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The Montague Reporter

YEAR 14 – NO. 20

also serving Irving, Gill, Leverett and Wendell

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EDITOR@MONTAGUEREPORTER.ORG

THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES

MARCH 3, 2016

Sheffield Students Compete To Cover Cold Feet



WICKS PHOTO

Sheffield Elementary principal Sharon Moberg and fifth-graders Logan Addison (left) and Brooke Thayer (right) show off the school's sock stash.

By LEE WICKS

TURNERS FALLS – Students at Sheffield Elementary School summoned their famous “Sheffield Pride” this winter and accepted the sock challenge from Liberty Elementary in Springfield, the school where their principal, Sharon Moberg, once worked.

“A little friendly competition in the interest of a good cause has been a win-win for everyone,” said Ms. Moberg. “At the end of

the challenge, the socks donated by Sheffield students will be donated to the Franklin County Survival Center. Socks are one of the items they never have enough of, because they have to be new.”

Added the principal, “People generally clean their closets before making a donation; few people think about going out and buying socks to donate.”

Yet what could be more important on a cold winter day than a

see SOCKS page A5

ERVING SELECTBOARD

Anything Goes? Not Quite

By KATIE NOLAN

Starting May 2, the Erving highway department will begin picking up bulky waste items left out by residents. The pickup will start in Erving and continue eastward for two weeks. The program was formerly called “Anything Goes,” but many items, including mattresses, box springs, televisions, computers, and tires, are not picked up.

Highway foreman Glen McCrory explained that landfills won’t take bulky waste with items like televisions mixed in.

Town clerk Richard Newton said, “Everything goes means everything goes,” and suggested the town should investigate the cost of picking up all types of bulky waste during May.

McCrory said that televisions may be dropped off during highway department working hours at the highway garage, at no cost to individual residents. “A lot of TVs get dropped off during the year,” he said, with about two loads disposed of per year, each costing the town about \$900.

see ERVING page A6

Amherst District Predicts Assessments to Rise by 2%

By JEFF SINGLETON

AMHERST – The administration of the Amherst-Pelham Regional School presented a “four town meeting” of local officials last Saturday morning with a proposed budget of 2.6% over that of the current fiscal year, which would increase total assessments to Leverett, Shutesbury, Pelham and Amherst by 2% in the coming year. It also recommended against moving forward with elementary school regionalization this spring.

Attendees at the meeting, held at the regional middle school in Amherst, included members of local selectboards, finance committees and school committees, as well as regional school superintendent Maria Geryk and her staff. A small audience included state representatives

and candidates.

The district’s recommended FY’17 budget totaled \$30,804,122, an increase of \$781,282 the current fiscal year. The regional district includes students from Amherst, Pelham, Leverett and Shutesbury attending grades 7 through 12 in Amherst. The four towns administer their own elementary schools at this time.

Superintendent Geryk also recommended that a plan to expand the regional district to include the elementary schools not be sent to the town meetings this spring. Geryk noted that Amherst was already considering elementary school consolidation: adding regional consolidation to the mix of issues was not realistic.

Finally, business manager Sean Mangano recommended that a new regional committee be established

see DISTRICT page A7

MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD

Montague Requests FirstLight Power Resources Fix Bridges Over Canal

By JEFF SINGLETON

The town of Montague is requesting that FirstLight Power Resources, as part of its application to the federal government to renew its license as owner of the Turners Falls power canal, fix several key bridges over the canal.

FirstLight, which was recently purchased by PSP Investments (see accompanying story), is applying to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) to renew licenses for two projects in the area: the Northfield Mountain Pumped Storage Project and the Turners Falls Project. The latter project includes the Turners Falls Dam, the power canal which flows out of the dam running parallel to the Connecticut River, and two hydroelectric stations on the canal.

Between the canal and the river lie a number of mill sites the town has been attempting to develop. According to the statement, drafted by town planner Walter Ramsey and ap-

proved by the Montague Selectboard at its meeting on February 29:

“All five mill sites and their respective bridges over the

see MONTAGUE page A6



FILE PHOTO BY JOE PARZYCH

FirstLight Power Resources owns the dam and power canal at Turners Falls.

Canadian Firm To Purchase FirstLight

By MIKE JACKSON

FRANKLIN COUNTY – The power of the harnessed Connecticut River may soon be making money for retired Canadian civil servants, military veterans and Mounties.

Under a deal announced last Thursday, the global utility giant Engie, headquartered in France, will sell the Northfield Mountain pumped storage facility, the Turners Falls dam and power canal, the century-old Cabot Station, and extensive riverfront property – assets known collectively as FirstLight Power Resources – to Canada’s Public Sector Pension Investment Board (PSP Investments), which invests a number of government pension funds.

The sale is pending, subject to approval by the Fed-

eral Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC).

Engie, formerly known as GDF Suez, has been seeking to sell off North American power plants and shift toward energy services, stating its plan is to reduce both its debt burden and its carbon footprint.

Last week it acquired California energy services firm OpTerra, and sold nearly 9 gigawatts’ (GW) worth of conventional power generating capacity, mostly in fossil fuels, to the Texas-based Dynegy Inc.

At the same time it sold another 1.4 GW – the FirstLight assets, which also include some smaller hydro plants on the Connecticut and Housatonic rivers – to PSP Investments for \$1.2 billion.

“The expected timeline is a mid-June closing with PSP,” said Len Greene, GDF Suez North America’s

see PURCHASE page A6

Gary Billings Talks Syrup Politics, And Production, at Ripley Farm

By JULIE CUNNINGHAM

MONTAGUE – Gary Billings, a fourth-generation maple syrup producer at Ripley Farm in Montague, works hard year round to produce the final product that goes to the stores. That’s why, when asked about the current controversy surrounding maple flavoring that does not use actual maple syrup, Billings is quite clear.

“Maple flavoring without maple syrup is such a rip-off,” says Billings. “There are a lot of shady things that go on in flavorings. I’m not sure what the federal government is going to do about it though.”

Last week maple syrup farmers from New England and the Midwest wrote a letter to Congress explaining their position on the matter, and asking Congress to take action. The letter alleges brands like Quaker Oats and Hood are in violation of the Food and Drug Administration by labeling their products as “maple flavored” without actually including maple syrup in the ingredients.

Billings remembers when his father owned the business. At just ten years old, he began to help with the process. Later in life, he would



CUNNINGHAM PHOTO

Gary Billings, fourth generation maple syrup maker, feeds the fire in his arch, where the sap is boiling.

see SYRUP page A5

The Montague Reporter

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Outdoor Bands and Public Health

Last week the Montague selectboard revisited the issue of outdoor music in downtown Turners Falls.

The problem was placed on the front burner last year when the owner of the new Avenue A bar and grill Hubie's Tavern began to feature music on their outdoor patio several nights a week. This patio is located right between several apartment buildings, and inevitably, those who live in those buildings complained to the selectboard.

Readings showed that the music at Hubie's was well above the 70 decibel limit in the town's existing noise ordinance.

Last summer, the selectboard tried to strike a balance between the desire to promote a successful business that was drawing people into downtown Turners and the peace of mind of those who live in the neighborhood.

They raised the decibel limit from 70 to 80 from 4 to 10 p.m. The new limit was applied to eight evenings a month. Communication between Sean Hubert and his neighbors seemed to improve.

However, it now appears that this compromise solution has not worked. Staying within the 80 decibel limit has proven to be difficult, if not impossible, for the bands at Hubie's. The neighborhood, understandably, feels it can not tolerate noise at this level multiple times each week during the warm weather.

We disagree with those who say that residents of a downtown area should be willing to tolerate noise at that volume and, more importantly, that late at night and that frequently.

Many downtown Turners residents have lived in cities. They are quite aware that urban areas are loud. But few such urban areas allow outdoor band music on a regular basis in neighborhoods with large residential populations. Regular outdoor music does not seem to be allowed elsewhere in our region, either.

This is not at all the fault of Sean Hubert, who had a good idea. It is simply a reality. We honestly hope that Hubert can adapt to this reality and still run a viable business that draws customers into Turners Falls.

All that being said, we are also concerned that the Montague selectboard is headed in a direction that would undermine public events

with music, that are being tolerated, and even enjoyed, by residents of all neighborhoods in Montague.

In an effort to take the focus off of Hubie's and establish a "level playing field," the board decided to make the noise issue a broad "public health issue," and handed the problem off to the health director Gina McNeely.

McNeely has dealt with the problem before, having proposed a broader set of noise regulations a decade ago (2005). The selectboard at the time rejected McNeely's proposal in favor of regulations targeted only to entertainment and, in the context of the dispute at that time, applicable mainly to indoor entertainment. So the 2005 proposal may be making a comeback.

Fair enough – but unfortunately in her presentation last week to the selectboard, McNeely seemed to argue that any noise that impinges upon a friendly coffee conversation in one's apartment at any time of the day is a public health issue.

Although McNeely raised a key privacy issue that needs to be addressed, we would question the definition of public health implicit in this example. Certainly if the noise could be heard at midnight, or even daily in the evening, it could be a public health problem. But one kitchen-table conversation at 7 p.m. on a weekend night?

Such an extreme standard could eliminate the summer community band concerts at Peskeompskut Park, the Turners Falls Block Party, and music at the Pumpkinfest. It could also end occasional outdoor music at the Avenue A bar, Between the Uprights, which to our knowledge no one has complained about. Not to mention music at Old Home Days in Montague Center.

We doubt McNeely intended to apply her standard to these important community-building events. But her public health framework, combined with the selectboard's desire for a level playing field, seems to lead the town in this direction.

Would the operation of trucks or heavy machinery be exempt from such a sweeping health regulation? Will future selectboards be expected to grant exemptions for construction and concerts? Would they have the authority to supersede the board of health in doing so?

We shall see on March 21 when the board, and McNeely, revisit the noise question.

CLARIFICATION:



NINA ROSSI PHOTO

A headline to the Montague police log highlights published in our February 18 edition ("Visiting Teens Explore Unsecured Death Trap on Power Street Owned by Jeanne Golrick," pg. B3) may have caused some confusion among our readership.

Ms. Golrick has warned this newspaper that the headline was "inaccurate, misleading, and potentially illegal" and has issued a "demand" that we "retract the incorrect information and publish a public apology to [her] in a prominent place in [our] next publication."

The building in question, known as the Railroad Salvage building, and pictured above in a photograph taken March 2, with its gate open wide to all the world's children and fools, is actually owned by a limited liability corporation named "Solutions Consulting Group LLC," of which Millers Falls resident Golrick, according to current filings with the Secretary of the Commonwealth's Corporations Division, has since August 2014 been the "sole remaining person with capacity of member-manager."

Whether the owner of a single-

member LLC is the owner of its assets is beyond the knowledge of this newspaper and can only be determined by a judge, weighing the twelve factors which the state's Supreme Judicial Court has set forth for determining whether the "corporate veil" of such an entity may be "pierced" in order to hold its member(s) liable in the wake of, for instance, serious tragedy.

I am so very sorry, *everyone*.

Mike Jackson,
Managing Editor

CORRECTION:

On a different note, we apologize to our readers for a reporting error that attributed comments made by Jeff Suprenant, chair of the Riverside water district commission, at last week's Gill special town meeting to Gene Beaubien, the town's fire chief and emergency management director (February 25, "Gill Voters Pitch In Toward Montague's Pipeline Intervention," pg. A5).

Beaubien was not in attendance at the special town meeting.

Suprenant was speaking in opposition to a proposal, ultimately approved by the meeting, to contribute \$5,000 to the town of Montague to help defray legal costs it is incurring as an intervenor before the state Department of Public Utilities over Berkshire Gas's contracts with Kinder Morgan's proposed natural gas transmission pipeline.

If built, that pipeline would pass through Montague, Erving and Northfield, but not Gill.

Suprenant's comments pertained to the Northfield Mountain pumped storage project, one of the FirstLight Hydro assets currently being sold by Engie to PSP Investments (see story, page A1).

He argued that Gill should not contribute to helping towns facing the pipeline, because they have not helped Gill residents in their attempted interventions pertaining to the pumped storage project, which he claimed has had a negative impact on the river and on Gill.

We apologize in particular also to Gene Beaubien,

who contacted us on the matter, emphasizing that he was not even in attendance at the February 22 special town meeting, and that he does not bear any close resemblance to Mr. Suprenant. – Eds.

Here are Mr. Suprenant's comments on the topic, transcribed from video made by the Gill cable advisory committee and hosted online by MCTV:

"I didn't see too many other towns step up to the plate when the Northfield Mountain Project was going to bring in, pump up 5 billion gallons of water on top of that 'project' up there.

"FirstLight has destroyed the best part of the Connecticut River. And nobody's done anything about it! And I've been at several meetings with FERC, and they don't give a damn about us – I can tell you that right now. And they've already made their mind up about this gas pipeline. You can be assured of that.

"So I'm just saying that – it's unreal, because, there were very few people at the meetings for the Mountain Project that I've attended, and it's just sad to see what they've done to this river. And they've sold that project, two times in the last three years, for a billion dollar profit each time they sold it.

"No other towns stepped up then – the town of Gill, we have a large portion of that river. And this is the same thing that we're facing with this right now.

"So I do not support this."

Letter to the Editors

A Hopping Place

When I moved here a decade or so ago, midwinter was a particularly quiet time in the life of our community. People hunkered down at home, businesses and attractions reduced their hours or closed, and those who could afford it headed off to warmer climates.

This February, Turners Falls felt different to me! I want to recognize a few people in particular who went above and beyond to help make our community a more vibrant place this winter:

Turners Falls RiverCulture and a small committee of community members put together an impressive line-up events under the umbrella of "Music and Diversity II"

that gave people of all ages a wide range of opportunities to be inspired and to learn, to reflect and connect during Black History Month.

Many people and organizations contributed to the success of this programming, but without the leadership of Suzanne LoManto, Anne Harding, and Richie Richardson it would not have happened.

The Great Falls Discovery Center was open almost every day in February 2016! DCR staffers Janel Nockleby and Shawn Kennedy hosted an astonishing array of programs in the Great Hall, the exhibits, and on the grounds during that time, and rearranged their schedules so the Center would be open

to visitors throughout the February school vacation week.

Unity Skate Park was completed early this month, and skaters, BMX bikers, and scooter-riders have been riding it every day since – even on days when they had to shovel snow and sweep water off it first!

Thanks to the many community members whose persistence and vision made it happen, and to the Montague Parks and Recreation staff and commissioners for their support. I am looking forward to celebrating with you all at the grand opening this spring!

Jen Audley,
Gill-Montague Community
School Partnership

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JESSICA LARKIN ILLUSTRATION

LOCAL BRIEFS

Compiled by DON CLEGG

People in **Wendell** are beginning the process of applying to become a **Solarize community**, along with Warwick and Northfield.

Solarize is a state program that helps communities work together to provide discounts to solar systems through group purchasing. These discounts can be as much as 20% of the cost of a system without Solarize. There will be a meeting on March 3 at 7 p.m. at the Wendell town offices to discuss the idea.

The Great Falls Discovery Center was open during the entire February School Vacation Week for the first time in many years. From February 13 to the 20th, the center had **661 visitors for programs and walk-ins**. No records are available for previous attendance during this week but it is believed to be the highest in the 12-year history of the Discovery Center.

The Center's winter seasonal hours are over as of Saturday, March 5, and its spring hours are Fridays and Saturdays, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., through mid-May.

There will be a **used book sale** on Saturday, March 5, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the Carnegie Library in Turners Falls, with thousands

of well-organized and presorted books, DVDs, and audio books to choose from.

Minimum donations, which benefit the Friends of the Montague Public Libraries, are \$3 a bag for books, and \$1 each for DVDs, CDs, and audio books. For more information, call 863-3214.

Ever wondered **what the four H's stand for in the name of the 4-H organization**? Ever wanted to join a group of youngsters who share a common passion – whether it be in horses, farming, sewing, or electronics to name a few?

Local 4-H leaders will be in the community room of Greenfield Savings Bank in Turners Falls on Saturday, March 5, from 10 a.m. to noon to introduce potential 4-H'ers to the available groups, answer questions, and display the group's projects and products for viewing.

Join author Joan Duris for a creative and fun-filled afternoon for children and adults to **design their own, unique book** at the Northfield Mountain Recreation Area on Sunday, March 6 from 1 to 3:30 p.m.

Explore, imagine, and discover the world of books and gain a better understanding of the writing process as you begin creating your own masterpiece. This family pro-

gram will use the natural world as inspiration.

After the outdoor exploration, led by Northfield naturalist Kim Noyes, participants will return indoors to begin designing your own books as Duris shares tips from her own writing experience. Duris wrote and illustrated her first book at age nine, and her passion for writing children's books is equaled only by her love of winter. She is a long-time member of the Northfield Mountain Ski Patrol Her new book, "B is for Berkshires," was published in 2015 by Islandport Press.

Bring your imagination, a camera (or cell phone with a camera), and dress for the outdoors in warm layers. The program meets inside the cozy, pellet-stove heated yurt behind the Visitor Center.

Participants will leave with a book they have begun, to continue working on at home. Please call to pre-register at 1(800)859-2960.

Next Monday, March 7, all are welcome to come to the Wagon Wheel restaurant on Route 2 in Gill prepared with up to 5 minutes of poetry, or performance art.

The audience at the last Wagon Wheel Word event heard incredible poetry by local poets, as well as a compelling dramatic monologue, excerpts of novels in-the-works, and even spiritual rantings.

This month's event, which begins at 6 p.m., will include a poetry open mic and poetry by featured poet Trish Crapo.

The **Greenfield Community College Chorus** will open its spring semester concert series on Friday, March 11 with a free preview concert of "Music for Chorus,

Strings, and Piano." The performance will take place from 12:15 to 12:45 p.m. in the Sloan Theater at Greenfield Community College.

The GCC Chorus is under the direction of Margery Heins, with soloists from the chorus, and with Marilyn Berthelette, accompanist. The concert is a preview of a longer program to be given later in the semester.

For more information about the spring concerts or the Community College Chorus, call (413) 775-1171 or send an email to heins@gcc.mass.edu.

Dawndale Farm Wildlife, and Cummington Wildlife, Inc., are hosting a seminar on "**Becoming a Wildlife Rehabilitator**" on March 12 and 19. Greenfield Community College's science department is sponsoring this event at the GCC campus.

Wildlife rehabilitators take in ill, injured, and orphaned wildlife to rehabilitate them so they can be re-released back into the wild. The purpose of this seminar is to educate folks on rehabilitation, and give them the information they need to take the state exam.

Western Mass is in need of more licensed wildlife rehabilitators, and hopefully more people will become licensed after they take the seminar. Any profits from the seminar will be used for the rehabilitation of wildlife in our community.

Contact Kat at kat@dawndale-farmwildlife.com or (413) 768-9145, or Nancy at nancy@dawndalefarmwildlife.com or (413) 834-5733.

Send your local briefs to editor@montaguereporter.org.

NOTES FROM THE GILL-MONTAGUE SCHOOL COMMITTEE

School District, Towns Working Together on Budget Gap

By ELLEN BLANCHETTE

At the Gill-Montague school committee meeting held on February 23, district business director Joanne Blier presented the most current assessment numbers for the two towns. Based on the district's preliminary approved budget, Blier said the assessments are 4.28% for Montague and 0.57% for Gill. That is approximately \$42,858 higher than the district's original affordable assessment calculation of 3.26% for both towns.

Blier went on to say, "On February 17, the Town of Montague finance committee voted to increase their affordable assessment from the 3.26% to 3.68%. We have received notification from [Gill administrative assistant] Ray [Purington] stating that he believed the Gill assessment increase of \$8,963 is affordable to the Town of Gill, but that the town finance committee and selectboard have not yet

weighed in on the affordability of the assessment increase."

Blier said in an interview this week that she and Sullivan would be attending a joint meeting of the selectboards and finance committees of both towns, where she hoped they will be able to work out the budget differences. She said there was a large reduction in the tech school's assessment to Montague this year, and that she hoped that town would "look at education as a whole" in considering their assessment. The meeting was to be held on Wednesday, March 2, at 6 p.m. at Montague's town hall.

Superintendent Michael Sullivan asked the school committee to give him feedback on the district's current preliminary operating budget for FY'17 of \$18,681,793. He wanted to know if they supported going forward with the current budget.

Michael Langknecht, member from Montague, said he didn't

think they should consider making cuts until they meet with the towns.

Joyce Phillips of Montague said, "I don't think we should jump the gun, we don't know what might happen," and referenced the Governor's budget, which has not yet been completed.

Valeria "Timmie" Smith, member from Gill said, "We should stick with this budget. We have squeezed and squeezed..."

It was also pointed out that the budget can be cut at town meeting if necessary. The members agreed to wait until the next school committee meeting to make a final decision on the budget.

An issue regarding Group Health Insurance (GIC) negotiations was raised by chair Sandra Brown. Brown said the issue was whether the municipal representative, Jeff Singleton, should be allowed to participate in the GIC negotiations. Singleton is the municipal repre-

sentative for the towns on contract negotiations.

Brown discussed the matter with Russell Dupere, the school district's attorney, and Dupere said Singleton should be included. Brown said at the next opportunity for an executive session of the school committee, which she said would be on March 1, the appointments to the GIC negotiation sub-committee will be redone, as the municipal representative was "wrongly excluded" from the previous meeting's discussion.

Phillips raised an alternative point of view, reading from Massachusetts legal statutes. Brown said she felt it better to take the opinion of the district's attorney, and the matter was resolved.

The next regular meeting of the Gill-Montague school committee will be held on Tuesday, March 8 at 6:30 p.m. at Turners Falls High School.



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Great Falls Middle School Students of the Week

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Catherine Reynolds

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Lydia Wright

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Over In Gill

Part IV: New Ideas for Police and Sewage Treatment

By MICHAEL NAUGHTON

MONTAGUE – As I noted in my last column, the Montague finance committee has been spending most of its time reviewing departmental and other spending requests, asking questions, and preparing for the final deliberations that will take place in a few weeks.

Although town government may seem to plod on with a numbing sameness from year to year, in most years there are at least a few unusual or unexpected requests to consider, and the current year has provided more than its share.

Personnel increases (and decreases) are relatively rare – most years have none – but in my last column, I described how the Department of Public Works (DPW) superintendent has asked for three additional employees. Approval of these will boost his entire crew to twenty, counting himself, which the superintendent has pointed out is two fewer than he had when he started in 2004.

We've also heard from the police chief that he would like to eliminate the staff sergeant position, which is part of the union, and replace it with a lieutenant, who would not be a member of the union. This would not change the total number of employees in this department, but the chief has argued that the lieutenant would effectively act as "assistant chief,"



especially at times when the chief himself is not available.

Although a lieutenant's pay scale would almost certainly be higher than a staff sergeant's, we've been told that the budget need not increase for a couple of reasons. One is that recent retirements will mean new hires starting near the bottom of the pay scale, but the other is that, being non-union, the lieutenant would not be eligible for overtime pay.

Also, the Water Pollution Control Facility (WPCF) superintendent has announced that he's planning to retire towards the end of this calendar year. He has proposed a plan, in consultation with his crew, to eliminate his position and instead create two new ones, "administrator" and "chief operator," which would function as equals and run the plant together.

The WPCF, known colloquially as the "sewer plant," is an unusual entity in town government: it's what's called an "enterprise fund". That means that it is not supported direct-

ly by taxation – instead, it charges a fee for its services, and supports itself on those fees, which in this case are the sewer rates paid by users of the system. (A small portion of their budget, having to do with what's called inflow and infiltration – I & I – is actually paid for with taxation, but the big majority of its budget is covered by sewer fees.)

That means that, technically, the finance committee doesn't have to recommend a balanced budget: once the budget is set, the sewer rate will be set by dividing it by the number of gallons the department estimates it will process during the coming year.

But the finance committee and the selectboard are very aware that taxpayers and sewer users are, for the most part, the same people, and we try very hard not to raise either taxes or sewer rates any more than necessary.

For the past several years, the WPCF has been able to achieve some remarkable cost savings by using and improving a relatively new method for sludge processing. Very simply, what comes in to the plant is separated into clean water, which is then pumped into the river, and "sludge," which is whatever is left. Traditionally, the sludge is then trucked to a landfill, an incinerator, or some other facility – at Montague's plant, the cost for doing this was several hundred thousand dollars a year.

The new method has dramatically reduced the volume of sludge produced by the plant, which has saved the costs of hauling and disposal. Development of this method has been a team effort, and one of the rationales for the proposed management structure is that it will enhance and strengthen this team.

The finance committee, of course, has no direct role in approving or denying these proposals, but we are interested because they have financial implications, as well as implications for the quality of the services that taxpayers receive for their dollars.

One of the reasons that we meet jointly with the selectboard is that we are able to share our opinions, but at some point fairly soon the selectmen will have to make some decisions about what direction they want these departments to go.

Happily, the town administrator is now back on the job, and he'll be able to offer his insights and recommendations in the weeks ahead.

Mike Naughton has been a Montague resident since 1974 and a finance committee member most years since fiscal 2001. He can be reached at mjnaught@crocker.com or by looking in the phone book. The opinions expressed here are his own and are not necessarily shared by anyone else in town government.

Montague Dems to Caucus March 31

Montague Democrats will be holding both the Town Office Election Nominating Caucus and the Democratic State Convention Delegate Selection Caucus on Thursday, March 31.

Town Election Democratic Nominating Caucus

First, Montague Democrats will hold their caucus to select candidates for Town Office elections on Thursday, March 31, 2016, balloting from 6:30 to 7:00 PM in the 2nd Floor Meeting Room of the Town Offices, 1 Avenue A, Turners Falls. Successful candidates receive the party nomination to appear on the Monday, May 16 town election ballot. Voting is by paper ballot and is open to all registered democrats and registered un-enrolled voters.

Only registered Democrats may run in the caucus for the Party nomination. Democrats who wish to run in the caucus must deliver their intention in writing to Democratic Town Committee Chair, Jay DiPucchio, by 5:00 PM, Monday, March 21. Notice may be by mail, email or in hand. Verbal declaration cannot be documented and is not acceptable. Candidates must have been registered Democrat as of 12/31/15.

Individuals choosing to run without seeking Democratic Party nomination should check rules with the Town Clerk. Occasionally, candidates for the caucus nomination also gather signatures for nomination through the Town Clerk process so that they can still appear on the May ballot if they are defeated at the caucus.

By the Democratic Town Committee's vote following the 2003 caucus, registered un-enrolled voters also may vote in the Democratic Town Election caucus. No absentee balloting is allowed. All caucus candidates must be present at the end of balloting (or make other arrangements with the Chair) or their election may not be certified.

Incumbent term expirations below. Non-party incumbents may have filed with the Town Clerk.

OFFICE, TERM: INCUMBENT, PARTY

Selectman, 3: Christopher M. Boutwell, Sr., Dem.

Town Clerk, 3: Debra A. Bourbeau, Dem.

Treasurer/Tax Collector, 3: Patricia A. Dion, Dem.

Assessor, 3: Teresa A. Miner, Dem.

2: Ann M. Cenzano, Dem.

Bd. Of Health Member, 3: Albert L. Cummings, Jr., Dem.

Park & Rec. Comm., 3: Linda N Ackerman, Unenrolled

Library Trustee (3), 3: Karen Latka, Dem.

3: Amanda Traynor, Dem.

3: Nancy Crowell, Unenrolled

2: Vacant unexpired term

1: Vacant unexpired term

Tree Warden, 3: Mark A. Stevens, Unenrolled

Soldier Memorial Trustees (Veteran), 3: John Murphy, Dem.

Montague Housing Authority, 5: Judith L. Hastings, Dem.

Following balloting, results will be tabulated and the second caucus convened for convention delegate selection beginning at 7:30 PM:

Democratic Convention Delegate Selection Caucus

Registered Democrats in Montague will hold a caucus at the 2nd floor meeting room of Montague Town Hall, 1 Avenue A, Turners Falls, at 7:30 PM, Thursday, March 31, 2016 to elect 5 delegates and 4 alternates to the Massachusetts Democratic Convention to be held Saturday, June 4, at the Lowell Convention Center in preparation for the election cycle of 2016.

This local caucus is a meeting that is open to all Democrats registered in Montague by January 31, 2016. Registered attendees are eligible to vote and/or run for one of the five openings available to represent Montague Democrats at the statewide convention. Delegates must be divided equally among men and women. Candidates must consent to nomination in writing. Candidates may make a one-minute statement to the meeting and may distribute materials. It is a very straightforward and transparent process any registered Democrat may participate in, or just come to watch.

For info about the Convention or caucus procedures contact Democratic Town Committee chair, Jay DiPucchio 863-8656 or visit the party website at www.mass-dems.org.

Democratic Town Committee Meeting

The Democratic Town Committee will meet at 6:15, to reorganize from the March 1 primary election and prepare for the caucus at 6:30. Any registered Democrat may attend.

The second floor meeting room of the Town Office is wheelchair accessible by elevator from the parking lot entrance at the rear of Town Hall.

Questions/Letters of Intent:

Jay DiPucchio, Democratic Town Committee Chair
35 Central Street
Turners Falls, MA 01376-1326
here.now@verizon.net
413-863-8656 home

Leverett Dems to Caucus March 13

Registered Democrats in Leverett will be holding a caucus at the Leverett Library on Sunday, March 13 at 2pm to elect 2 delegates and 2 alternates to the 2016 Massachusetts Democratic Convention, where Democrats from across Massachusetts will gather to adopt a new Action Agenda. The Convention will be held on Saturday, June 4th at the Tsongas Arena in Lowell.

"There is much at stake in 2016 as big, outside money targeting our Democratic legislators has already been pledged," said Chairman Tom McGee. "Our June convention will focus on building up our Democratic Party's grassroots around the values and ideas that improve the lives of working Bay Staters – ensuring we send strong Democrats to Beacon Hill, Capitol Hill and the White House."

The caucus is open to all registered Democrats in Leverett, and the Democratic committee welcomes participants. Delegates will be divided equally between men and women, and all ballots will be written and secret. In the spirit of inclusion, youth, minorities, and people with disabilities who are not elected as delegates or alternates may apply to be "add-on" delegates.

For more information on the caucus please contact Barbara Tiner at Barbara@wetlanded.com.

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SYRUP from page A1

come home from his job as a police officer in Montague to help his father with the boiling.

“When my father was alive and this was his business, if we had a good run, he would boil all day and I would come home and take over for him. We would boil until 1 a.m.,” says Billings.

Now, he is thinking about passing the business down to his sons, who will be the fifth generation of Billings men to make syrup at the farm.

“I took the business over in 1990,” Billings explains. “Now, my sons are tied up during the week with work; they come back and help on the weekends.”

During syrup season, Billings sits by the arch, a large boiler used to heat the sap until it reduces into syrup. He feeds the fire every five minutes or so. To



CUNNINGHAM PHOTO

After the syrup comes out of the arch, Billings filters it. Powdered diatomaceous earth is used to remove impurities.

keep the fire running, Billings uses 35 cords of wood a year. “Someone has to cut that wood,” Billings half-jokes. He cuts the wood himself, but he has a few workers who help to check the pumping stations.

Instead of checking each individual bucket, Billings uses a pipeline system to a few strategically placed pumps. These pumps need to be emptied, but he said it is less time-consuming than emptying individual buckets.

Depending on the conditions, the sap to syrup ratio can vary. Right now, Billings is running at two percent. That means it takes 50 gallons of sap to make one gallon of syrup.

“This early in the season, I would like to see it higher,” he notes.

While the syrup season is normally six weeks, since the weather has been unpredictable this winter it’s not clear how long this season will last. Billings explains that the syrup season is usually complete by the third week of March, because there is typically a cold spurt during that week.

“This year the weather has been so screwy, we may be done, or we may be under three feet of snow,” says Billings.

This spring he is hoping to build a new sugar shack, and even has a spot picked out. His arch, however, will now be replaced. “That thing is more than 100 years old,” he explains.

After the sap is poured into the arch, it moves through a series of chambers, with the temperature increasing with each chamber. After the syrup is boiled down and removed from the arch, it is put into a filter press. A special powder is used to remove the impurities. Only then is the syrup ready to eat.

At the end of production, Billings is left with a Grade A syrup that is sold in stores around the area, including Atkins Farms in Amherst, the Leverett Village Co-op, Fosters, Food City, Faces, and Green Fields Market. He also sells directly out of his house.

His work doesn’t stop with the end of the season, however. During the off season, the pipeline needs to be maintained. Billings says the pipeline costs \$90 per 1,500 feet: “It isn’t cheap.”

He also needs to cut wood for the next season and maintain the pumps.

“The syrup season is actually the shortest part of the process,” Billings explains.



SOCKS from page A1

pair of warm and dry socks? Two student leaders, newly elected to the recently formed student council, are excited about the project and looking for more ways to be involved with the community.

Fifth grader Brooke Thayer said, “I like that we are donating to people who don’t have enough socks.” She also likes being on the student council, and said she looks forward to sharing ideas for more projects with other students.

Logan Addison, also a fifth grader, said, “I like to donate to kids who don’t have socks or clothes.” As a student council member, he looks forward to finding out what people are interested in and to encouraging students to uphold Sheffield Pride by being rule keepers, not rule breakers.

That motto, Sheffield Pride, along with the school’s mascot, a lion, carries a powerful message of strength and family. A family of lions is called a pride, and princi-

pal Moberg’s comments about the school community make it sound very much like a family.

There are three classes for each grade at Sheffield Elementary, with an average of 15 to 18 students in each class, making personal attention a given. Like other schools in the Gill-Montague district, Sheffield follows the precepts of the Responsive Classroom, “a research-based approach to teaching that focuses on the strong link between academic success and social-emotional skills,” according to the Responsive Classroom website.

Which brings us back to the sock challenge – and the colorful heap of socks in all sizes in the middle of principal Moberg’s office. The goal of the challenge is to gather more new socks than their competitor.

By Monday morning, February 29, Sheffield students had brought in 191 pairs. A member of the student council announces the new total every day, and Principal Moberg felt sure they would top 200

by the afternoon. The competition ends on March 4.

Sheffield students have extended the reach of the effort by issuing challenges to Orange, Gill, and Hillcrest. “Friendly competition that serves the community is a fine thing,” said Moberg, who is filled with enthusiasm about the students, staff and faculty at Sheffield.

Now in her fourth year, she is realizing some of her early goals, such as forming a student council, and she is delighted by the spirit of collaboration and cooperation she sees daily. Parents have been particularly supportive of new programs at the school.

She encourages current and prospective parents to check out the website sheffield.gmrtd.org, which also links to Facebook and Twitter pages. There you will find announcements about upcoming events and descriptions of the various programs.



American-Israeli Anthropologist To Present on Israel/Palestine Conflict

GREENFIELD – Jeff Halper, former head of the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions and author of *An Israeli in Palestine* and *Obstacles to Peace*, will stop in Greenfield on Monday to discuss the conflict and present his new book, *War Against the People* (2015, University of Chicago Press).

Halper offers a knowledgeable voice and a critical, constructive

analysis of what is happening in Israel/Palestine. He argues that a democratic, bi-national state is the only remaining just solution, and examines the obstacles it faces from all sides.

Halper’s new book broadens the discussion to include what he calls “global Palestine,” and the globalization of what he calls “securocratic war,” including tools and

methods of counterinsurgency and domestic repression.

The March 7 talk and discussion will take place at the Greenfield Community College Downtown Center, 270 Main Street, at 12:30 p.m. It is sponsored by the Traprock Center for Peace & Justice.

The event is accessible, free, and open to all. Light refreshments will be served.

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TOWN OF MONTAGUE PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT

The following outlines a Scope of the Service Tasks for which the consultant will perform for the Master Plan for Norma’s and Rutter’s Parks Project component of the Town’s FY 2015 Community Development Block Grant Program funded by the U. S. Department of HUD. The basic objective of the Consultant’s efforts will be to design and prepare bid ready plans and specifications for the project. The fixed fee amount for the scope of service tasks, as outlined below, is \$18,590.

The Town of Montague reserves the right to continue with the selected engineer/landscape architect for additional services. These services may include: Bid ready plans and specifications, bidding and construction oversight. These services may be extended by contract with a negotiated fee for service.

Towards this goal, the consultant will be responsible for the following scope of service tasks in accordance with all Federal/State/Local laws and regulations, including but not limited to HUD regulations under Title I of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, as amended, applicable M.G.L. Chapter 149 requirements, as well as related Federal and State Labor Standards Provisions HUD form 4010; HUD Handbook 1344.1 Federal Labor Standards Compliance; Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 149, Section 27; and Massachusetts Department of Labor and Industries (Labor Laws); Davis Bacon and Related Acts; the Contract Work Hours and Safety Standards Act, Copeland “Anti Kickback Act” and compliance with all applicable Federal/State/Local ADA requirements:

Scope of Services

- Task I – Kick-Off Meeting, Survey, Site Inventory & Analysis
- Task II – Conceptual Design Alternatives
- Task III – Final Master Plan

Proposals should include the firm’s qualifications and relevant work experience, particular reference should be made to state and/or federally funded projects, with the above mentioned type of project, a listing of all personnel who will be working on this project and their responsibilities and qualifications, a timetable for completion of the scope of services, documentation that the firm meets insurance requirements (Errors and Omissions Insurance, coverage to be equal to 10% of the construction costs with a minimum of \$250,000 and if the designer has a deductible to their policy, this deductible will be subject to approval by the town). The complete list of evaluation criteria is available upon request at blunter@fcirna.org.

Five (5) copies of the sealed technical proposals and one (1) sealed copy of a separate fixed price proposal for NORMA’S AND RUTTER’S PARK PROJECT should be submitted in writing by 3:00 p.m. March 24, 2016 to the Town of Montague, Selectboard Office, 1 Avenue A, Turners Falls, Massachusetts 01376. The envelope containing the non-price proposals shall be marked “MASTER PLAN for NORMA’S AND RUTTER’S PARKS PROJECT NON-PRICE PROPOSAL”, and the price proposal shall be marked “MASTER PLAN for NORMA’S AND RUTTER’S PARKS PROJECT PRICE PROPOSAL”.

For additional information, please contact either Bruce Hunter by phone at (413) 863 9781 extension 133, or at the above email address.

A site briefing and visit is scheduled for March 10, 2016 at the NSA Community Center, 2 Montague Ave, Lake Pleasant, MA at 10:00 am. If you are in need of directions contact the Franklin County Regional Housing and Redevelopment Authority at (413) 863-9781 x133 or at blunter@fcirna.org.

The Town of Montague reserves the right to reject all proposals in the interest of sound business practices. The Town of Montague is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employers and encourages proposals from qualified minority and women owned businesses.

Montague Board of Selectmen, February 3, 2016

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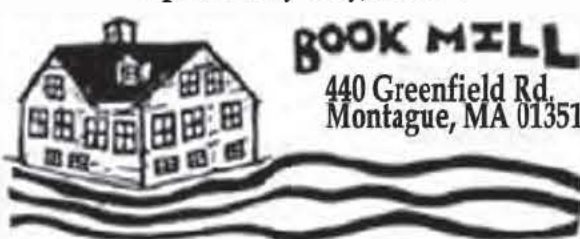
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ERVING from page A1

George Moonlight Davis said he sees televisions sitting on curbsides around town after the pickup, and that residents don’t remove the unacceptable items left behind by the highway workers for a long time.

Assistant assessor Jacquelyn Boyden suggested that the highway crew could pick up the acceptable bulky items and leave a bright colored “sticker of shame” on unacceptable items like televisions and tires.

“Tag it, it’s worth a try,” said Davis.

“What’s the purpose of Anything Goes?” asked selectboard member Arthur Johnson. “To keep the town clean.” Johnson argued that, if it could be done within the waste pickup budget, the town should pick up televisions and tires – “get rid of the trash in town.”

Both Johnson and Newton were surprised to learn the cost of the bulky item pickup was \$17,000 – a bit less than the \$20,000 budgeted. Both said they thought that, if it came before town meeting, voters would even approve more than \$20,000 in order to allow currently forbidden items into the bulky waste pickup program.

Newton and Boyden both suggested using some of the bulky waste funding to staff the highway garage on several Saturday mornings, when it might be more convenient for residents to drop off televisions or tires.

Johnson had another suggestion: a bulky waste program in addition to the May bulky waste pickup, scheduled individually and paid for in advance by individual residents.

Selectboard member Jacob Smith said, “I’d like to find out what the cost is, before we go in blindly.”

McCrory agreed to check with Greenfield about the cost of its bulky waste pickup program, and present the information at the next selectboard meeting.

State Legislature Inaction

Bembury reported that he had checked the state legislature website and found no change in the status of special legislation for early retirement packages for Dana Moore, Jr. and Robert Miner.

Moore’s package was approved by the October 2015 STM. At that time, proponents stated that, to make the package effective, the state legislature needed to pass special home-rule legislation by June 2016.

Town meeting voted Miner’s enhanced early retirement package in 2001. However, according to Bembury, “Nobody knows what happened... There is no record of it from that day on.” The original vote and package were re-affirmed with

a November 2015 STM vote, and the proper paperwork was submitted to the legislature.

According to Smith, although the legislation was not finalized, Miner’s retirement payments were increased as voted at the 2001 town meeting. Bembury said if the legislation is not passed, Miner would have to pay back the amount of the enhanced payments he has received to date, and his future payments would be decreased.

“I talked to Bob last week,” Bembury said, and asked if he needed anything from the selectboard. “He told me ‘Just fix it’.”

The other Erving item waiting for state legislature action is Erving’s recall bylaw. The November 2014 STM voted to petition the state legislature to adopt a special act establishing a procedure for Erving residents to recall elected town officials. According to municipal clerk Betsy Sicard, that legislation is listed on the legislature’s website as being “in committee.”

Annual Town Meeting May 2

Boyden presented the draft warrant for the May 2 annual town meeting, still a work in progress.

“This is chock full of articles,” Bembury commented. He suggested looking for articles that could wait until the June special town meeting. Boyden told the board she tried “to put the no-brainers first” on the warrant and to group related articles, such as funding for the various school districts.

The board plans to adopt the fiscal year 2017 budget and have a final draft of the warrant by March 14.

Other Business

Brenda Silva was appointed to the administrative coordinator selection committee.

William Bembury, Gary Betters, Paula Betters, Linda Downs-Bembury and Carol Lyman were appointed to the senior housing committee. Johnson expressed concern that the committee includes two married couples. Boyden protested that the situation was not necessarily a conflict of interest. She said she would insert an advertisement in the Around Town newsletter seeking to recruit up to four more members. Bembury said that the first meeting would be held in April, May or June.

The board approved closing out the Chapter 90 state-reimbursed road work on High Street, Mountain Road and Lillian’s Way, and accepting the final reimbursement amount of \$5,262.

A special town meeting will be held at the senior/community center at 7 p.m. this coming Monday, March 7.



PURCHASE from page A1

spokesperson for government and regulatory affairs.

Greene said that, even after the sales to FirstLight and Dynegy, Engie would continue to own a “significant amount” of generating capacity in North America. For its part, PSP Investments has been moving toward hydro. It owns a majority of a company called H2O Power LP, which owns eight power plants in Ontario. In September, PSP purchased two plants on Pennsylvania’s Allegheny River, then sold them to H2O Power last month.

“H2O Power will assume cer-

tain overhead responsibilities previously assumed by Engie,” said Guthrie Stewart, PSP’s senior vice president and global head of private investments.

Stewart also told the Reporter his company sees “great value in working with the unique expertise located at the facilities” in Northfield and Turners Falls.

Stewart gave no indication as to whether the new owners would be friendly toward Kinder Morgan’s proposal to situate a natural gas pipeline across the front lawn of Northfield Mountain.

Engie’s North American subsidiary owns the Distrigas LNG

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE ERVING POLICE LOG

But There Were No Turkeys

Monday, 2/15

9:06 a.m. Advised MassDOT of large ice flow on Route 2 in Farley area.

9:35 a.m. Report of alarm sounding in the High Street area. Found to be a malfunction at a Church Street residence.

11:35 a.m. Took report of single motor vehicle crash at Holmes Street and Route 2.

Tuesday, 2/16

8:15 a.m. Noise complaint at Lester Street residence.

Quiet upon arrival.

9:35 a.m. Assisted on scene of medical emergency on North Street.

2:55 p.m. Motor vehicle crash reported, Route 2, Farley area. Assisted state police on scene.

Wednesday, 2/17

6:35 a.m. Disabled motor vehicle on Prospect Street. Not a hazard; owner made own arrangements.

Friday, 2/19

2:20 p.m. Report of gunshots fired. Possibly an at-

tempt to shoot at wild turkeys. No sign of anything in area at this time.

2:30 p.m. Disabled motor vehicle on Maple Avenue. Not a hazard.

Sunday, 2/21

4:20 p.m. Criminal complaint issued to [redacted] for operating with a revoked registration and no insurance.

Monday, 2/22

12:15 p.m. Report of gas alarm at senior center. False alarm.

Wednesday, 2/24

6 p.m. Assisted with vehicle stuck in area of Laurel Lake Road.

Thursday, 2/25

12:38 p.m. Motor vehicle lockout at Weatherheads convenience store. Entry gained.

12:50 p.m. Mediated landlord/tenant dispute on Northfield Road.

Saturday, 2/27

Disabled vehicle, Weatherheads parking lot. Tow requested.

MONTAGUE from page A1

canal are included on the Turners Falls National Register Historic District (1982 designation). Only 35% of the square footage in the district is currently occupied.

“In 2013 the Town designated the Historic-Industrial Canal District a ‘Slum and Blighted’ district in effort to seek state and federal support for re-investment in the area. The district is zoned for adaptive reuse and it is a community goal to revitalize this area in a manner that protects the historic structures.

“Numerous reports cite limited physical access over the canal as the critical barrier to the redevelopment of this area and protection of the historic resources.”

The historic mills in question include the Strathmore complex, a former paper mill that has been the target of frequent failed development efforts – and frequent expressions of frustration by town meeting members when asked to make appropriations for its maintenance.

Last year, the town put out a request for proposals to develop one structure, known as Building 11, under the urban homesteading program. In December, Turners Falls fire chief Bob Escott ordered the town to remedy dangerous conditions in several buildings in the complex.

A bridge from Canal Street to the Strathmore, considered vital to development of the site, has been “closed by FirstLight since approximately 2004 due to lack of maintenance” according to the selectboard comment. Another bridge owned by the company, the so-called IP Bridge located near the head of the canal, has access limited to emergency vehicles. The document approved by the selectboard also notes the poor condition of an access road that runs along the side of the canal.

The comment to FERC proposes that First Light

“...identify a management plan for the Strathmore Bridge, IP Bridges, and Canal Access Road

with a commitment to repair and maintain ... public access over the power canal to the Historic-Industrial Mill District.

“If FirstLight is not willing to improve access to the historic-canal district, the town suggests that that Power Company be required to acquire and remediate the vacant properties which have been rendered unusable and undevelopable because of the hydro project.”

The Montague comment also complains that the FirstLight application does not provide sufficient access to the Connecticut River for recreational uses, and “fails to meet the need for a historical and archeological interpretive framework for a 1676 King Phillips War Battle that occurred in the project area.”

The statement recommends that the power company “work with the town to establish and provide funding for a Native American Cultural Center in Turners Falls.”

The public comment also criticized the low flow from the dam into the river parallel to the canal. This “unacceptable minimum flow” into this section of the river, according to the town’s statement, is responsible for “destroying aquatic habitat and eliminating recreational opportunity [including white water canoeing] during most of the year.”

The statement expressed support for comments by other local organizations, such as the Connecticut River Watershed Council, on the environmental and recreational issues raised by the company’s applications.

Extension: Cable

The saga of the proposed contract between the town and its local access television provider, Montague Community Cable Incorporated, continued. The contracts are complete and have been approved by the town’s cable advisory committee (CAC). But MCCI is also required, by a recent town meeting vote, to present a “long term plan” to improve community involvement in the station and expand lo-

cal content.

A final draft of that plan was sent to the CAC last week, but the committee failed to post the meeting needed to discuss it within the 48 hours required by the state’s Open Meeting Law. This meant that on Monday, CAC chair Jason Burbank came before the selectboard to request yet another extension of the town’s existing contract with MCCI.

The board approved the request, and the contract will be extended until its April 4 meeting.

Other Business

Bud Gnateck of the Judd Wire Company requested that the board renew the company’s lease of Montague property used as a parking lot. The board briefly discussed whether the lease would impede the town’s upcoming project to construct a new DPU facility in the area, and when it decided it would not, approved the company’s lease request for three years at \$100 per year.

The board approved a request by the Airport Commission for a cable hook-up to the main airport building in the industrial park. The request will be made to the town’s cable provider, Comcast.

The board approved a request from the Berkshire Brewing Company for one-day liquor licenses for three events at the Shea Theater on March 4, 5 and 6.

Also approved was a request for the use of public property for the annual Newt Guilbault Little League parade on April 24.

The board approved a memorandum of understanding with the Franklin County Solid Waste Management District to place wood pellet recycling sheds at the town’s transfer station on Sandy Lane.

Finally, it approved an agreement with the engineering company Insituform for sewer lining work “at various locations.”

The next scheduled selectboard meeting will be March 7.



regasification terminal north of Boston, and has argued that LNG provides a better solution to New England’s winter gas needs than new pipeline infrastructure. It has thus far refused Kinder Morgan access to survey on its land.

“It is difficult for us to express a view on any of these requests until we have the opportunity to engage with the First Light employees and the different local stakeholders,” Stewart said on Tuesday.

“PSP Investments/H2O Power

will benefit from the expertise of existing employees at Northfield Mountain to assess potential requests of third parties,” such as Kinder Morgan’s.

“Generally speaking,” he added, “environmental, social and governance issues are of prime importance for PSP Investments and we have detailed policies on this, and we will abide by them in how we deal with First Light assets.”

The Northfield Mountain and Turners Falls projects are both in

the midst of processes to renew their licenses with the FERC, which are granted on 30- to 50-year terms. FirstLight has retained the firm Gomez & Sullivan Engineers, PC to oversee its relicensing process.

“The sale is not expected to impact the relicensing at Northfield,” said Engie spokesman Greene. “That process will continue regardless of the ownership.”

The sale will affect properties in Montague, Gill, Northfield and Erving.



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NOTES FROM THE WENDELL SELECTBOARD

Budget Season Starts in Wendell; Con Com Still Mulling Solar Proposal

BY JOSH HEINEMANN

February 24 marked the Wendell selectboard’s and finance committee’s beginning discussions of the town’s FY’17 budget. Fin com chair Doug Tanner and members Robin Heubel and Garrett Sawyer met with the selectboard, and together the group listed some possible expenses that are outside the normal operating budget, and the other regular payments.

Facilities engineer Jim Slavas has taken over backup and maintenance of the town office computer systems, and has estimated 191 hours for that work. He did not specify an hourly rate, but selectboard member Jeoffrey Pooser said that Left Click charged \$100 an hour, and the going rate is \$50 an hour.

Tanner recommended the cost of living allowance (COLA) this year be 0.9%, based on a five-year average of the consumer price index.

Fire chief Joe Cuneo asked for a reverse 911 system. This system would reach every household with a land line, and could also include cell phones as well. It would be used to warn residents of an impending emergency, or to offer information to residents as a townwide emergency is happening. The cost is based on the number of households, and shared town coordinator Nancy Aldrich said that the system in New Salem costs \$1,100 a year.

Cuneo got an estimate for installing a building security system that would be monitored by radio by Shelburne Control dispatch. That service would have no monthly charge, but it would be expensive to install, \$17,000 for the five town buildings: the office building, the garage, the library, the town hall, and the police station. The alternative is to stay connected with Berkshire Communications with its monthly monitoring fee.

Tanner said figured that the pay-back for the radio system would be ten years and that “by that time, the equipment would be broken,” so he thought the change was not necessarily a good idea.

Selectboard chair Christine Heard said she has not yet talked with highway commissioner Harry Williston about further work on a walking path between the town common and the Wendell Country Store. She said she would do that.

The highway garage and fire station needs a new roof, but Tanner said he looked at the roof that the building has now and he thought it could serve another year with a repair.

Selectboard member Dan Keller said that the new, mold-free and airtight ductwork has been installed in the town hall, paid for by Green Communities grant money. He said that installing a sheet of plastic on the dirt under the crawl space underneath the town hall would not cost much, and would hold some ground moisture away from the town hall floor. Heard said she would contact Tom Chaisson about the work.

Wendell has joined the eleven-town Municipal Coalition Against the Pipeline. Montague has already incurred \$10,000 in legal expenses as an intervenor in the DPU hearings. The total legal costs could

reach \$70,000, and Montague is asking other member towns for help with that expense.

Sawyer asked the status of Wendell’s contract with Seaboard Solar. Seaboard sold the contract for the one installation that is operating, and Pooser said that Wendell has over \$60,000 in credit. He has asked if that credit could be applied to home electric bills, or to municipal electric bills, and while the answer has not been “no,” Wendell has not been able to collect the money in any form.

Wendell will be paying more for Swift River School, both because of a normal increase in operating expenses and because more Wendell students will be attending the school.

The cost of ambulance service from Orange will increase to \$14,000 this coming year, and in years following that cost is likely to increase dramatically, but according to a formula that has not yet been set. The ambulance service will establish an enterprise fund so that money neighboring towns pay for the service will not go into Orange’s general fund.

The cost of the fiberoptic connections to town buildings is \$6,960, and librarian Rosie Heidkamp says she is satisfied with the speed and capacity for now. If the library load gets saturated and people want more access, the cost will increase.

Aldrich found that the price to buy a propane tank so that the town hall kitchen does not take propane away from the emergency generator supply is \$600. Wendell rents two tanks per generator at \$90 per year per tank, and only Amerigas, which owns the tanks, is allowed to fill them.

Pooser said that by owning a tank and being able to shop around for a propane supplier he has saved a good deal.

Heard asked, “Who would watch the gas prices, monitor the tanks, and shop around for prices?” When no one stepped forward, board members agreed to rent a separate tank for the town hall kitchen, and to continue to rent tanks from Amerigas.

New Solar Project

Conservation commission members Mary Thomas, Robin Heubel, and Melissa Grader met the selectboard with an update on the hearing they held for a proposed solar installation that would go on land owned by Dave Arsenault behind his house and behind Kemsley Academy.

The con com hearing spanned four weekly evenings, but committee members had not yet had time to talk among themselves and reach a finding. They would be meeting March 1, and have until March 8 to respond.

The planning board has issued an OK for the project, but neither the open space committee nor the energy committee supports it, and one abutter opposes it.

The original idea called for a 2-megawatt system, but the proposers have reduced their plan to 1-½ megawatts to accommodate concerns about wetlands raised by the conservation committee. Wendell would get a rent payment based on the output, and with a smaller solar farm, the town would get less money. 6.8 acres of the project would impact

wetlands, although only 750 square feet are in actual wetland, the rest being in a wetland buffer zone.

The proposed main access road passes within 5 feet of wetland, and Arsenault does not want his driveway used as an alternate access road. The whole area has a low infiltration rate and a high water table. Conservation committee members suggested another area on Arsenault’s property, one that requires no tree removal, but he did not like the location.

There are some issues that cannot be resolved until spring.

Pooser said the company is trying to do things properly, but the clock is ticking for them. Massachusetts has not lifted its solar net-metering cap, and when and if it does, there is likely to be a flood of applicants.

Fiber-optic Buildout

Keller said he met with a Shutesbury selectboard member and broached the subject of cooperation among Wendell, New Salem, Shutesbury, and Warwick to facilitate getting fiber-optic internet service to homes.

Leverett, which already has its self-financed fiber-optic system, is willing to work with the four towns, and not only out of its generosity. Parts of Wendell and Shutesbury would logically be reached through Leverett, and providing that access to Wendell and Shutesbury could give Leverett some redundancy and make its network more resilient.

Keller suggested that the five towns could go to MBI with a proposal, and he is organizing a meeting of selectboards and broadband committees from the towns to discuss the possibility. He said that exploring this option does not necessarily mean that Wendell should withdraw from WiredWest.

Broadband committee member Rob Heller said that in his opinion, dating back at least to the Roman Empire, private enterprise has done poorly in providing infrastructure. Roman roads and aquaducts were built with public resources, the American railroad expansion was financed in part with government money, and rural electrification did not happen until the government stepped in.

Other Business

Energy committee chair Nan Riebschlaeger met the selectboard with a suggestion for changing lights in the town hall, the library, and the highway garage and fire station to LEDs, and installing switches so that more of the lights can be turned on and off independently.

Heidkamp has a list of lights she would have changed. The cost estimate of \$25,000 would come from the town’s Green Communities grant, and leave \$29,000 in Wendell’s account.

Keller mentioned that he and buildings and grounds coordinator Ted Lewis looked at the shed behind the meetinghouse and noticed that someone had closed off a section as if creating a place to live. The shed is collapsing, but boards on one side look like sound, clear chestnut.

He said he would write up a draft request for proposals (RFP) seeking a person who could remove the building in exchange for the chestnut.

DISTRICT from page A1

to revisit the formula for assessing member towns.

The current assessment formula is based entirely on a five-year rolling average of enrollment. This method has been strongly opposed by Shutesbury, which argues that “ability to pay,” based on property tax valuations, should play a role, as it does under the state’s so-called statutory method.

Some of the highlights of Mangano’s budget presentation included:

- * The budget/revenue proposal assumed that a “level services” budget – the cost of providing the same services as last year – would increase by nearly \$900,000. The largest increases were in “risk and benefits” (various forms of insurance), charter school tuition, and a “control account” to fund a potential collective bargaining agreement.

- * These increases were offset by a list of 16 reductions, totaling \$475,000. These would include the elimination of three “professional” staff (one of which will be funded by Amherst College), savings of \$60,000 in health and unemployment insurance, a cut in the hours of the director of teaching and learning position, and reductions in clerical and “paraeducator” positions.

- * The final budget recommendation also included a number of “additions” over the previous fiscal year. These include funding for the STEAM program, \$35,000 for a licensed public nurse, and a \$116,459 contribution to fund future retiree health insurance liabilities known as OPEB.

- * On the revenue side of the equation, the budget assumes \$9,379,437 in state Chapter 70 educational aid, based on the governor’s current state budget proposal. This is an increase of 0.4% or \$37,580. By contrast, local funding through assessments to the four member towns increased by \$384,143, or 2%, to a total of \$19,544,726.

- * Local assessments this year would be calculated by a formula whereby 10% would be allocated according to wealth, measured by “taxable property value,” while 90% would still be based on the enrollment average. Mangano portrayed this as a compromise in the debate over the current formula pending a decision by his proposed “assessment method working group.”

- * Mangano estimates an increase of \$75,000 in state transportation reimbursements, \$170,000 in charter school reimbursements, from the state, and a \$25,000 reduction in the use of excess and deficiency reserves.

- * The proposal also included \$645,442 in “total funded capital improvements.” These included \$400,000 in Americans with Dis-

ability Act upgrades, an HVAC pump room in the middle school, and air conditioning in the high school photo lab.

Officials from the four towns asked pointed questions about Mangano’s presentation, but generally supported the budget. All who spoke at the meeting stated that they could afford the assessments as recommended.

The proposed assessment method, in modifying the current method by incorporating property values, will require votes at each town meeting in the spring to approve an amendment to the regional budget.

There was also general support for the decision to delay town meeting votes on regional consolidation for another year. Katherine Appy of the regional school committee said that Amherst had “a lot on the table,” and to bring the regionalization issue this spring would be “too much.”

Kip Fonsh, regional school committee member from Leverett, said his motion on the committee to delay the process was “not an easy motion to make,” since he had spent “four years of [his] life” on the issue. Fonsh noted that Leverett had “a number of significant financial matters” to deal with this spring that could “direct attention away from” regionalization.

There was less agreement on the need to continue discussions about the assessment method by forming a working group. George Arvanitas of Shutesbury thanked Mangano “for having this conversation” about assessment which, he said, “will benefit all of us.” Shutesbury residents have been critical of the current method based on enrollment, and many support assessments more heavily influenced by measures of wealth.

Peter d’Errico, selectboard member from Leverett, said he did not “see the need for continued conversation” about the issue: “I do not believe it promises any benefit.”

He said that his board might send an article before Leverett’s annual town meeting to allow residents to “take a stand” in favor what he referred to as the “equal child method,” meaning the existing assessment method based solely on enrollment.



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NOTICE OF FILING

On February 28, 2016, Turners Falls Hydro LLC, PO Box 149, Hamilton, MA 01936 filed an Notice of Intent (NOI), Preliminary Application Document (PAD) and Request to Use the Traditional Licensing Process (TLP) with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission for the re-licensing of Turners Falls Hydro Project (FERC No. 2622), located at 16 Canal Road, Montague, MA. The NOI, PAD and TLP documents are available for public inspection at 823 Bay Road, Hamilton, MA, or can be downloaded from the FERC library at <http://elibrary-backup.ferc.gov/>

Comments on the NOI, PAD and request to use the TLP are due to the Commission and potential applicant no later than March 29, 2016 and must reference the project number P-2622. – Turners Falls Hydro, LLC. Respondents must submit an electronic filing pursuant to 385.2003(c) or an original and seven copies of their comments to the Secretary, FERC, 888 First Street, NE, Washington, DC 20426.

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SPORTS CORNER I: Franklin County Tech School



AT LEFT: Franklin Tech's Brittany Andrews drives the ball past Old Colony Tech's Megan Santos on February 25. Old Colony Tech took the lead 19 seconds before the final buzzer for a 36-35 win in the Small School Vocational Girls' Tournament Semifinal. The team was eliminated from postseason play by Lee on Monday.

BELOW: Colin Gould slices between St. Mary defenders and takes the ball to the hoop. Franklin Tech captured the Tri-County League Title with an 82-48 win over St. Mary. The Eagles beat Westfield Tech on Tuesday and will face Lenox Memorial tonight.



DAVID TOTT PHOTOS

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TFHS Basketball: Victory and Defeat



Maddy Chmżyński makes another successful jumper, scoring a game-high 23 points during matchup. The Pioneer Panthers prevailed, defeating the Turners Falls Indians 42-35 on the Indians home court during the first round of the Western Mass D-IV Tournament.

Turners Girls Knocked Out of Playoffs

By MATT ROBINSON

Playoffs are a curse and a blessing. When a high school team is good enough to make the postseason, they never know when their last game is. They don’t know if tonight is “the night” – the last night.

The last time they lace up their sneakers, the last time they play with a team they’ve played with for years.

It’s the same for the coaches. They will coach again but not with this team. Sure, Nadia Hasan has been invited to the all-star game on March 18, and Jordan Meattey will play softball, but the 2015-16 Lady Indians will never play another game ever again.

For the last 20-plus years, the Tribe always knew when their last game would be: it was always the last game of the regular season. But this year was different. For the first time in a generation, the Turners Falls Lady Indians boldly charged into the second season. Yes, playing every game that might be your last may be a curse but it’s much more a blessing.

As soon as the ladies began missing from the foul line, you knew it was going to be a tough night for the team. They played hard, and gave as good as they got, but when they couldn’t hit from the line, Pioneer began to pull away.

see TURNERS GIRLS pg B4

Turners Boys Win in First Round; Face Granby Friday

By MATT ROBINSON

The Turners Falls Basketball Indians finished the regular season on a positive note, and won their first playoff game on Tuesday night against Pioneer Valley Christian Academy.

Those who’ve followed the Blue Indians for the past few years realize what an uphill battle the season has been. Last year, Liam Ellis (1007 career points), Nick York (516), and Tyler Charbonneau (317) all graduated, as did their fifth man, Emmitt Turn (47) – leaving Coach Mullins just 2 starters, Jalen Sanders and Tionne Brown.

In short, it was a complete rebuilding year for the Tribe from Powertown. Last year, Turners Falls had a regular season record of 18-2 and advanced in the playoffs before losing in the third round to eventual champion, Hopkins. This year, they headed into the postseason confident that they can be competitive against any school in their division.

Fourth Quarter Push: Mahar 71 – TFHS 52

On Thursday, February 18, Turners Falls fell to the Mahar Scarlet Senators, 71-52.

Although trailing badly for the first three quarters, Turners

see TURNERS BOYS pg B4



Jalen Sanders scores a game-high 26 points as Turners Falls High School defeat Pioneer Valley Christian 64-50 in Round 1 of the Western Mass D-IV Tournament.

Time to Dance and Celebrate at the Shea!

By REPORTER STAFF

TURNERS FALLS – This weekend the newly renovated Shea Theater throws open the doors and turns on the lights for three nights of fabulous music. Organizers and volunteers have worked hard to implement many improvements to the inside of the theater, adding creative lighting, a bar and lounge area, an art galleria, and fresh coats of paint everywhere, including behind-the-scenes green rooms.

Now it’s time to let the public in to admire the work, and enjoy three concerts in the 300 seat hall.

Leading off the fun on Friday night is an eight-piece band from Brooklyn, New York. Red Baraat has been dubbed “the best party band in years” by NPR. Horn, guitar, sousaphone, drums create a fusion of North Indian bhangra, rock, and jazz that appeals to a diverse audience, one that inevitably ends up dancing the night away. DJ

Bongohead opens. Starts at 8 p.m. and tickets are \$28 at the door.

On Saturday night, come out to hear Speedy Ortiz’s play “illegally loud snack rock.” Headed by songwriter/guitarist/singer Sadie Dupuis of Amherst, the Massachusetts-based band promises to rock the house with original music that has been described as both “catchy and jarring.” Alexander F (from Rubblebucket) and Maxi’s World open. Tickets are \$18 at the door, starts at 8 p.m.

Wrap it up with indie artist Heather Maloney, whose folk rooted indie rock is blessed by her distinctive voice and meaningful lyrics. Her show begins at 7 p.m. on Sunday, and tickets are \$20 at the door.

The weekend also launches the “Light Up the Shea” fundraising campaign for continued rehabilitation of the historic theater. The theater has been closed for several

see SHEA pg B4

OYSTERGIRL's guide to REAL LIVING

by Vanessa Query

#13: Hygiene History: When Water Was Unhygienic

In my last column, I briefly mentioned a period of several hundred years in which Europeans shunned water as an agent of cleanliness. I thought I’d tell you all about that!

During the “Black Death” of the mid-fourteenth century, the plague killed somewhere between 30 and 60% of Europeans in under a decade.

In 1348, at the height of the pandemic, King Philippe VI of France asked the medical faculty of the University of Paris to figure out the cause of the plague.

Their most notable idea was hot baths.

The theory was, hot baths created a relaxing of the skin, opening up its pores, which were then vulnerable to invasion. The idea stuck, and people became terrified that water would make them susceptible to not only the plague but all sorts of other diseases as well.

Bathhouses – how most people bathed before indoor plumbing – had been pretty common. But the fear of water grew with every threat of the plague, and almost all European bathhouses closed within 200 years.

Everyone got dirtier and dirtier. The aristocracy, who set the tone for the masses, was the dirtiest. Their clothes were as elaborate and fancy as ever – even more so, with increasing access to materials like velvet and silk – but underneath, their bodies were literally teeming with lice, nits, and fleas.

Dirty bodies were not just the norm, but the goal. The medical authorities built upon the ideas of those fourteenth-century University of Paris doctors. It became common knowledge that blocked pores sealed the body off from infection, that filth and dirt encrusted on the skin created a barrier that protected the skin from invasion.



During the several hundred years that water was shunned and bodies were never cleaned, finding fleas on your person was a quotidian enough activity that this painting would be considered a glimpse into everyday life. Woman Catching a Flea by Georges de la Tour, France, c. 1638.

If you were alive in the seventeenth century, your hygiene routine would have focused only on that which was visible to others: your face and your hands. And it was mostly about appearances: You wouldn’t clean your face or brush your teeth, just wipe with a dry cloth and rinse out your mouth. You might comb your hair. But that’s it.

Notably, throughout this time in history, it was really only bodies that were dirty – houses, streets, and clothes were all kept clean.

However much being dirty was lauded as the healthiest option, the arguably innate desire for humans to be clean shone through. In the 1600s, wearing linen became the new hygiene standard. Clean linen, it was thought, was better than water for personal care: It was safer and more reliable.

see HYGIENE pg B3

THE GARDENER'S COMPANION



By LESLIE BROWN

FLORIDA – February 13: The long and winding road.

It’s the end of our stay at Georgetown. We have packed our bags and driven north to Palatka, where I will catch the train to Fort Lauderdale. It arrives at 11 a.m., only ten minutes late.

It’s a long train of auto cars and passenger seats. We are shown to assigned seats, which are comfortable reclining chairs with footrests next to large glass windows. The friendly staff have helped us board and lifted on our bags for us.

We are three cars down from the food cart and four down from the dining car. Many of us have come prepared with snacks, as we will not

Going South: Part Four

arrive in Fort Lauderdale until 5:45. This is not the Acela Express, and we make many stops.

The passing views are of small towns: orange groves with pitiful, puny fruit, forests and swamp lands of wildly competing growth – palm, pine, eucalyptus, Haw, and royal fern whose low, fan-like growth holds its own by virtue of the ability to grow anywhere. At Orlando, we stop for fifteen minutes as families with children embark laden with Disney pets, backpacks, and memories. Everyone looks like they’ve been through the wringer.

At last, the train finds Fort Lauderdale and we get off: a family of four with huge suitcases bound for a cruise; an improbably large man who struggled to ambulate shepherded by his petite wife with enough supplies for at least a month; the slender woman who hopped off as often as allowed for a smoke and who made

frequent trips to and from the bar and the rest room; and me.

The cruise groups are swallowed up by huge courtesy vans and I manage to snag one of the wandering, lost taxis hoping for one more fare. After the loss of twenty minutes and twenty-five dollars, I am dropped at my destination.

There is no response to the doorbell or to knocking. Shortly, a neighbor comes from across the street and lets me in. My ninety-four-year-old mother-in-law has been admitted to the hospital with high blood pressure and vertigo.

I spend a quiet evening in the company of a glass of wine, a frozen dinner and a good book, surrounded by the eerie feeling of being in someone else’s place when they are not home. The phone rings often with calls from two of her daughters and the hospital social worker until

see GARDENERS pg B5

Pet of the Week

My name is Millie but please don't call me Millie Vanilli. Not only does Millie Vanilli recall the 1980's pop band that lip-synched its way to infamy, but "Vanilli" makes me seem like a bland ice cream flavor when I'm really so much more.

I'm a dark chocolatey, butter-scotchy, caramelly swirl of a cat with pistachio eyes to keep it interesting. I travelled all the way from New Jersey to find a home and someone with

good taste who will appreciate my charm and patchwork patterns.

If you already have cats, just stir me slowly into the mix and I'll blend right in! All you vanilla ice cream fans, it's time to branch out and try a new flavor. Come down to Dakin and visit me, it will be so good!

Contact the Dakin Pioneer Valley Humane Society at (413) 548-9898 or at info@dpvhs.org.



"MILLIE"

Senior Center Activities MARCH 7 to MARCH 11

GILL and MONTAGUE

Gill / Montague Senior Center, 62 Fifth Street, Turners Falls, is open Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Congregate meals are served Tuesday through Thursday at noon. Meal reservations must be made one day in advance by 11 a.m.

All fitness classes are supported by a grant from the Executive Office of Elder Affairs. Voluntary donations are accepted. Council on Aging Director is Roberta Potter. Kitchen Manager is Jeff Suprenant. For more information, to make meal reservations, or to sign up for programs call 863-9357. Messages can be left on our machine when the Center is closed.

Tues, Wed & Thurs Noon Lunch
M, W 10:10 a.m. Aerobics, 10:50 a.m. Chair Exercise
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1 p.m. Knitting Circle
Tuesday 3/8
9:30 a.m. Chair Yoga
Wednesday 3/9
9 a.m. Veterans' Outreach
10 a.m. Nurses' Hour
11:15 a.m. Friends' Meeting
12:45 p.m. Bingo
Thursday 3/10
9 a.m. Tai Chi
10 a.m. Coffee & Conversation
1 p.m. Cards & Games
Friday 3/11
AARP Tax Prep Appointments
Reflexology Appointments
No Aerobics or Chair Exercise

ERVING

Erving Senior Center, 1 Care Drive, Erving, is open Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. for activities and congregate meals.

Lunch is at 11:30 a.m., with reservations required 24 hours in advance. Call the Mealsite Manager

at 423-3308 for meal information and reservations.

For information, call Paula Betters, Senior Center Director, at (413) 423-3649. Transportation can be provided for meals, shopping, or medical necessity.

Call to confirm activities, schedule a ride, or find out about the next blood pressure clinic.

Monday 3/7
9 a.m. Tai Chi
10 a.m. Osteo Exercise
Tuesday 3/8
8:45 a.m. Chair Aerobics
9:30 a.m. COA Meeting
10 a.m. Stretching & Balance
11:30 Homemade Lunch (call)
12:30 p.m. Crafty Seniors
Wednesday 3/9
8:45 a.m. Line Dancing
10 a.m. Chair Yoga
Noon Bingo, Snacks & Laughs
Thursday 3/10
8:45 Aerobics (fast moving)
10 a.m. Healthy Bones
12:30 p.m. Creative Coloring
Friday 3/11
9 a.m. Quilting
9:30 a.m. Bowling; Market Trip (call)
11:30 a.m. Pizza Lunch
12:30 p.m. Painting Class/Wkshop

WENDELL

Wendell Senior Center is at 2 Lockes Village Road. Call Nancy Spittle, (978) 544-6760, for hours and upcoming programs. Call the Center for a ride.

LEVERETT

For information, contact the Leverett COA at (413) 548-1022, ext. 5, or coa@leverett.ma.us.

Flexibility and Balance Chair Yoga – Wednesdays at 10 a.m. at the Town Hall. Drop-in \$6 (first class free). Senior Lunch – Fridays at noon. Call (413) 367-2694 by Wednesday for a reservation.

What Do You Want for Your Rivers?

GREENFIELD — The Connecticut River Watershed Council and Art for Water are creating a "river of words" to draw attention to the federal relicensing of five major hydroelectric facilities from Turners Falls to north of Hanover, NH. This public participation, community art project will tell a thousand stories to improve the ecological health and recreational opportunities of the Connecticut River. Come add your voice at the Great Falls Discovery Center, in Turners Falls on Saturday, March 5 at 1 p.m.

"We are working together to bring a public opinion art installation to the state and federal government," says Andrew Fisk, Executive Director of the Watershed Council. The government is in the process of making decisions about how these dams will operate over the next 30 to 40 years.

"You have a unique opportunity to influence how 200 miles of the



Connecticut River and its tributaries, from Montague to north of Hanover New Hampshire, will be managed, restored and improved" for all who live here.

Come, add your voice and engage in this interactive art project at the Discovery Center. "We are building an inspiring and influential art exhibit that is made up of your stories and aspirations for our rivers. It's called the *Power of Water, The Power of Words* because our voices do have the power to influence positive change."

This is a massive and influential collage of stories.

The Nolumbeka Project, another sponsor of the presentation, has this to say: "Your river story will join the larger River of Words exhibit urging federal officials to improve the health and recreational use of the Connecticut River. This is an exciting opportunity to creatively engage in a policy-making process. You own your rivers; now is the time to speak up for a positive impact that will last for a lifetime."

Nolumbeka members are also "concerned about and are carefully monitoring the relicensing process from the standpoint of identifying, documenting and protecting Native American cultural assets in the area. This participation is shared with and overseen by Native American advisers."

To learn more about the River of Words project, call the Watershed Council at (413) 772-2020, ext. 206.

MONTAGUE COMMUNITY TELEVISION NEWS

This Week on MCTV

By ABIGAIL TATARIAN

This Saturday, your voice can be heard at the "Power of Water, Power of Words" participatory art exhibit at the Great Falls Discovery Center (see above).

Here at MCTV, production rolls on. Don't forget to check out the live broadcasts of local meetings including the Montague Selectboard on Mondays at 7 p.m. and the Finance Committee Meeting on Wednesdays at 6pm. The following videos are now available online & for download:

- Northern Roots 2016: This is the evening concert of the Brattleboro Music Center's ninth annual Northern Roots Traditional Music

Festival which took place January 30. This year's festival featured the rich traditions of Ireland, Scotland, England, Scandinavia, New England and French Canada. Enjoy the sounds of musicians Keith Murphy, Mariel Vandersteel and Stash Wysloush, Becky Tracy and Dan Restivo, Will Woodson and Erin McDonald, and Traddleboro 2016: Amanda Witman, Mia Bertelli, and Robin Davis – all dazzling us in this performance. 1 hr, 56 mins.

- Opioid Task Force January 2016: This latest episode of Franklin County Matters, hosted by Dave Roulston, takes in depth into the Opioid Task Force, tackling the problem of heroin addiction and prescription abuse in Franklin

County and the North Quabbin Region. 59 mins.

- Also check out recent local meetings including the Gill town meeting (and selectboard meeting) from February 22, the Gill-Montague school committee meeting from February 23, and the Montague's cable advisory committee meeting from February 23.

Something going on you think others would like to see? Get in touch and learn how easy it is to use a camera and capture the moment!

Contact (413) 863-9200, info-montaguetelevision@gmail.com, or stop by 34 Second Street in Turners between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. Monday through Friday. We'd love to work with you!

THE HEALTHY GEEZER

A Bigger Footprint



Q. Over the years, I've been buying larger shoes. Could it be that my feet are getting bigger, or is it that I've gradually begun to prefer shoes with more room in them?

Feet do get bigger over decades of pounding. Some people over the age of 40 can gain half a shoe size every 10 years. I know my feet are larger than they used to be. I've gone from a 10-½ shoe when I was a young adult, to a 12 in my geezer years.

The foot is a complicated machine. It contains 26 bones, 33 joints, and more than 100 tendons, muscles, and ligaments.

Feet flatten out because the supporting tendons and ligaments lose their elasticity. As the tendon along the length of the sole elongates, the arch lowers. This condition contributes to bunions, which are inflamed swellings of the small fluid-filled sacs on the first joints of the big toes.

Another reason feet enlarge is that the force of your weight thins the fat pads cushioning the bottom of the feet. The loss of padding can cause corns and calluses, which are protective layers of compacted, dead skin cells. Thinner pads also lead to soreness.

Not all older people notice the reality that their feet have been getting bigger. A study of senior patients at a U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs hospital found that three quarters of them were wearing shoes that were too small.

Properly fitted shoes are important to the health of your feet. The following are some pointers to remember when buying shoes:

- The uppers on shoes should be made of a soft material that can match the shape of your foot.
- Leather shoes reduce the possibility of skin irritations.
- If you buy new shoes with leather soles, rough up the surfaces before walking, especially on carpet.
- Consider thick soles to cushion your feet if you have to walk on hard pavement. This is an important consideration if you are visiting countries such as Italy, which has many cobblestone streets.

- Opt for low-heels. They are more comfortable and safer.
- The best time to measure your feet is at the end of the day when your feet are largest.
- Most of us have one foot that is larger than the other, so fit your shoe to your larger foot.
- Don't select shoes by the size marked inside the shoe but by how the shoe fits your foot.
- When fitting shoes, make sure there is about a half-inch extra space for your longest toe when you are standing.
- Make sure the ball of your foot fits comfortably into the widest part of the shoe.
- Your heel should fit comfortably in the shoe with a minimum amount of slipping. The shoes should not ride up and down on your heel when you walk.
- Walk in the shoes to make sure they fit and feel right. Then take them home and spend some time walking on carpet to make sure the fit is a good one.

If you want to ask a question, write to fred@healthygeezers.com

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HYGIENE from page B1

The scientific evidence at the time suggested that white linen attracted and absorbed sweat. One scholar wrote, “We understand why linen removes the perspiration from our bodies, because the sweat is oleaginous or salty, it impregnates these dead plants,” referring to the flax from which linen was made.

So as long as you wore fresh linen regularly, in lieu of any other washing, you’d be squeaky clean. People wore white linen as a sort of undershirt that reached to the knees. Soon, it became a symbol of cleanliness to expose your linen.

Water slowly returned to favor,

due to a growing belief in the healing powers of spas and mineral springs. But that’s a story for another day!

For more information like this, read *The Dirt on Clean: An Unsantitized History* by Katherine Ashenburg (North Point Press, 2007).

Vanessa Query, aka Oystergirl, digs all things local and sustainable, and identifies mostly with the ancestral/paleo movement. She writes about food, movement, and more at theycallmeoystergirl.com. She welcomes responses and questions at oystergirl@montaguereporter.org.



MODERN VOIDS



BY MADELINE LAPORTE

Entertaining the Troops

By MELISSA WLOSTOSKI

We have President Franklin D. Roosevelt to thank for the USO. Just before the start of World War II in 1941, he wanted to unite many organizations into one “to lift the morale of our military and nourish support on the home front.” Those organizations, “the Salvation Army, Young Men’s Christian Association, Young Women’s Christian Association, National Catholic Community Services, National Travelers Aid Association and the National Jewish Welfare Board,” became the United Services Organization, or USO. (www.uso.org).

The organization, which had its 75th anniversary on February 4 of this year, now has offices throughout the world. Its mission statement is to “strengthen... American military service members by keeping them connected to family, home and country throughout their service to the nation.”

You can donate to the USO through individual donations, ones made in the name of loved ones and gifts that are for individuals that support the military and those people’s families.

The first thing I think of when I think of the USO is that it does tours where performers entertain the troops. These performers go from “one stop to a tour of multiple destinations” On average, they go on from 1 to 2 days when stateside, and 7 to 10 days for ones overseas.

They perform at bases where the soldiers are serving. They also go to hospitals like the Walter Reed Army Medical Center, the National

Naval Medical Center, and the Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany when given the chance to perform there. I spoke with Allen T. Tracy, executive director of the USO of the Pioneer Valley. “A lot of NFL stars have gone over,” Tracy said, “along with the country music stars.” He said this is because the organization has “a partnership with the NFL.”

The Pioneer Valley USO was incorporated in 1992, at Westover AFB in Chicopee. “Prior to that,” he said, “We were located in Holyoke since 1940.” (See www.pioneervalleyuso.org)

Tracy also mentions that “a lot of the same entertainers will go back, time and time again.” They also like the way Wounded Warrior started, which was to give care packages to the troops.

“Basically we put all kinds of hygiene items, whatever they need,” said Tracy. “If they give us a special request, we try to fill it. Homemade apple pie from mom? We try to fill.”

I believe that possibility of that happening with one of those packages is very cool. I am also a fan of a couple of country people who I know have done a USO tour –Toby Keith and Trace Adkins. So my interest was already drawn to this organization.

Now that I have learned all of this about the USO, I am more than willing to become a supporter of it. That is probably why it is such a wide spread organization: its vastness, when it comes to people who will be its supporters. It could very well cover the people in colonies underwater, when we get to the point that we are there, beneath the oceans.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MONTAGUE POLICE LOG

Rumbling Train; Dusk Skateboarders; Vehicle Inside Railroad Salvage Fence

Monday, 2/22

5:13 a.m. Multiple reports of motor vehicle collision on Federal Street: tractor-trailer unit vs. passenger car. Route 63 shut down at Lake Pleasant and in Montague Center. Two fatalities. Officers assisting in notifying families.

7:28 a.m. Caller reporting a dead owl in the road on Lake Pleasant Road. DPW advised.

6:24 p.m. Caller advises that she came outside from visiting her daughter on Fourth Street and noticed that her vehicle was “side-swiped.” Report taken.

8:25 p.m. Caller reporting of a barking dog on Park Street; states this is a common occurrence as the dog will be outside for 45 minutes to an hour at a time, barking consistently. Caller advised this would be on record and passed along to officers. Copy of call left for animal control officer. At 10:57 p.m., caller called back advising the same dog has now woken him up from his sleep.

8:55 p.m. Caller from Montague Street requesting to speak to an officer regarding his neighbor, who allows his dog to go to the bathroom in the caller’s yard. Caller has repeatedly asked the neighbor to stop. Officer spoke to caller on phone and will follow up with neighbors on tomorrow’s day shift.

9:35 p.m. Caller complaining of tractor-trailer unit parked and idling on Industrial Drive; noise is making it difficult to sleep. Referred to an officer.

Tuesday, 2/23

1:02 a.m. Burglar alarm at town highway garage on Avenue A. Responding officer advises that there is a bat flying around in the building; this is believed to have been the cause of the alarm. Bat removed; building secure.

7:35 a.m. Officer requesting that DPW be contacted for a dead skunk on the side of the road by the first entrance to TFHS. DPW advised.

11:17 a.m. Chief Dodge received a citizen complaint regarding two hazards on Central Street: a pickup truck with a snowmobile hanging off the back that is reportedly hanging over the sidewalk, and a large dumpster in the road. Caller is concerned that the snowmobile will affect pedestrian traffic and that the dumpster will not be moved in time for tonight’s precipitation. Responding officer advises truck and snowmobile are both entirely on the driveway, not sticking out over the sidewalk. Officer spoke with crew working on house with dumpster; dumpster scheduled to be removed

this afternoon or tomorrow morning.

4:36 p.m. Party into station requesting to speak to an officer regarding the road in front of his rental property on Federal Street; tenants are concerned due to the accidents that occur here. Officer contacted caller, who expressed his concerns and requested extra patrols/radar in the area to discourage speeding.

6:07 p.m. Large group of people trespassed from skate park, which closes at dusk.

9:23 p.m. 911 caller advising vehicle rollover on North Leverett Road. One party still inside car; one outside. Caller transferred to MedCare. Parties transported to Leverett; vehicle towed.

Wednesday, 2/24

9:22 a.m. Caller reports that there is a coyote in a field on Old Stage Road that appears to be injured (possible broken leg). Caller given number for Environmental Police.

2:47 p.m. Report of an 8-9” hole in the north-bound lane of the General Pierce Bridge that appears to go straight through the bridge. Alerted MassHighway; Greenfield PD, State Police, TFFD, and MedCare also advised. Area coned off. MassHighway on scene and will be returning with a steel plate to cover the area, ETA 20 minutes.

9:15 p.m. Hit and run accident at Fifth and L Streets; no injuries. Report taken.

11:02 p.m. Report of train idling near Bridge Street; has been there for approximately 1 hour. Caller stated that train has been “rumbling” so much that it has caused things in her house to fall. Officer en route to verify which tracks; confirmed to be PanAm. Officer advises train is moving now, no need to place call to rail company.

Thursday, 2/25

4:18 a.m. Caller from Park Street advises he was woken up by neighbor’s dog barking; animal control officer spoke to him yesterday and advised him to call when this was happening to have it on re-

cord. Caller advised this would be passed along.

1:59 p.m. Caller reports that a couple of minutes ago the attached vehicle was doing donuts on Third Street hill, almost hitting her and flipping the vehicle in the process. Unable to locate.

8:51 p.m. Caller from L Street advising of shopping carts again left in the area. Tonight when caller returned home, there was a cart blocking her driveway. There were also 2 carts directly across from the bakery. Referred to an officer.

Friday, 2/26

9:21 a.m. Caller from Park Street reporting that a dog has been barking for some time today; ongoing issue. Animal control officer notified and will be en route.

5:35 p.m. [redacted] was arrested on a default warrant.

10:49 p.m. Caller from Park Street advising of neighbor’s dog outside barking; has woken them up. Officer unable to locate owners of dog; lights are off in apartment. Copy of call left for animal control officer.

Saturday, 2/27

1:33 a.m. Caller reporting fight between unknown people on a 2nd floor rear porch on Third Street. Officers en route. Quiet upon arrival. Officer spoke with involved party. Investigated.

7:44 a.m. Burglar alarm at Franklin County Regional Housing Authority. Party from housing called and advised that this is likely a mouse problem that they have been having, and that the officer could disregard or did not need to stay on scene. Officer advising building appears to be secure.

4:31 p.m. Caller advising that there was a piece of “sheet metal” in the road on the General Pierce Bridge; a few people had stopped and moved the metal out of the way of traffic. Caller wanted this on record as she is aware that there was work on the bridge and this may be related to that.

6:36 p.m. Officer removing a group of kids from the skatepark.

8:11 p.m. Officer removing more kids from the skatepark.

9:18 p.m. Caller from Taylor Hill Road reporting possible chimney fire; she can smell smoke and see red where the stove pipe meets the chimney. Caller advised to evacuate herself and her family. Officer advised and Shelburne Control contacted for MCFD. Officers clear; fire department remaining on scene. Was definitely an active chimney fire; however, FD believes they caught it in time.

9:33 p.m. Caller advising of “odd behavior” from neighbors; stated that earlier today, parties had thrown a broken couch outside, then stuck a running hose out the window so that water was running down the side of the building. The lights in the apartment were then seen flickering. Officer spoke to tenants, who advised that they are in the process of moving out; water was from a fish tank they were emptying.

Sunday, 2/28

9:08 a.m. Report of a subject who stole boxes from behind Food City Plaza (presumably from the Salvation Army donation area) and loaded them into a white shopping cart. Caller confronted the subject and advised that she would be calling MPD, at which time the subject left the cart and boxes behind and ran from the area. Officer retrieved property (banana boxes containing towels/blankets) and will be returning to the dock behind the Salvation Army. Officer reviewed surveillance footage from Rite Aid; recognized the subject from downtown but does not know him by name. Will be on lookout.

2:17 p.m. Report of subjects on minibikes/dirt bikes riding in the area of Avenue C/Keth Street, disturbing the caller’s peace. Unable to locate.

5:34 p.m. Caller advising of vehicle parked inside fenced area at Railroad Salvage. Officers advised.

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SHEA from page B1

months and the organization changed management at the beginning of the year.

A new management group, spearheaded by local radio personality Christopher “Monte” Belmonte, hopes to position the Shea at the center of cultural life in Franklin County, in addition to restoring a degree of grandeur to the building that will match this new vision.

To that end, two dollars from every ticket sold will go directly into the fund. Additional donations to the campaign are of course always welcome and you may do this online by clicking the “donate” button at *sheatheater.org*. More events are scheduled for later in the month; read about them here in our paper, or head to *sheatheater.org* to look ahead.



TURNERS GIRLS from page B1

With 20 seconds left in the first period, Maddy Chmyzinski banged in a three to tie the game at 9. Then with 10 ticks left on the clock, Turners committed a foul sending a Panther to the line. She didn’t miss, and Pioneer took a 1-point lead after a quarter.

Turners only hit 1 field goal in the second quarter and were unable to take advantage of 5 shooting fouls and at the half, they trailed 21-13.

In the third, the Powertown offense began to click. They pulled to within 2 points, 25-23 with 1:58 left in the period. But both teams came up empty for the rest of the quarter, and heading into the final period, it was anybody’s game.

The Panthers scored the first 9 points in the fourth and with 2:47 left in the game, Turners trailed by 11 points, 34-23. Turners was unable to cut into the lead and with a minute 21 left, the gap was still 11, 40-29.

Blue began to hit in the last minute, but the gulf was too deep and the time too short. And the game ended with the score 42-35.

Chmyzinski hit 4 threes, 4 twos and 3 from the foul line for 23 total points. Lexi Lacey also chopped in a 3-pointer plus 2 hoops for 7.

Aliyah Sanders had a hoop and Hailey Bogusz, Chloe Ellis and Dabney Rollins all hit foul shots.

So the season is over for the Lady Indians. But Ted Wilcox and his Tribe have nothing to hang their heads about. They did wonderful. They achieved something which hasn’t been done since before any of the girls on the team were born. And looking ahead, it seems the future of Turners Falls Girls Basketball looks just fine.



LOOKING BACK:
10 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

Here’s the way it was March 2, 2006: News from the Montague Reporter’s archive.

Carol Ovalle Deported To Guatemala

Montague Police Deploy Tasers

Carlos Ovalle, arrested here in late January on a ‘fugitive alien’ warrant was not considered by federal officials to be a ‘coyote’ – or trafficker in illegal immigrants – contrary to reports by local law enforcement officials and news media.

“We acted simply because he was a fugitive alien,” said Paula Grenier, public affairs officer for the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement Boston field office. She added that she did not know where the rumor of his being a human smuggler got started.

For Latinos in Turners Falls, the case is far from closed. The arrest, in fact, sent shockwaves through the Hispanic community. One woman, who did not want to be identified, said she was now afraid to go out except on essential errands. “If they could take a man away from his wife and children, they can take me away from my husband and children. And who knows what happens to you afterward.”

She recounted one rumor that if ICE picks you up they’ll tear up your papers, or claim that you aren’t really who you claim to be.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Ovalle still lives in the small apartment, trying to decide what her next move will be. Her six small children, according to sources downtown, are doing well as can be expected

Public Radio Africa Correspondent Shares Insights on a Vibrant Continent

By LISA McLOUGHLIN

AMHERST – National Public Radio Africa Correspondent Ofeibea Quist-Arcton spoke on Tuesday, February 23, at the University of Massachusetts Amherst Honors College.

John Higginson of the History Department at UMass-Amherst and the University of South Africa in Pretoria began the conversation, asking Quist-Arcton about the economic and social situation of Africa as a continent.

Quist-Arcton is extremely knowledgeable, having covered Africa for the British Broadcasting, and now NPR, for decades. She spoke eloquently of the need for Africa to have a coordinated plan and a united voice with which to advocate for its collective global interests, including redevelopment of industry on the continent rather than simply exporting resources.

She also addressed the tensions between security and wellbeing on the one hand, and political freedom on the other, that are evident across Africa. Countries such as Rwanda have made great strides economi-



Quist-Arcton

cally, while their people are oppressed by violence. This is an ongoing conundrum with which individual countries struggle, sometimes complicated by corruption and political agendas.

Quist-Arcton emphasized that Africa, as a whole, is not subsumed by terrorism or war. She says she feels safe living there, and that countries such as Senegal are preparing to defend themselves while they are currently peaceful. She emphasized the innovation, creativity and talent of Africa’s youth, which

is its largest population segment, in starting businesses and pursuing education both on the continent and overseas. She would like to be able to spend more time reporting on the vibrancy of Africa.

Africans with economic means are well-informed via the internet and social media about the US elections, which they see as being fair, on time, and with the exception of Florida’s Gore/Bush election debacle, well-run.

The popularity of Donald Trump, whose suggestions to ban Muslims from entering the US have not gone unnoticed, has surprised Africans, and according to Quist-Arcton, made them question if he really does represent the US. Hillary Clinton, having traveled extensively in Africa as Secretary of State, is well-known.

Asked about her journalistic process, Quist-Arcton said that the best way to get information is, prepare yourself ahead of time with research, then allow people to feel comfortable, and then simply listen.

Tuesday’s appreciative audience of over 100 people felt privileged to have the opportunity to listen to her.

TURNERS BOYS from page B1

came out with a new intensity in the final period. Mahar had built up a 22-point lead in the first half, and allowed Blue only 3 points in the third.

At 6:46 of the last period, Scarlet had the ball and a 60-25 lead, but a throwaway gave the ball back to Blue. And that’s when Powertown came alive.

They shot threes, made steals, drew fouls, stole an inbound pass, and outscored Mahar 25-6 in under 5 minutes. Blue closed the gap to 66-50, but the surge was too little, too late, and the Senators went on to win 71-52.

Rick Craver was a monster on the outside, kicking in three 3-pointers and four 2-pointers for a total of 17. Tionne Brown hit a three of his own, four foul shots, and a field goal for 9.

Tyler Lavin sunk 3 freebees and a bucket for 7. Josh Obochowski and Jalen Sanders each had a hoop and 4 free throws for 6 points each.

Nick Croteau popped in a three and two foul shots for 5, and Kyle Bergman scored a basket.

Senior Night:TFHS 64 – Athol 50

Senior players Trevor Mankowsky, Colby

Dobias and Jalen Sanders started the February 22 game against the Athol Red Raiders along with Juniors Tionne Brown and Kyle Bergman. It was a much needed sendoff-victory for Powertown and their seniors, giving them a positive push into the postseason.

Blue was trailing with 2 minutes left in the first, 6-7. But then Sanders hit two foul shots, made a steal and scored a bucket, giving Turners the lead for good. He sunk the final basket of the quarter when Tyler Lavin fed him the ball underneath, and Turners led 15-7 after one.

Powertown pulled out to a 25-point lead at halftime, 38-13, and led 53-24 after three.

The Raiders began popping in three-pointers in the fourth, but Turners held on to win by 14 points, 64-50.

Sanders was the top scorer for Powertown, with had seven 2-pointers, three foul shots and a three-pointer for 20 points total. Rick Craver hit 4 buckets for 8 points. Josh Obochowski also scored 8 on three field goals and two free throws.

Both Kyle Bergman and Nick Croteau had 2 points from the line and 4 from the floor for 6 points. Colby Dobias and Anthony Peterson each hit 2 baskets for 4 points.

Tyler Lavin hit a three-pointer, Ian Mo-

PLAYER STATISTICS		
	Season	Career
Jalen Sanders	333	779
Tionne Brown	160	316
Josh Obochowski	172	172
Nick Croteau	113	126
Rick Craver	81	81
Kyle Bergmann	75	75
Tyler Lavin	65	65
Jeremy Wolfram	55	55
James Vaughn	44	44
Colby Dobias	38	39
Anthony Peterson	37	37
Javoni Williams	9	9
Trevor Mankowsky	4	4
Ian Moriarty	4	4

riarty got a two-pointer and a foul shot, and Tionne Brown shot in a basket.

Into the Second Season:
TFHS 64 – PVCA 50

So the Turners Falls Basketball Indians once again made it into the playoffs, albeit not as the favorite they’ve been. This year, they didn’t have a first-round bye.

Despite their 8-12 record, they qualified

via the 70 percent rule, and earned a 7th-place seed. On Tuesday night, they hosted the 10th-seeded Pioneer Valley Christian Academy Eagles

After leading by one point in the first quarter, Turners outscored Pioneer Christian 22-16 in the second and 11-5 in the third, to take a 44-31 lead going into the final period.

The Indians scored 20 in the fourth, and coasted to a 64-50 win.

Jalen Sanders dominated the boards, frequently shot-putting rebounds into the bucket. He hit accurately from the outside and was equally devastating on 5-step layups. He sunk a 3-pointer, 10 baskets and three free throws for 26 points.

Tyler Lavin was another one of the reasons Pioneer couldn’t keep up with Blue. He hit three 3-pointers and a bucket for 11 points. Tionne Brown was hot from the floor, hitting five field goals and a foul shot for 11 points.

Josh Obochowski scored 6 points on three baskets, Kyle Bergmann had a hoop and 2 freebees for 4 points, and Nick Croteau popped in a 3-pointer. Anthony Peterson also got 3 on a 2-pointer and a foul shot.

The next stop on Turners’ playoff run is Granby on this Friday, March 4.



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GARDENERS from page B1

she comes home the next day at six o'clock feeling well and happy to be there.

Monday brings visits from the visiting nurse who pronounces her fit and in no need of further check-ins, and the home health worker who comes to help with most anything. During all this bustle I walk the requisite six blocks to the grocery store and then again later to the pharmacy.

After all of the hubbub dies down, we enjoy the evening together. I help her to a good stiff scotch, dinner, and keep her company while she watches her favorites on the television.

We both turn in early. She is exhausted, and I need to get going early for the train at 8:50.

Around nine I receive a call on my cell phone. The train has been delayed in New York because of an ice storm, but I will be able to get alternative travel by bus at the same time.

I sleep fitfully and am awakened around five thirty by a violent thunderstorm with torrential rain and howling winds. Happily, both wind and rain have abated by the time my taxi arrives at eight.

There has been such a downpour that it is necessary to wade out to the cab.

The streets are flooded, and on two of the side streets the driver is forced to crawl through high water. We swim along safely to the station and arrive ten minutes before departure time.

There we learn that the storm has spawned tornados with considerable damage in Miami. Next, when our train-bus at last gets onto I-95, it is held up by an accident caused by a semi lying across the north bound lanes.

The station fills with the expected outcry of frustrated passengers claiming missed appointments and connections and pleading for alternative arrangements. Eventually we are offered a north bound train which will take an additional two hours as it will travel to Tampa before resuming the original route, or the bus, both of which should arrive at about the same time. There is a flurry of cell calls.

At last, at eleven both a train and the bus arrive and the contingent of travelers splits almost evenly between the two. I elect to stay with the bus plan, and eventually arrive back at Palatka bone-weary but home at last, at nine o'clock. Ken is waiting and we drive out to our new accommodations at Mill Dam.

We wake to the sound of birds and step out to the deck. Our cabin is a stone's throw from the lake's marshy edge. The mist is rising off the water, and it looks the way we imagine the bayou would. We have a wonderful mix of birds: killdeer, a solitary sandpiper, diving ducks, cormorants, one lone seagull, a blue heron and a great white. There are eagles and osprey in the sky over these waters which breed bluegill and bass.

We are perhaps a mile from the official boundary of the Ocala National Forest. The highway is busy and fast, but there are signs every few miles indicating the presence of black bears crossing. We stop at the nearby ranger station and pick up a trail map of our area.

February 18: "Don't Worry"

Armed with our road map, trail map, hats, water and good shoes, sunscreen and bug repellants, we pile into the car and drive in the direction of the Lake Eaton trailhead



Alligator sunning itself on the Silver River at Silver Springs, Florida.

which features a hike around the lake and the route to a huge sinkhole which is traversed by a walkway. We drive two paved roads with no sign of number 44. Amazingly, while we are stopped to peer again at the map, a mailman pulls up and we give in, asking directions.

We are sent to a dirt road of thick sand which we travel seemingly forever into the wilderness, worrying about getting stuck and who would care. Just when we are looking for a turn around, we see a brown park sign for the trailhead and parking. There is a large sign with a map, trails indicated – and even a rest room!

The first omen of danger occurs when I attempt to use this fine accommodation and find that is full of whining mosquitoes. We sip water and read the sign which begins in large letters: "DON'T WORRY!" This happy message tells us that despite rattlesnakes, panthers, bears and other attackers, we should enjoy our hike; just stay on the trail.

We examine a sandy pathway no more than a foot wide carved through encroaching plant life – full of ticks no doubt. We cravenly decide that however wimpy we may appear to the stalwart travelers of this wonderful wilderness, wimpy we are, and return to the car. There are no indications of which way to turn when we leave the parking area, and we imagine being lost forever in this 400,000 acre "park". After a long fifteen minutes, we arrive back at the paved road with immense relief. O pioneers!

February 21: A Pleasant Day

We have decided that we are just not cut out for wilderness hiking, and prefer the state parks with their wide, blazed trails. We head for Silver Springs, a combination of state park and commercial venture.

There is a large bulge in the river at the site of the springs, and you can take a glass bottomed boat ride to look at the fish and perhaps an alligator. There is a beautiful walkway around the boil of the spring, and the water is so clear that you can see the fish just fine and save your thirteen dollars a person.

The boil is the site at which spring waters from the Floridan aquifer push up about a hundred feet from the limestone below and rise into the river, or other body of water. These spring boils maintain at 72 degrees year round and would make for fine swimming if it weren't for the presence of alligators. We don't know whether to applaud the pluck of boaters without life jackets or call them just plain foolish.

Also, you can put in with a canoe or kayak and paddle the river, or enjoy one of several hiking trails. We choose to take a hike on one of the well-marked trails, and put in almost

an hour before saying "uncle," as it is well up into the eighties and humid.

We go over to the site of the glass bottomed boat and admire the fifty-plus person waiting line. We settle for a stroll around the central area, admire the water and fish, and read up on the Indians who were, of course, here first, before they were relocated by the government.

A pleasant day with no untoward surprises, unmarked roads or sandy pits waiting to engulf the car.

February 23: Silver Glen Springs

The national forest is full of intense, entangled growth, each species vying for its own space. The only remedy in this dense wilderness is the controlled burn. This involves setting fires with the purpose of cutting back the thick undergrowth, and allowing slash pine and palm to survive.

There was a big burn near us yesterday, which created a huge smoke cloud in the sky. Later in the day, large curls of ash fell on own cabin site, the table outside and on us randomly.

It is so unlike the manicured beauty of south Florida, where the yards feature one or two special trees or plants and otherwise grow blocks of purchased sod, regularly sprayed with weed repellent.

Today we head for Silver Glen Springs, which was recommended to us by a hiker we met in the state forest in Welaka near Georgetown. This part of the national park is a glen off the Silver River, which contains another warm water spring fed by the overfilled Floridan aquifer.

We walk in a short way and come to a small cove of bright, clear water dominated by a boil. This is a public swimming area beloved by manatees, and apparently also frequented by alligators, if the signs are to be believed.

It is beautifully tempting just the same. We take the short Spring Boils Trail into the jungle, and travel on a raised walkway through the swamp, which looks like prime alligator territory. There are viewing spots where we can see the water literally boiling out.

Across the highway from the park exit we see a small sign for the Yearling Trail. The name appeals, and we decide to give the wilderness trails another chance.

There are no "Don't Worry" signs at this trailhead. Instead, a large poster details the studies of Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings, who wrote about the stories she was told while staying for a month with the last residents of Pat's Island. Some of these tales about their adoption of a yearling fawn formed the basis of her novel *The Yearling*.

The trail is about that visit and about the history of the island, as well. It is our kind of trail, wide and

Following the “Beauty Path” with Gale Whitbeck

By ANNE HARDING

TURNERS FALLS – Gale Whitbeck was back at the Greenfield Savings Bank on Saturday to discuss what she calls the “Beauty Path” she learned as a young girl. In keeping with her Native American heritage, her dad identified Gale as a teacher early on, and stressed that she must spread her teachings around the world.

Gale, also known as Blacksnake Woman, says, “we are all born with a ‘path of beauty’ in front of us,” and she believes it is our responsibility to recognize not only the beauty in nature, but the beauty in ourselves. “We must see it, acknowledge it and then share it with others, to put beauty back in the world for those who follow us. The beauty path is not something to study, but rather, it is something to ‘let in and to do.’”

When Gale was in her 30s, she saw children in need, and for 40 years has been leading camps for young people. In her camps, children learn to think for themselves, respect each other, share their thoughts and learn from each other by taking turns to speak in a circle – often in response to a question thrown out by Gale.

Now in her 70s, Gale sees a different generation looking for their place in the world. “As a child we see the enchantment of life in everything we do, like the simple joy of climbing a tree,” she says. “As adults, it can be more difficult but we must find enchantment anew at every age. This can be difficult especially when going through times of loss, betrayal, poor health, or simply when the weight of multiple responsibilities wears a person down.”

Not only that, but Gale points out in our society we have moved away from the supportive village-style life and rituals that help keep us grounded. Instead, she says, we are often surrounded by negativity in so many places – news, politicians, daily interactions and more. By seeking and spreading the beauty path, one can help to dispel the “ugly” path that so many are following.

Gale Whitbeck also facilitates a “Beauty Path Circle” weekly gathering. According to Gale, “This beautiful ritual of discovery can be just the beginning of finding a spiritual community based on the beauty of The Mother Earth. One advantage of the circle ritual is that it ‘takes it out of thought and puts it real into the world’ where another traveler on the path might say, ‘that’s not the way I see it,’ and help you reframe negative thoughts.”

For additional information contact Gale Whitbeck at the Corra-hagen Center for Healing in Montague City, (413) 695-5628.



Gale Whitbeck

open, with numbered sites indicating aspects of the area's history. We decide to return another day, with filled water bottles and fresh energy.

February 25: Pat's Island

Pat's Island was so named because it is an island of scrub pine in the otherwise impenetrable forest. It was settled in the 1800's by a small but hardy group of souls, and actually boasted at one time a post office manned by the Pat Smith for whom the island was named.

At one time about a dozen families settled this 1400 acre island, and were granted homestead properties. The community once supported a church, store and school, in addition to the post office.

A living was made from farming, woods, cattle and hogs, hunting, fishing, making moonshine whiskey, and trading with boat travel on the St John's River. In 1935 the island was abandoned by the residents, following two years of hard freeze and a dwindling population.

The island is formed of areas of fertile soils and moisture, surrounded by a “sea of scrub.” Today, the pine scrub is populated by bears and other wildlife, as well as a clan of scrub jays. These birds live in an extended family of parents and offspring

which are the established owners of 25 acres or so. There is a breeding pair, and then the helper birds who defend the turf, help forage for insects and snakes, and signal the presence of predators. These jays are a bright blue and gray and lack the crest of the common blue jay.

We hike in armed with water and a bear bell on a beautiful, clear bright day, after a day of heavy air and some rain. We bring the bell because two nights ago, a bear went right by the front of our cabin, leaving his scat.

We admire a few jays, the beautiful scrub pines and a huge area of sandy trails. After a couple of miles, we come to the cemetery and read the stones and their stories of the sad loss of these otherwise hardy souls who lost their lives to fire, war and illness. We see bear scat and scattered berries, but no bear, much to our relief.

We are coming to the end of our extended vacation in northern Florida, and will soon be heading home to hearth and family. We will miss the warmth and our adventures, but we are also quite ready to settle back into the routine at home. We are content with having made a reservation again for next winter.



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NatureCulture: The Science Page

If you have a scientific idea you'd like to write about, a science-related book to review, an activity to advertise, or would like to share your experiences with science or any related field, please be in touch: science@montaguereporter.org.

Lisa McLoughlin, editor

Events

History of Science and Technology Fair

Grade 1-6 students at the Full Circle School take on the roles of ancient, medieval, renaissance, industrial and modern scientists with short speeches, songs, and dance.
Friday, March 4, 5:30 p.m.
Full Circle School, Bernardston
Info: fullcircleschool1973@gmail.com

History in Stone

A slide show "visit" to the eleven cemeteries of Leverett; see what history can be gleaned from them.
Sunday, March 6, 2 p.m.
Leverett Library, Leverett
Info: dawnmarvinward57@gmail.com

Observe Jupiter at Opposition

Opposition occurs when a planet is opposite the Sun from Earth and is one of the better times to observe that planet. A cloudy skies option will be a film or similar, TBA.
Friday, March 11, 8 p.m.
Mt. Pollax, driveway at address: 1403 S East St, Amherst
Sponsored by the Amherst Area Amateur Astronomers Association
Info: amherstastronomy.org

It's a Bee's Life

We will learn about the bees in our lives and take a hands-on approach to improving places for them to live in our communities. Learn from local experts.
Sunday, March 20, 2 p.m.
120 Ridge Rd, Hardwick
Info: EQLT.org

Quabbin Tracking with David Brown

With or without snow, there are many clues to animal presence hiding in plain sight for us to discover: tracks in sand and mud, feeding sign, scat, digs, scrapes, rubs and so forth. Practice some of the tracker's art at the Quabbin.
Sunday, March 20, Pre-register by March 16.
Info: dbwildlife.com

Forest Ecology Through the Eyes of Thoreau

This program will approach forest ecology through the eyes of Henry David Thoreau. Along the way, we will share with you relevant short pieces of Thoreau's writings as they relate to the forest that we see, combining natural history with literary and poetic appreciation.
Activity Level: Light, on-trail Fee: \$50/person.
Saturday, April 2, 10 a.m.
Walnut Hill Tracking & Nature Center, Orange
Info: walnuthilltracking.com and nqcc.org/events.html

Synergy Art Exhibit

Art based on science by Alicia Hunsicker of Leyden. Science and Engineering Library at UMass Amherst. Through June.
Info: aliciahunsicker.com

Of Pipelines and Water

By JULIA BLYTH

NORTHFIELD – This time of year, I look for tracks of mammals in the snow on my walks. In the woods behind my house, where the proposed Kinder Morgan pipeline would tear down the trees, I have seen tracks of bobcat, mink, fisher, coyote, fox, raccoon, opossum, mouse, vole, shrew, and cat.

In the spring, I watch as mole salamanders and wood frogs make their way hundreds of yards through the forest to their ancestral breeding grounds, a vernal pool. If the pipeline is built, after the disturbance of construction is over, I imagine that most of the mammals would return, cautiously crossing the long open expanse under the Eversource power lines and over the newly scarred ground containing the proposed pipeline, and retreating to denser cover, safer places.

The creatures of vernal pools would have a harder time. They cannot just go somewhere else – individual salamanders return year after year to the pool of their birth, and if that pool is gone, bulldozed, or drained, or blocked, the salamanders have nowhere to go, and that population will be snuffed out.



A spotted salamander, *Ambystoma maculatum*. All species in the genus *Ambystoma* are considered mole salamanders. "Mole" refers to the fact that they spend most of their lives burrowed deep underground in the upland.

When water moves across or through the ground, it seeks to go downhill, and it seeks the most permeable substrate to move through. In other words, water will choose a downward path through sand or gravel instead of a path through clay or solid rock.

In our area, the hilly areas are made up of shallow bedrock with fissures through it. The water has a certain way of flowing over and through the bedrock where there are little gaps. This route is called a "preferred water pathway."

We don't know all of the many places that water flows, but we see it in some, like where a "seep" comes out of the side of a steep hill, and creates a wet place where wildlife comes to enjoy a drink.

When a trench is created by digging and blasting through bedrock, and that trench is backfilled with loose rock and sand, it changes the preferred water pathway.

In the case of Kinder Morgan's Northeast Energy Direct Pipeline, the trench would be seven to ten feet deep, and at least 4 feet wide. Water that once flowed perpendicular to that trench will hit the trench and then about half of the water

would change direction, flowing downhill within the trench rather than crossing and continuing on its previous pathway.

This would be a huge change to our local hydrology. It could drastically change the water table in some places, leading to intermittent streams and vernal pools drying up in some places, and possibly increasing flooding in other places.

Trees are very good at drinking up water, and their roots hold soil in place. When hills are clear-cut, we see streams become cloudy with soil runoff (erosion) – at least at first. With the vegetation disturbed, the loose topsoil has nothing to hold it in place. Rainwater falling too fast to absorb into the soil drags topsoil downhill with it.

Soil that has been compacted by heavy machinery is not as good at soaking up water as the loose, loamy soil in the forest. Over distance, water accumulates and flows over the top of the ground, dragging soil with it, eventually entering streams that would be clear in an undamaged forest.

Over time, grasses and other low vegetation will grow and help hold the soil in place, but trees will be prevented from growing on the pipeline easement, since their roots would damage the pipe. Without the trees that now cover many acres of land along the pipeline route, there will be more runoff water that is not being taken up into the trees, leading to swollen streams and potential landslides.

As neighbors to the proposed pipeline, many of us have anthropocentric fears as well as concern for disruption of natural processes. Will the change in hydrology affect the flow of water into our wells? Will a spill of hydraulic fluid or diesel during construction make its way into our aquifers? Will blasting to create the trench shake our foundations or wells?

And hydrology alteration is just one small facet of the damage that this pipeline would cause. The direct, local possibilities worry me in an immediate way, but beyond my back yard the climate disruption posed by this and countless other fossil fuel expansion projects is extremely disturbing.

The future I hope for includes a world where we can teach our children how to grow a garden using time-honored techniques, where we don't have to survive frequent catastrophic weather, where people are not displaced from their homes by sea level rise, where we have good water and clean air, and where I can walk in the woods with my children to witness the spring miracle of migrating salamanders, returning to their ancestral home to mate and lay eggs.

Julia Blyth is on the board of the Greater Northfield Watershed Association and is a member of the Northfield Stewardship and Open Space Committees.

Call for Poetry and Science

"Poetry and science both seek to peer through to the underlying reality of things, pushing at the borders of imagination." – Sarah Howe, quoted in *NewScientist* magazine.

Quantum physics and poetry both expound the possibilities for multiple truths. If you have a scientific poem, or some poetic science, please send it to us:

science@montaguereporter.org

Moon and Sky Events Calendar for February 2016:

Tuesday, March 1:	Last Quarter
Tuesday, March 8:	New Moon
Tuesday, March 15:	First Quarter
Sunday, March 20:	Vernal Equinox
Wednesday, March 23:	Penumbra Lunar Eclipse
Wednesday, March 23:	Full Moon
Thursday, March 31:	Last Quarter



NOAA PHOTO
GOES Satellite Captures Spring Equinox, 2013. Note: the Sun in this image is artificially created.

There is a lot going on in the sky this month.

On March 8, a total solar eclipse will happen, but it'll only be visible from Australia and Asia. The rest of the stuff, we'll be able to see.

The long-awaited Vernal (spring) Equinox occurs on March 20 – the first day of spring by the astronomical calendar. On this day, the

earth receives equal amounts of light and dark, and if you have an unobstructed view of the horizon (but who does in the valley?) on this day the sun rises due East and sets due West.

Around the spring and fall equinoxes, the sun moves the most in its rising and setting position from day to day, a difference of

about one full sun width as it appears on the horizon each day. Source, and for more information: archaeoastronomy.com

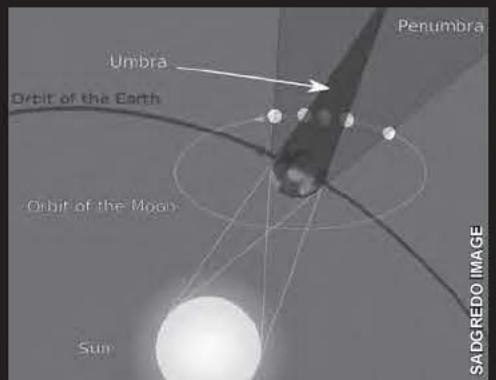
On March 23 (also the date of the full moon, as it must be for us to have a lunar eclipse), a penumbral lunar eclipse will be visible to us. Penumbral refers to the fainter, outer part of the earth's shadow, so the eclipse won't look very dramatic.

It starts around 5:40 a.m. and will reach the height of its effect in our location, covering about half the face of the moon just as it sets about an hour later. For more information about eclipses see eclipse.gsfc.nasa.gov/eclipse.html.

Sky Events Calendar by Fred Espenak and Sumit Dutta (NASA's GSFC)

Find these events or create your own custom sky calendar at eclipse.gsfc.nasa.gov/SKYCAL/SKYCAL.html

Additional Information from: *Astronomical Phenomena for the Year 2016*, Prepared Jointly by The Nautical Almanac Office United States Naval Observatory and Her Majesty's Nautical Almanac Office United Kingdom Hydrographic Office Washington, US Government Printing Office 2013 and timeanddate.com



The geometry of a Lunar Eclipse.

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ONGOING EVENTS:

EVERY SUNDAY

Mocha Maya's, Shelburne Falls: *Celtic Sessions*. Musicians of all levels welcome to play traditional Irish music, 10:30 a.m.

ONE MONDAY EACH MONTH

Wagon Wheel, Gill: *Wagon Wheel Word*. First week of each month. Monthly poetry reading, often with special guest poets. 6 p.m.

Carnegie Library: *Outside the Lines!* Last Monday of each month. Adult Coloring Group. Supplies provided. 6:30 p.m.

EVERY TUESDAY

Carnegie Library, Turners Falls: Crafts and activities for children of all ages. 3:30 to 4:45 p.m.

EVERY WEDNESDAY

Carnegie Library, Turners Falls: *Story Time*: Thematic stories, projects, and snacks for young children with Mez, 10:15 to 11:30 a.m.

Leverett Library, Leverett: *Tales and Tunes Story Hour*. For ages 0 to 5 and their caregivers. 10:30 a.m. to noon.

EVERY THURSDAY

Carnegie Library: *Music and Movement with Tom Carroll & Laurie Davidson*. Children and their caregivers invited. 10 a.m.

The People's Pint, Greenfield: *Derek Bridges*. Live acoustic guitar. 7 p.m.

Pioneer Tavern, Millers Falls: *Watchdog Open Mic*. All musicians, comedians, and magicians are welcome! 8 p.m.

EVERY FRIDAY

Slate Memorial Library, Gill: *Story Hour*. Stories and hands-on arts & crafts. 10 a.m. to noon.

CeCe's Chinese Restaurant, Turners Falls: Traditional Native American and improvised Asian flute music featuring *Eric Wolf Song*. 6 to 6:30 p.m. Free.

The Pioneer Tavern, Millers Falls: *TNT Karaoke*, 8:30 p.m.



The Shea Theater celebrates its grand re-opening with three nights of music March 4, 5 and 6. Signature Sounds presents Red Baraat on Friday, whose music is described as a merging of hard-driving North Indian Bhangra with elements of go-go, rock and jazz; Western Mass indie rock export Speedy Ortiz (photo above) on Saturday; and singer/songwriter Heather Maloney with Mikey Sweet on Sunday. \$\$

EXHIBITS:

Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *Portraits of African Americans, Past and Present*. Large paintings by Louise Minks and sculpture by Belinda Lyons Zucker. Winter hours, Wed-Sunday 10 to 4 p.m. Through March 31.

Nina's Nook, Turners Falls: *17 Mysteries and Signs* by Ruth West. Tintypes for the Digital Age. Through March 12.

Shelburne Falls Arts Co-op, Shelburne Falls: *Earthly Delights* Paintings, fiber, jewelry, photography, wood and pottery by member artisans. Through 3/30.

The Art Garden, Shelburne Falls: *Winter*. Over 60 works of art created by more than 30 artists.

Avenue A Storefront Galleries, Turners Falls: Rodney Madison: *"Of African Influence."* Madison's paintings are paired with traditional African fabric, which has served throughout his life as inspiration for his art.

Von Auersperg Gallery, Hess Center for the Arts at Deerfield Academy: *Question Bridge: Black Males*, a five-channel video

installation that aims to represent and redefine black male identity in America. Through 3/4.

CALLS FOR SUBMISSIONS:

The Leverett Trails Committee solicits entries for its April exhibit *Where in Leverett?* at the Leverett Library. Take a photo, draw a picture, write a poem, riddle or paragraph about a place in Leverett. Challenge others to figure out where it is through your work. Deadline March 15. Info at www.rattlesnakeguttertrust.org

Slate Roof Press, a member-run, not-for-profit collaborative, invites submissions to its annual poetry chapbook contest. The winner receives \$500, becomes an active member of the press, and will have his/her chapbook published by Slate Roof. Winners make a 3-year commitment to the press, including

SATURDAY, MARCH 5

GCC Dining Commons, Greenfield: *37th Annual Seconds Pottery Sale* sponsored by the Artspace Community Art Center. 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Great Hall, Turners Falls: *Power of Water/Power of Words*. Bring all your local river stories to become part of a public participation River of Words art exhibit. Sponsored by the Connecticut River Watershed Council. 1 to 2 p.m.

Wendell Library, Wendell: *War Games*. Movie begins at 7:30 p.m. Episode from *Fireball XL5* starts at 7 p.m.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: Signature Sounds presents *Speedy Ortiz with Alexander F and Maxi's World*. 8 p.m. \$

Pioneer Tavern, Millers Falls: *Misty Blues*. 9 p.m.

SUNDAY, MARCH 6

Leverett Library, Leverett: *History in Stone*. A slide show of 11 Leverett cemeteries and what can be gleaned historically from the information found there. Presented by Dawn Marvin Ward and sponsored by the Leverett Historical Society. 2 p.m.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: Signature Sounds presents *Heather Maloney with Mikey Sweet*. 7 p.m. \$

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Lazy Bones*, Old Time Jazz, Blues and more. 8 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *TNT Karaoke*. 9 p.m.

MONDAY, MARCH 7

GCC Downtown Center, Greenfield: Activist-author Jeff Halper discusses his new book *War Against the People: Israel, the Palestinians and Global Pacification*. Sponsored by the Traprock Center for Peace and Justice. Music provided by activist-folksinger Ben Grosscup. 12:30 p.m.

Wagon Wheel, Gill: *Wagon Wheel World*. This month featuring Trish Crapo. All are welcome to come with 5 minutes of spoken word performances. 6 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Quiz Night with Heather and Michael*. 8 p.m.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 9

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Shout Lulu*. Southern String Band. 8 p.m.

THURSDAY, MARCH 10

Deja Brew, Wendell: *The Doug Plavin All Stars* with special guest. 8 p.m.

FRIDAY, MARCH 11

Great Hall, Turners Falls: *Great Falls Coffeehouse*. Keth Murphy and Beck Tracy. Play traditional music from Newfoundland, Quebec, Ireland, France and beyond. This monthly coffeehouse is sponsored by the Friends of the Great Falls Discovery Center. 6 p.m. Donations.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Barrett Anderson*. Hypno Boogie Blues! 8 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *The Snaz*. (Brattleboro Indie - pop-rock sensations and guest TBA.)



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Wendell Movie a Mythic Journey and Successful Fundraiser



Donna and Alia shop at Jolly Jeff's.

By NINA ROSSI

WENDELL – Doug Dawson is a scholar of myth, an amateur filmmaker, and a Wendell resident of 37 years. With inspiration abounding in this creative community of 800 or so folks who maintain a proud tradition of “keeping it weird,” Doug has created a unique fundraiser in the form of several short films featuring the adventures of local couple Donna and Alia and a cast of unique characters from the town.

A blend of reality and fiction, with real and make-believe names for characters and places, the third movie premiered last weekend at the town library.

In the second film that Doug created four years ago, Donna and Alia go out in search of scrap metal. It was only a half-hour long, and while it served to raise money for the fire department and senior center, it was also a huge hit with the community, who enjoyed helping produce it as well as watching the final result.

Donna and Alia start off their mythic journey in the latest movie by going tag sale-ing. They find all sorts of funky items at a sale in Turners Falls and then happen upon an odd object at “Jolly Jeff’s” barn sale. This metal grate from a furnace was seen in the hands of a shaman in the opening sequence, so the audience

already knows it is a portal to another world with ancient origins.

Thus launches the archetypal hero’s journey, complete with an evil queen, a confusing crossroad in the wilderness, a test for the protagonists to pass in order to go home to their yurt, and a funky tripping out sequence – or maybe two? There were suspicious chocolates and an odd organic blue drink, each of which had magical effects. And to be honest, I was enthralled the whole time and didn’t labor over taking many notes (plus it was dark, and I was eating brownies and popcorn provided by the Friends) so story details are quite jumbled in my head.

The storyline, although following the typical sequence of a hero’s journey, was specifically local in ways that delighted the audience, who packed the library at each of the four shows. There were gasps and snorts when different people appeared in the film, and plenty of in-jokes and cameo appearances at various landmark locations.

One thing that stood out for me was the appearance of artifacts within the story and their importance. It is clear that art has a very material and spiritual importance to the community, whether it be costume, building, sculpture, drawings and paintings, music, or installation art. All this and more permeated the movie at every

turn. Local musicians are featured in the soundtrack.

For instance, images from a series of black and white “transmissions” by artist Adrian Montagano criss-cross the screen in one sequence. Their symbolical geometry describes an ancient language whose visual truth is still legible to us.

Another sequence uses 78 drawings done by Doug’s partner Christine Tarantino, who died in 2012. These loose, gestural paintings were made from expired day lily blossoms that she rubbed across the paper, and we see faces and figures emerge and disappear as they flash by our eyes, like the masked dancers we glimpse here and there in the darkness behind the drum circle in a later scene.

More irreverent scenes included one in which man-horses in black leather harnesses pulled a corseted evil queen along unpaved roads, following directions transmitted to “Her Boogerliness” by a nerdy guy whose laptop computer functions as a portal facing back into the “real” world. These man-horses have appeared at other Wendell events, such as the annual alternative prom night.

Doug learned how to edit as he went along, mastering each technique as new ideas occurred to him and others in the creative group that worked on the project. Most scenes were roughly outlined and then improvised, with no rehearsals.

The project took four years to complete, and raised \$800 last weekend for the Friends of the Wendell Free Library. Doug plans to hold additional screenings in the community as separate fundraising events, including an outdoor show this summer, before releasing the hour and a half long movie online and on DVD.

Keep an eye out for this opportunity to head up the hill, for a decidedly different and enjoyable movie experience.

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