The Gill-Montague Senior Center, 62 Fifth Street, Turners Falls is open Mondays through Fridays from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. For more information, please call 863-9357.

Monday 10/5

10:15 a.m. Aerobics
11 a.m. Chair Exercise

Tuesday 10/6

Closed for Elections
Wednesday 10/7
9 a.m. Veterans’ Agent
10 a.m. Outdoor Yoga at the Discovery Center
10:15 a.m. Aerobics
11 a.m. Chair Exercise
12 p.m. Bring Your Lunch Bingo
4 p.m. Mat Yoga

Thursday 10/8

1 p.m. Pitch
3 p.m. Writing Workshop

Friday 10/9

9 a.m. Tablet Class (pre-register)
10:15 a.m. Aerobics
11 a.m. Chair Exercise
2 p.m. Chair Dance

LEVERETT

Chair Yoga classes are held Wednesdays at 10 a.m., hybrid, at the town hall and on Zoom. Foot care clinics are the third Tuesday of each month. The next clinic is October 20.

Luncheons are held on the fourth Friday of each month at town hall. For more information, contact (413) 548-1022 or

coa@leverett.ma.us, or check the town newsletter or the Leverett-Connects listserv.

ERVING

Open Mondays through Fridays from 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. at 1 Care Drive. Daily snacks and coffee. Fitness room and pool table open.

Monday 10/5

9 a.m. Good for U
10 a.m. Seated Fitness
12 p.m. Pitch

Tuesday 10/6

8:15 a.m. Nail Clinic
8:30 a.m. Nurse
9 a.m. Stretch and Balance
10 a.m. Line Dancing
11 a.m. Social Stringer

Wednesday 10/7

9 a.m. Interval Training
10 a.m. Chair Aerobics

Thursday 10/8

11:30 a.m. Bingo

Friday 10/9

9 a.m. Barre Fusion
10 a.m. Pilates Flow

Friday 10/9
8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. Quilting and Open Sew

WENDELL

Foot care clinic is the first Wednesday of each month. The next clinic is October 7. Call Katie Nolan at (978) 544-2306 for information or appointments.

For Senior Health Rides, contact Nancy Spittle at (978) 544-6760.

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

Montague Public Libraries and The Brick House Invite the Community To Share the Halloween Spirit!

TURNERS FALLS – Halloween costumes can be expensive, especially when kids grow out of them almost as quickly as they grow into them. Don’t let those unused costumes haunt your closets. This fall, Montague Public Libraries and the Brick House Community Resource Center are asking the community to help make sure every local kid who wants to dress up has a costume to wear.

Both organizations are collecting clean, gently used Halloween costumes and accessories now through the annual Halloween Costume Swap Party, taking place next Saturday, October 10, from 3 to 5 p.m. at the new Brick House Annex at 22 Third Street in Turners Falls. Community members can drop off donations at collection bins at the Carnegie Public Library at 201 Avenue A, and the main Brick House building at 24 Third Street.

Youth services librarian Angela Rovatti-Leonard, who organized the costume swap party, sees it as a chance to bring organizations together around creativity and resource sharing. “We’re teaming up with local community organizations to turn costumes into second chances,” she says. “A little creativity, collaboration, and reuse can make Halloween even more fun!”

The party is one of many ways Montague Public Libraries and the Brick House are working together.

The growing partnership has created more opportunities to share resources, connect neighbors, and make sure local families have welcoming places to turn.

At the swap, children and teens can bring a costume from home and choose a new-to-them costume to take home. No costume to swap? You can still join the party. The afternoon gathering, which will also include light refreshments and a creepy-cute craft, is for everyone.

“Halloween is such an exciting part of being a kid, and we want every child in our villages to have the chance to join in,” said Lachlan Thompson, community relations coordinator for Montague Public Libraries. “A costume that’s been sitting in the back of someone’s closet collecting dust might be exactly what another kid has been looking for. That’s what makes this kind of community sharing so wonderful.”

Those interested in donating are encouraged to check their closets for costumes that are clean and gently used. Costumes for children and teens are especially welcome, along with accessories such as hats, masks, capes, wigs, animal ears, and other pieces that can help turn an everyday outfit into a Halloween costume.

Donations will be accepted in designated bins through next Friday, October 9; community members can also bring donation items to the party.

Artist Profile: Valerie Gilman

By MELISSA WLOSTOSKI

GREENFIELD – Valerie Gilman is one of the latest artists I have found to profile. I saw a sculpture of hers that resembled a sun at the LAVA Center in Greenfield. She describes it as “a mosaic piece, made of clay fired in a gas kiln to cone 6 mid-high range firing temperature.”

Gilman told me she has been doing art like this “since college, so 37 years.” She makes what she makes for sculptures that draw her curiosity, that amuse her, that feel inspiring or nourishing or beautiful. She had a studio in her home, and she taught at Northampton Pottery Studio.

She also coaches other artists and creatives. She absolutely loves working as a coach, helping other artists “understand the value of their work, build lives that support their work and create their own most honest and compelling work.”

Her work has been at the Paradise City Arts festival a number of times and is currently up at the Pinch Gallery in Northampton. A bit more of what she has done includes a sculpture on the Amherst town common in 2016, and an outdoor mosaic mural commissioned for a home in Virginia in 2023. When she was in the middle of doing that mural, she made the sun piece I liked so much.

Gilman worked for local potters through high school and college, and graduated with a degree in art in 1988. She made sculptures to



COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

The author was originally drawn to this sun sculpture, Gilman’s contribution to the 2025 Community Art Show at the LAVA Center in Greenfield.

show in craft shows in New York, then had at least one solo show a year while teaching out of the studio. She also taught at a college level for 14 years.

I asked her how long it takes to make something like the sun sculpture. She told me the multiple steps connected to that. The original sculpting of the piece, with clay on a board, took roughly four hours, the next step two hours, and the last steps involved firing, cutting it apart,

attaching the pieces with mastic, grouting, and cleaning up with grout lines. All that comes to 15 hours.

Gilman said her friends and family are very supportive of her life as an artist. “It is a patchwork life that I built to satisfy and accommodate all of my strengths, values, and passions,” she said.

You can see some of her most interesting pieces of art on her website, valeriegilman.com. Her coaching site is taprootartsinsight.com.



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LOOKING BACK: 10 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

Here’s the way it was on September 29, 2016: News from the Montague Reporter archive.

Emotions Run High

The Gill-Montague regional school committee found its Tuesday meeting packed with about 60 defenders and opponents of the “Indian,” two weeks after introducing a proposal to lead the district through a reconsideration of the high school’s longstanding mascot. The topic was the process by which the issue should be discussed over the course of the year. Chair Michael Langknecht asked visitors to limit their comments to that topic, but he struggled to keep them from skipping ahead to arguing the mascot’s merits and faults, and each camp accused the committee of bias in the other’s favor.

Having heard from visitors, the committee held a lengthy discussion of their plan for the process. Timmie Smith of Gill proposed that “at least two,” rather than simply “two,” public forums be allowed for, and argued that the committee should make a decision by spring. “We are within a term of service on the school committee,” she said. “I think this issue is about a bigger issue that’s going to take a lot of time to process,” said Christina Postera. “It’s sent an energy along the community – the emotions are so high. I do not think putting a time limit on forums, or listening to people speak, would behoove the process.”

20 YEARS AGO

Here’s the way it was on September 28, 2006: News from the Montague Reporter archive.

Fire at Judd Wire

A fire in the ventilation system at Judd Wire caused the evacuation of approximately 175 employees at 8:24 a.m. on September 27. Turners Falls fire chief Ray Godin said he was on the scene within three minutes of the call. “There was smoke blowing from the rear of the building and from the roof,” he said. “The fire started in a vertical duct from the number 10 Extruder, and traveled horizontally in the ventilation system in both directions. The main exhaust motor caught fire. We had men inside attacking the fire from underneath, and men on the roof attacking it from above.”

Hard-Working Youth

On Saturday a small but devoted group of youth, with Brick House supervisors, spent a few hours in the rain working on the Montague Skate Park. Though some tasks such as sweeping and painting were impossible due to the weather, vines and weeds that had overrun the park were cut and made ready for disposal. Progress on the park has been slow but steady. With hopes of the park reopening before winter, the crew accomplished all that was possible for the day. With a few more hours of solid work – and 100 feet of fencing – the park could be ready for a grand reopening soon.

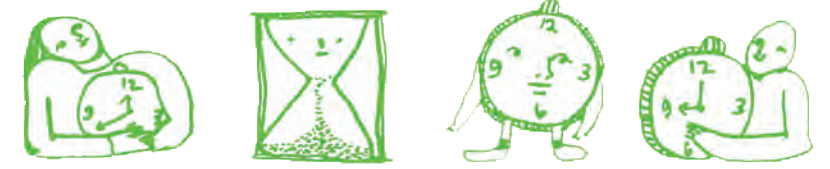
140 YEARS AGO

Here’s the way it was on September 29, 1886: News from the Turners Falls Reporter archive.

Turners Falls and Vicinity

The rains of the past week have filled up the streams and rivers so that there will probably be no more suffering from drouth this year. Lawrence Baker has begun the manufacture of cigars in John Thomas’s building on Twelfth street, and will have goods ready for the market by next month. The Fitchburg road will, at an early date, lay concrete in front of the depots recently erected at the suburban stations, instead of building the customary wooden platforms. New depots are soon to be built at Roberts and Stony Brook. Emanuel Jinks slept on the sidewalk, as being a safer place than a freight car, and for such carelessness he takes a 30 days’ course at the jail. Good Luck Temple of Honor have engaged through Fred R. Co-mee of the Chickering Musical Bu-

reau, Miss Clara L. Thompson, a public reader of merit, and will give an entertainment at Colle’s opera house on the 22nd of October. An inquest was begun before Justice Dana over the death of the man or men who were recently burned to death in the railroad car. Joe Duff, who was supposed to have been burned with Tom Allen, has turned up, and with James Donohue has been lodged in jail to await developments, while it is said that Michael Kelley has been seen at his own house in Farmington, Ct., since the fire. There was a mass of bones which did not belong to the remains of Allen, but whether they were human bones or not is undecided. A curiosity in the form of a letter, came to Mr. Batson one day last week. It consists of sixteen leaves, ten leaves are written by ten brothers and sisters, one by each of them, and six leaves by nephews and nieces who are married and have families of their own. As it passes around each one takes out his old leaf and inserts a new one, so the whole letter is changed with each trip.



HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MONTAGUE POLICE LOG

Ongoing Issue; Bat Scratch Fear; Intricate Details of the Law; Canal Walk; Guerilla Speed Bumps; Sleeping Arrangements

Monday, 9/21

8:16 a.m. Caller from Avenue A states that a nearby dog barks all day long while its owners are at work. Caller states it has been an ongoing issue but is getting worse now with the windows open. Caller states multiple residents in his building have complained to him; he called the board of health, who told him to call the police. Message left for animal control officer (ACO). 10:31 a.m. Caller states that during an event at the Mohawk Ramblers club on Saturday, his vehicle was hit by another car, which took off. Caller states he did not notice damage until someone texted him a photo of the other involved vehicle. Officer conducted follow-up with involved female, who admitted to being at fault for the crash. Both parties informed that a crash report would be completed. 8:13 p.m. Walk-in states she discovered an AirTag on her vehicle and believes her ex-boyfriend put it there. Officer spoke to party about her concerns. Unable to locate AirTag on vehicle. Advised to contact phone company to get information on involved tag. Tuesday, 9/22 3:54 p.m. 911 caller from Powertown Apartments states that a female party is slightly intoxicated and acting combative towards him. Officer requesting ambulance to location for patient evaluation. Patient being transported. 5:45 p.m. Caller from Meadow Road advises he captured and contained a bat in his house, then discovered a scratch on his finger and is unsure if it came from the bat. Contacted ACO, who advises to have the party contact his doctor and have the wound cleaned out. ACO will reach out today. 7:19 p.m. Walk-in from Greenfield Road requesting to speak to an officer. An individual has been using a dirtbike on their property. They put down logs to deter the individual on the bike and located a sign that made a threat stating that if their son got hurt, so would the reporting party. Referred to an officer. Wednesday, 9/23 8:11 a.m. Officer following up at a Wrightson Avenue location after maintenance staff from the Gill-Montague schools reported finding items that were illegally dumped on school property. Unable to locate. 11:01 a.m. Walk-in is concerned about a marijuana plant being grown behind a Turners Falls Road location. Officer will follow up after reviewing the intricate details of the law. 12:49 p.m. Caller from Sixth Street reporting male

drinking near the park. Officer located male matching description; he had no alcohol on him. 12:58 p.m. 911 caller states that a silver Chrysler van stopped in the middle of the street near Avenue A and Third Street, and the male driver yelled to the caller’s 13-year-old daughter that he thought she was beautiful and asked if he could pull over and get to know her better. Area checked; unable to locate anyone similar. 2:19 p.m. 911 caller reporting smoke from the second floor of a North Leverett Road building where they have various equipment. Transferred to Shelburne Control, who request PD to location to assist with traffic. Officer advises Route 63 shut down to North Leverett Road; second officer has road closed from Billings to Gunn Road. Caller on Ripley Road states a lot of traffic is being diverted onto her street; she is concerned there may be an accident. Fire upgraded to a second alarm; requesting road closure signs and barricades. DPW advised. Surrounding roads shut down. Anonymous caller states someone on Spaulding Brook Road is throwing cardboard in the roadway to slow vehicles down, like a makeshift speed bump. Caller states female party on Ripley Road has put something in the road to slow people down, along with a ladder and “Slow Down” sign. Caller states female approached her vehicle yelling at her; when she requested the female take the item out of the roadway the female refused and advised her to drive over it. Officer spoke with female about her vehicle parked in the roadway and items in the road. Female was unhappy with the request to move the vehicle. Officer states he will assist with traffic for the time being. Roads reopened. 2:21 p.m. Detail officer advises he was just told about a couple of people walking around in the canal down towards Eleventh Street. The canal is currently drained. Officer advised. People walk in there frequently when it is drained, and also will fish in there. 4:54 p.m. Multiple 911 calls and reports of a telephone pole down with a brush fire on Randall Road. Callers state they can see smoke. Officer advises embankment on fire on the east side of the pole; they can see only smoke on the west side of the hill at this time. Officer advises they are trying to use fire extinguishers but they don’t seem to be doing much. Shelburne Control advised. Officer requesting road closure signs for both ends of

Randall Road and requesting ETA from Eversource. FD advises 10 minute ETA provided. DPW on scene with road closure signs. Detail officer on scene. 7:52 p.m. Caller states two parties are in the parking lot by the Creemee screaming at each other outside their vehicle, described as a Volvo. Caller states it may be physical. Officer advises call not as reported; parties are yelling at their dog to return to them. Thursday, 9/24 12:57 a.m. Caller states same parties are fighting in the parking lot and their stuff is all over the parking lot. Verbal disagreement about sleeping arrangements; parties agreed to keep it down. Units clear. 12:31 p.m. Anonymous caller reporting a male party in a car actively using drugs in the public lot on Third Street. Officers located vehicle. Not as reported. Parties were sleeping in the vehicle. Second time officers warned parties about cleaning up their belongings at this location. 4:44 p.m. Caller from K Street states that a male has been outside for roughly half an hour filming her house, and possibly filming inside her house, as her windows are open. Both parties have a history of calls. Referred to an officer. 8:51 p.m. Hatchery Road caller reports her dog has been missing since around 8 a.m.; states dog is friendly and wearing a collar, a “super-mutt,” russet in color, named Luna. Also reports hearing what sounded like a gunshot earlier in the day, and is worried someone may have shot her dog. Report taken. 10:17 p.m. 911 caller from K Street requesting officer to location as his brother is currently breaking things and going ballistic. Caller states his brother is very violent and to use caution; advises officers approach the rear of the house, as the front is locked and gated up. Officers knocking on door; no answer; room is quiet. Caller states male may be hiding from PD; refuses to come out and speak with officers. Investigated; all seems quiet. Friday, 9/25 7:22 a.m. First of many reports of vandalism (spray-painted graffiti) on buildings and objects around town overnight. Locations include several storefronts on Avenue A, the Greenfield Savings Bank building and ATM, picnic tables, Dreamhouse and other Third Street locations, a town hall, the bandshell at Peskeompskut Park, the Shady Glen, Loot Found & Made, Montague Dental Arts, the Carnegie Library, the Shea Theater, and Couture Brothers. Sev-

eral discarded spray paint cans located on Avenue A and Third Street. State police crime unit taking over scene; PD units clear. 10 a.m. Caller from Fourth Street states that her neighbor keeps filming her and antagonizing her, creating a harassment situation. Referred to an officer. 4:08 p.m. Caller reporting a male party lying and rolling around in the grass close to the roadway on Dry Hill Road by Route 63; worried about safety. Unable to locate. Saturday, 9/26 12:25 p.m. 911 caller from Federal Street reports that a tree fell down onto a neighbor’s yard and took down power lines with it. Eversource notified. PD clear; TFFD on scene. 2:13 p.m. Caller from Randall Road states that she was walking her dog and a loose dog joined them; states she has that dog on a leash, but her dogs won’t allow her to bring them into the house. Dog returned home. 7:56 p.m. Party into station to report missing juvenile son. Area agencies advised to be on lookout. Party entered as missing. 8:23 p.m. Officer taking pictures of vandalism that may be new related to previous calls from Avenue A. 10:11 p.m. Caller from G Street states there is a tow truck in front of her house and she wants it removed; states an officer previously stated that he would write a ticket; inquiring if that was done, as she states a new ordinance went into effect and the driver cannot park in front of her house. Would like a call back with an explanation of what is being done about the truck. Contact made with operator; advised of ordinance. He will move the truck. Officer will call caller back. Sunday, 9/27 11:51 a.m. Walk-in reports that while she was eating dinner at the Rendezvous last night, her car was sideswiped. Report taken. 7:23 p.m. Report of a disturbance at a Greenfield Road address. Officer spoke to both parties, who advised it was verbal only. 11:19 p.m. Greenfield PD requesting MPD check a Bangs Street address for a male party for whom they have probable cause for arrest. Notified GPD that male is at this residence. GPD on scene to take custody of male party. Monday, 9/28 1:13 a.m. Officer has located two signs that have been vandalized with graffiti: a stop sign at the corner of First and L Streets, and the sign at the entrance to the DCR parking lot off of First Street. Graffiti appears to be new/recent. Report taken.

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Montague Community Television News

Television Personalities

By HANNAH BROOKMAN

TURNERS FALLS – Get to know your local selectboard! MCTV covers both the Gill and Montague selectboard meetings on our channel, so you can keep up with all of their decisions, conversations, and personalities.

And if those meetings look like fun, you might consider attending an MCTV board meeting! We not only have great conversations and personalities of our own, but we have pizza. MCTV is currently looking for one person to fill an empty board seat, and we hope that if you are reading this, you will consider it. The commitment is low – just one meeting a month – and no experience is necessary.

Please reach out by emailing a letter of

interest to infomontaguetv@gmail.com, calling us up at (413) 863-9200, or stopping by the station at 34 Second Street to talk with Dean or Deirdre, Mondays through Fridays from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

And if you see us out there filming, say hi! And let us know if there is any performance, meeting, or other event we can film, or any movie project that we can help with. MCTV is stocked with cameras, microphones, and everything else you need to make a video, and we can even help edit it!

Check out all we do, including all recent recordings of town committee meetings, at our Vimeo page, which can be found linked on the “Videos” tab at montaguetv.org, or find us on Channel 9 in all five of the villages of Montague.

WEST ALONG from page B1

The fading jewel weed has changed, from the pale orange flowers that nourished hummingbirds and bumblebees, to the seed pods we call *touch-me-nots*, which pop open when brushed by the sleeve of the human visitor. Here and there, deeper into the woods downriver, I find downed trunks and tree limbs. A windfall in the true sense of the word, ready to be harvested for firewood, and carried up to the house. After curing for a year of two, that windfall will serve as firewood for the ancient Glenwood C cookstove.

When all the leaves are down, usually after the first strong mid-October windstorm or rainstorm, I’ll discover once again, through the eyes of great-grandfather, the margins of the Old Pasture he once farmed.

My own eyes, no longer limited by the leafy growth, will see deeper into this landscape and sense once more what it might all have looked like, way back then.

Autumn always brings on a certain nostal-

gia, carried on the scent of woodsmoke weaving in from maybe the last century.

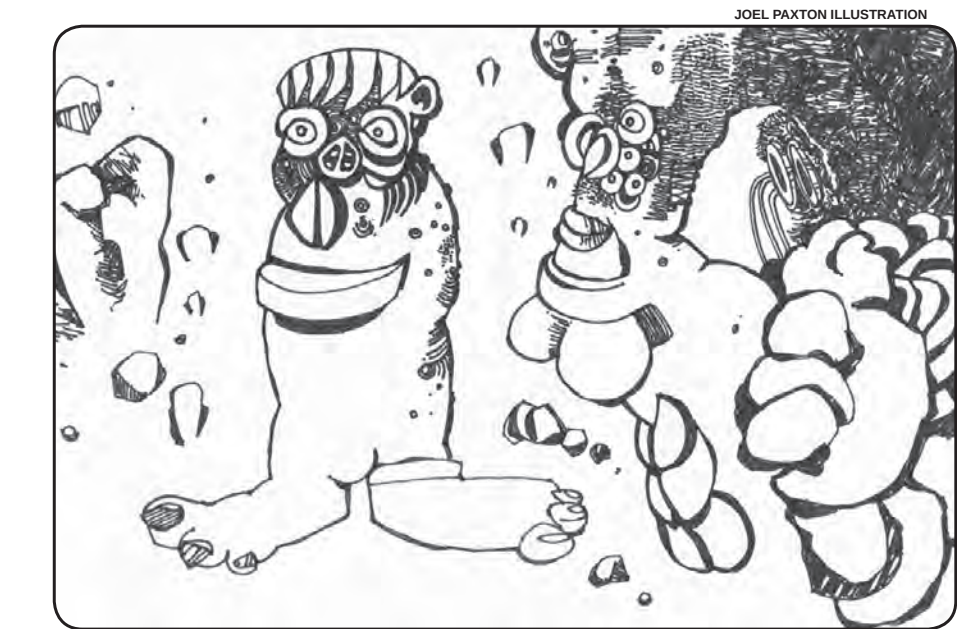
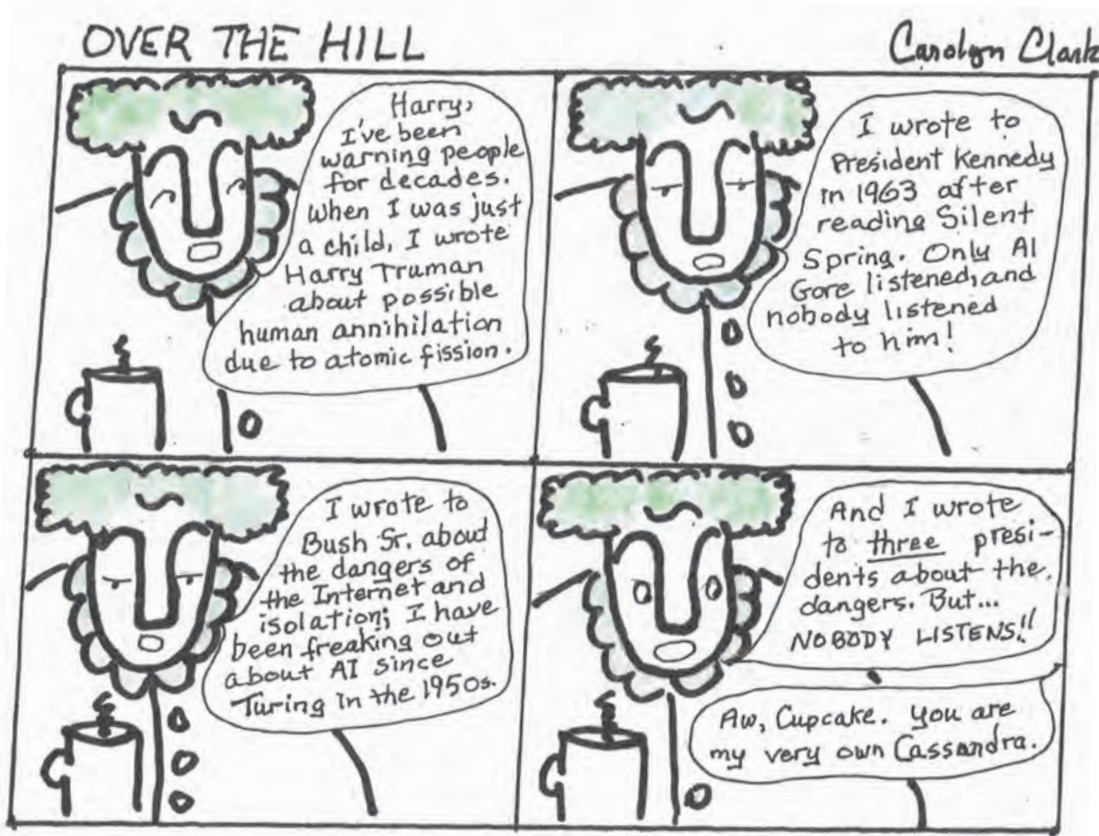
I’ll be looking for the stray hermit thrush, tarrying and lingering on his way south, checking out the barberry bush growing uninvited down the path.

Or maybe I’ll spot the spritely and teasing winter wren fidgeting in the roots of a blown-down tree.

But mostly we’ll be there on our own, lost in thoughts, memories, and the comforting warmth of the ephemeral golden wood.

*Still, let me know before you set out.
And I will walk with you to the beginning of the path
with one hand on your shoulder.
I will even watch after you and not turn back to the house until you disappear
into the crowd of maple and ash...*

– Adapted from “Directions,” a poem by Billy Collins



MONTAGUE CRYPTOJAM !!!

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DAVID HOITT PHOTOS

Left: Pioneer Regional's Kiara Gruszkowski attacks during Tuesday's game as the Turners Falls Thunder – left to right, Madison Haight, Jakbia Williams, and Addison Talbot – prepare to defend.
Right: Turners Falls's Madison Haight (right) jousts at the net against Pioneer's Ryleigh Goodwin. The visiting Panthers won, 3-1, giving them a 4-and-3 record on the season.

SPORTS from page B1
their teammates knocked them back over the net.

Maddie Haight gave 15 assists, Jakhia Williams made eight kills, and Abby Moffatt (10) and Addie Ehle (8) led the team in digs.

This Tuesday, Franklin Tech and Turners each had home matches. The games sandwiched perfectly, as Tech wrapped up just as Turners was tipping off.

The Tech contest against Mohawk was amazing. The teams went back and forth, orchestrating great blocks, lucky bounces, spikes, and serves just scraping over the net. Both went on streaks, but in all three sets, the Eagles pulled off the wins to improve their record to 6 – 2. Emma Petersen finished with 11 digs, Charley Knight gave 11 assists, Madison Pettengill served five aces, and Sarah Beckwith made nine kill shots.

Across Millers Falls Road, the

Thunder had a more difficult night against the Pioneer Black Panthers. Blue led in all four sets, but the Panthers pulled off three wins.

The gym was packed, and while the home crowd outnumbered the visitors, the contingent of Pioneer folks cheered and chanted in unison, and the players on the court even clapped three times at the end of each chant.

In the first set, Moffatt was always in the right place to prevent aces and deflect kill shots. Blue fought for every point, played as a team, and took the set by six. They then led in the second contest, but Black tied it at 11 and then increased the lead to 18-12. The Thunder streaked back to make it 18-17, but Pioneer took advantage of some mental mistakes and took the second set on a fault.

In the third set, the Pioneers erased an early Thunder lead to

pull ahead, 2 sets to 1. In the fourth and deciding set, the Panthers again came from behind to take a 20-19 lead. That's when the Blue bubble burst. They tied it up, or so it seemed – the officials conferred, ruled that a Turners player had touched the net, and signaled to the scorekeepers, who deducted a point from Blue and gave it to Pioneer. Turners never recovered, and dropped the fourth match 25-22.

Haight finished with 14 assists and seven aces, Williams with eight kills, and Moffatt with 18 digs. The loss drops the Thunder's record to 3 – 5.

Golf

On Tuesday the Franklin Tech golf team shot a combined 71 in the two-ball shotgun competition at Westover, earning them a second-place plaque for the second consecutive year.

Girls' Soccer

Mahar 5 – FCTS 1

The Mahar Senators came to Tech last Thursday and turned a 2-1 game into a 5-1 drubbing. This was one of those games in which the final score did not reflect the play. With the Eagles' regular goalie on injured reserve, Isabella (Bella) Liebenow had to sit in as goalkeeper. The game was pretty physical, and not just hip-check physical – bodies were flipping over bodies, and several girls hit the turf hard.

Mahar scored two quick goals, but at 13:32 of the first half, Kaelyn McLean found Faythe Sobieski, who scored to make it a one-goal game. But at 8:34, Mahar made it 3-1.

Tech mounted several attacks in the second half, but the visiting goalie snatched every kick and passed the ball all the way down the field, forcing the Eagles to start over. Every save and throw

caused the Senator faithful to erupt in cheers, and twice more, Mahar took the puck all the way down-field and scored.

Football

FCTS 48 – Pathfinder 20

Last Friday in football, the Eagles beat the previously undefeated Pathfinder Golden Pioneers out in Palmer.

This game was not as one-sided as the score might imply. According to Eagles head coach Joe Gamache, Pathfinder had the ball trailing 26-14 when the Eagles' D forced a punt. Wyatt Whitman broke through the wall and blocked it, grabbed the loose ball, and sprinted into the end zone.

The Pioneers, who had scored 99 points in their last two games, refused to fold, grinding down the field to make it a two-score contest, 33-20. That's when the Birds took control. They drove down the field and scored to take a 20-point lead. Gold attempted to narrow the gap by throwing the ball, but Hunter Donahue intercepted it, setting up the Eagles' final touchdown.

The Pioneers are a great team – they gained 269 yards on the ground – but Tech hit on all cylinders: rushing, passing, defense, and special teams.

Mason Bassett threw for 141 yards and two touchdowns, and Donahue had 87 receiving yards and two touchdowns, followed by Cole Bassett with 35 and Nolyn Stafford with 20. Brady Gancarz led the ground attack with 113 yards and a touchdown, while Donahue ran for 58 and a touchdown, Justin Lent for 28, and Whitman 15 and two touchdowns.

Donahue returned kickoffs for 63 yards and scored a 2-PAT, while Joseph DiSciullo kicked a field goal and a one-pointer.

On defense, Donahue led in tackles and made an interception, Zachary Haskell made 1½ sacks, and Lent helped him out with the other half-sack.

On Friday, the undefeated Eagles travel back to Hampshire County to play the Ware Green Indians.



DAVID HOITT PHOTOS



Left: Franklin Tech senior Janiyah Wan serves against the visiting Mohawk Trail Warriors on Tuesday. The Eagles soared to a 3-0 win.
Right: Gianna Marigliano sends the ball over the net with Pioneer Regional's Evangeline Lewis defending on Tuesday.

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THURSDAY, OCTOBER 1

New Salem Library, New Salem: *Photography Workshop* with Ed Comeau. Learn about lighting, composition, more. To register, call (978) 544-6334. 6:30 p.m. Free.

CitySpace, Easthampton: *Mirah, Evan Greer, All Feels*. 6:30 p.m. \$.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 2

Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *Kidleidoscope Story Hour: Fox*. For ages 3 to 6. 10:30 a.m. Free.

Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *Immigrant Institutions Walk*. Tour downtown Turners Falls and learn about the institutions immigrants built in the 19th and 20th centuries. Ages 8 and up. 4 p.m. Free.

Nova Lot, Turners Falls: *Great Ghouls Night Market*. 5 to 9 p.m. Free.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: Drew Paton. 6:30 p.m. \$.

Unnameable Books, Turners Falls: *Solidarity Presence in Palestine*, talk and Q&A with three local activists about their time in the West Bank and the legacy of Awdah Hathaleen. 6:30 p.m. Free.

Garden Cinemas, Greenfield: Screening, *Situations* (2025). Discussion with director and subject Greg Vrotsos follows. 6:30 p.m. \$.

Floodwater Brewing, Shelburne Falls: *Zydeco Connection*. 7 p.m. Free.

THCC, Easthampton: *Oh The Humanity, High School Football Heroes, The Tough Get Going*. 7 p.m. \$.

The Church, Belchertown: *Gloop, barbie.ai, Perfect Nails, Rebecca Schrader*. 7 p.m. \$.

Colonial Theater, Keene: *Randy Travis*. 7 p.m. \$\$.

Nova Arts, Keene: *Roger Miller, Rick Maguire*. 7 p.m. \$.

No Fun, Troy: *Unsane, Prize, Life Abuse*. 7 p.m. \$.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Sam Grisman Project*. 8 p.m. \$.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Eric Love*. 8 p.m. No cover.

The Drake, Amherst: *Iron Lung, Dropdead, Innumerable Forms, The Eye*. 8 p.m. \$.

Academy of Music, Northampton: *Pat Metheny Side-Eye*. 8 p.m. \$.

MASS MoCA, North Adams: *Lucinda Williams*. 8 p.m. \$\$.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Oodelally, Jake McKelvie*. 9:30 p.m. \$.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 3

Peskeompskut Park, Turners Falls: *Great Falls Farmers Market*. SNAP accepted. 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Free.

Dickinson Library, Northfield: *Dungeons & Dragons*. Single-day campaign for ages 16 and up, all XP welcome. Register at www.northfieldrec.com. 11 a.m. Free.

Two Ghosts, Turners Falls: *Corey Laitman, bobbie, Rebekah Dutkiewicz, Mark Schwaber*. 6 p.m. \$.

Just Roots, Greenfield: *Celebration Brass Band*, barn dance, food, silent auction. Fundraiser supporting affordable farm shares, nutrition support. 7 p.m. \$.

Hutghi's, Westfield: *Glasss, Casca, The Body Keeps the Score, My French Vivisection*. 7 p.m. \$.

Institute For The Musical Arts, Goshen: *Dimensionality*. 7:30 p.m. \$.

Big E Arena, West Springfield: *Ice Cube*. 7:30 p.m. \$\$.

Haze, Northampton: *Ichabod Stronghouse, Ouster Nash, Stunt Meridian, Buzzer*. 8 p.m. \$.

Midnight's, Brattleboro: *Burial Woods, Rocco Desgres, Robert Bushinsky, B.B. Dozer*. 8 p.m. \$.

Organ Factory, Brattleboro: *Haitlin, barbie.ai, Concrete Morning*. 9 p.m. \$.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Daniel Ouellette, Chris Goudreau*. 9:30 p.m. \$.

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 4

Conway Center, Conway: *Festival of the Hills*. Parade, skillet toss, log splitting, history talks, book sale, fried dough, 10K road race, more. 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Free.

Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *Painting with Inks from the Garden*, workshop with materials provided. Ages 6 and up. 10:30 a.m. Free.

Erving Public Library, Erving: *Medicine from the 1800s Until Now*, with Matt Villamaino. 2 p.m. Free.

Unnameable Books, Turners Falls: *Caroline Belle Stewart, Stella Corso, Ryan Skrabalak, Corbett Bresner*. Readings. 3 p.m. Free.

Wendell Free Library, Wendell: *Sylvia in Wendell-land*. Celebratory tea party honoring Sylvia Wetherby. 3 p.m. Free.



Bassist, bandleader, and bluegrass nepo baby Sam Grisman brings his band, the Sam Grisman Project, to the Shea Theater this Friday.

Feeding Tube Records, Florence: *Raub Roy, BYOCD*. 4 p.m. By donation.

Academy of Music, Northampton: *Randy Travis*. 7 p.m. \$.

Bombyx Center, Florence: *Ballake Sissoko & Piers Faccin*. 7 p.m. \$.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 5

Greenfield Public Library, Greenfield: *Manufacturing Job Fair*, organized by the MassHire Franklin Hampshire Career Center. 3 to 5 p.m. Free.

Carnegie Library, Turners Falls: *Friends of the Libraries* annual meeting; election presentation by the League of Women Voters. 5:30 p.m. Free.

Montague Common Hall, Montague Center: *Andrew & Noah VanNorstrand with Rachel Bell*. Benefit for the Common Hall accessibility fund. 7 p.m. \$.

Firehouse, Worcester: *Bad History Month, Nyxy Nyx, Jake McKelvie, Abdul Sherzai*. 8 p.m. \$.

EXHIBITS

Waterway Arts, Turners Falls: *Open Up!* Installation by Lo Roux. Through October.

Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *Migrations*, colorful works depicting scenes of village life, history, and Mayan culture in Guatemala, through November. *A Day of the Dead Altar* built by local families will be on display until November 3.

Montague Center Library, Montague: *Jon-Marc Seimon and John Rae* present photographs of local protest events over the last two years.

Sawmill River Arts, Montague: Guest artist *Emet Aron* of Dream Seed Arts displays prints, ceramics, and wearables; reception this Saturday, October 3 at 1 p.m. Guest jeweler *Chelsea Dupuis*; reception Saturday, October 24 at 1 p.m. Both through November.

Leverett Library, Leverett: *Falling in Love with Rainbow Valley*, art by Ezra Wilde, through October.

Leverett Crafts & Arts, Leverett: *Color Stories*, paintings, prints, drawings, and quilts by Sarah Stroud, Sara Casilio, and Lori Lynn Hoffer. Reception this Sunday, October 4 at 3 p.m.; through October.

Rhodes Art Center at NMH, Gill: *Out of the Frame*, reduction linocuts by printmaker and faculty member Stephen Allison. Through October 23, by appointment at mseno@nmhschool.org.

Artspace, Greenfield: *Carnival Studies*, Polaroid instant photos of carnival scenes, through October 18.

LAVA Center, Greenfield: Photography and collages by *Morgan RaShel Kelner*, through October with a reception this Saturday, October 3 at 11 a.m.

Fiddleheads Gallery, Bernardston: *A Touch of Whimsy*, fanciful and humorous art, through October 25.

Sunderland Library, Sunderland: *Embrace the Wrinkles*, collages by Sarah Gately, through October.

Gallery A3, Amherst: *Variations/ Sensations*, paintings by Janet Winston, through October.

Shelburne Arts Coop, Shelburne Falls: *Floorscapes: From Mountains to the Sea*, new designs on painted table mats and runners by Joanne Gold, through October.

New England Visionary Artists Museum, Northampton: *Gaia's Garden*, paintings by Charlotte Treiber and Jules Jones. October 7 to 30, with a reception next Friday, October 9 at 6 p.m.

CALLS FOR ART

The **Sunderland Library** is taking exhibit proposals for bimonthly shows in 2027. Propose a show for 37 linear feet in the library's Reading Room Gallery by November 30. Applications at sunderlandpubliclibrary.org/gallery. Questions to director@sunderlandpubliclibrary.org.

Montague Center Library: Calling all Montague artists who work with fiber! Submit your work for exhibition at the Montague Center Library in December and January. Art due November 30. For more information email kmartineau@cwmars.org.

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FRIDAY, OCTOBER 16

Wendell Meetinghouse, Wendell: *The Burning Reed*, one-person show by Joe Laur with new versions of Rumi's stories and poems. 7:30 p.m. \$.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 17

Northfield Mountain, Northfield: *Mushroom Walk*. Learn safe and responsible foraging methods with Mass Audubon field naturalist Jonathan Kranz. 10 a.m. Free.

Next Stage Arts, Putney: *Tony Vacca & Fusion Nomads, Massamba Diop*. 6 p.m. \$.

Mount Toby Friends Meeting, Leverett: *Windborne*. 7 p.m. \$.

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 18

Stone Church, Brattleboro: *Saving Vice, Slob Drop, In Shallows, Provenance, The Lycan, The Eyes Of Apathy, Amora Downs*. 2 p.m. \$.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 21

Parlor Room, Northampton: *Told Slant, H. Pruz, Sable Island Pony*. 7:30 p.m. \$.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 23

Leverett Town Hall, Leverett: *Cribbage*. 10:30 a.m. Free.

Belltower Records, North Adams: *Creative Writing, Slowpoke Records, Dominick & The Family Band*. 7 p.m. \$.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 24

Thompson Temple, Lake Pleasant: *Owsley's Owls, Grateful Dead tribute*. 6 p.m. \$.

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 25

Rat Trap, Holyoke: *Freak Phone, Inner Cross, Owen Manure, Fugue State, Jackals*. 7 p.m. \$.

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 4

The Drake, Amherst: *Steve Gunn, Spectre Folk*. 8 p.m. \$.

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 6

Greenfield Records, Greenfield: *Aaron Russell, Michael Slyne, Parashi-Rambutan duo*. 7 p.m. By donation.

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 13

Hutghi's, Westfield: *Subjects, Identity Shock, Period Bomb, Demented FX, Human Ignorance*. 8 p.m. \$.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 16

Bombyx Center, Florence: *Rickie Lee Jones*. 6:30 p.m. \$.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 6

New Salem Library, New Salem: *America Is Wild*, interactive wildlife activities for kids presented by Brad Timm. 3:30 p.m. Free.

Silo Arts, Turners Falls: *Bad History Month, Nyxy Nyx*. 6 p.m. By donation.

Dickinson Library, Northfield: *Composting and Recycling*, with FCSWMD program director Amy Donovan. 6 p.m. Free.

Wendell Free Library, Wendell: *Resilience Hub* monthly meeting. 6:30 p.m. Free.

Iron Horse, Northampton: *Horse Lords, No Thankyou, Silk Fence*. 7 p.m. \$.

Stone Church, Brattleboro: *Great Lake Swimmers*. 8 p.m. \$.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 7

Dickinson Library, Northfield: Book group, *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* by Muriel Spark. 10 a.m. Free.

Leverett Library, Leverett: *Digital Legacy Planning*. Prepare your wishes for your online accounts. 12:30 p.m. Free.

Montague Center Library, Montague Center: Cookbook club, *East* by Meera Sodha. 6 p.m. Free.

Wendell Senior Center, Wendell: Historical fiction group, *The Berry Pickers* by Amanda Peters. 7 p.m. Free.

Bombyx Center, Florence: *Four Roads to Freedom*. Black Civil Rights anthems, Irish rebel music, Latin American Nueva Canción, Yiddish labor songs. 7 p.m. \$.

Iron Horse, Northampton: *Maria Muldaur*. 8 p.m. \$.

No Fun, Troy: *Jeru the Damaja*. 8 p.m. \$.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 8

Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *Nice & Easy Walk*. 10 a.m. Free.

Millers Falls Library, Millers Falls: *Community Care Corner* with Brick House Community Resource Center staff. 1 p.m. Free.

Dickinson Library, Northfield: Environmental book group, *Waste Wars* by Alexander Clapp. 3 p.m. Free.

Carnegie Library, Turners Falls: *Mysterious Massachusetts*, paranormal history talk for adults. 5:15 p.m. Free.

Millers Falls Library, Millers Falls: Book club, *Open Throat* by Henry Hoke. For adults. 5:30 p.m. Free.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 9

Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *Kidleidoscope Story Hour: Leaves*. For ages 3 to 6. 10:30 a.m. Free.

Great Falls Harvest, Turners Falls: *Alex Homan, Stella Kola. Financial Collapse, Shane Justice McCord*. 6:30 p.m. \$.

Montague Common Hall, Montague Center: *Square Dance with Easily Distracted*; Will Mentor calling. Jammers welcome. 6:30 p.m. By donation.

Unnameable Books, Turners Falls: *Mel Bosworth, Ryan Ridge*, readings. 7 p.m. \$.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 10

Peskeompskut Park, Turners Falls: *Great Falls Farmers Market*. SNAP accepted. 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Free.

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 11

Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *Leef Peeping Walk*. Ages 6 and up. 10 a.m. Free.

Main Street, Ashfield: *Ashfield Fall Festival*. Food, games, tag sales, live music by *Forest Avenue, Over Easy Jazz, Houghton & Hazen Metro*, more. 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Free.

Erving Public Library, Erving: *Puzzle Swap*. 1 p.m. Free.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Celebration of Life for Dave Riebschlaeger* with *Simon White & Rhythm, Inc.* All welcome. 2 p.m. Free.

Stage 33, Bellows Falls: *Roger Miller, Michael Tarbox*. 3 p.m. \$.

Stone Church, Brattleboro: *Bobby Bare Jr.* 7 p.m. \$.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 12

Shutesbury Athletic Club, Shutesbury: *Drum Class*. Bring a drum or borrow one. 6 p.m. \$.

Living Room, Florence: *Jason Calhoun, Moontype, bobbie*. 7 pm. \$.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 14

Shutesbury Town Hall, Shutesbury: *Community Sing-Along*, sponsored by Neighborhood Aging and Dementia Support (NADS). 2 p.m. Free.

LAVA Center, Greenfield: Writers Read, featuring *Amy Gordan, Cheryl Dukes* and *JuPong Lin*. 7 p.m. By donation.

Nova Arts, Keene: *Kimaya Diggs, The Get Down*. 7 p.m. \$.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Falltown String Band*. 8 p.m. No cover.

Hutghi's, Westfield: *Atomic Prey, Corrode, D.O.D., Demented FX*. 8 p.m. \$.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 15

Gill-Montague Senior Center, Turners Falls: *Flu Clinic*. Covid and pneumonia vaccines also available. Walk-ins welcome. Bring insurance card if you have one. 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. Free.

The National Spiritual Alliance, Lake Pleasant: *Lofi Lab on the Road*. Creative hangout space for kids and teens, sponsored by the Montague Public Libraries. 4 p.m. Free.

Leverett Library, Leverett: *Ariel Shapiro & Clarissa Lyons*. Yiddish music from the archives to the present. 5:30 p.m. Free.

Wendell Free Library, Wendell: *Climate-Resilient Toilet and Greywater Systems*, talk and discussion. 6 p.m. Free.

Baltimore's Horse Lords uses both alternate tuning systems - their instruments are modified for just intonation - and wonky polyrhythms, but in the service of heady, raging grooves that make them one of our era's finest experimental rock outfits. See why some are calling a certain viral Québécois math rock group "Diet Horse Lords" next Tuesday at the Iron Horse in Northampton.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 9

Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *A Touch of Class*. 7 p.m. By donation.

Palladium, Worcester: *Knocked Loose, Denzel Curry, Superheaven*. 7 p.m. \$\$.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Cinemastorm* double feature: *Cujo* (1983), *The Thing* (1982). Trivia contest between features. 7:30 p.m. Free.

CitySpace, Easthampton: *Sweet Petunia, Hoonah*. 7:30 p.m. \$.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *The Equalites*. 8 p.m. \$

Academy of Music, Northampton: *David Cross*. 8 p.m. \$\$.

MASS MoCA, North Adams: *Devendra Banhart & HUG*. 8 p.m. \$.

Blackbird, Northampton: *The Greys*. 9 p.m. \$.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 10

Peskeompskut Park, Turners Falls: *Great Falls Farmers Market*. SNAP accepted. 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Free.

MONDAY, OCTOBER 12

Montague Elks, Turners Falls: *A Night of Spirits & Ghosts*, presentation on mediumship and paranormal investigation. Proceeds benefit the Elks. 6:30 p.m. \$\$

Brick House, Turners Falls: *Awnthay, Cum Dumpster, Magnolia, When The Time Comes, Vomit Dolls*. 7 p.m. \$.

Epsilon Spires, Brattleboro: *Bob Bellerue & Katie Porter*. 7 p.m. \$.

Bombyx Center, Florence: *Kimaya Diggs, Alisa Amador*. 7 p.m. \$.

THCC, Easthampton: *Wishbone Zoe, Bimbo, Rick Rude*. 7 p.m. \$.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *A Farewell To Kings, Rush tribute*. 8 p.m. \$.

The Drake, Amherst: *Jeffrey Lewis*. 8 p.m. \$.

Iron Horse, Northampton: *White Denim, Arc Iris*. 8 p.m. \$.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Buttersnakes, Anna Claire, Josh Burkett*. 9:30 p.m. No cover.

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SYNTHESIS from page B1

eldritch holes not evoked by any possible chemical reaction and its vegetables a sickly color, drew my immense unease.

The hot dog was no different: this frankfurter had no grounding in reality. Mustard on a hot dog does not behave that way, even when carefully prepared to be flattering for a photo. It appeared to be a solid, noodle-like object placed upon the dog, and did not properly cascade over its edges as mustard should.



The bun had an overt foam-like texture, and most egregiously, the meat itself had a wood grain embedded into its surface.

From extensive monitoring of generative AI proliferation I recognized all of these as characteristics of Google's Nano Banana model, which has long touted itself as able to generate menus. I believe the model synthesized the bread from a macaroni amalgam. To imagine biting into this synthetic food made me feel rather sick.

Lastly, the sign featured an AI-generated rendering of a train, and an extremely poorly done one at that. The steam rising from the smoke stack did not appear to have behavior grounded in reality. If the train was traveling forward, as was indicated by the left half of the steam – setting aside the fact that was somehow being reabsorbed into the train itself – why was the right half of the steam billowing outward to the right? Furthermore, the wheel linkages made no sense. There were pistons leading to nothing. Why were the steam and sand

MONTAGUE REPORTER

ON THE ROAD

LINUS MANCHESTER PHOTO

MIKE HENRY PHOTO

Our June 18 edition went with Wendy Levy to Juneau, Alaska this summer. Above, she can be seen rereading it on a boat in Auke Bay.

Going somewhere this fall? Take us with you!
Send your photos to editor@montaguereporter.org.

Readers Jillian Henry and Ruby Claire Henry, meanwhile, smuggled our May 28 edition to San Juan, Puerto Rico.

domes so large, and why did they have forward-facing doors, as if a person is meant to enter them?

ARGYLE PHOTOS

It had arrived: this horror had invaded our reality.

I began to openly question why, to anyone on the sidewalk who would listen. Why, pray tell, is it

so hard to pull out one's phone and take a photo of actual food you have made to be served in your restaurant, then use an app to remove the background, place it against a blue canvas, and add some text? All of this can be done on a smartphone, with no particular skill needed.

And if they wanted something more professional, why not reach out to our wonderful local community of artists? Do they believe themselves to be better than the community? Would they prefer to have customers who do not represent the reality of this area? Perhaps they hope for a certain clientele, one they consider better than those who walk by their store each day.

The cashier came out to meet me, seemingly out of concern that I was going to make a further scene if she didn't put on a customer service face and placate me. She told me that at the time of opening the restaurant, they did not have images of their food, so computational synthesis was chosen.

I pushed back, asking why, if this were truly the case, would they allow it to remain up now that the restaurant had been open for quite some time? I got a blank stare, before being told:

"This is becoming more common these days."

With this statement I had to remove myself from the sidewalk.

Those words disturbed me perhaps more than anything else she could have said, because they mean the prison has become home to some people.

It is enough for some to give a passing chuckle at the world beyond their bars, as if they believe capitulating to this new reality would allow them some sort of transcendence, beyond the common rabble that roams our streets. But I can no longer go into my community and be free from this new synthesis, and that scares me.

The synthetic food is not appetizing. The AI is not a person. The world has changed.

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