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LAKE PLEASANT MILLERS FALLS MONTAGUE CENTER MONTAGUE CITY TURNERS FALLS

The Montague Reporter

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YEAR 11 - NO. 18

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THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES

FEBRUARY 14, 2013

Weekend Blizzard Blankets County



GEORGE CARNER PHOTO

Tristen Felton, age 3, of Turners Falls, reestablishes hydrant access on Warner Street in Erving.

Montague Police Advise Businesses on Break-Ins

By PATRICIA PRUITT

TURNERS FALLS – Members of the Montague Business Association (MBA) met Tuesday at the Montague Public Safety Complex with Montague Police Chief Chip Dodge and Officer Michael Sevene, to discuss the recurring rash of break-ins targeting businesses downtown and strategies for crime prevention. Many of the owners of those businesses, some of which have been “hit” multiple times, were present at the meeting.

Chief Dodge distributed a handout that included photographs of the two suspects believed responsible for the majority of the robberies. One of them, Terrance [REDACTED] is currently in jail. The other, Lance [REDACTED] is not in jail, and there are two active warrants for his arrest. The Police Department has appealed to the public for information on [REDACTED]’s whereabouts.

In this era of no funding for community policing, Officer Sevene is as close as the police department can get

to a community policing officer: he divides his normal 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. shift between responding to calls in his cruiser and walking the beat downtown. He has become well known to the downtown business owners, and in Tuesday’s meeting he presented advice and information about useful equipment that might lead to thwarting a break-in.

Lighting is a major factor in preventing a would-be robber. Motion-activated lights can be a business or home owner’s best friend, especially if they are used both indoors and outdoors. Cameras inside and out are also useful, and can give police a source of evidence when the case gets to court. Alarms, reinforced doors, and bright street lighting can all contribute to deterring a break-in. The bottommost of bottom lines is not to store cash on the premises.

Stephan Smith of A.H. Rist Insurance was also present. He reminded people that documentation of alarm systems are attached to insurance

see **POLICE** pg 5

West Along the River

Walking to Peskeompskut

By DAVID BRULE

Picture a lone figure making his way through a snowy landscape on a late February afternoon. That’d be me.

The path leads slightly upward and into a pine grove. To the right of that path, a sudden cliff drops to the frozen surface of the Cove sixty feet below.

The dusk will be spreading soon, and under the sweeping white pines, the light is already fading. An evening saunter out here is easier than it will be soon, the Big Snow promised overnight will change all that. Snow, for now, crunches underfoot. The frozen Connecticut booms as ice expands and contracts, but the current through the Narrows keeps the water there open. On the other side of this rocky ridge where Peskeompskut begins, the Cove is frozen solid. Solitary men fish through the ice, standing or crouched over their lines that descend down into the dark waters.

Peskeompskut is an old name, lost for a while but coming back into parlance. *The Place Where the Water Splits the Rock*, or is it *the Place Where the Rock Splits the Water*? Possibly, in the Algonquin family of languages both meanings work. In either translation, the water has had its way with the rock. I prefer to think that the place called Peskeompskut starts here at the Narrows and stretches downriver to



Barred owl by Jean-Jacques Audubon

below the falls.

Geologists tell us that this arm of bedrock formed a barrier to the post-glacial Connecticut and forced it to flow over the unyielding ridge forming three waterfalls here: one the plunge pool called the Lily Pond site, one we call the Bear’s Den, the third at the Narrows. The river eventually broke through at the Narrows and has flowed through that gap ever since.

As far back as anyone can remember, boys from town, longing

to get away from Avenue A, Second Street or L street, could hike up the river a short way to swim here at the Narrows, at the place we often called Red Rocks. Or, on hot afternoons, after a buming day in the tobacco fields, some of us would head down the bank off Carlisle Avenue and leap into the dark waters there, washing the tobacco dust, nicotine juice and dirt out of ears and nose, and everywhere else.

But this is winter now, mid February and I’m alone out here on the point, glad there’s no one else around to interrupt my late afternoon walk. This point is high above the dark waters, draped with pines, a picnic table here and there. It is a curious spot. Solitary and solitary, yet hardly a mile from downtown with its bright bars, bustling bakery, theater and restaurants.

Alone with your thoughts out here, perhaps you can imagine the faint echoes of the log drivers work-

ing below, just down there. Those men danced from log to log where the drive jammed up here at the Narrows, held back by massive chains while the loggers sorted and shunted the tree trunks down to Turners Falls. Those massive chains still lie deep beneath the surface in the dark waters. For millennia before the Northern woodsmen, the First Peoples shot their canoes through this gap, whooping greetings after journeying along the Bay Path and past Wachussett, joining others down from Squakheag and points north. They were welcomed by the resident Pocumtuck to camp here, to fish, to trade or find a mate in these truce lands spread below this spot on either bank and down to the falls and Wissitinnewag.

But this February evening, there’s little sound other than the groan of the river. No calls of loggers nor Indians, no ghostly echoes from long ago music of the 40s and 50s that used to float down from the Perkins’ roller skating rink high up on the river bank off Millers Falls Road. It’s thankfully quiet now, and I can continue my walk in relative silence.

Rounding the point and starting back toward the cove, a soft query, half boom, half whisper comes out of a pine: “*Whoo cooks fer yoo-oo?*” A barred owl questions me. His large, soft gray form discernible in the dusk. I give him a wide berth, not to disturb his ruminations. With eyes of liquid obsidian, he watches me

trudge off up the curving trail, then resumes his questioning hunting call.

I’m seeking out my spirit tree that stands high above the Bear’s Den cliff and plunge pool. An ironwood tree grows there, aged, grey, sinuous and almost invisible. Its trunk is small in girth, but muscular and stubborn. It carries its name of ironwood well. Like the aging Walt Whitman. I like to grapple a bit with this survivor. I push and pull against its rock hard strength, testing my sinew against its unyielding force. Can’t budge it. Don’t want to anyway. Just testing our mutual endurance, to rattle a bit, to draw into myself some of this tree’s perseverance.

Back on the trail, old voices fill my head. Bits of conversation, ancestors converse, in many tongues. This place is alive with spirits. Some with restless murmurings, others chant songs of happiness, trying out their voices again.

Down on the cove, fishermen have started a fire on the ice. Hmm. *Will the world end in fire or ice?* Below the frozen surface are the meadows and the charcoal pits of more ancient hearths, an accumulation of campfires going back 12,000 years before the massacre. Below the anglers are the bones of those ancient people, and below that, the dancing tracks of the dinosaurs.

I catch myself.

Voices? Really now!

Maybe that’s all just the sweep of history whispering through the soft branches of the towering white pines out here along this ancient arm of rock. Or maybe it’s just that owl keeping a winter’s eve and interrogating the fading light.

PET OF THE WEEK**Me and My Shadow****Shadow**

LET'S PLAY!!! I mean, Hi- nice to meet you, my name's Shadow. Now, let's play! I like all kinds of toys, but feathers and stringy toys are my favorite!

You should check out the video of me playing with feathers on string, or better yet, come in and play with me yourself!

I am a typical high-energy young boy who needs lots of exercise and interaction with my people. I'd also be a great match for another playful cat – we could entertain each other.

Come meet me – to know me is to love me!

Watch my video at <http://goo.gl/FsG3w>.

For more information on adopting me, contact the Dakin Pioneer Valley Humane Society at (413) 548-9898 or info@dvphs.org.

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Montague Libraries**School Vacation Week Happenings**

By LINDA HICKMAN

There a variety of programs at the Montague Public Libraries during school vacation week.

All week at the Carnegie Library there will be *Art-to-Go* kits available in the children's room.

Tuesday the 19th, there are two programs. At 10 a.m., there will be an *Animal Tracks and Skulls program* at the Carnegie Library. Naturalist Dawn Marvin Ward will bring a variety of animal skulls for this mostly indoor program. Depending upon weather conditions, a small part of the program may be held outside. At 3:30 p.m. is the *Millers Falls Library Club*, which features crafts, snacks, and a story for all ages.

Story Time with Ruth O'Mara is held on Wednesdays at 10:15 at the Carnegie Library. It also features crafts, stories, and snacks.

The very popular *Music and Movement* for young children with Tom Carroll and Laurie Davidson is Thursday mornings at 10 a.m. at the

Carnegie.

Monday the 18th, the libraries are closed in honor of Presidents Day. During vacation week, the Carnegie Library in Turners Falls will be open Tuesday and Wednesday 1 - 8 p.m., Thursday 1 - 5 p.m., Friday 10 a.m. - 5 p.m., Saturday 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. The Millers Falls Library will be open Tuesday and Thursday, 2 - 5 and 6 - 8 p.m. The Montague Center Library will be open Wednesday 2 - 5 and 6 - 8 p.m. For more information, call the Carnegie Library at (413) 863-3214.

Fuel Assistance

Are you age 60 or over and worried about your home heating bill?

Income eligible seniors can find help through Franklin County Home Care's Benefits Counseling Program. We will help file an application for fuel assistance and find other ways to save you money. Contact Gretchen Smith at (413) 773-5555 or info@fchcc.org for more information. Read more at www.fchcc.org.



JESSICA LARKIN ILLUSTRATION

By FRED CICETTI

Q. I'd like to be able to do CPR, but I'm squeamish about doing mouth-to-mouth on a stranger. Any suggestions?

There is an emergency technique called *Hands-Only CPR*. This is CPR without mouth-to-mouth breaths. It consists of two easy steps: Call 9-1-1 and push hard and fast in the center of the victim's chest. That means 100/minute uninterrupted compressions until paramedics arrive.

The chest compressions should have minimal interruptions.

GILL-MONTAGUE

Gill/Montague Senior Center, 62 Fifth Street, Turners Falls, is open Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Roberta Potter is the Council on Aging Director. Congregate meals are served Tuesday through Thursday at Noon. Meal reservations must be made one day in advance by 11 a.m. The Meal Site Manager is Kerry Togneri. All fitness classes are supported by a grant from the Executive Office of Elder Affairs. Voluntary donations are accepted. For information, to make meal reservations, or to sign up for programs, call (413) 863-9357. Leave a voice message if the center is not open.

Monday, 2/18

10:10 a.m. Aerobics
10:45 a.m. Chair Exercise
12 p.m. Pot Luck & Bingo
1 p.m. NO Knitting Circle

Tuesday, 2/19

9:30 a.m. Chair Yoga
AARP Tax Aid by Appointment

Wednesday, 2/20

10 a.m. Aerobics
10:30 a.m. Monthly Health Screening

11:15 a.m. Friends' Meeting

12:45 p.m. Bingo

Thursday, 2/21

9 a.m. Tai Chi

1 p.m. Pitch

Friday, 2/22

10 a.m. Aerobics

Stopping compressions to give mouth-to-mouth breaths may bring some additional oxygen into the lungs, but the benefit of that oxygen can be offset if you stop the blood flow to the brain and heart muscle.

This form of CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation) is recommended by the American Heart Association (AHA) for helping anyone who is a teenager or older. It is used when a person collapses suddenly outside of a hospital setting.

When teens or adults suddenly collapse with cardiac arrest, they usually have enough oxygen in their lungs and blood for several minutes after the collapse. This oxygen will keep vital organs healthy as long as someone uses chest compressions to pump blood to the heart and brain. An unaided victim of cardiac arrest will die within 5 to 10 minutes.

The University of Arizona College of Medicine offers this help-



PHOTO BY FAFNIR ADAMITES

What's pictured here?

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THE HEALTHY GEEZER:**CPR Can Save Lives**

ful video of Hands-Only CPR at this website: www.ahsc.arizona.edu/node/730

However, there are occasions when you should use CPR with breaths, according to the AHA. These include:

- All infants (up to age 1)
- Children (up to puberty)
- Anyone found already unconscious and not breathing normally
- Any victims of drowning, drug overdose, collapse because of breathing problems, or prolonged cardiac arrest

However, using the hands-only version of CPR is always better than being a passive bystander.

All CPR training courses that include skills practice will teach you Hands-Only CPR. You can learn more at www.heart.org/handsonly-cpr.

Send your questions to fred@healthygeezers.com.

SENIOR CENTER ACTIVITIES – February 18th - 22nd

10:45 a.m. Chair Exercise
1 p.m. Writing Group

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 congregating meals. Lunch is at 11:30 a.m., with reservations required 24 hours in advance. Call Mealsite Manager Rebecca Meuse at (413) 423-3308, for meal information and reservations. For information, call Polly Kiely, Senior Center Director, at (413) 423-3649. Transportation can be provided for meals, shopping, or medical necessity. Call the Center to confirm activities, schedule a ride, or find out when is the next blood pressure clinic.

Flu Clinic – Call the Senior Center at (413) 423-3649 to find out when the next flu clinic will be held. This clinic is free to Erving residents, sponsored by the Erving Board of Health and available on a walk-in basis. The shot is recommended for those over 55, those who work with children or the elderly, and those with chronic illness. Pneumonia shots will also be available for those over 60 who have never been vaccinated.

Telephone Reassurance – Phone calls every morning for seniors who want someone to check in on them.

Shopping Trips – Thursday afternoon alternating from Turners Falls to Orange.

Quilting Classes Resume

A new series of 10 quilting classes will begin on Monday, February 11th and continue every second and fourth Mondays of the month. The Senior Center owns two sewing machines that participants may use or you may bring your own portable. Classes are led by Dianne Cornwell and her assistant Sandy. There is no fee for the class but donations are gratefully accepted. Call Polly at (413) 423-3649 for more information.

Monday 2/18

9 a.m. Tai Chi
10 a.m. Osteo Exercise
Noon Quilting

Tuesday 2/19

8:45 a.m. Chair Aerobics
9:30 a.m. C.O.A Meeting
12:30 p.m. Painting

Wednesday 2/20

8:45 a.m. Line Dancing
10 a.m. Chair Yoga
Noon Bingo

Thursday 2/21

8:45 a.m. Aerobics
10 a.m. Posture Perfect
Noon Cards

Friday 2/22

9 a.m. Bowling
9:30 a.m. Sit and Knit

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Tahner Castine

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Take-It-Easy Chair Yoga - Wednesdays at 10 a.m. at the Town Hall. Drop-in \$4 (first class free).

Senior Lunch - Fridays at noon. Call (413) 367-2694 by Wednesday for a reservation.

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.

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JESSICA LARKIN ILLUSTRATION

Local Briefs

Compiled By DON CLEGG

Winter School vacation is here, with a variety of children's and family activities available in the local area.

Come and be "part of our world" as we go "under the sea" with your favorite Disney characters including Sebastian, Scuttle, Flounder, Prince Eric and Ariel in **The Little Mermaid**. This classic Disney title contains all of the songs from the Academy Award winning animated feature film as well as three new songs from the Broadway show. Every family member will enjoy the show.

"The Little Mermaid Jr" is underwritten by Greenfield Savings Bank. Performances will be held at Greenfield High School Friday, Feb. 15 at 7 p.m., Saturday, Feb. 16 at 2 p.m., and Sunday, Feb. 17 at 2 p.m. Purchase tickets at www.jaduke.com/shows or reserve tickets by calling (413) 863-9901.

Previously mentioned in the Feb 7 issue of the *Montague Reporter* the New Renaissance Players bring Lewis Carroll's **Alice in Wonderland** to life for their 3rd Annual Family Show at The Shea Theater in Turners Falls. Join Alice as she wanders through Wonderland to meet some of literature's most iconic characters. The play features Lewis Carroll's quirky, humorous, and fanciful dialogue from both *Alice in Wonderland* and *Through*

the Looking Glass.

The show also features original music composed and performed by Daniel Hales, and the frost heaves. Performance dates are Friday, Feb. 15, at 7:30 p.m. Saturday, Feb. 16 and Sunday Feb. 17 at 3 p.m. and repeats the same days and performance times the following weekend. For information or to purchase tickets online, visit www.theshea.org.

The Carnegie Library in Turners Falls offers the program "Tracks and Skulls" on Tuesday, Feb. 19, from 10 to 11 a.m. Children of all ages and their families are invited to come learn about animal tracks and skulls with children's naturalist, Dawn Ward.

The Great Falls Discovery Center in Turners Falls will be open from Tuesday, Feb 19, through Saturday, Feb 23, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

The Senior Symposia's next program at Greenfield Community College, entitled "Global Climate Change and the Pioneer Valley," will be presented by Julie Brigham-Grette, Professor of Geosciences at the University of Massachusetts at the GCC Downtown Center, 270 Main Street in Greenfield on Wednesday, Feb 20, from 2 to 4 p.m.

The Pioneer Valley landscape today is a product of the last glacial melt, 20 to 10 thousand years ago. We can trace this history in the sediments deposited in Glacial Lake

Hitchcock (now the Connecticut River Valley) to reconstruct paleoenvironmental changes in the landscape as well as changes occurring throughout the Northern Hemisphere and the globe. These sediments contain information about El Nino and the Southern Oscillation that today are major features of our climate system. Brigham-Grette will bring her focus up to the modern era and current issues of climate change. Pre-registration is strongly advised. Call (413) 775-1661 or arrive early for limited same-day registration.

Heard of the Jr. Duck Stamp Contest? Interested in trying out your hand at entering? Then be creative and build a duck. Join USF&W staff at the GFDC on Feb. 19 through Feb. 21 from 1 to 3 p.m. as we explore the variety of renditions of birds from different artists and cultures. Students will use concepts such as patterns, colors, lines, and textures to create a unique bird with a variety of materials.

This free program is geared towards 3rd through 6th graders with an accompanying adult. All materials are provided. Call (413) 863-3221 to pre-register.

Young children ages 3 to 6 and their caretakers are invited to join USF&W refuge staff at the GFDC for Discovery Hour: **Mystery Tracking**, on Friday, Feb. 22, from 10:30 to 11:30 a.m. Discover different things about local wildlife and the places they live. Be crafty, have fun, and bring your imagination as we explore the natural world around us. This month we'll be using our detective skills to identify tracks left behind by different local animals.

The Traprock Center for Peace and Justice in collaboration with the

environmental justice class at Greenfield Community College and Greening Greenfield will co-sponsor a free presentation by **animal rights advocate Marian Kelner** on Friday, Feb. 22, from 1 to 2:30 p.m. in the Sloan Theater on the Greenfield Community College Campus.

Kelner has advocated for the

Montague Democrats to hold State Democratic Convention Delegate Caucus

Registered Democrats in Montague will hold a caucus at the first floor meeting room of Montague Town Hall, 1 Avenue A in Turners Falls, at 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, Feb. 21 to elect five delegates and three alternates to the Massachusetts Democratic Convention.

The state agenda-setting convention will be Saturday, July 13, at the Tsongas Center at UMass Lowell.

This local caucus is a meeting open to all Democrats registered in

rights of animals for many years in and outside the classroom. Respect for all species permeates her poetry, short stories, and essays, while her songs on two CDs explore human relationships. This talk is part of the Roots of Peace Speaker Series.

Send local briefs to editor@montaguereporter.org.

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HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE GILL POLICE LOG

Tractor Trailer Stuck on Bridge, Foot Pursuit

Tuesday, 2/5

7:45 a.m. Fire alarm at residence on Wood Avenue.

2:30 p.m. Motor vehicle accident at business on Main Road; under investigation.

4:15 p.m. Tractor trailer unit stuck on the Gill Montague Bridge; assisted same.

6:20 p.m. Restraining order violation committed on Walnut Street; warrant requested from judge for arrest.

Wednesday, 2/6

7:43 p.m. Fire Alarm on Northfield Mount Hermon campus.

9:40 p.m. Assisted Bernardston police with emergency restraint and hospitalization of person posing risk of serious harm by reason of mental illness at Hotel on Route 10.

Thursday, 2/7

10:15 a.m. Motor vehicle accident on French King Highway; no injuries reported in Factory hollow Area.

12:30 p.m. Department of Children Services requested assistance with child complaint of abuse on Mountain Road.

2:05 p.m. Erratic operation of blue box truck westbound on

Route 2; subject checked OK.

Friday, 2/8

10:10 a.m. Disabled motor vehicle on West Gill Road; assisted resident with flat tire.

12:18 p.m. Medical at Stoughton Place; resident assisted.

7:20 p.m. Medical at Stoughton Place; resident transported.

10:00 p.m. Snow mobile accident on Ben Hale Road; under investigation.

Saturday, 2/9

11:35 a.m. Assisted Bernardston police with arrest at Motel on Route 10; Foot pursuit.

3:30 p.m. Family disturbance on

Barney Hale Road; assisted all parties. No restraining order requested.

9:10 p.m. Motor vehicle complaint on Main Road; motor vehicle in question not located.

Sunday, 2/10

11:50 a.m. Motor vehicle complaint on Northfield Mount Hermon Campus; truck in the way of plowing; owner located.

12:35 p.m. Arrest of resident on North Cross Road for motor vehicle violations.

4:50 p.m. Assisted Northfield police with domestic situation on Beers Plain Road.

5:45 p.m. Assisted Bernardston police with suicidal subject on Bald Mount Road.

6:05 p.m. Reported animal abuse at residence on Main Road.

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Doug Smith - Owner



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GUEST EDITORIAL

Regional School Consolidation: What Are The Benefits?

Amherst, Leverett, Pelham and Shutesbury (ALPS) are considering consolidating their elementary schools into one region with one budget and one school committee.

This could have a domino effect, eliminating the old superintendency Union 28, and forcing decisions by the town of Erving and the Gill-Montague and Mahar regional districts. Other districts in the county are facing similar decisions.

But is there evidence that consolidation addresses core funding problems or improves education?

We now have several studies that address these questions. Four years ago there was a well-funded study on the benefits of consolidation in Franklin County as a whole. This year, the board overseeing the ALPS consolidation hired consultants to evaluate the educational and financial impacts of consolidation.

Do these studies show that consolidation will save school districts substantial money so that those with declining enrollment will remain "viable?" In my view the evidence is clear that the answer is a solid "no."

The projected savings from administrative consolidation are extremely small, and do not at all address core funding problems. The County study showed that consolidating everything into one county-wide district would save perhaps 3% of aggregate spending. The ALPS study indicated savings of well under 2%. The reason is simple: administrative costs are not a large portion of local school budgets, so cutting them does not address the core causes of the education funding crisis.

The question of educational improvements is a bit more complex. But a careful reading of both the County and ALPS studies shows few palpable benefits for students through consolidation. The pro-consolidation argument is filled with rhetoric about efficiency, modernization and providing a "Twenty-first Century education." This is all very compelling to school officials close-

ly connected to state-level policymakers, but will the result really look much better to students and parents on the ground? I say not at all, at least not as currently articulated.

This problem leads to justifications for consolidation that are, to say the least, a stretch. For example the ALPS study claims that one large school district will reduce paperwork, allowing school officials to concentrate more on education. Really? The central office staff in Amherst will have less paperwork dealing with the two additional elementary school populations of Leverett and Shutesbury?

Similarly we are told that one regional budget would be "easier to understand" than four. So, the taxpayers of Leverett will find a large regional budget containing three other towns easier to understand than the budget of their own elementary school, which is a town department?

One way to understand this conceptual problem is to consider it in the context of the history of past efforts to reform education in Massachusetts. Cities and towns have been consolidating education services for over 150 years. In some instances, consolidation, although no doubt encountering stiff local opposition, produced clear benefits.

In the mid-19th century, the one-room "district schools" were combined into a smaller number of multi-room schools administered by town-wide departments. The resulting schools were bigger, had only two grades per classroom, and were staffed by professional teachers who had graduated from the new state "Normal Schools," or teachers' colleges. The new system was dramatically different.

Another wave of consolidation occurred after WWII. It was driven, in part, by the desire to build big modern high schools. We now know that some of these schools were too big. Still the benefits of consolidation were clear: new language and chemistry labs, sports fields and



CHRIS SAWYER-LAUÇANNO ILLUSTRATION

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Thoughts on the Resignation of Pope Benedict

When I heard the news that Pope Benedict had decided to step down from the Papacy, I was as surprised as everyone else. While commentators have pointed out that Benedict had dropped hints over the past two years, because this is so rare I'm not sure that it really registered.

After a long papacy, such as that of his predecessor, John Paul II, it is not surprising that an older man is chosen. After the flurry of writing, traveling and encountering initiated by John Paul II, perhaps it is natural to elect someone who will slow down the pace. Benedict indicated from the start that he was older, and I think he knew he could not keep up the pace of a far younger man.

Nonetheless, Benedict is a brilliant theologian, scholar and teacher, beloved by his former University students, and he has had a remarkable gift to take the fruit of his intellectual labor and express it beautifully. I have been deeply moved by his

insights, along with practical applications, in his homilies, weekly audiences and major addresses and writings. And despite his age, Benedict has been able to connect with people of all ages, including the young people of the world at international youth gatherings, proclaiming the faith in its fullness.

For someone to voluntarily give up power takes great humility. To acknowledge that the aging process prevents one from giving all that a position deserves requires great honesty with oneself. To be a first-rate theologian and Scripture scholar gives one intellectual and spiritual freedom to take a step that has not been taken in centuries. Nonetheless, for those who thought that papacy was a position for life, Benedict's resignation is still disquieting.

Naturally, many have raised the question whether there is more to this story. Both as Pope, and previously as the Pope's right hand man, Joseph

Ratzinger knew more about the scandal of sexual abuse in the church than most. I would not have wanted to be in his shoes. Perhaps this change will lead to the possibility of greater transparency, as well as healing for victims, their families and the entire church.

Perhaps Pope Benedict's greatest legacy will be the fact that he stepped down. Jesus taught his Apostles that authority was for service, to be exercised with humility and gentleness, speaking the truth in love. The shoes of the first Pope were not those of a monarch, but of a simple fisherman. In the end, Benedict is leaving a palace and moving to a monastery. There, he can study, pray, write — and trust that another can fill those shoes.

— Father Stan Aksamit
 Our Lady of Peace Church
 Turners Falls

gyms, libraries and auditoriums. I attended one of those new middle schools the year it opened (in 1960, I admit). It certainly felt bigger and better.

I would argue that the benefits to be had in the current round of consolidation are few, because consolidation has been driven less by a desire for innovation than by a crisis in funding. This crisis began in Massachusetts when the huge infu-

sions of state money allocated for educational reform in the 1990s dried up, and the 2002-03 recession led to cuts in state Chapter 70 aid to school districts. At that point, demands for regional consolidation intensified. State officials assumed that consolidating districts would help address the funding problem. But the math simply did not support this belief.

Recognizing the problem, Patrick Administration officials attempted to articulate other, non-financial benefits of consolidation. While this is a step in the right direction, the new rationale is marred by excessive emphasis on efficiency, and policy jargon coming out of federal initiatives such as "No Child Left Behind" and "Race to the Top." Arguments focusing on "increasing capacity" and "robust teacher evaluation systems" are not very compelling to most parents and taxpayers.

In struggling to make their case to locals, state policymakers became

irritated by the large number of districts (326), each with its own superintendents, special education directors, business managers and so on. They looked longingly at states like Maryland, where only a few districts are organized on a county basis. The whole Massachusetts system seemed utterly irrational, propped up by cities and towns clinging to an outmoded belief in "local control."

But irritation at the irrationality of the current system, justified as it may be, does not provide a compelling reason for changing it.

Parents and taxpayers in most cities and towns like their school districts. If redundant bureaucracy irritates state officials, what does this mean for my kid, really?

The Montague Reporter welcomes and encourages responses to this opinion piece.

— JEFF SINGLETON
 Montague

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NOTES FROM THE LEVERETT SELECTBOARD MEETING

Fire Department in Need of New Recruits

By DAVID DETMOLD

Within the next three to five years, forty-five percent of the town of Leverett's call firefighters will be retiring, Peter Reich, a member of the town's recently appointed fire department study committee, told the selectboard on Tuesday. Almost half of the 13 member crew is reaching the age where, "They are not comfortable carrying 40 to 50 pounds of weight into a burning building," said Reich, who added, "and there are not young people in town. That's the reality. Regionalization is not going to solve that."

Like many towns in Franklin County, Leverett is confronted with the aging not only of its general population, but also of the people who make up its fire department. Although fire chief John Moruzzi is still a few years from retirement, deputy chief Stewart Olsen, who is the department's training officer, will reach 65 next month, and without a specific legal opinion that he can continue as the officer responsible for training new recruits, Olsen told the board on Tuesday he would not be comfortable continuing in that role beyond the end of March.

And though Leverett, like a number of other towns in the county, is examining the possibility of regionalizing its fire department with one or more of its neighboring communities, Reich and Olsen and other members of the study committee do not regard that approach as a sure cure for the problem.

"Three times in the last ten years, we've put a new firefighter through the academy and then they get hired elsewhere. They go and get a real job," said Olsen.

Training and equipping new recruits does not necessarily cost the town much in dollars and cents, but to lose promising young trainees is demoralizing in a department sorely in need of new blood, Olsen told the board. Several members of the committee said young people cannot afford to buy a home in Leverett, so they move elsewhere to find jobs and affordable housing. A plan to regionalize the Leverett fire department with the fire departments in Sunderland or Shutesbury, for example, would do nothing to stem the attrition of retirement and the loss of young people in Leverett's own department.

Selectboard member Peter d'Errico encouraged the study committee to pursue conversations with the fire chiefs and town administrators of Shutesbury and Sunderland anyway, and to keep current with the Franklin Regional Council of Government's proposal to study the potential for regionalization efforts among fire departments around the county. He also said the department and the study committee should focus on recruitment in town, through education and outreach via the town's website, the newsletter, and other forums. The selectboard will seek a legal opinion about the possibility of senior officers remaining with the force, at least in a training capacity, beyond the official retirement age, if they should want to.

D'Errico also said, "You need to look at the alternatives. Maybe having someone hired to be on duty during the day," to set the wheels in motion when medical calls (45 percent of the Leverett department's call

volume at present) or fire emergencies come in. D'Errico suggested this could be a paid fulltime firefighter, not necessarily the chief.

The committee will continue its research and plans to issue a report to the selectboard by the fall.

The board heard budget presentations from police chief Gary Billings and road boss Will Stratford; both department heads offered nearly level funded budgets, with expected cost of living increases for employees and an \$800 increase in the police department's line item for gas the only exceptions.

"We've been able to hold the line for the last several years, and it looks like we will be able to do the same this year," said Billings, who segued into a critical account of pending legislation on Beacon Hill he said would institute a ban on high capacity magazines without an exception for law enforcement. If that bill were to become law as written, Billings said, it would cost the town money to replace departmental weapons, since a number of the officer's guns have a capacity for clips greater than the proposed 7 round limit. He was also critical of a proposal that would require each weapon in individual ownership to be insured separately for \$1 million. He noted his department had handled four or five new gun permits in recent weeks. "That's kind of an upsurge for Leverett," Billings said, attributing the demand for new permits to a popular belief that access to guns would be tightened soon in Massachusetts, in

see LEVERETT pg 8

NOTES FROM GILL SELECTBOARD MEETING

Gill Rejects Spending Unexpectedly Robust Cash Reserves

By DAVID DETMOLD

With a little over \$207,000 already socked away in various stabilization accounts, the Gill selectboard was presented with an unexpectedly robust balance of \$211,047 in the town's free cash account as well on Monday. For the first time in several years, the combined balance of the town's cash reserves is, at least for the moment, well in excess of the 10 percent of its roughly \$3 million annual operating budget considered a safe minimum to meet unanticipated expenses. However, this good news comes none too soon against a backlog of delayed maintenance to town buildings and an aging fleet of fire department and highway vehicles.

Town administrative assistant Ray Purington told the board this year's free cash account, certified by the state Department of Revenue last Thursday, is up by more than \$117,000 over last year's total of \$94,000. He attributed the rise to several factors, including long awaited reimbursements from federal and state disaster management agencies for some of the town's costs in cleaning up after tropical storm Irene and the freak pre-Halloween snowstorm of 2011.

In addition to the \$15,000 windfall, if that is the proper term, for storm cleanup, Purington listed better than anticipated growth in motor vehicle excise tax, property tax payments, trash sticker receipts and other local revenues for part of the gain, and noted that individual town departments, which the selectboard has kept on a

strict austerity regimen through years of recession and negative or flat state aid, were still able to return \$64,000 in unspent funds at the end of the last fiscal year, including \$4,500 from last year's snow and ice account, \$13,000 from the three largest departments - police, highway and fire - combined, and \$14,500 from an overestimate in what the town would pay for trash removal.

The selectboard discussed briefly how they would like to see free cash allocated this year, with Purington reminding them, "We are getting better at weaning ourselves off of free cash to prop up the operating budget," but allowing that some amount of free cash would inevitably be put to that use again at annual town meeting.

Selectboard member John Ward said he was not inclined to spend "one time money" on ongoing operating expenses. And acting chair Randy Crochier (Ann Banash is on vacation) said, "I'd like some of that to land in stabilization, or in capital projects to some of these buildings. I'm not in favor of using it to backfill the budget."

After the meeting, Purington noted, "There are still a number of hefty projects to fund," including

replacing at least one of the town's three aging fire engines soon, and one highway truck that is reaching the end of its life expectancy. In addition to the \$52,780 new roof for town hall that RCI of Southampton has contracted to replace come spring, the town is also looking at needing to replace the roofs at the Riverside Municipal Building and the elementary school in the not too distant future, Purington said. The boiler at the Riverside building is nothing to write home about either.

However, the town got another unexpected bit of good news on Monday. An energy audit for the Riverside building, the Slate Library, and town hall will be entirely paid for by a state Department of Energy Resources (DOER) grant in the amount of \$9,340, allowing more of the approximately \$130,000 remaining in the town's Green Communities grant to be spent on actually saving energy in those buildings, once the audits identify the most efficient ways to do that.

Purington said he found out about the possibility to apply for the new DOER grant on Jan. 30, received selectboard authorization to apply, wrote the grant on Monday, Feb. 4 and received

see GILL page 8

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE LEVERETT POLICE LOG

Domestic Dispute and B & E

02/04/13 6:19 p.m. Report of a domestic dipute at Leverett Rd residence. Verbal only, peace restored. 02/09/13 12:00 p.m. Assisted tow company in removing off the road vehicle on Leverett Road. 02/11/13 3:41 p.m. Assisted M.S.P. with a M/V accident on the Shutesbury side of the town line. 02/12/13 11:00 a.m. Reported B&E into a Chestnut Hill Road home Jewelry and silver service taken. Under investigation

POLICE from page 1

ance policies and if they are not in working order, it may affect insurance coverage.

Chief Dodge then took questions from the audience. One person asked if the break-ins were being done by "outsiders" from elsewhere. Dodge said he knew of only one instance where a robbery was committed by people driving a car with Vermont license plates. He felt sure most of the break-in activity was being done by local perpetrators.

Another questioner asked why known breaking-and-entering offenders are not monitored by bracelets, as other types of repeat offenders are. Dodge replied that bracelets are used for the most violent or for sex offenders, and that this is a decision of the courts.

This led to the next question: how can citizens have an impact on court processes for different sentencing? Drawing from his experience in professional police associations, Dodge advised citizens to start with their local representatives and ask them to push for legislation.

Another questioner asked what the MBA can do to help police. The answer was to report any suspicious activity they see to the police.

An MBA member reminded the group that banks have overnight safety deposit boxes, so no business needs to leave its receipts on the premises, or risk taking them home.

The final question dealt with the street lighting along Avenue A. Dodge acknowledged that it is quite dim in stretches, with some of the bulbs out and suggested the MBA



PHOTO COURTESY OF MONTAGUE POLICE

Montague police seek Lance on two active warrants.

write to the board of selectmen and to Tom Bergeron in the Department of Public Works. In his opinion, the problem is "economics," not lack of concern or will.



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NOTES FROM THE SWIFT RIVER SCHOOL COMMITTEE District Seeks Inclusion In Nuclear Meltdown Zone

By KATIE NOLAN

WENDELL – The draft fiscal year 2014 (FY'14) Swift River School budget of \$1.88 million will be presented at a hearing on March 7 at the Swift River Elementary school. The budget is 1.1% higher than the FY'13 budget.

At its Feb. 7 meeting, the Swift River School committee approved using the alternative method for assessing the amounts owed by Wendell and New Salem for FY'14. Under the alternative method, operational costs are assessed based on the number of students attending from each town. The default statutory method assesses the towns based on the relative wealth of each town as determined by a state Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) formula.

Wendell committee member John Fitzgerald said that the Wendell regionalization planning committee had met with Erving regionalization planning committee member Beth Lux. According to Fitzgerald, the Erving planning committee would like to hire a consultant to evaluate financial and educational effects of regionalization and invited Wendell to join them and share costs. The Wendell committee took no action on this plan.

Fitzgerald said that the regionalization planning committee that includes Union 28 (U28) towns Leverett and Shutesbury will vote March 9 about going forward with a plan to regionalize with the Amherst-Pelham regional school district. If the committee votes positively, a regional governance plan

will be developed, and residents of the four towns may be able to vote on a regionalization plan in November. If Leverett and Shutesbury decide to leave U28, the remaining towns (Wendell, New Salem, Erving) would have difficulty funding it.

Swift River committee chair Michael Yohan of New Salem said that the New Salem town moderator has not yet appointed any members to its regionalization planning committee.

The committee approved sending a letter to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission asking for an increase of the evacuation zone from 10 to 50 miles in the event of a radiological emergency at Entergy's Vermont Yankee plant in Vernon, VT. In addition, the letter asks that Entergy provide funding to help schools develop plans for their responses to a radiological emergency. Wendell representative Johanna Bartlett, who is also the representative to the Mahar school committee, said that the Mahar committee has approved sending a similar letter to the NRC.

U28 superintendent Joan Wickman told the committee that the U28 joint committee had approved a \$543,428 FY'14 budget. Wickman informed the committee that under a recent law, Chapter 222, a school that suspends or expels a student is required to continue to provide educational services for the student. Wickman said that the Leverett selectboard had petitioned the state protesting this requirement, and State Auditor Suzanne Bump had ruled that it is an unfunded mandate and, therefore, a state rather than a school district, obligation.

Introducing...

Dear Clio

Dear Clio,

Lately I can't fall asleep at night. You see I have a problem, and I keep turning it over in my mind. I lie there in the dark, my heart racing, worrying that I will make the wrong choice.

During the day I can't concentrate. Maybe it's just lack of sleep, but I think it's because I can't stop thinking about this situation and playing out different scenarios in my mind. I'm distracted all the time! My coworkers ask me what's wrong, but I can't confide in them.

Of course I could talk to my family, but at this point I think they are sick of hearing about my troubles. I can't ask my friends for advice, either. They are too close to

the situation. I'm so confused, Clio. I just need the right person to talk to, someone objective who can point me down the right path, someone to listen and tell me that I'm not crazy!

Any advice?

Sincerely,
Can't Sleep

Dear CS,

I think you are right that telling someone about your problem could be therapeutic. The fears and doubts racing around your mind each night will be easier to conquer if you first write them down – in a letter to me. I am starting a newspaper column in the Montague Reporter and hope that people like

you will write and share your worries – anonymously – with me and with local readers. Interpersonal problems, moral questions, anything that is causing you stress, is just what I am looking for! Since we all live with worries and insecurity, our readers will appreciate your honesty. It may give them the courage to face anxiety of their own.

I promise to respond with empathy and never to be preachy. I might even have some good advice for you! Send your letters to: editor@montaguereporter.org or by post to: 58 4th Street, Turners, MA 01376.

Yours,
Clio

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SUSAN C. MORSE PHOTO



Mountain Lions with Sue Morse

Join tracker and photographer Sue Morse for an evening presentation on Mountain Lions on Friday, Feb. 22 from 7 to 9 p.m. at Arcadia Wildlife Sanctuary in Easthampton. Morse is an expert in natural history and tracking. Morse has been monitoring wildlife and interpreting wildlife habitat use since 1977. Her research has focused on cougar, bobcat, black bear, and Canada lynx. Morse will talk about the natural history of the mountain lion, her research in the Western states, and claims of cougars here

in the east, both now and in the future. Morse's stunning photography alone is worth coming for!

This program, for ages 16 and older, is co-sponsored with Hitchcock Center for the Environment, Arcadia Wildlife Sanctuary/Mass Audubon and Northfield Mountain Recreation and Environmental Center. Pre-registration is required by calling Arcadia at (413) 584-3009 or online at www.massaudubon.org. In case of inclement weather cancellation call after 3 p.m. on Feb. 22. \$

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Treacle & Ink: on putting the poems of Lewis Carroll to Music

By DANIEL HALES

Lewis Carroll clearly intended Wonderland and the Looking Glass World to be musical as much as they are magical places. Even when characters aren't breaking into song, the poems they recite have such a musical quality to them, all you have to do is read the words out loud to hear them sing ("O frabjous day! Callooh! Callay!"). When I began this project, the first thing I wanted to make sure of was that I figured out how each poem sang to me straight off the pages of the books. I've carefully avoided listening to any other poem-song adaptations. I haven't watched any of the film adaptations in years.

Of course *Alice* has so deeply permeated pop culture, it's absolutely impossible not to pick up external influences. Fortunately, no one's Alice, or Cheshire Cat, or Caterpillar is exactly the same.

One of the most striking things about *Alice in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass* is how many different associations people have with these classic stories. Obviously this is partly due to the abundance of film and stage versions, each emphasizing (and altering) different aspects of the books. And of course the books themselves encourage it; each of Alice's encounters is an invitation to the reader for interpretation and reinterpretation.

Therefore, in putting the poems from these stories to music, I wanted to try and produce a soundtrack that felt coherent and unified, and – simultaneously – to create as eclectic a mash-up of genres and instrumentation as possible. I wanted waltzes that wouldn't sound out of place in a Victorian drawing room, and psychedelic rockers that would get the party started at the maddest

21st century mad tea party.

I also want to make sure my presentation and our performances of the songs emphasized the pointed social and political satire that almost always lies just beneath the surface of poems that are, at times, dismissed as "amusing nonsense." Carroll takes on economic inequity, class privilege, ageism, and hypocrisy with so much wit and humor, it can be easy to laugh your way right past it. The best example of this is probably "A-sitting On a Gate (The White Knight's Song)" in which a vain, navel-gazing, aristocrat repeatedly demands that an "aged aged" working man explain how he earns his living, but is too self-involved to hear the man's answer:

...He said "I go my ways,
And when I find a mountain-rill
I set it in a blaze.

And thence they make a stuff
they call
Rowland's Macassar oil –
Yet twopence-halfpenny is all
They give me for my toil."

But I was thinking of a way
To feed oneself on batter;
And so go on from day to day
Getting a little fatter...

Most importantly (to me, at least), I saw an opportunity to explore some of the stories' more nuanced moods and textures, subtler shades that can get lost in adaptations that attempt to make *Alice in Wonderland* into a zany Technicolor joyride. Alice is often bullied and manipulated by grown-ups (never mind the fact that they're usually animals, chess pieces, or playing cards). Alice is often lonely, scared, and confused. I wanted to make sure the songs reflected these more complicated states of being, in addition



PHOTO NAYANA GLAZIER

"Your Hair Wants Cutting": from left to right, Ashley Blom as Alice, Gilana Chelimskey as the March Hare, Jeremiah Solomon as the Dormouse, and Michael Glazier as the Mad Hatter. *Alice in Wonderland* will be performed by the New Renaissance Players at the Shea Theater this weekend and next.

to conveying the sheer fun and raucous energy of Carroll's words and worlds.

In the two original songs I wrote for this production, "Push Them Into The Wishing Well" and "Contrariwise," I attempt to give innocent Alice (and anyone else, for that matter) the best advice I have to offer when confronting the phoniness and cruelties of the adult world: don't conform, think for yourself, and stand up for yourself:

If you're hoping to pass through
the looking glass, go at it contrary,
contrariwise

If you're hoping to peek past the
scenery, try looking contrary,
contrariwise

Step off the path, pet the Cheshire
Cat, but pet it contrary, contrari-
wise.

I've saved the best for last. My adaptations of these poems would be one dimensional stage facades without the contributions of my wonderful and talented band-mates. Ivan and James give these songs their pulse, their swagger, the swing in their step. And the brilliant (no, really) viola arrangements composed by James, and beautifully performed by Anna, totally blow my mind. I'll end with a challenge and a special offer: our complete discography, a lifetime's supply of treacle, and backstage passes for our next show at Carnegie Hall to anyone who can name every pop tune, jingle, and drinking song quoted in James' viola arrangement for "A-Sitting on a Gate". (You'll have to confirm your guesses with James, however, since I haven't figured all

of them out myself, and he's not telling.)

We hope to go into the studio to record fifteen of these songs for our next album ("Contrariwise" or "Treacle And Ink" – which title do you like better?) in March. For more information, or to help us fund this album by buying one of our first two albums, visit: www.thefrostheaves.com.

Alice in Wonderland is directed by Jillian Morgan. Performance dates are Friday, Feb. 15 at 7:30 pm, Saturday, Feb. 16 and Sunday, Feb. 17 at 3 pm. And the following weekend Friday, Feb. 22 at 7:30 pm, Saturday the 23rd, and Sunday the 24th at 3 pm.

To purchase advance tickets, contact emoonily@hotmail.com or (413)522-8616 or www.theshea.org.

NoFIRES Awarded Community Innovation Challenge Grant

The Patrick Administration announced the recipients of the Community Innovation Challenge grants for fiscal 2013.

The Northwestern Juvenile Fire Intervention, Response, and Education (NoFIRES) program was awarded \$63,750 and will be administered by the Hampshire Council of Governments under the leadership of the Northwestern District Attorney's Office in collaboration with the City of Holyoke and the Towns of Athol, Erving, New Salem, Orange, Petersham, Phillipston, Royalston, Warwick, and Wendell.

Northwestern District Attorney David E. Sullivan formally accepted the grant at the Statehouse in Boston. "This is a tremendous boost to NoFIRES and will allow us to bring Holyoke, Petersham, Phillipston, and Royalston into the program," Sullivan said.

NoFIRES' core mission is to protect our youth, their families, and the communities in which they live from the dangerous and sometimes fatal act of setting fires. NoFIRES is committed to providing a consistent, coordinated, and appropriate response to youths through the age of 16 who set fires or engage in fire-related behavior.

Greenfield Community College Art Student Recognized in National Competition

Three years ago, Susan Valentine's experience with paint involved painting walls in her house. Today, Susan is a Greenfield Community College painting student whose work has been recognized in a national contest. Her oil painting, "Daylily 2," won second place in The Artist's Magazine's 2012 Art Competition for Student Still Life/Floral and is featured in the January 2013 issue.

How did Valentine become an award-winning painter in just two years?

Ask Valentine and she'll say it was an organic process growing from a lifelong interest in art and looking

closely at the world around her.

Ask GCC Art Department Chair Paul Lindale and he'll say, "Susan is a prime example of someone who embraces the opportunities offered to students at GCC and applies hard work and dedication to her art."

Valentine studied graphic design at GCC from 2007 until 2010 and works as a graphic designer. A website client, artist Robin Keller, bartered paintings for Valentine's work. Valentine asked Keller to teach her to paint. From Keller, she learned the mechanics of working in acrylic and became completely enveloped by the experience.

In 2010, hearing a GCC friend



Daylily 2 – painting by Susan Valentine

enthusia about a painting course, Valentine thought, "I want to take that class." Valentine emailed the instructor to ask to be allowed into

the class without prerequisites. The next morning, Professor Penné Krol emailed saying, "Just come."

Commenting on her process, Valentine said, "Composition is what catches me. I take photos of my garden for the beauty of it, how the sun shines on top of a petal and how that light flows onto another flower. That daylily looked like joy."

Valentine thrives in the collaborative environment of the GCC painting studio. She said, "I'll be learning about value (from light to dark) and saturation (from gray to brilliant) for the rest of my life. One lesson I've learned at GCC is that if there is something you want to do, do it. And, find community within which to do it."

Visit www.susanvalentineart.com.

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NOTES FROM THE MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD MEETING

F.L. Roberts Gets Green Light on Wine and Malt Application

By PATRICIA PRUITT

At the Monday selectboard meeting, the lawyer for F.L. Roberts Michael Snyder, presented his client's interest in expanding his business on 3rd Street to include liquor sales, and highlighted the company's experience operating four successful stores with alcohol sales.

Before opening the liquor license hearing on F.L. Roberts, Montague selectboard chairman Chris Boutwell recused himself to avoid any possible conflict of interest because he works for a liquor distributor. The board appointed select member Mark Fairbrother as temporary chair for the license hearing. Select member Pat Allen opened the hearing by saying she didn't feel inclined to approve another venue for liquor sales and would have to be persuaded.

Snyder emphasized that Bradford Manton, store manager, has completed his TIPS (Training for Intervention Procedures) training, the legal requirement for the service and sale of alcohol. The assistant manager who is on the premises 45 to 50 hours a week will also train in TIPS as

will all other sales staff. The company district manager, Ray Cross, stressed that his company has a zero tolerance policy for not carding, and any slip ups result in immediate dismissal of the staff person. Upon hiring, every staff person signs the zero tolerance policy, so everyone knows what to expect.

There were several concerns raised from the audience in the selectmen's room. Building Inspector David Jenson felt it was a less than ideal location for liquor sales and would expand the times sales could be made from 9 p.m., as it is in the other liquor sales locations, to 11 p.m. Town Planner Walter Ramsey spoke as a resident of the L Street neighborhood. He said he felt adding more liquor sales would not be an asset to the immediate residential area. The present locations of liquor availability did not constitute an inconvenience as it stood now. Chief of Police Chip Dodge said his main concern was the likelihood of children entering a venue with alcohol freely displayed. It's important that the alcohol products be in plain sight of the store employees. Yet, Dodge felt that alcoholic beverages

stocked in a cooler would be observable. Cross said floor displays would be for larger quantities in heavy packaging. In the end, Allen made a motion to approve the license request by F. L. Roberts & Company and both selectmen approved it.

In other business, the board approved the 19 draft articles for the warrant of the special town meeting on Feb. 28th at 6:30 in the Turners Falls High School cafeteria. They also set the date for the annual town Meeting for May 4 at 9 a.m., with a special town meeting set for 8:30 a.m. on the same day before the annual meeting.

The selectmen also certified the official population count for Montague at 8,532, based on the figure from the 2012 census.

In other announcements the Massachusetts Municipal Associate (MMA) will hold its legislative breakfast meeting on March 1, at the Whately town hall.

The First Light power company has set the dates for the annual draw down of the Turners Falls canal for Saturday, Sep. 30 through Oct. 5, 2013.

GILL from page 5

word of approval from the state the very next day, on Feb. 5. Purington told the board, "That was pretty amazing. I think the folks in Boston like what we're doing. They like our enthusiasm."

In other news, the board plans to urge the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG) to allocate staff time to raising regional concerns about the pending relicensure of First Light Power's Northfield Mountain Pumped Hydro facility and the Turners Falls Dam, but appeared to back off an earlier proposal to have the town of Gill call a "stakeholders meeting" to allow local landowners to coordinate with town government and other interested parties in providing formal input on the five-year relicensing process. Selectboardmember Ward will work with the town conservation commission to

come up with a draft of the town's position on relicensing, however.

The board decided to wait for input from the fire department before weighing in on a proposal by the Franklin County Fire Chiefs Association, which seeks FRCOG funding to study the potential for regionalizing firefighting services in the county. The board will wait for firmer figures to decide whether to support a proposal by the Franklin Regional Retirement System to allow a 3 percent cost of living increase for retirees in the system this year. Town employees are being recommended for a 1.7 percent cost of living adjustment (COLA) this year, Crochier noted, but Purington pointed out that only a percentage of a retiree's total pension is subject to cost of living adjustments. Gill has about "three or four" retirees in the system, and seven active employees enrolled,

Purington said, and if the 3 percent COLA were approved, it would cost the town a bit over \$1,000, on top of the roughly \$70,000 the town already pays into the retiree system.

The board took issue with a decision by the fire department to use a \$2,500 Federal Emergency Management Agency grant to purchase a "smart board" for the public safety complex meeting room. "You'll drag me kicking and screaming into the 21st century," said Ward, who questioned whether the money could not have been better spent. "Is the smart board the smartest thing to spend the \$2500 on?" he asked. Crochier wondered with the purchase would wind up costing the town more in maintenance down the line. "I'm just afraid we're buying an expense," said Crochier, who added, "Give me old fashioned stuff I know how to use."



LEVERETT from page 5

the wake of recent national episodes of gun violence.

Billings added that his department has been assisting the Leverett Elementary School in reviewing and tightening its security policies since the elementary school shooting in Connecticut in December that left 20 students and six staff members dead. He said school children are used to fire drills, and they would now get used to safety drills as well. "People are going to have to get used to changes," he said. "There will be more to come."

Although Stratford was able to offer an essentially level funded budget, other than anticipated cost of living increases for highway department employees, he did offer two capital projects for special article consideration at annual town meeting in April - one for about \$16,500 to replace the highway's failing

fuel pumps, and one for \$140,000 to purchase a new six wheel dump truck, to replace the department's 1998 dump truck.

But after some discussion, Stratford allowed, "Sometimes I think, just give me \$40,000 and I'll rebuild it," referring to the 1998 truck, which he said is well built, with minimal rust, and 80,000 hard miles on the odometer.

Stratford said he would come in at another occasion to discuss repair of several bridges in town, which has been an ongoing topic of concern given tightening state regulations. The bridges of immediate concern are all in the Moores Corner area of Leverett - on Dudleyville Road, Mill Yard Road, and Coke Kiln Road.

D'Errico said he would like to coordinate with Stratford and with utility companies operating tree

trimming services in town to make sure all the lines that will support the town's proposed high speed municipal fiber optic network are as free as possible from the threat of falling limbs, and falling trees.

"It will be tough if we're talking about taking a lot of trees," said Stratford.

"We're ready to take the heat," said d'Errico.

On that note, the town continues to experience almost daily breakdowns of the new furnaces, installed factory direct from Adams Manufacturing in Ohio by Siemens Building Technologies in a town hall efficiency upgrade two years ago. D'Errico said, half jokingly, the selectboard was considering asking Siemens to remove the two faulty furnaces and replace them with German made alternatives instead.



HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MONTAGUE POLICE LOG

Hit & Run and Tree Cleared

Wednesday 1/30

2:54 a.m. Intoxicated male subject outside Franklin Emergency Shelter on Farren Avenue. Subject taken into protective custody.
4:41 a.m. Single car accident at Federal Street and Lake Pleasant Road on Route 63. Damaged vehicle off road into tree. Person transferred and vehicle towed.
3:28 p.m. Shoplifting at F.L. Roberts in Turners Falls.
10:03 p.m. [redacted]

[redacted] arrested for operating a motor vehicle with a suspended license.

Thursday 1/31

5:15 a.m. Tree in the road on Main Street in the center of Montague. Tree cleared.
7:43 a.m. Shoplifting at F.L. Roberts in Turners Falls.
2:10 p.m. Domestic disturbance, [redacted] Central Street, Turners Falls.
5:52 p.m. [redacted] arrested at his residence on a warrant.

6:40 p.m. Domestic disturbance investigated at 144 3rd Street, Turners Falls.

Friday 2/1

1:59 a.m. Domestic disturbance at [redacted] 4th Street, Turners Falls.
8:16 a.m. Medical emergency at Carroll's Market in Millers Falls. Removed to hospital.
10:26 p.m. Officer requested at Franklin County Technical School.
Saturday 2/2
1:50 p.m. Assault at Farren Care Center.

5:00 p.m. Domestic disturbance on 3rd Street, Turners Falls.

Sunday 2/3

7:43 p.m. Medical emergency at 2nd Street Bakery in Turners Falls. Removed to hospital.
Monday 2/4
10:08 a.m. Hit and run accident, top of the hill on 7th Street, Turners Falls. No injuries reported.
10:14 p.m. Domestic disturbance resulting in property destruction at [redacted] 4th Street, Turners Falls.

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The Millers Falls Library Club: *Free after school program*. 3:30 to 4:45 p.m.

Route 63 Roadhouse, Millers Falls: *Free Texas Hold 'em Poker tournament*, with cash prizes.

EVERY WEDNESDAY

Carnegie Library: Children and their families are invited to come enjoy stories, crafts, music, activities and snacks. 10:15 to 11:30 a.m.

Between the Uprights, Turners Falls: *Karaoke with Dirty Johnny*. 9 p.m. to midnight. Free.

EVERY THURSDAY

Carnegie Library: *Music and Movement* with Tom Carroll and Laurie Davidson. Children and their caregivers are invited. 10 to 11 a.m. Free.

Between the Uprights, Turners Falls: *Open Mic with Dan, Kip, and Schultzy from Curly Fingers Dupree Band*. 8:30 to 11:30 p.m. Free.

Route 63 Roadhouse, Millers Falls: *Open Mic Night*, 9:30 p.m.

EVERY FRIDAY AND SATURDAY

Montague Inn: *TNT Karaoke*, 8:30 p.m.

ART SHOWS:

Great Falls Discovery Center, open 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

FEBRUARY 2 through MARCH 31

Nina's Nook, Avenue A, Turners Falls: *Sensual > Sexual > Smut*. Erotic art by local artists. Open 4 to 9 p.m. on Thursday, Feb. 14 for Valentine's Day!



"What've you got?": Rebel Without A Cause screens at the Montague Bookmill this Sunday.

LOCAL EVENTS:

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 14

Mocha Maya's, Shelburne Falls: *Allie Farris*, piano-driven classic rock. Northeast debut. 8 p.m., free.

Deja Brew Pub, Wendell: *The Roosters*, classic rock dance music by Bruce Scofield and Mark Feller, 8 to 10:30 p.m.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 15

Bruce's Browser, Athol, MA: Film Screening, *Freedom Riders*, civil rights movement documentary. 6:30 p.m., free.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Lewis Carroll's Alice in Wonderland*. Staged by the New Renaissance Players. 7:30 p.m. \$

Mocha Maya's, Shelburne Falls: *The Equalites*, reggae, 8 p.m.

Arts Block Café, Greenfield: *Happy*

Valley Guitar Orchestra, with Peter Blanchette, director. 20 acoustic and electric guitars perform classical and contemporary compositions. 8 p.m., \$

Deja Brew Pub, Wendell: *Josh Levangie & the Mud, Blood & Beer Band*, singing all your Johnny Cash favorites and more, 9 to 11:30 p.m.

Route 63 Roadhouse, Millers Falls: *The Whiteboards*, classic rock. 9:30 p.m.

Arts Block Café, Greenfield: *Lily Henley*, vocalist and fiddle player, cross-cultural folk. With *Laura Cortese* opening. 9:30 p.m., \$

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Kudzu*, reggae. 9:30 p.m., free.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 16

Memorial Hall, Shelburne Falls: *Live from the Metropolitan Opera* in HD: Verdi's *Rigoletto*. 12:55 p.m. \$

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Lewis Carroll's Alice in Wonderland*. Staged by the New Renaissance Players. 3 p.m. \$

Montague Grange: *Gender Role Free Contra Dance*. Please bring soft-soled non-street shoes to protect the wooden dance floor. 7 to 10 p.m. \$.

Mocha Maya's, Shelburne Falls: *Fancy Trash*, indie folk rock, and *Wishbone Zoe*, junkyard rock, 7:30 p.m.

Arts Block Café, Greenfield: *Walter Strauss*, master guitarist, with *Here Come The Foxes* opening. 8 p.m., \$

Deja Brew Pub, Wendell: *Ottomatic Slim*, Chicago-style blues, 9 to 11:30 p.m.

Route 63 Roadhouse, Millers Falls: *Outerspace Band*. Tickets available. 9:30 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Rockit Queer*, dance party with DJ *Funkadelic Fern*. 9:30 p.m., \$

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 17

Mocha Maya's, Shelburne Falls: *Pat Hull*, folk, 2 p.m.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Lewis Carroll's Alice in Wonderland*. Staged by the New Renaissance Players. 3 p.m. \$

Montague Bookmill, Montague Center: *Dead of Winter* Film Series, *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955, dir.

Nicholas Ray). 7 p.m., free.

Deja Brew Pub, Wendell: *John Sheldon*, up close & personal set, 8 to 10 p.m.

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 18

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Bingo* night. 8 p.m.

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 19

Carnegie Library, Turners Falls: *Tracks & Skulls*. Learn about animal tracks and skulls with Dawn Ward. 10 to 11:30 a.m. Free.

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 20

Downtown building, Greenfield Community College: *Senior Symposium, Global Climate Change and the Pioneer Valley*. Presented by Julie Brigham-Grette, Professor of Geosciences at UMass. Call (413) 775-1661 to pre-register. 2 to 4 p.m., \$

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Quiznite with Quizmaster Alex*. 8 p.m.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 21

Deja Brew Pub, Wendell: *Tommy Filiault & Friends*, acoustic rock, 8 to 10 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Half Shaved Jazz*. 8 p.m., free.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 22

Sloan Theater, Main Campus, GCC: *Roots of Peace* Speaker Series. *Marian Kelner*, animal rights advocate. 1 to 2:30 p.m., free and open to the public.

Arts Block Café, Greenfield: *Café Buenos Aires*. Chamber ensemble plays Argentinean composers; Tango dancers. 6:30 p.m., \$

Deja Brew Pub, Wendell: *Gumbo Diablo*, latin, new orleans r&b, roots, rock and reggae. 9 to 11:30 p.m.

Route 63 Roadhouse, Millers Falls: *Rock 201*, classic rock. 9:30 p.m.

CALL for PHOTO SUBMISSIONS

Four Seasons on the Leverett Trails. March and April exhibit at the Leverett Library. Sponsored by the Leverett Trails Committee. See www.rattlesnakeguttertrust.org/trail/s/photo-exhibit/ for more information. Deadline February 15.

CALL for POETRY SUBMISSIONS

Slate Roof Press, Greenfield: *1st Annual Poetry Chapbook Contest*. Winner will become an active member and have a limited-edition, art-quality chapbook published by

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On Mexican Time



MARY AZARIAN WOODBLOCK

By **LESLIE BROWN**

Part 1

Ten hours after our much delayed departure we arrive. A thirty minute taxi ride from the Guadalajara airport and we are let in to our rented casita, 11:30 p.m. Mexican time.

After a day of hurry and wait, missing connections and disappointing our waiting Mexican driver, we sip Chardonnay in celebration and then gratefully fall into bed. We have bounced anxiously from Bradley to Newark, missing our connection to Houston, waited another hour and a half, eaten poor airport food and then surprisingly, slipped through Mexican customs as if greased. As quickly as we have rushed through our American day, here we begin to slow down.

We are in Ajijic, a small town west of Guadalajara, situated on Mexico's largest inland body of water, Lake Chapala. The town is ringed by mountains, dark blue in the morning and velvet rose to purple at night. The casita is charmingly seated on a tiled patio ringed by roses, cacti, flowering vines of unknown names and of course, palms. We have a seating area there in front of the living room, kitchen and bathroom area. Upstairs is a commodious bedroom with a fireplace that opens onto a large



Church Chapala, Lake Chapala, Ajijic, Mexico

screened balcony, which soon becomes our favorite spot with its generous view of the mountains and our neighbor's rooftops and a sliver of the lake.

We are a mere couple of blocks from the plaza with its vendors of hats, embroidered blouses, pottery, freshly ground coffee, handmade potato chips, toys and paintings. Another block or so takes us to the lakefront, a few in another direction to the shops. It is, as our kindly taxi driver told us, a walking town.

I awaken to the sound of bells and the cries of the water vendor. Although it is only 7:30 a.m., I feel wide awake and refreshed, excited to be here. I dress quickly and walk to a nearby store for milk, granola,

bread and peanut butter, then return happily homeward to make coffee. Already it's clear that the pace of this small town is one of leisure.

It is after three o'clock before we venture out to find a midday meal. Fortified with beer and Italian pasta, we decide to explore a bit and locate the plaza coffee shop where we are to meet the friends who have become residents of this beautiful place.

The streets are challenging ankle benders made of cobblestone and as we can, we take to the sidewalks, which, although not without pitfalls, are at least smoother. We readily find the plaza after many stops on the way to admire historical wall murals portraying the indigenous people's uprising

against the Spanish oppressors, flowers decorating brick and stucco architecture and many beautiful smiling people. We also note the side street that leads to the shore. Weary now, we save that walk for another day.

Part 2

Ajijic has a large ex-patriate community of Americans and Canadians mostly, who have relocated for the climate and the reduced cost of living. Currently, one dollar equals approximately twelve pesos and you can live here on about a third of what you would spend at home. Our friends, Jim and Carol, were both self-employed in the US, so had no pensions. In Mexico, they own a condo, run a car, pay for excellent health and dental care and purchase food and other necessities, all on \$1600 a month. They couldn't say enough about the area and the climate and urged us to visit.

Personally, I was skeptical; I had no interest in spending time with other English speakers living separated from the native community. I was wrong. There are those who do just that.

A woman who has lived here

over three years says happily that she speaks no Spanish and mimes asking for Kleenex in the store by blowing her nose. At breakfast we sit next to a large American who is inquiring about the size of the waffles. Before the main meal, the waiter brings small plates, fresh butter and jam with bread. Is this the size of the plate for my waffle? bleats the man. We would rather be anywhere but next to this boorishness.

But there are also those like Jim and Carol who enjoy the company of familiars and the ability to converse at length in the comfort of one's own tongue and who also love Mexicans and their culture.

Wednesday is market day. The length of the side street is jammed with covered stalls selling everything you would ever need or want: fresh fish, vegetables, jewelry, clothes, a puppy, toys, dishes, music and movies, fresh chicken, flowers and plants, gifts of all kinds. We buy a couple of small glass blown souvenirs for friends.

Browsing our way down to the lakefront, we decide to stop for a Margarita and a light lunch as it is almost three o'clock. We order dos margaritas and wait ten minutes or so before a smiling waitress approaches our table and sets down four! Our waiter arrives a bit later to take our food order and we tell him we ordered two, not two each. But it's Happy Hour he says, two drinks for one. Happily we have ordered our drinks on the rocks! Cold, redolent of lime and slightly sweet, they disappear smoothly down the throat. Thus the need for a long walk back up the shoreline where we stop with a carrot for El Blanco, the large bellied, slow moving burro of the area whose elderly owner has died and is now cared for by all the neighboring business folk.

El Blanco is a bit of a legend in his own time and is featured in many of the oil paintings for sale down at the waterfront. In them, he spouts words of wisdom, drinks white wine and believes he is one of us.



Ajijic Centro, Poncitlán, JA, Mexico

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