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Page 9

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FEBRUARY 16, 2012

Mahar Superintendent Asks Wendell to Consider Withdrawing from the Region

BY KATIE NOLAN

WENDELL – Michael Baldassarre, superintendent of the Mahar Regional School District, asked Wendell school and finance committee representatives at last week's meeting of the Mahar regionalization subcommittee whether the town of Wendell would consider withdrawing from the Mahar region, to let the other member towns proceed with plans for a hybrid region.

Wendell special town meeting will vote on articles at a special town meeting on February 28th to clarify the town's position on regionalization, after rejecting a plan for a hybrid Mahar region by a lopsided margin last fall.

Baldassarre said Wendell could negotiate an acceptable rate to tuition its upper school students into Mahar, if the town agreed to withdraw from the region. Doing so might allow Petersham, New Salem and Orange to regionalize, which would spare the cash strapped town of Orange from paying a \$340,000 state charge for underfunding its ele-

mentary schools for the last three years.

On February 9th, Wendell finance committee co-chair Jim Slavas told the Mahar regionalization subcommittee the Wendell selectboard and finance committee were strongly opposed to continued work on a hybrid regionalization agreement. Wendell will place two regionalization articles on the warrant for the February 28th special town meeting, in hopes of clarifying the town's position.

"The general feeling is not to go forward with hybrid regionalization. There are too many issues that can't be resolved in the agreement," Slavas said.

The proposed hybrid regional agreement to create a K-12 region of Orange, Petersham, and Mahar, with Swift River (Wendell and New Salem) participating in the hybrid region only for grades 7-12 was approved last year by the Orange and New Salem town meetings, but voted down at Petersham town meeting by a three-vote margin, and rejected overwhelmingly at

Wendell town meeting.

Currently, Mahar is a 7-12 region, and Orange, Petersham, and Swift River are separate elementary school districts. Orange and Petersham share a superintendent, and Mahar handles administrative tasks for those elementary schools. Swift River shares an elementary superintendent with Erving, Leverett, and Shutesbury in Union 28.

The first regionalization article the selectboard has placed on the warrant for Wendell's February 28th special town meeting seeks voter approval to rescind the vote of the December 19th, 2007 town meeting authorizing the Mahar school committee "to study a range of K-12 regionalization alternatives, including a four-town K-12 district," while the second article authorizes the Mahar committee to study a range of regionalization alternatives, excluding a hybrid region.

Slavas reiterated the feeling among Wendell officials that "going forward with a hybrid region is not useful for Wendell

see MAHAR pg 12

Jim McGovern Stumps in Turners



Congressman Jim McGovern at the Strathmore Mill

BY DAVID DETMOLD

"I'm looking forward to representing this area," Jim McGovern, (D-Worcester) eight term member of Congress, leading light of the Congressional Progressive Caucus, and Democratic whip for the New England region, told a handful of town officials, Mass Department of Transportation workers, and local residents at Montague's town hall on Monday, February 13th.

McGovern, who represents the 3rd Congressional District of Massachusetts, will be seeking re-election in the new 2nd Congressional District, as Massachusetts shrinks from ten seats in Congress to nine, with redrawn district lines reflecting the loss of population in the western part of the state. The new district will include the towns of Leverett, Wendell, Erving, Gill, and Montague.

McGovern, who won his last election with 56% of the vote against Republican Marty Lamb (39%) and Independent Patrick Barron (4%), has yet to draw a major opponent for the November election.

"If I am lucky enough to get re-elected, I'll hit the ground running," said McGovern, who toured Sunderland with representative Steve Kulik, (D-

McGOVERN pg 10

Zen Peacemakers Property Sold



WICKS PHOTO

The former home of the Zen Peacemakers may again host conferences, if new owners' plans come true.

BY LEE WICKS

MONTAGUE - The property on Ripley Road in Montague, once a dairy farm, then home to the late 60s commune known as the Montague Farm and more recently home to the Zen

Peacemakers, will soon buzz with the sounds of construction and renovation under the ownership of William and Elizabeth Jacobson. The couple currently lives in Shelburne Falls.

On Tuesday, the septic

system passed inspection; the real estate agent was there, along with a representative from the bank, and once they got the good news, the Jacobsons said they were ready to draw up a purchase agreement.

see ZEN page 11

RiverCulture Awarded Seventh Consecutive Adams Grant



An overflow crowd packed RiverCulture's first Feast for the Arts, May 7th, 2011

BY PATRICIA PRUITT

TURNERS FALLS - Recognition that places Turners Falls and Montague prominently on Massachusetts' cultural map was awarded this month along with a \$36,000 Adams grant from the Mass Cultural Council, thanks to the efforts of RiverCulture director Lisa Davol and many others, including local artists, producers,

town officials, businesses, enthusiastic volunteers, and the interested public towards whom the cultural programs are directed.

The fact that RiverCulture received a seventh straight grant in a row is impressive, because in the early days, word had filtered back to Montague town hall that hardly any group in the state received more than

four consecutive grants.

The town of Montague backed RiverCulture again this year with \$15,000 in program income funds, and Davol will be working with the business community to raise the rest of her budget for 2012.

As part of her constant search for ways and means to assure the continuity of RiverCulture see GRANT page 14

PET OF THE WEEK

Big Heart in a Small Package



Little Foot

I am Little Foot. I'm a 4 year old female shorthair cat in need of a good home. It would be funny if I was named after the dinosaur in *The Land Before Time*, because I'm so darned small! I'm also so darned cute, as you can see by my photo. I love other cats and love chasing and pouncing on toys. I'm just a little bundle of activity! In my former home, I loved playing groomer with my feline buddies. I am a little scared of big dogs, so I would need a really slow introduction and time to get used to one. Again, check out my adorable photos and see if you can resist my charms! I'm a member of the Lonely Hearts Club. That means I've been here longer than most of the other kitties and my adoption fee has been reduced by half! For more information on adopting me, please contact the Dakin Pioneer Valley Humane Society at 413-548-9898 or via email: info@dpvhs.org.

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THE WENDELL COA FILM SERIES PRESENTS:

"The Englishman Who Went Up a Hill But Came Down a Mountain"

The Englishman Who Went Up a Hill But Came Down a Mountain stars Hugh Grant as a mild-mannered English mapmaker who upsets an entire Welsh community when, after surveying the town's beloved local "mountain", declares it to be a mere "hill" according to official government definitions. The outraged townsfolk devise an ambitious plan to remedy the situation in this charming romantic comedy about a community facing an uphill struggle.

The Englishman Who Went Up a Hill But Came Down a Mountain is a fond throwback to the British comedies of the 1950s in which earnest citizens went about their daily lives little

realizing how eccentric they were.

The British dote on eccentricity; one of their recent scientific surveys triumphantly concluded that the eccentric are happier and live longer than you... "Every character in this movie, with the possible exception of the fresh-cheeked local lass Betty of Cardiff (Tara Fitzgerald) is crazy as a bedbug, and none of them know it, and that is why they are so funny," said Roger Ebert, of the *Chicago Sun Times*.

The free showing will be Sunday, February 19th at 7:00 p.m. at the Wendell library. For more info contact: Douglas Dawson at: 978-544-7762 or ddawson@post.harvard.edu.

MONTAGUE LIBRARY NEWS

Making Valentines at Carnegie Library

LINDA HICKMAN PHOTO



Orrin Anderson and his father Solon Sadoway of Turners Falls worked intently on making valentines at the Carnegie Library Valentine Party on Saturday, February 11th. Over 60 adults and children of all ages attended.

ERVING PUBLIC LIBRARY

February School Vacation Week Programs

A Scrabble Tournament with prizes for 5th and 6th graders will be held Wednesday, February 22nd at 1:00 p.m.

The Junior Book Club will discuss *Love that Dog!* by Sharon Creech on Wednesday, February 22nd from 4:30 to 5:30 p.m. Refreshments will be served. A book club for 3rd through 6th

graders will meet earlier. There's still time to pick up the book and read it or listen to it before Wednesday.

A Story and Craft Hour on the theme of transportation for Kindergarten through 2nd Grade will be held on Thursday, February 23rd at 11:00 a.m. (two hours before the library opens).

SENIOR CENTER ACTIVITIES – February 20th to 24th

GILL-MONTAGUE - Senior Center, 62 Fifth Street, Turners Falls, is open Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Congregate meals are served Tuesday through Thursday at noon. Meal reservations must be made one day in advance by 11:00 a.m. Kerry Togneri is the meal site manager. Council on Aging director is Roberta Potter. All fitness classes are supported by a grant from the Executive Office of Elder Affairs. Voluntary donations are accepted. Appointments are now being scheduled for free AARP tax aid. For information, meal reservations, or to sign up for programs, call 413-863-9357. Messages can be left on our machine if the center is not open.

Monday, February 20th

10:00 a.m. Aerobics
10:45 a.m. Chair Exercise
12:00 p.m. Potluck & Bingo
NO Knitting Circle

Tuesday, February 21st

10:30 a.m. Seated Health Program

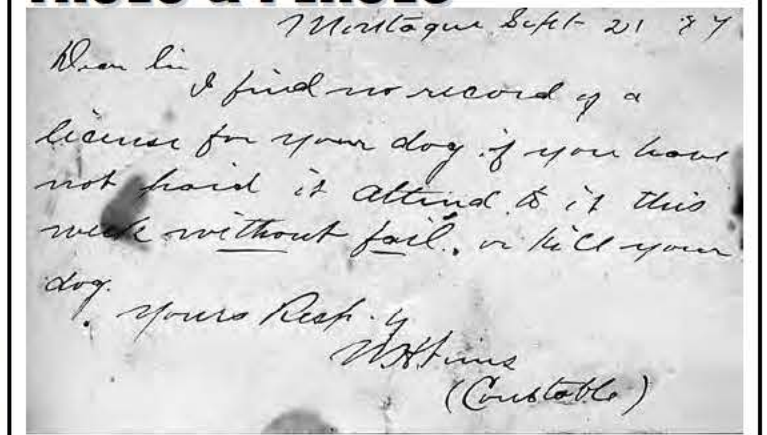
1:00 p.m. RAD Self Defense
Wednesday, February 22nd

10:00 a.m. Aerobics
12:45 p.m. Bingo
Thursday, February 23rd
9:00 a.m. Tai Chi
1:00 p.m. Pitch
Friday, February 24th
10:00 a.m. Aerobics
10:45 a.m. Chair Exercise
1:00 p.m. Writing Group

ERVING Senior Center, 1 Care Drive, Ervingside, is open Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. for activities and congregate meals. For Center and program information, call Polly Kiely, Senior Center Director, at 413-423-3649. Lunch is daily 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. Transportation can be provided for meals, shopping, or medical necessity. Please call the Senior Center to confirm activities, schedule and to find out when the next blood pressure clinic will be held.

Monday, February 20th
CLOSED for President's Day

FACES & PLACES



Were people kinder and gentler in 1887?

This 1887 postcard sent from W.H. Nims, constable for the town of Montague, to G.P. Noyes of Millers Falls, reads: "Dear Sir, I find no record of a license for your dog. If you have not paid it, attend to it this week, or kill your dog."

Thanks to Ed Gregory and the Montague Historical Society for this note.

MONTAGUE PUBLIC LIBRARIES

February School Vacation Week Programs

All of the libraries will be closed on Monday, February 20th in honor of Presidents' Day.

On Tuesday, there will be a Prince and Princess Party starting at 10 a.m. Come get royally crafty making crowns, shields, and scepters for children of all ages.

The Millers Falls Library Club meets Tuesday afternoon from 3:30 – 4:30 p.m. Children of all ages enjoy stories, crafts, and snacks with Linda.

Story Hour is Wednesday at 10:15 a.m. at the Carnegie Library with Ruth. Young children and their families enjoy stories, crafts and snacks.

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

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Grade 7
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Tim Momaney
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Local Briefs

JESSICA LARVIN ILLUSTRATION

COMPILED BY DON CLEGG - Montague town administrator Frank Abbondanzio reported the town's meeting on Monday with representatives from New England Central Railroad, Pan Am Railroad, the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection, and the federal Environmental Protection Agency on the topic of idling trains in Millers Falls was not very productive.

Abbondanzio said the upshot appeared to be that the rail companies will continue to allow switching operations, including long periods of idling diesel trains, and the possibility that those trains would continue to block Route 63 in Erving for long periods of time, as a necessary part of their normal operations.

He said those switching operations, which have bothered village residents due to noise and fumes and travel delays, would continue four days a week, but not on weekends, and would most likely take place in nighttime hours between 9 p.m. and 11:00 p.m.

He said the frequency of such incidents would increase if the national economy improves.

On the plus side, the village of Lake Pleasant can take heart, because the railroad representatives promised their trains would no longer be left idling there.

U.S. Senate candidate **Elizabeth Warren**, a Democrat likely to challenge incumbent Republican senator Scott Brown in the general election this fall, will be in Greenfield on Friday afternoon, February 17th. Starting at 4:00 p.m., Warren will take a brief walking tour of

downtown Greenfield followed by a meet and greet with appetizers and a cash bar at the Arts Block Cafe on Court Square. All are welcome.

The **Sunday Afternoon Lenten Series** welcomes Mother Olga of the Sacred Heart to Our Lady of Czestochowa Church, 84 K Street, in Turners Falls on February 26th, at 2:00 p.m. Mother Olga Yaqub is the founder of a new religious order, the Daughters of Mary of Nazareth, in the Archdiocese of Boston. She grew up in war-torn Iraq where she served the suffering victims of war.

The Greening Greenfield Energy Committee presents **Carbon Nation**, a movie about climate change solutions that doesn't care if you believe in climate change, on Wednesday, February 22nd, starting at 6:30 p.m., in the Greenfield Public Library community room, 400 Main Street.

WHA1 radio will be at Scotty's on the Hill in Turners Falls on Friday, February 17th,



Raffle Winner, Brava Jemas-Lang

A World House Divided?

BY CHARLENE GOLONKA GREENFIELD - During Black History Month, as a way to honor the spiritual principles that inspired Rev. Martin Luther King, the Interfaith Council of Franklin County invites the public to a potluck supper to explore beliefs that both unite and divide in the 'world house' of religions, on Thursday February 16th, from 5:30 to 8 p.m. at the First Congregational Church, 43 Silver Street, Greenfield.

Here are some questions that may animate the conversation:

What does faith teach us about differences?

How do we love our neighbors as ourselves when our neighbors look, act, and dress differently? What does faith

teach us about loving one another when our beliefs are different?

What is the long-term effect on a group when its followers have long believed that theirs is the "one true" religion?

When have you been an outsider or in the minority group? How did it feel?

Can a diversity of faith, culture, race, and experience enrich us and bring our own beloved communities into deeper connection?

This is the fourth of a seasonal series of conversations to build community, get to know cross-county neighbors, and increase understanding of the cultures and religions in our area. For more info: interfaithcounciloffranklin-county.org.

from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. offering the chance to win two tickets to see the Harlem Globe Trotters at the Mass Mutual Center on February 22nd or 23rd. Bobby C will be drawing the winning ticket from folks who stop by.

Hallmark Institute of Photography, in Turners Falls invites prospective students and their families to an **Open House** on Sunday, March 4th, from 12:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Prospective students and their guests will have the opportunity to tour the campus, with its 370-seat auditorium, design lab, imaging theater, commercial and portrait studios, and classrooms. Current students and faculty will demonstrate a day in the life of a Hallmark student.

The Montague Reporter pulled three winners from the raffle held at Food City on Sunday, February 12th. Jonathan von Ranson of Wendell chose a gift certificate from the Leverett Co-op, Levin Prondecki of Erving chose a certificate from Arrowhead Bait and Tackle in Shelburne Falls, and Brava Jemas-Lang chose a certificate from the Solar Store.

Not quite sure what a canine will be doing with a purchase from the Solar Store. Maybe that will become a follow up local brief. The raffle will continue, with a new winner picked each month. Thanks to all who participated.

Send local briefs to: reporter-local@montaguema.net.

Pest Management Workshops for Vegetable Gardens

WENDELL- Wendell vegetable gardeners are invited to a series of workshops on Integrated Pest Management practices presented by Karen Idoine and sponsored by the Wendell open space committee. These practices reduce pesticide use and protect our ecosystems. Workshops will include time for gardeners to share problems and solutions. The program is free for Wendell residents.

Integrated Pest Management for Vegetable Gardens I: An Introduction: Thursday, March 1st, 7 - 8:30 p.m. at the Wendell Free Library.

Integrated Pest Management for Vegetable Gardens II: The Nitty-Gritty: Thursday April 5th, 7 - 8:30 p.m. at the Wendell Free Library.

Hands-on Garden Visits (in the Community Garden, or another Wendell garden, TBA). Thursdays, May 3rd, May 24th, June 21st (with rain dates the following Thursdays) 7 - 8 p.m.

Karen Idoine has a background in agricultural entomology, integrated pest management (IPM), biological control, horticulture and natural history. She has extensive environmental education experience. For more information, email msundell65@hotmail.com.

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"The Voice of the Villages"

Reflecting on a Playground Incident

Conventional wisdom might say fisticuffs on the playground are as old as the institution of school itself. However we can draw little comfort from that observation, conventional though it may be.

In recent times, we have learned the extremes to which bullying can drive both the bully and his target. In our Valley, we have lost to despair and death some parents' child, someone's friend or neighbor. These losses and others statewide roused the legislature to require a bullying policy in schools across the state.

The Gill Montague Regional School District has such a policy in place, along with recommended steps to take should bullying or violence occur between students.

One step is to promptly call parents when an incident occurs.

As we heard last week from two sets of parents, from interim superintendent of schools Nadine Ekstrom, and from Montague Elementary principal Maureen Donelan, all parties took very seriously the playground incident that occurred between half a dozen students on the elementary playground on Friday, February 3rd, during which punches were thrown and extremely derogatory names were called.

Principal Donelan acknowledged school policy requires the district to promptly call the parents of all students involved.

Parents lamented they had not been informed by the school, but had first found out about the incident from their children, after school was dismissed.

While the principal's later multiple meetings with parents were praised, it still bothered the parents that the school had not called them as soon as the altercation came to light.

Indeed, informing parents when something goes wrong at school is a positive for the schools and the community on several counts:

It reinforces the trust parents place in their child's school by demonstrating that school staff is aware and on top of what happens daily in school.

It demonstrates active confirmation that a parent's child is a parent's number one concern.

It demonstrates that the school is equipped with both a policy and a commitment to deal with potential or unexpected adverse events affecting students.

It lets both aggressors and non-aggressors know that certain kinds of behavior are not acceptable and will not be tolerated.

It affirms the school as a community where every individual is valuable to the whole.

While, in the particular case at GMRSD last week, no phone call was made to parents, the school can easily pinpoint times during its handling of the situation where calls could, and should, have been made to the parents involved.

Now, the school can certainly adjust the chain of responsibility to make sure parents are notified promptly, according to policy, if such incidents happen again. We certainly hope none do.

As one parent said, "Let's make this an opportunity to do better."



KHALIL BENDIB CARTOON, OTHER WORDS.ORG

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Not So Fast on Rising Costs for Waste District

On behalf of the Franklin County Solid Waste District, I want to clarify some information printed in a February 2nd article about Leverett's transfer station budget (*MR X#18: Notes from the Leverett Selectboard*).

The article reported that Leverett's assessment to the Solid Waste District could increase by \$1,000 next year. In fact, Leverett's assessment will

only increase by \$213 next fiscal year.

The discussion that was reported refers to a process the Solid Waste District is undertaking to adjust its revenue stream in a manner that is more sustainable.

At a January District board meeting, I presented several budget scenarios for FY'13 and beyond. The District board asked for more research and

information before adjusting the assessment and fee-for-service structure.

Any funding changes would be first discussed with member towns and would not be effective until fiscal year 2014 at the earliest.

- Jan Ameen
executive director,
Franklin County Solid
Waste District Greenfield.

Terraform Planet Earth

BY JOSEPH A. PARZYCH GILL - Recently, NASA scientists have come up with a plan to terraform Mars.

'Terraform' is a new word scientists have coined to define their proposal to create an Earth-like atmosphere on Mars.

The plan is to warm the planet to melt the solar ice caps, which are largely made up of frozen carbon dioxide, and to release carbon dioxide locked up in rocks.

By adding the greenhouse gas octafluoropropan to the atmosphere of Mars, scientists say, they would be able to warm the planet and melt the frozen CO₂, another greenhouse gas, thus accelerating the warming process.

Then, with sufficient carbon dioxide in the atmosphere,

planting lichen or other simple plants would allow them to convert carbon dioxide to oxygen. As the planet warms, larger plants, such as trees, could accelerate oxygen production.

Mars is similar to Earth in many ways. The planet has water and a day that's a little over 24 hours long. It's viable for terraforming and settlement, scientists believe. In a few centuries, Mars would have an atmosphere that could sustain Earth-like life; just in time for us to vacate planet Earth, once scientists working hand in hand with corporations have rendered it uninhabitable by polluting the air, soil and water.

It seems ironic that we are serious about making planet Mars more suitable to sustaining life at the same time we seem bent on destroying life here on planet Earth.

In 1933, President Roosevelt created the Civilian Conservation Corps. In 37 days it was up and running. Granted, he did not have to deal with a do-nothing Congress, but, in

the nine years the CCC was in operation, three million unemployed young men were put to work.

In their conservation efforts, they planted over three billion trees to serve as wind breaks, to hold water and soil in place, largely in the Dust Bowl region. These trees turned out tons of oxygen.

Now, many of our forests have been decimated by clear cutting, even on the Quabbin reserve, to feed wood fired power plants. Strip mining of coal, with entire mountaintops torn off, clear cuts those forests as well. We are seeing an increase of greenhouse gases in our atmosphere these forests could have converted to oxygen, as we now propose to do on Mars by first planting lichens and algae or other simple plants.

Perhaps we should try terraforming planet Earth before tackling Mars. Putting thousands if not millions of unemployed men and women to work in a CCC program would regenerate our economy. The efforts of government employed conservationists, like in Roosevelt's day, could regenerate our own planet's carbon dioxide, converting forests for a better world for us, and for future generations.

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GUEST EDITORIAL Resisting the Rising Tide of Renewables

JONATHAN VON RANSON WENDELL - As commercial alternative energy proposals come to our town, the Wendell energy committee's recommendation will be sought.

I have, I think, a justifiably skeptical viewpoint, and I am grateful for this chance to contribute to the discussion.

With a destabilized climate, acidified oceans and the planet's sixth great extinction event underway, all this by scientific consensus, we may agree the Earth is in cataclysm, difficult as that is to truly comprehend.

Human impacts are everywhere, as almost everything - especially energy, the great reach-extender - became a product, a commodity. The subsequent activity has destabilized the two great subsystems of life: the geophysical (e.g., climate, ocean) and the biological (e.g., species extinctions). Most point to fossil energy as the culprit, but could the actual villain be commodity energy itself, both its manufacture and use?

Bearing in mind that Earth is an energy system involving both 'geo' and 'bio' energies, and that our fuel and electricity come from its flows or potentials, it is right, if explosive, to ask whether the technologies being advanced as alternatives today might simi-

larly disrupt the Earth's natural systems and extend the current nightmare.

Questions about the non-fossil energy concept that have gotten far too little attention, in my opinion, are:

- "Is it reasonable to expect these 'renewable' systems to play out relatively benignly, or to expect them to stress other functions of the already destabilized energy system that is our living planet?"

- "How are renewables, in Earth-system terms, inherently different from the fossil energy approach? All divert either a *store* (potential) of energy within the Earth-life system, or a *flow*. Biofuels, biomass, geothermal, nuclear divert stores, as do fossil fuels; renewables take from the flows.

- "Are the new technologies even true net-energy producers? For most forms other than fossil, the calculated net energy output is marginal - even assuming elements of a fossil-supported industrial infrastructure. For both development and implementation they either receive direct government subsidy or entail considerable financial risk. And fossil energy, not renewables, builds these systems.

- "Are we trying to build a sustainable era using not just fossil

power, but a fossil mindset? Are we truly grappling with the cataclysm, with new respect for the patterns of the system, or are our heads still turned by our so-recent heady ride?

Today the diversion of fossil stores might be seen as a 'kidnapping' in the biosphere, given the reaction in climate, biota, the life system as a whole. What reason is there to think that diverting from energy flows isn't 'energy kidnapping,' subject to similar systemic consequences?

Hopefully the Wendell community, led by the energy committee, is Earth-minded enough to be courageous and hard-headed about the physics. And to consider whether remaining fossil deposits - but a very finite allotment of them, those currently committed for development of renewables, say - would be best used for transition to a conservation-based, local economy.

Government might not initially subsidize this path, but foundations might, and a restored sense of sovereignty and purpose by many of us here might be contagious, viral even. The hopes and societal pressures for 'renewables' are enormous, but if they even possibly set us up for a dead-end, given no environmental margin to spare, the courage must be found to resist them.

NOTES FROM THE GILL-MONTAGUE SCHOOL COMMITTEE

G-M Budget Director Quits

BY ELLEN

BLANCHETTE - Lynn Bassett, budget and operations director for the Gill-Montague Regional School District, resigned this week.

Interim superintendent Nadine Ekstrom informed the school committee Tuesday night about Bassett's unexpected departure. The matter was not on the agenda, but required some quick decisions.

Bassett, who had worked at the district for 10 years, is currently on vacation. Her final day of employment at the GMRSD has yet to be determined.

Ekstrom said with the budget process underway it was necessary to have someone familiar with the process who could step in quickly to assist. She recommended the district contract out the district's business operations services for three months while they consider a search for a new business manager.

Last year, the school committee received a presentation from Management Solutions, Inc., a company that offers outsourced accounting and financial management services on a contractual basis. Committee member Jane Oakes said she had been skeptical of adopting this approach in the past, but under the circumstances, trying it out for three months would give the district an opportunity to see if it was a good fit. Other members agreed, with the proviso that a search committee be formed to consider the district's long term business management needs.

In her report to the school committee, Ekstrom said with the approval of the district's accelerated improvement plan (AIP), and with the very positive first quarter report from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education the district is now shifting focus to implementation rather than creation of curriculum and best practices.

At the school committee meeting in January, Ava Mitchell and Joan Connolly of the DESE said the district had made a good start in developing their AIP and offered high praise to the teachers, staff and interim superintendent Ekstrom for their dedication and hard work.

The shift to implementation

will be accomplished with weekly principal observations of grade level curriculum being delivered in the classrooms with an emphasis on pre-K to grade 6. Principals will review lesson plans weekly and provide feedback to teachers to ensure that all elementary teachers are delivering a standards-based curriculum.

Ekstrom presented a revised preliminary FY'13 operating budget for the district, reflecting a change in projected teacher salaries. The new Unit A contract contained an agreement that said if Chapter 70 aid to the district increased beyond a certain level, teachers would get an additional 3% hike in salaries. Because state aid to the GMRSD did not increase in the governor's budget, that aspect of the teachers' projected pay hike has been deducted from the preliminary budget.

The new preliminary total for the GMRSD's FY'13 operating budget is \$16,745,218, a 2.05% increase over FY'12.

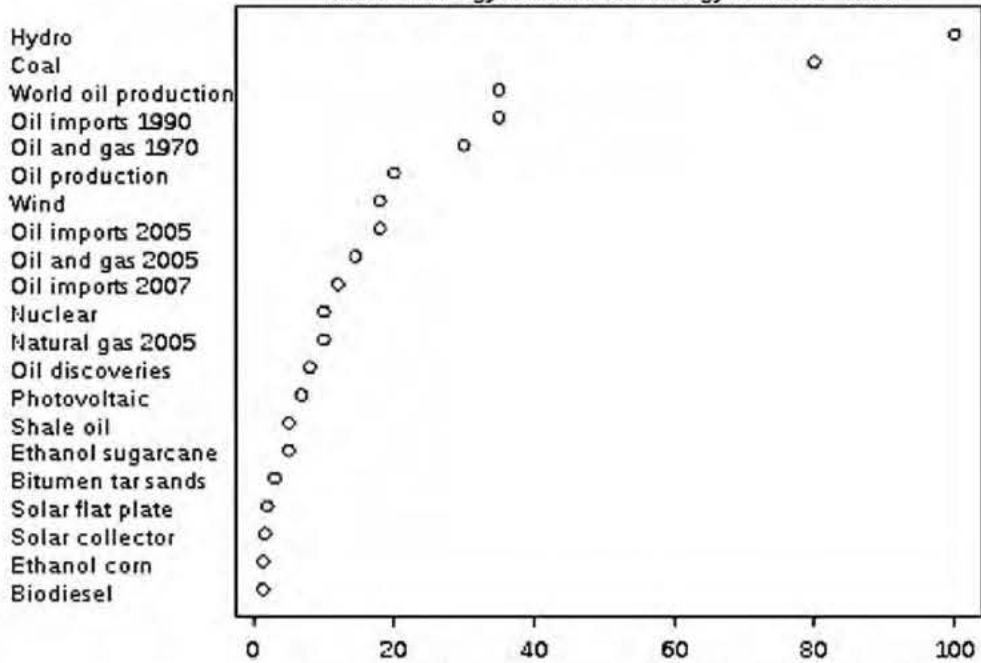
In a discussion with Jeff Singleton, of Montague, who was reporting on the last meeting of the technical panel (made up of members of both town's finance committees and the school committee), Ekstrom mentioned that Gill-Montague was the only Level IV school district not to get an increase in Chapter 70 aid in the governor's budget this year. Ekstrom raised this issue with representative Steve Kulik (D-Worthington) at a recent meeting.

Kristen Boyle of Montague said Math Night at the Montague Elementary School was a phenomenal success with a huge turn-out; standing room only in the cafeteria. She said the mix of activities for students of all ages and a separate program upstairs for parents created an event that brought the school community together.

The school committee adjourned at 9:00 p.m. to go into an executive session to conduct strategy sessions in preparation for contract negotiations for nonunion personnel (the superintendent). The next school committee meeting will be on Tuesday, February 28th at Turners Falls High at 7:00 p.m.

EROI - USA

Ratio of Energy Returned on Energy Invested - USA



SOURCE: MURPHY & HALL (2010) ANN NY ACAD SCI 1185: 102-118

Energy return per energy invested (EROI) for the common energy sources, from David Murphy of SUNY in Syracuse, N.Y., one of the foremost U.S. experts on energy return. As the chart indicates, wind, nuclear, photovoltaics, and the biofuels ethanol and biodiesel are relatively marginal. Other factors aside, hydro is outstanding for its energy return. Murphy, when he visited Wendell in 2010 at the invitation of the Wendell Energy Task Force, said the EROI for petroleum was initially ranked, at 100:1, when oil was easy to find. But oil's return per energy invested is now declining, as the chart also shows, yet much of our infrastructure, way of life and expectations were set during oil's heyday.

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NOTES FROM THE MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD

Paper, Going Cheap

BY JANEL

NOCKLEBY - Members of the selectboard and town administrator Frank Abbondanzio all agreed on Monday that leftover ends and rolls of paper at the town-owned Strathmore Mill complex is now considered surplus, at a value less than \$5,000 yet more than \$10. This information will be posted for ten days, for potential bidders to ponder, per town policy. After that, the town can start to give it away to non-profits who present a letter of interest.

Turners Falls RiverCulture, as part of the town, is also eligible to use rolls of the paper for upcoming projects. Lisa Davol, RiverCulture director, expects to have artists use about five or six of the rolls soon, for local projects. She also envisions the possibility of creating an art supply store, with the proceeds benefiting future RiverCulture projects.

Town building inspector David Jensen has also contacted a non-profit, Extras for Creative Learning, in Lynn, and they also seem interested in the surplus paper for creative projects. They will likely be taking a small box truckload of it away after the ten day notice is over.

There should plenty to go around.

"One box truck isn't going to make a dent over there," said selectboard member Chris Boutwell.

"If you exclude the plywood, there are probably three tractor trailers (of paper) at a minimum," Jensen noted.

The selectboard members, Abbondanzio, and Jensen also brainstormed ways to get junk materials out of the Strathmore, such as metal debris, scraps of plywood, and trash. Perhaps a work crew from the county jail could

help fill up an existing dumpster by the mill, suggested Jensen. Selectboard chair Mark Fairbrother said getting the area cleaned up would make it more attractive to potential developers.

In other news, the Turners Falls Fire Department chief, Bob Escott, suggested the town sign onto a statewide mutual aid agreement in order to be covered with insurance throughout the state, in case Montague's resources are needed for fire, police or public works in areas outside of town (as, for example, when Montague dispatched crews to help with last year's tornado response in Springfield). Expenses incurred outside of Montague could then be more easily reimbursed, Escott explained. Selectboard members concurred and signed the agreement.

The contractor for the ongoing \$40 plus million renovation of the Gill-Montague bridge, SPS New England Inc., will continue to lease the town office building annex for another year.

The selectboard was notified that this year's power canal drawdown has been scheduled by First Light Power for September 10th to 15th.

The Turners Falls Airport commission received permission from the selectboard to declare some very old computers of no value and to use the Apple Computer company's recycling program to dispose of the otherwise unusable machines.

The Harmony Lodge of Masons will be having an open house on February 25th from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., and the selectboard approved the placement of a sign on public property at the corner of Montague City and Masonic Roads to advertise the event.

Override and Dept Exclusion on Town Meeting Warrant

BY DAVID DETMOLD

The selectboard and finance committee heard budget requests from the highway and police departments on Tuesday, before discussing the probable need for an override of Proposition 2½ to deal with rising costs to run the town and the schools.

Selectboard chair Rich Brazeau said, "We've been keeping people level funded for three or four years now;" and finance committee member Ann Delano said, "People who just see big numbers and don't want to pay for it don't understand the hours that go into finding the best possible solutions to these problems." Finance member Nancy Grossman noted the two and a half percent annual increase allowed in the tax levy does not keep up with the fixed cost increases of town services.

But selectboard member Peter d'Errico was unwilling to discuss a larger override, to provide the town a cushion against rising costs for five years, if the rationale for that increase would be pegged largely to expected increases in the town's assessment for the regional school. This year, the region is seeking approximately a \$65,000 increase in Leverett's assessment, due in part to percentage changes in student enrollment from Leverett compared to the other towns in the region.

"I don't imagine asking for a five year override for a high school that's been losing enrollment with a budget that is going up," said d'Errico, who rejected the rationale offered by Amherst superintendent Maria Geryk at a four town meeting on the regional budget last Saturday.

According to d'Errico, Geryk said increases in the town assessments reflect a need for "stability" in the regional school budget. He asked for a meeting in

Leverett with Geryk to hear why rising assessments are the cost of a stable regional school in a time of declining enrollment.

Finance chair Don Gibavic countered, "You have not been sitting in meetings for the last five years with five different superintendents," at the Amherst Region. "That's instability."

"She's got a contract," retorted d'Errico, referring to Geryk.

The two parried back and forth, with Gibavic questioning whether the regional school had in fact been losing students steadily, and d'Errico insisting that it had.

Geryk will be invited to come to a hearing in Leverett in March, but the selectboard acknowledged it would be too late by then to influence the FY'13 budget, which is due to be voted on by the regional school committee on February 28th.

The Leverett school committee has been steadily chipping away at the size of their expected budget request, reducing an increase first forecast at about \$120,000 down to less than \$20,000 in the most recent version. The school committee will be invited to a hearing on the elementary school budget with the finance committee and selectboard on February 28th.

The selectboard also anticipates introducing a debt exclusion override at annual town meeting, to pay for installation of last mile high speed internet fiber optic cable for residents and businesses.

No firm figure was offered for either the debt exclusion override for high speed internet, or the override expected to meet rising costs of town and school services.

A warrant article to pay for consulting services to

examine possible sites for private wells or a public water supply to ameliorate the problem of contaminated wells at about half a dozen homes on the eastern end of Teawaddle Hill Road, down gradient of the town's former landfill, will also be on the town meeting warrant, Brazeau said.

The good news there is that the Department of Environmental Protection, after conducting an inspection of the area with the town well committee last week, seemed open to the possibility of finding a site or sites for new wells to alleviate the contamination problem at these homes. This may be a much less expensive solution than either taking the homes by eminent domain, or hooking them up to the Amherst water system. Estimates for the latter options ran to nearly \$2 million.

Highway super Will Stratford presented a more or less level funded \$375,000 budget for his department, including the cost of highway building maintenance, snow and ice removal, and tree warden expenses.

Stratford noted rising fuel costs would add at least \$4,000 to the bottom line; a cost of living increase for town workers has yet to be determined.

Stratford said approximately \$100,000 in state Chapter 90 funds would be diverted from regrading and improvements to Teawaddle Hill and Juggler Meadow roads in order to have sufficient funds on hand to install a 50-foot by four by eight box culvert next to the existing culvert on Bull Hill Road, to handle excess water flow from Long Plain Brook and to help prevent the periodic floods that have plagued that neighborhood and swamped basements in recent years. The new culvert is expected to be installed by late spring, and

will require traffic to detour from Bull Hill Road for most of a week.

Stratford said wooden bridges on Coke Kiln Road and Old Mill Yard Road were due for replacement, as they have both reached the end of their useful 20-year life spans. He said new state regulations may require these bridges to be built to state specifications, but the selectboard said they were prepared to fight this requirement as an unfunded mandate, and told Stratford to proceed with the bridge replacement in the same way the town has replaced the timber bridges for generations.

Stratford said the reconstruction of the Dudleyville Road bridge by Moores Corners was also coming soon, and would require a detour for several days. He will plan that work for a week of school vacation, or after school lets out for the summer.

Stratford will ask town meeting to fund a \$60,000 replacement for a 2001 dump truck, plow and sander. He said the ten year old truck has 100,000 miles on it and is showing signs of normal "New England DPW truck rust," a common ailment in these parts.

Police chief Gary Billings also presented a largely level funded budget, at approximately \$194,000. Billings said the rising cost of fuel would also be a factor for his department.

The board held a dog hearing regarding a wandering Great Dane-Shepherd who generally lives at 14 Montague Road, but has been repeatedly housed at the Dakin animal shelter after straying, or at dog officer Roberta Bryant's kennel. After hearing a tale of woe from the dog's owner, the board ordered her to restrain the dog in future, and pay the outstanding \$79 bill to the town for Bryant's services.

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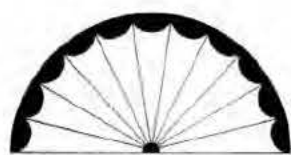
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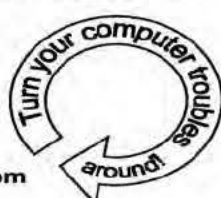
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NOTES FROM THE GILL SELECTBOARD

Chip Sealing Proposed for Cross Road

BY DAVID DETMOLD - Small towns are always being urged to regionalize services, but on Monday, when the highway superintendents of Gill and Montague got together to make a presentation to the Gill selectboard, it wasn't to talk about sharing a road sweeper or a sewer vacuum truck.

Montague highway superintendent Tom Bergeron was actually there as a resident of Boyle Road, to ask the selectboard to chip seal Cross Road this summer with layers of oil and stone, and Mick LaClaire, Gill highway super, was there to detail how much that would cost.

Cross Road, less than a quarter mile long, is a bow-shaped dirt road that connects at both ends to Boyle Road, just south of the elementary school.

Bergeron, whose land abuts Cross Road, said that over the years traffic has increased on this short side street, to the point where residents cannot keep their back windows open in the summer because of all the dust that blows in.

LaClaire said the exact layout of the 1120-foot long road, which narrows at the elementary school end, will have to be determined before chip sealing could take place. He estimated the job would cost the town between \$20,000 and \$25,000.

He added there would be some cost savings to the town in later years, in terms of maintaining the road.

Ann Banash, joining the meeting remotely from Florida via speaker phone, asked whether Cross Road is a county road, which might affect the ease of utilizing state Chapter 90 funds for chip sealing the road.

Reached by phone after the meeting, Bill Allen, retired Franklin County engineer, said he was cer-

tain Cross Road was indeed a county road. "I was always surprised they laid out that short stretch as a county road," he admitted. "It happened within the last 50 years."

Allen could not say why the road had ever been named Cross Road, since it no longer crosses from any significant point in town to another, and represents a longer way to get from point A to point B on Boyle Road. But he recalled a dirt road that once crossed from Main Road to Boyle and continued west for a bit to an old sawmill on Unadilla Brook, at about the point where the south end of Cross Road intersects with Boyle Road today. Perhaps in the old days, that was considered the best way to cross from Main to Boyle, and the remaining quarter mile arc is an extension of that old way.

Bergeron said he had spoken to most if not all of the residents who live along Cross Road now, including the Tognarellis, the Raus, and the Vielmetts, and they were all solidly behind the plan to chip seal the road. The board will hold a public hearing on the proposal at their next meeting on February 27th.

Speaking of the Tognarellis, Tognarelli Heating and Cooling was the low bidder - at \$54,174 - out of five bids received for upgrading the heating system and installing new boilers at the public safety complex. Bids will be reviewed and the contract awarded on the 27th.

A \$1250 change order was approved for the pump replacement project at the Riverside Pump Station, to cover the cost of changing out old air valves below street level on Riverside Street. Replacing the malfunctioning valves will require pumping out the wet well and the backflow from the pipe that runs

beneath Barton Cove (the pipe slopes upward toward Turners Falls) into a truck holding tank while the work is in progress. The cost will be charged to Riverside sewer users, as part of normal maintenance.

Town administrative assistant Ray Purington got the go ahead from the board to seek bids from architects on what it might cost to conduct a survey of the aging roof systems of the various town buildings. He said the newest of the roofs is the one on the original section of the elementary school, installed in 1994. The rest are between 25 - 35 years old, except for the 90-year old slate roof on the Slate Library, which presents other worries, as slate roofs tend to need replacing or else constant maintenance after 100 years. The roofs on the town hall and the safety complex have been leaking already, and are in the worst repair.

Purington said it would be possible to look at opportunities for adding insulation to roof systems at the same time as surveying the roofs themselves. He said the building maintenance fund, or perhaps a grant from the town's insurance company, MIIA, would be the first places he would look for funding for the survey.

The town needs more people to serve on the open space committee, now that the state has approved Gill's new open space plan.

The board reconvened in executive session to consider a lawsuit by Kevin Chickering, of 446 Main Road, in which the town was named, regarding the enforcement of clean-up orders by county health inspector Glen Ayers served on Lawrence Krejmas, owner of the property at 444 Main Road.

NOTES FROM THE ERVING SELECTBOARD

Finance Committee Recommends Cuts

BY KATIE NOLAN - The Erving finance committee presented the selectboard with their preliminary recommendation for \$600,000 worth of cuts to departmental requests for the FY '13 budget, on February 13th.

Major reductions proposed by the finance committee include putting \$118,000 into the stabilization account to save toward a new fire truck, instead of purchasing a truck for \$450,000; holding the Erving Elementary School (EES) budget to a 2.5% increase, rather than the school committee's proposed 12% increase; increasing the amount town employees pay for health insurance by 2%, and holding employee cost of living adjustments to no more than 2%.

Selectboard chair Andrew Goodwin commented, "We don't need a fire truck, not this year." He added the fire department has many vehicles and probably can't staff all the trucks it already owns.

Finance member Daniel Hammock told the selectboard, "The school committee's heart is in the right place; it would be good to give them 12%, but all the taxpayers aren't getting 12% increases in income." He said the state average per pupil cost is \$6,000 to \$8,000, and said he calculated a cost of \$18,000 per pupil in Erving based on the FY '13 EES request.

Finance chair Stanley Gradowski said that at EES, "We keep on putting money into it, good money after bad, with no result." Quoting a per pupil expense of \$18,000 to \$19,000 per student, he commented, "We could send them to Northfield Mount Hermon for that."

The state Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) website lists the state average cost at \$13,055 per pupil for

FY'10, the most recent year available, and the EES cost at \$14,161. DESE's website shows that for FY'10, 58% of EES students were rated proficient or higher in English and language arts versus 69% statewide and 61% of students were rated proficient or higher in mathematics versus 58% statewide. According to the Northfield Mount Hermon school website, tuition for day students is \$32,900 plus \$1,880 for mandatory fees.

Finance member Winniphred Stone-Rubinaccio remarked it was "lopsided" to increase the school budget by 12% when other departments were being cut. She said the school committee attributed their need for more revenue this year to the rise in the number of special needs students. Rubinaccio-Stone continued, "If 50% of the students are special needs, it should be looked into."

Gradowski speculated that perhaps "kryptonite" was present in Erving's environment, resulting in an excess of children needing special education.

The selectboard will meet with department heads on Thursday, February 23rd to discuss their budget requests.

In other business, the selectboard discussed a letter from regional administrator Les Fiorenzo of the Federal Railroad Administration regarding police chief Chris Blair's complaint of New England Central Railroad (NECR) trains blocking crossings for excessive lengths of time at Route 63/Federal Street and Paper Mill Road. Fiorenzo wrote that railroad crews have been instructed to avoid unnecessary blockage of crossings whenever possible. He said Massachusetts has state laws against rail operations blocking crossings,

and if crossings are blocked for more than five minutes, operators are subject to a \$200 to \$500 fine for each incident. He concluded by saying, "Since the federal government has no authority in these state matters, we recommend that you work with NECR to resolve this issue."

Town administrator Tom Sharp told the selectboard he met with senior center architect John Catlin and owner's project manager Bruce Hunter. Catlin is convinced humidity is not a problem for floor tiles flooded when water pipes froze recently. If there are any problems, they are likely to surface before the one year building warranty ends. The selectboard agreed to extend Hunter's contract until March 2nd, as long as the selectboard is updated weekly with a checklist of outstanding issues, actions taken, and completion dates.

The selectboard asked Sharp to set up the process for bidding on cleanup of the Usher Mill property, excluding the boiler building. Members of the Usher re-use committee want to save the boiler building and stack as part of redevelopment of the site. The selectboard will decide the fate of the boiler building after hearing from the re-use committee. The property is expected to be out of land court and owned by the town by mid-March.

The selectboard approved renewing the Erving Paper Mill's wastewater discharge permit, after review of the application by the town's environmental consultant Tighe and Bond and recommendations for revisions to the permit. During the application review, Tighe and Bond noticed some of the town's sewer use regulations needed revisions. The selectboard will consider the revisions at their March 6th meeting.

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Shoveling Sand at the Old Sand Bank



Wetlands near the Mackin Site

BY JOSEPH A. PARZYCH
GREENFIELD - While Al Norman may seem to be shoveling sand against the tide, with a lawsuit in land court against the Greenfield planning board over its special permit for a 135,000-square-foot big box store on the French King Highway now entering its ninth month, a crew from J. H. Maxymillian of Pittsfield has begun shoveling sand using a loader with the bucket capacity of a dump truck at the former Mackin sand bank.

Greenfield Investors Property Development, Inc. of Fairfield, CT, bought the Mackin property in 2011 for \$3.75 million, and contracted with Maxymillian for site work; the designer is Alievato Architecture, Inc.

The project seems to be moving ahead despite the protests of Al Norman, a spokesman for the abutters who have sued the developer and the town over the issuance of a special permit.

"We're not done yet," said Norman earlier this week.

He added, "The developer is just playing in his \$4 million sand box. The recent movement of sand means nothing to the plaintiffs' lawsuit."

With the warm weather and lack of snow, the project is off to an early start. A Caterpillar D3 C with an operating weight of about eight tons is leveling the sand taken from the southeasterly corner of the sand bank. The building site terrain is uneven,

but for the most part the crew is adding and leveling about three feet of onsite sand.

A much larger 26-ton Caterpillar D7H with a blade over 12 feet wide stood next to the former Mackin office building. A machine of that size, capable of moving serious amounts of dirt, belies the statement of Maxymillian's foreman that they were just there to level the site. Plans call for eventually filling the site nine feet deep.

The foreman was doing a whole lot of measuring and staking of the site for "just leveling."

J. H. Maxymillian is a building contractor, general contractor, and constructor of highways. Maxymillian's foreman would only give his first name, Jud, claiming to know nothing of his company's plans other than leveling the site.

Jud claimed to have no knowledge of whether or not his company is going to handle the site work, or build the big box store, nor did he know the building owner or what store would eventually occupy the building. A call to Maxymillian's office in Pittsfield yielded little, other than the information that they have been invited to bid on future work for the project.

As to wetlands, Maxymillian's crew has filled over a small patch of ice, but that area is of no concern to the state, according to Norman. The wetland on the southwesterly corner

of the property is the main area of concern for the Department of Environmental Protection. Maxymillian's crew is not working anywhere near that area.

The parking lot plan calls for a buffer of 25 feet from the wetland, which means it encroaches 75 feet into the 100 foot wetland buffer zone, Norman said.

During Greenfield conservation commission hearings, the developer argued that the "wetland" in dispute was just a shallow trench dug by a Mackin employee, Walter Demerski, to facilitate water runoff from the yard. But the DEP ruled that the area was in fact a wetland resource, and the developer's plans to put a parking lot over the wetland were withdrawn. The DEP also ordered that this

have fallen from beavers gnawing them down, and from having the ground soften from flooding so the wind and snow topple them. Many standing trees are dead or dying with their roots submerged. The original small stream the beavers dammed exits the formerly wooded area via a culvert under Route 2. State employees have placed a wire grid across the culvert entrance which the beavers periodically plug, resulting in flooding an even larger area, bringing down more trees to the east.

With the beavers building a bigger and bigger pond across the road, and raising the water table in the process, it remains to be seen if the nine foot elevation of the site will be sufficient.

The reason for elevating the

"No one knows what store will occupy the building," Greenfield town planner Eric Twarog countered. "I doubt that Al Norman knows it will be Walmart. He may be saying that because it's his job to say that."

Norman feels that the big box parking lot is significantly larger than the Greenfield zoning ordinance requires, and with the site elevated nine feet, adding a 20 foot tall building will make the development much more visible to neighbors and motorists along French King Highway. Norman also said he feels the store will be very visible from Route 2, and that this huge commercial project located next to a rural residential zone will cause a drop in property values for abutters and spoil the view for people approaching



Maxymillian of Pittsfield has broken ground for the new big box store at Mackin's sand bank.
 Wetlands, near the bottom of the photo, are being buried under about four feet of sand.
 (Frogs hibernate in the mud at the bottom.)

existing wetland be expanded.

In the meantime, across from the Mackin site, between Gill Road and the Route 2 bypass, beavers, without clearance from the DEP, town planners, or abutters, have built the mother of all wetlands on land once capable of accommodating wildlife from far and near. In the process, the beavers have raised the water table, wreaking havoc with the trees growing on top of this peat bog. More than half the trees

site nine feet is to accommodate storm water flow from the parking lot of the big box store. The sand on site is very clean and ideal for filtration of storm water runoff. More sand will have to be trucked in to elevate the 818,356 square foot site by nine feet.

Norman said he has confidential information that Walmart is the store that will occupy the building, which will be twice the size of the nearby Stop & Shop.

the site from the east.

Greenfield's corridor overlay district guidelines require this area of the French King Highway to be developed in such a way as to create an attractive entryway into Greenfield, to minimize strip development and traffic congestion, to protect scenic and natural features, and to promote high quality building and site design.

Maybe Norman's lawsuit stands a chance after all.

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African Potluck Drumming and Dancing at Swift River School



(Left - right) Abdou Saar, Baika Niang, and Sana Aidaye perform at the Celebrate Africa! potluck at Swift River School on February 9th

JOSH HEINEMANN PHOTOS

BY JOSH HEINEMANN

NEW SALEM - Monkeys and chimpanzees in *papier mache* swung from the rafters and the walls in the Swift River School cafeteria on Thursday evening, February 9th as well over a hundred students, parents and neighbors came to enjoy a potluck

African style dinner, topped off with a kinetic African drumming and dance performance dubbed *Celebrate Africa!*

After the dinner, the crowd moved across the hall to experience the music of Abdou Saar, now of Wendell, but originally from Dakar, Senegal, with drum-

ming by Backa Niang, also from Dakar, and the rhythmic accompaniment of an ekonting, played by Sana Aidaye, also from West Africa.

Aidaye called the ekonting the original banjo. This instrument has a sound box made from half a gourd, and three fishline strings stretched on a fretless neck.

The evening was part of the Swift River School year-long African studies program, with each class taking on different art and study projects, and two weeks with Abdou Saar as artist in residence at the school, teach-



Papier mache monkeys swung from the ceiling



The audience was Wowed!



Wendell's Abdou Saar leads students in dance

ing drumming and dancing alongside the school's music teacher, Ed Hines. The program was made possible with grants from the Massachusetts Cultural Council and the Wendell Cultural Council, and sponsored by the the Swift River parent teacher community association (PTCA). Abdou Saar began playing the drum, but soon he got up to dance. At first he danced alone. Then he called up two Swift River students to join him, then four, then some adults, and by the last dance the whole stage was

filled with student and adult dancers.

The potluck dinner choices were made by Wendell and New Salem citizens, New Englanders, but they used African recipes and the food was delicious. There were more choices than could fit on a single plate, so I had to take seconds.

When I walked home, carrying two nearly empty dishes through a star filled night, I felt more optimistic about the world than I had in months.

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from **McGOVERN** page 1 Worthington) before stopping for an hour or so in Montague.

Questioned about the decline of federal aid to cities and towns, McGovern decried the descending spiral of partisan gridlock in Congress, saying, "Washington is a mess."

He added he did not hope for anything more from the 112th Congress, except possibly for "damage control" from outnumbered fellow Democrats.

Looking ahead, McGovern hoped Obama would win reelection this fall against whatever candidate emerges from the rubble of the Republican primary, and win with long enough coattails to drag a few dozen more Dems in behind him and realign the balance of power on Capitol Hill.

"I hope in the next election, people take a side. This gridlock results in nothing happening. Support the president, and give him enough people to get his programs done. Right now, the Republican Party is at war with itself, with a libertarian wing that doesn't believe in a public sector. Period. Let cities and towns raise their own funds to rebuild sewer systems, roads and bridges," he said, caricaturing the freshman Republican mantra in Washington.

He added, "I wish I could tell you, 'Don't worry. Everything will be fine.' But we need a farm bill, and right now," Republicans in the House are trying to strip out the food stamp program and child nutrition as a condition for funding that bill. "That's how partisan things are," said McGovern, who serves on the House Agriculture Committee, as well as the Rules Committee, where he is the number two Democrat, next in line behind 82-year-old Louise Slaughter.

McGovern said he hopes to serve as majority chair of the Rules Committee someday, where he can be more influential in putting a progressive stamp on legislation as it moves through Congress.

McGovern said even if they disagreed with his positions, his constituents in Worcester or Fall River would agree, "I've been accessible. I'm very interested in results. I'll work with

you to make things happen."

At that point, town administrator Frank Abbondanzio and town planner Walter Ramsey mentioned a few projects they might like the Congressman's help to make happen in Montague, like the long awaited \$6 million reconstruction of Greenfield Road (at least as far as the overpass to Montague Center, which was demolished more than a decade ago after being undermined by Guilford Rail, now Pan Am Railroad, a corporation that appears to have no accountability for its actions in any court of law), and the multi-million dollar effort to remove barriers to the redevelopment of the town-owned, 240,000-square-foot Strathmore Mill.

Turners Falls RiverCulture director Lisa Davol told McGovern her seven-year-old arts based economic development project was entering "a new strategic level," seeking artist live/work space to reenergize the downtown, and toward that end, the Strathmore Mill was also high on her list of redevelopment projects as a prospective home for artist lofts and studios.

Franklin County Regional Housing and Redevelopment Authority director Robin Sherman told McGovern that in addition to taking a lead role in the renovation of a number of key blocks in Turners Falls in recent years, her agency maintains 579 tenants under Section 8 federal housing vouchers, bringing a combined total of "\$300,000 every month into this area to local landlords through rent subsidies."

Sherman told McGovern, "We understand the federal deficit. But we're seeing losses in Community Development Block Grant funding in the last several years, and we don't see a funding source to replace them. Most housing stock in this town was built before World War II, and it was built well, but it needs to be maintained." If the FCRHRA loses access to CDBG housing redevelopment funds and can no longer assist with code improvements through zero interest revolving loans, Sherman said, "Seniors will

lose the ability to stay in their homes."

Moreover, "Federal and state governments have not been making new investments in affordable housing, and there is a tremendous need, especially for deeply affordable, supported housing." Without a reliable source of federal funding, Sherman warned low income residents would be increasingly vulnerable to displacement and homelessness.

McGovern acknowledged all of Sherman's concerns, and said, "I'm with you on the need to continue these programs."

He then toured the \$40-plus million Gill-Montague bridge renovation with project managers for contractor SPS New England, and Massachusetts Department of Transportation officials, including district highway director Al Stegeman and resident engineer Robert Demers.

McGovern, who before leaving town made a point of stopping into Equi's Candy Store for a Valentine's Day treat for his wife, asked if the four year detour of outbound traffic had been "a real drain on the business community."

Demers told him, "The best thing we can do is get it done and not come back. I don't want to be rushed. I want to get it right."

Asked why there has been no visible sign of progress on the bridge project during the recent mild winter months, SPS assistant project manager Pat Frechette said ten workers had indeed been busy beneath the brick deck level over the winter, replacing vertical steel gussets, and while that work was ongoing, no excess vibration or demolition could be tolerated on the deck surface.

Touring the bike path and viewing the vacant hulk of one of Massachusetts' 'ten most endangered historic buildings,' the 1871-era Strathmore Mill, McGovern asked, "How do you get there?"

The question prompted laughter in the group.

"That's the million dollar question," someone remarked, and Ramsey pointed to the condemned footbridge owned – but not maintained – by First Light Power / GFD Suez (the largest

utility company in the world).

McGovern questioned Ramsey, Davol, and Abbondanzio closely about the barriers to the Strathmore Mill's redevelopment, and concluded by saying, "I look forward to helping you make this project happen."

He stared across the canal at the old battlements of that sprawling castle of industry, talked about artists' lofts, entrepreneurial start-ups, and debris removal as the canal that could once again provide clean, inexhaustible power for the huge facility flowed by.

"This should happen," he said. "This complements the character of the community."

Talking about the potential to lure start-up companies into a renovated space as large as the Strathmore, McGovern added, "If you build it, they'll come."

But where would the federal government find funds to aid communities like Montague with outsized projects like the redevelopment of the Strathmore Mill in an era of trillion dollar deficit spending?

Earlier in his talk, McGovern reminded listeners that President Clinton had increased taxes on upper income Americans and overseen budget surpluses in his second term, only to see that progress reversed under George W. Bush, who lowered taxes on the wealthy, ran eight successive years of deficits, and presided over the near meltdown of a deregulated financial sector.

Besides his support for reversing the Bush tax cuts on

upper income Americans, McGovern had pointed toward a source of fiscal, if not moral, restraint in an earlier visit to town, when he appeared at a forum sponsored by the Progressive Democrats of Massachusetts at the Turners Falls High School in September of 2005.

At that time, McGovern called for an immediate end to the war in Iraq, just as now he is calling for an immediate end to the war in Afghanistan. That war is due to cost America more than half a trillion dollars by the end of this year, to say nothing of the 1,892 American servicemen and women who have already died in the longest war in which our country has ever been engaged.

In 2005, speaking of Iraq, McGovern told his audience in Turners Falls, "Nothing disturbs me more than to see our country involved in a war we have no business being in. Great nations sometimes make mistakes. We all honor our troops. Many of them are returning with post traumatic stress, and we need to make sure they have what they need in the way of medical care when they get back...."

"Silence is not patriotic," McGovern told his audience that day, not knowing that some of the same people who heard him then might decide whether to elect him to represent them in Congress six years later. "Silence is cowardice," McGovern said. "This war needs to end. Not one more dollar; not one more death."

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74 PROSPECT ST. TURNERS FALLS

ZEN from page 1
chase and sale agreement.

William Jacobson, a self-employed equities trader who likes to be called Bill, said, "I was thinking about our future. I could put money in the bank or into the markets, but what I really wanted to do was invest in this property and this community."

Jacobson has a vision for the beautiful 34-acre site. He sees it as a place for retreats where meditation and movement practices might come together in a way that sustains both body and soul. It could be an environmental center, or a place where, with special permits, classical music concerts might be held in the summer, or a destination for educational or business leaders to gather and forge mission statements. It could be the site of a retreat for writers or dancers. The pos-

sibilities are only limited by imagination.

The Jacobsons will not be the ones to develop these programs. They just plan to provide a beautiful facility that can be rented by appropriate organizations. In time they will hire a marketing director to get the word out. But first, there's a lot to do.

In a multi-million dollar renovation begun in 2003, the Zen Peacemakers converted the property and its huge old barn into a Buddhist conference center. The main conference space is the converted dairy barn, where you can still see the stone ramp the cows once used to get from one level of the barn to another. The commercial kitchen is framed but not yet completed. The main space is lovely, with soaring south facing windows, and Jacobson has already chosen his office.

But the lofty space is also expensive to heat, even with the geothermal system and solar panels the Peacemakers installed, and the new owner will seek advice for making the system more efficient.

The original Ripley farmhouse, built in 1790, also needs a lot of work to turn it into a place where 25 to 30 people might comfortably stay. Formerly spacious rooms have been divided up into a labyrinth of small warrens. Yet light pours in, and the Jacobsons surveyed one room wondering if it should be a double or single.

"A wall could go there," suggested Beth. Bill agreed. In fact looking carefully you could see where one might have been.

There are some signs of water leaks, and most of the aesthetic details common to old homes are either hidden behind walls or gone, but neither Jacobson seemed particularly daunted by the scope of the project.

Climbing a hill that passes through a meadow and leads to the pump house, Beth said, "This was a little unexpected. We'd talked about going back to New York (when their two children were small, they lived in Brooklyn), and then this opportunity came up and it's so exciting."

Before living in Shelburne Falls, the Jacobsons lived in Boston. Bill became familiar with Western Massachusetts when he came here for mediation retreats. His wife joined him and also caught the spirit of the area. The move to Shelburne Falls followed.

And now this!

There are meandering paths

through the woods. At the entrance to one, a small sign reads, "Mother bear and cubs cross here." Steep paths lead to the stream where the new owners found arrangements of stones that work like sitting areas. One very large rock needs to be hauled back into place. No problem.

The 60s communards, many of whom still live in Montague, Wendell, and Leverett, could tell the Jacobsons much about the origin of some of the property's unusual features. Like the sign hung on

the barn for years reading, 'Better Active Today than Radioactive Tomorrow'. The Zen Peacemakers left that there, in honor of the commune's foundational work in jumpstarting a worldwide anti-nuclear movement in 1974.

There's an old apple orchard in need of pruning and a hay field that will have to be cut, and, oh yes, they do have to find someone to plow, just in case we get a late winter storm. This is no sit back and relax retirement opportunity. It is a



William Jacobson

journey and a business that will bring some jobs to the community, and revitalize a very special resource.

With so many possibilities, the Jacobsons are wide open to ideas and eager to hear what members of the surrounding community might want to see happen at the center. Bill can be contacted at williamjacobson@crocker.com or 413-522-2647, and Beth at elizabethjacobson@crocker.com or 413-535-7846.



Elizabeth Jacobson

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE GILL POLICE LOG

Breaking & Entering; Coy Dogs

Monday, 2/6

4:30 a.m. Reported breaking and entering into a motor vehicle at a residence on French King Highway. Electronics and prescription pills stolen.
10:30 a.m. Assisted resident with firearms complaint on Center Road.
6 p.m. Assisted resident on Trenholm Way with firearms issue.
6:50 p.m. Motor vehicle

accident on Barney Hale Road with property damage and wires down.
7:35 p.m. Domestic order served at Oak Street and confiscation of firearms.

8:50 p.m. Investigated smoke reported coming from under the Gill Montague Bridge.
Unfounded.

9:45 p.m. Assisted Montague police with reported teenager looking

Wednesday, 2/8

7:45 a.m. Reported coy dogs in the field at intersection of West Gill and Main Roads.

9:50 a.m. Assisted Department of Children Services with complaint of child neglect on French King Highway.

Friday, 2/10

9:30 a.m. Assisted Erving police with motor vehicle

to jump from a bridge. accident on French King Highway.

8:13 p.m. Arrested subject from North Cross Road on warrant issued with Greenfield District Court.

Saturday, 2/11

1:35 p.m. Animal complaint on Franklin Road. Owner located from South Cross Road. Notified to pick their dog up.

Sunday, 2/12

2:35 p.m. Assisted Bernardston police with arrest of subject.

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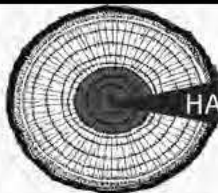
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MAHAR from page 1

because the issues are not resolvable."

For several years, Slavas has asked the Mahar school committee to respond to Wendell's perception that the Mahar assessment is unfair, because Wendell pays more per student than the other three towns in the region. The differences in each member town's per student cost is based on the state's formula (the statutory method of assessing) for determining how much each town is required to spend on education.

Slavas told the subcommittee that, although the assessment method is an important issue, there are other issues that "would be a roadblock" for getting approval from Wendell.

Massachusetts Association of Regional Schools (MARS) consultant Ken Rocke noted that the subcommittee was set up by the Mahar school committee, and that Mahar is an existing region, so a Mahar subcommittee working to amend the regional agreement does not require authorization from the individual town meetings. Rocke said, "Those warrant articles would not prevent the subcommittee from continuing its work. It seems like it's a statement of position and polling."

Subcommittee member Chris Donelan of Orange asked, "Is there a discussion in Wendell about withdrawing from the Mahar region? It's disturbing to me to look at the condition of the Orange schools, that Wendell sees no value in that [the hybrid region]." He continued, "The purpose of having a regional school district is having an educational community. I'm not seeing a common goal of all four towns as an educational community."

Slavas said, "The issues in the hybrid region don't seem resolv-

able and they are dictated by state legislation – and there's a long list of legislation that would need to be changed... It's a waste of time to push forward on a hybrid region."

He added that Wendell has established a regionalization planning committee that is looking at a wide range of options and "could result in changed re-alignment."

Subcommittee chair Michael LeBlanc of Petersham said he felt "It's premature to abandon the agreement," and said he would like subcommittee members to meet with people in Wendell before the special town meeting. "The only town we haven't met with is Wendell."

Slavas acknowledged he had not understood that the subcommittee expected its members to set up informational meetings in their towns before the town meeting votes in the fall of 2011.

LeBlanc said, "There was a lot of misinformation at [Wendell's] town meeting, and no opportunity to speak."

Slavas replied he had kept the Wendell selectboard, finance committee, and school committee well informed about the Mahar regionalization subcommittee's deliberations.

At the request of the subcommittee, Slavas presented an overview of the statutory assessment method and an alternative assessment method proposed by the Wendell finance committee. Finance committee members from all four Mahar region towns had been invited, but none, except for Slavas, attended the subcommittee meeting.

Slavas explained that when the Mahar region was formed in 1957, the contract between the member towns provided that each town would pay the same per pupil cost for sending their students to Mahar.

In 2006, the state developed a

new model – the "aggregate wealth model" – for deciding what communities across the state were required to pay towards education. The state legislation superseded the original Mahar contract.

According to Slavas, under the statutory method, based on the state's determination of a town's ability to pay, Petersham is paying approximately \$200,000 more for Mahar expenses than it would under the original contract/equal student assessment method. New Salem and Wendell are paying approximately \$100,000 more than under the original contract method, and Orange is paying approximately \$400,000 less than under the original contract method of assessing.

Slavas said the state calculates the aggregate wealth of a town by using the total value of property in the town and the total income of residents. Statewide, the total value of property in towns is 4.63 times greater than the value of income in towns. However, the aggregate wealth model splits the "total local effort" or "minimum contribution" required from a town equally between the two types of wealth. This means that income counts 4.63 times more than property for the model, and towns with proportionally more wealth derived from the income measure are disadvantaged under the aggregate wealth model. Wendell, with much of its land area taken up by state or other non-taxable land, is one of the towns with proportionally more income than land wealth.

Using the state's aggregate wealth model, Wendell is shown to be wealthier than Orange, but less wealthy than New Salem or Petersham. However, Wendell pays more per student at Mahar than New Salem or Petersham because the percentage of high school students in the Wendell

population is very low. The statutory assessment formula does not include a factor for the number of students a town sends to a regional school.

Orange resident Kelli Gervais, attending the meeting, asked, "Is Wendell holding regionalization back because of state legislation? We're a community and should act like a community. Why not fight this battle after regionalization, all together?"

Slavas replied, although the problem lies with the state formula, regions are allowed to propose alternative assessment methods. "Within the region, we can make the winners and losers more equitable," he said.

Donelan commented, although the town of Orange pays less per Mahar student than Wendell does, the state provides more Chapter 70 school aid for Orange students than for Wendell students (\$6,600 for Orange students, \$3,500 for Wendell students), reducing the disparity between the contributions from each of the towns.

Slavas noted, "Chapter 70 has winners and losers, too." He said the alternative method he developed would effectively re-distribute the Chapter 70 student aid money to make town assessments more equal on a per pupil basis.

Superintendent commented that no alternative assessment could be put into effect unless all four towns agree each year. He wondered if Wendell might consider withdrawing from the Mahar region and tuitioning its students to Mahar at a rate negotiated between the town and the region, thereby allowing the other three towns to proceed with regionalizing.

Slavas observed that, if Wendell leaves the region, it would lose state regional bus reimbursement. Baldassarre estimated that amount at around \$10,000 annually.

Referring to the charge Orange has incurred from the state for underfunding its elementary school system for the past three years, Baldassarre said, "Orange has to come up with \$340,000 by July 1st. It could be a win/win: you get the rate you want and help Orange save itself."

The state Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) will forgive the underfunding charge if Orange regionalizes.

Donelan asked, "Are you asking that we identify an alternative method in the agreement? I have no problem with putting it in the regional agreement."

Wendell school committee chair Ray DiDonato asked Slavas, "Would it satisfy you if it's in the agreement knowing that towns can vote to reject it each year?"

Slavas answered, "What's important is a method that we can all buy into and go to town meeting and ask people to vote for."

Gervais asked Slavas, "If you could get this in the agreement, could you get the votes for regionalization in Wendell?"

Slavas told her, "No."

Donelan told the committee it was worthwhile to wait to make any decisions on the regional agreement until after meeting with Wendell. DiDonato mentioned issues other than the assessment that concerned Wendell voters. These include the "unitary" budget, that would have all towns voting on the elementary school budgets for Orange and Petersham, and potential use of excess and deficiency funds by individual schools.


The subcommittee approved a motion to set up a public meeting with the Wendell selectboard and finance committee prior to the February 28th special town meeting.

MQ

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JESSICA LARKIN ILLUSTRATION

BY FRED CICETTI

LEONIA, NJ - Q. Which foods are best for a bedtime snack?

Eating a small snack a few hours before bedtime may help you sleep by preventing hunger from waking you. However, there are no snacks guaranteed to put you to sleep.

Milk, herbal tea and other comforting remedies help a bit at bedtime because they make you feel more relaxed. However, there is no evidence they induce sleep.

Some people suggest that cereal with milk, peanut butter on toast, and cheese with crackers are good bedtime snacks because they combine carbohydrates with protein.

The theory is based on the fact that tryptophan, an amino acid, makes you sleepy. Proteins

THE HEALTHY GEEZER: Warm Milk and Honey

make tryptophan. And carbs make tryptophan more available to the brain.

Studies done on the sedating effects of tryptophan needed up to 15 grams of tryptophan to create an effect. You would need to eat more than a pound of turkey to get just one gram of tryptophan. That nap you take after Thanksgiving dinner is caused by packing in too much food, not the tryptophan in the bird.

To get a good night's sleep, it is more important to avoid some foods. Here are some foods you should sidestep: high-fat foods, garlic-flavored and highly spiced foods, alcohol, caffeine, and any beverages before bed.

Here are some pointers to help you get better sleep:

Go to sleep and wake up at the same time, even on week-ends. Sticking to a regular bedtime and wake time schedule helps keep you in sync with your body's circadian clock, a 24-hour internal rhythm affected by sunlight.

Try not to nap too much during the day — you might be less sleepy at night.

Try to exercise at regular times each day. Exercising regularly improves the quality of your nighttime sleep and helps you sleep more soundly. Try to finish your workout at least three hours before bedtime.

Try to get some natural light in the afternoon each day.

Don't smoke cigarettes to help you sleep. The nicotine in cigarettes is a stimulant.

Create a safe and comfortable place to sleep. Make sure there are locks on all doors and smoke alarms on each floor. A lamp that's easy to turn on and a phone by your bed may be helpful. The room should be dark, well ventilated, and as quiet as possible.

Develop a bedtime routine. Do the same things each night to tell your body it's time to wind down.

Use your bedroom for sleeping, not daytime activities. After turning off the light, give yourself about 15 minutes to fall asleep. If you are still awake and not drowsy, get out of bed. When you get sleepy, go back to bed.

Try not to worry about your sleep. Some people find that playing mental games is helpful. For example, tell yourself it is five minutes before you have to get up and you're just trying to get a few extra winks.

If you are so tired during the day that you cannot function normally, and if this lasts for more than two to three weeks, you should see your family doctor or a sleep disorders specialist.

If you have questions, write to fred@healthygeezzer.com.

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Chloe Ellis
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Carlie Kretchmar
Snejana Lashtur
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Kaeden Socquet
Jeremy Towle
David Tricolici
Kyleigh Williams

Second Honors

Tanner Ames
Hannah Bogusz
Ian Cecchi
Amanda Cooke
Sahaley DuPree
Olivier Fournier-LeMay
Madison St. Marie
Riley Staiger

Third Honors

Samuel Adams
Malik Baker-Gore
Madison
Chmyzinski
Adrianna DiMaio
Peyton Emery
Avery Palmer
Aliyah Sanders
Nicholas Taylor
Samantha Wegiel
Henry Worden

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Tahner Castine
Nolan
Courtemanche

Jemma Dickson
Savannah Donahue
William Doyle
Jordyn Fiske
Alison Hulslander
Tess Hunter
Madelyn Johnson
Ian Moriarty
Will Roberge
Patrick Salls
Amanda Savinski
Kate Sprinkle
Riley Wood

Second Honors

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Jaynise Burton
Nicholas Croteau
Keara Deery
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Francis Fuhrmann
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Bryn Kruzlic
Michelle Leh
Kaili Lynch
Nicholas Morin
Owen Ortiz
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Mark Waite
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Jack Darling
Jenna Hackett
Melissa Hersey
Alyssa Kordana
Dylan Mailloux
Nicole Peralta
Veronika Sankova
Nicole Thibeault
Alysha Wozniak

GRADE 8

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Allison Cooke
Ivy Cross
Tarah Dempsey
James Fritz
Courtney
Gochinski
Ryan Lenois
Timothy
Momaney
Riley Palmer
Jenna Putala
Seth Rider
Nevan Shattuck
Margaret Sroka
Sydney Upham
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Kamryn Frost
Zackary Hillman
Jessica Loynd
Mitchell Mailloux
Dominic McLellan
Sadie Pelletier
Sabrina Petrowicz
Jason Scott

Third Honors

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Catherine Landers
Alexander
Lindgren
Lindsey Mailloux
Trevor
Mankowsky
Jordan Meattay
Ciara Staiger
Rachel Waldron

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE ERVING POLICE LOG

Malicious Destruction; Trailer Crash

Tuesday, 2/7

5 a.m. Report of an altercation and medical at Pratt Street residence. Report taken. Criminal application issued for [REDACTED], for malicious destruction of motor vehicle on Pratt Street.

Wednesday, 2/8

4:45 p.m. Assisted Northfield police with arrest on Millers Falls

Road.

Thursday, 2/9

3 a.m. Dispatched for a possible firearm at Pleasant Street. Person walking found toy gun. Mistook for real firearm.

Friday, 2/10

9:23 a.m. Tractor trailer crash on Route 2 at Forest Street. Assisted state police on scene.

Saturday, 2/11

1:45 p.m. Water main

break on River Road. Highway department notified.

2:30 p.m. Criminal application issued to [REDACTED], for un-

licensed operation of a motor vehicle and speeding on the French King Highway. 5 p.m. Alarm at Elementary School. Checked same. Secure.

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Ferry Meadow Farm - part XXVII

Turners Falls 2017

BY ELOISE MICHAEL - I worry the FBI agents will come back to the river in the morning. I will have to be somewhere else before then.

My plan is to stay far enough from my house that my two bodies can't be caught in the same place at once. This body will hide somewhere and sleep. I am still not sure where. Then my other body, the one with access to a phone, the one who is not barefoot and in her pajamas, will try to contact Jason.

Soon the ground is flatter,

and I can see the steel bridge high overhead, its trussed silhouette against the moonlit sky. I don't imagine I can hide here, so I press on toward the bridge.

The rocky beach ends where the piers of the bridge rest their weight. Here for a short distance the beach is sand, and I pass quickly under the bridge. Beyond its footings a brick wall, a mill building, rises from the bedrock, forming a sheer edge to the river.

In the dark it seems like the mill has its foundation below the water line, and I think I will

knowing how deep the water will be or where each footstep will land.

I lean my weight onto the building, pressing the palm of my right hand on the clammy bricks, and begin to move forward. I find there is a narrow ledge of jagged rocks just at the waterline which I can walk along without getting too wet.

If the FBI guys come now, I won't be able to run. I wonder if I could jump in the water. I can't tell whether it is deep enough to hide in. I also can't tell whether it is fast enough to

be dangerous in the dark.

Inching my hand forward on the brick wall, I concentrate on where I am stepping. I am surprised when the wall I am reaching for is suddenly not there.

I look up and begin to feel with both hands. I am at the edge of a tunnel, I realize, a brick arch that opens into a dark space under the massive old mill.

Water flows out from under the building here. At first I am terrified even to be standing near this tunnel, but finally I find the courage to let go of the brick wall and step forward. The water is not deep. I take another step, then another, feeling each time with my bare foot to be sure of my footing before shifting any weight onto it.

When I reach the other side, I am comforted by the brick wall, which I can again hold onto. A moment later I find myself standing on dry land, though it is only inches above the water line. I follow the wall of the mill building until it abruptly ends once again. I have arrived at a second tunnel, this one without water.

Walking across the mouth of this dark tunnel seems like a piece of cake compared to the watery one. Slowly I realize that I do not need to cross it. I have found my hiding spot. I am not sure whether I am brave enough to go in at all.

On top of that, I worry this might be the first place people would look for a fugitive doppelganger.

— Continued Next Issue

from GRANT page 1

and extend her program's reach in assisting the arts based economic development potential of downtown, Davol is now working with the Franklin Regional Council of Governments to develop a sustainable cultural and livable communities plan to foster not only a renewed sense of place for Turners, but also to help attract new businesses to the downtown. Davol is focusing on the potential for redevelopment, including artist live/work space, at the former Strathmore Mill across the canal. Since 2010, the 240,000-square-foot mill com-

plex has been owned by the town.

In March, Davol will participate in a two-day Creative Economy Summit in Greenfield, where she will share some of the ideas and observations gained on her recent trip to Hamburg, Germany as part of the Five Colleges, European Union sponsored Riverscapes project. She will network with business, municipal and creative economy leaders on the topic of Creative Neighborhoods, focusing on revitalization efforts in Brattleboro, Greenfield, Turners Falls and Easthampton.

Meanwhile, RiverCulture's calendar for 2012 is filling up with events ranging from a Turners Falls memorabilia exhibit in September, to an October Haunted House in the former Greenfield Savings Bank, followed up with a local artisans' shop in the former bank during the holiday season, and a downtown holiday window decorating contest using donated materials.

For the tech-minded, a Hampshire college student is working with Davol on installing sidewalk quick response codes along the Avenue that can be accessed by smart phones as entry points into the story and places of

interest in Turners Falls.

Then there's the Feast for the Arts this spring, where participants will both fund a downtown art project with their entry fees and then choose from a menu of proposals the cultural endeavor to receive those funds. Also, another contest: for artist-designed crosswalks. (Artists, watch for calls for proposals on the RiverCulture website: www.turnersfallsriverculture.org.)

This is the short list. Davol said the calendar of upcoming events will be easier to access than ever, and the website is almost complete with an eye to easier navigation with smart phones. Check it out, and stop by our creative downtown for dining, wining, and art loving the next chance you get.



HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MONTAGUE POLICE LOG

Burglary, Breaking & Entering; Illegal Dumping

Wednesday, 2/8

6:18 a.m. Accident with property damage at South Ferry Road and Ferry Road. Summons issued for leaving the scene of property damage, speeding, and failure to yield at intersection.

10:08 a.m. Suspicious activity at the Shady Glen on Avenue A. Advised of options.

1:36 p.m. Warrant arrest of

on Second Street for being a fugitive from justice on court warrant.

6:54 p.m. Assault and battery on Fourth Street. Summons issued.

10:01 p.m. Threatening, harassment on Central Street. Advised of options.

10:09 p.m. Domestic disturbance on Canal Street. Arrest of

for domestic assault and battery, assault and battery with a dangerous weapon, and threatening to commit a crime.

11:32 p.m. Neighbor disturbance on Turnpike Road. Peace restored.

Thursday, 2/9

8:54 a.m. Officer wanted at Turners Falls High School. Peace restored.

10:45 p.m. Domestic disturbance on Fourth Street. Investigated.

Friday, 2/10

1:16 a.m. Summons issued to for uninsured

motor vehicle, and revoked registration on Old

Northfield Road.

11:55 a.m. Arrest of on default and straight warrants on Fourth Street.

11:46 p.m. Assault and battery on L Street. Services rendered.

Saturday, 2/11

9:35 p.m. Burglary, breaking and entering in alley behind Third Street. Investigated.

Sunday, 2/12

5:12 a.m. Domestic disturbance on Fairway Avenue. Services rendered.

11:12 p.m. Straight warrant arrest of on

Turners Falls Road.

Monday, 2/13

10:01 a.m. Brush fire past

Carroll's Market on East Main Street. Referred to other agency.

11:09 a.m. Neighbor disturbance on Bangs Street. Advised of options.

12 p.m. Officer wanted on Avenue A. Peace restored.

12:40 p.m. Illegal dumping on Fifth Street. Report taken.

2:31 p.m. Burglary, breaking and entering on Turnpike Road. Report taken.

3:43 p.m. Threatening, harassment on Fourth Street. Verbal warning.

Tuesday, 2/14

3:31 p.m. Threatening, harassment on Grout Circle. Advised of options.

4:22 p.m. Warrant arrest of for failure to register as a sex offender.

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Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Craft Night*, 7 p.m.

EVERY THURSDAY

Between the Uprights, Turners Falls: *Acoustic open mic*, with *Dan, Kip and Shultz* from *Curly Fingers DuPree* hosting. 8:30 to 11:30 p.m.

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

EVERY FRIDAY

Burrito Rojo, Turners Falls: *Song Shop Open Mic*, 8 p.m.

FRIDAYS and SATURDAYS

Montague Inn: *TNT Karaoke*.

NOW through MARCH 10th

Nina's Nook, Turners Falls: *Sensual, Sexual, Smut: Erotic Art by Local Artists*.

NOW through FEBRUARY 27th

Salmon Falls Artisans Showroom, Shelburne Falls: Celebrate Black History Month and Valentine's Day with *The Fetish of Love*: works inspired by West African Fetish Dolls by *Belinda Lyons Zucker* in Gallery Two.

NOW through FEBRUARY 29th

Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls: paintings in the great hall by *Camilla Roberts*.

NOW through February 29th

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Wendell Free Library: Wendell resident *Christine Texiera*, presents *Asana*, oil on paper drawings.

NOW through FEBRUARY 26th

Vermont Center for Photography, Brattleboro: *After Chernobyl*, Photographs by *Michael Forster Rothbart*.

NOW through APRIL 1st

Gallery at Hallmark, Turners Falls: *Imitating Art*, a student photographic exhibition featuring attempts to photographically reproduce an original work of art.

FEBRUARY 21st to MARCH 16th

Augusta Savage Gallery, UMASS, Amherst: *Fine Tuning: Zero Balancing & Sustainable Bodies*, featuring work by Montague's *Jenny Chapin* and also *Terry Jenoure*, and *Alexia Cota*. Opening Reception February 21st, 5 - 7 p.m.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 16th

Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *Goji berries!* *Rachel Levin* from the Department of Biology at Amherst explores goji berries, 7 - 8:30 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *St. Valentine's Aphrodisiac Extravaganza* - games, raffles, prizes from *Oh My! DJ Bex!* Benefit for *NELCWIT* (donations welcome, but also free), 7:30 p.m.

Montague Bookmill: *Open Mic*, free, 7 - 9 p.m.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Tommy Filiault and Friends*, 8 - 10 p.m.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 17th and SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 18th

Memorial Hall, Shelburne Falls: *Pothole Pictures* presents *Superman*, 7:30 p.m. Music on Friday at 7 p.m. *Whistlestop*, and at 7 p.m. on Saturday, *Rob McWilliams Project*.

Montague Bookmill: *Darlingside*, 8 p.m.

FEBRUARY 17th, 23rd, 24th at 7 p.m.

FEBRUARY 18th, 19th, 25th, 26th at 2 p.m.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *New Renaissance Players* presents

Treasure Island.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 17th

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Josh Levangie & The Mud, Blood & Beer Band*, 9 - 11 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Jones Trio, jazz that thumps*, 9:30 p.m.

Route 63 Roadhouse, Millers Falls: *Flabbergaster & Loomis Band*, 9:30 p.m.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 18th

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Nexus*, Eclectic Harmonic Rock, 9-11 p.m.

Burrito Rojo, Turners Falls: *Stone Coyotes*, 9 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Rockit Queer with DJ Greg2000*, 9:30 p.m.

Route 63 Roadhouse, Millers Falls: *Cooper Jones Band*, 9:30 p.m.

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 19th

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Sunday Locals: Michael Metivier, Brook Brown-Saracino & Friends*, 6 p.m. Free.



Rebel Alliance plays at Mocha Maya's on Saturday, February 25th at 8 p.m.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *John Sheldon*, 8-10 p.m.

Montague Bookmill: Free Films for the Frozen presents, *The Long Goodbye*, 1973, directed by *Robert Altman*, written by *Leigh Brackett*. Based on the novel by *Raymond Chandler*. Featuring *Elliott Gould*. 7 p.m.

Mocha Maya's, Shelburne Falls: *Ray Mason*, 2 p.m.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Shadows Fall*, 6:30 p.m.

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 20th

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Bingo*, 8 p.m. Free. (prizes)

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 22nd

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Peter Siegel & Friends*, 8 p.m.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Harmaniac Brothers*, 8 - 10 p.m.

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 23rd

Montague Bookmill: *Brittany Haas*

& *Lauren Rioux*, 8 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Tawdry, and the Diamondstones*, 9:30 p.m. Free.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Larry Kopp*, 8 - 10 p.m.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 24th

Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls: Come listen to a wonderful story about *Owls*, and then stay for a craft activity. 10:30 a.m. - 12 p.m.

Mocha Maya's, Shelburne Falls: *Ray Mason*, with special guest *Marc Pinansky*, 7:30 p.m.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *The Wildcat O'Halloran Band*, 9 - 11 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Something Else* (name of groove-jazz band), free, 9:30 p.m.

Route 63 Roadhouse, Millers Falls: *Fred Ellsworth & the House Shakers*, 9:30 p.m.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 25th

Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *Investigation Station: Winter Buds*. 10:30 a.m. - 2 p.m.

Wendell Free Library: *Bela Lugosi's Dracula*, 7:30 p.m.

Mocha Maya's, Shelburne Falls: *Rebel Alliance*, 8 p.m.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *The Reprobate Blues Band*, 9 - 11 p.m.

Montague Grange: *Gender Role Free Contra*, 7 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Heather Maloney Band*, 9:30 p.m.

Route 63 Roadhouse, Millers Falls: *Psycho Magnetic*, 9:30 p.m.

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 26th

Montague Grange: *Vintage + Antiques Market*, Quality vintage and antiques vendors bring their wares to the Grange, 7:30 a.m. - 1 p.m.

Montague Grange: *Family Dance*, 3:30 p.m.

Montague Bookmill: Free Films for

Memorial Hall Theater

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the Frozen presents, *Heaven Knows, Mr Allison*, 1957, featuring *Deborah Kerr* and *Robert Mitchum* 7 p.m.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Le Cheile*, 8 - 10 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *TNT Karaoke*, 8 p.m.

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The Work of Robert Strong Woodward



ANNE HARDING PHOTO

Local artist Polly Anderson, left, and author Janet Gerry who wrote the book "Artist Against All Odds" a story of the life, times and work of acclaimed Buckland artist Robert Strong Woodward, stand by a Woodward pastel entitled "Eternal Equinox."

BY ANNE HARDING

GILL - Local author Janet Gerry and artist Polly Anderson spoke to a crowd of rapt listeners at the Slate Library in Gill on Wednesday, February 8th, about the work of renowned Buckland landscape artist Robert Strong Woodward. Through a series of slides of his work, excerpts from Woodward's diaries, and personal recountings by people who knew him, the audience gained insight into the man behind the art.

Gerry was just two years old when Woodward died, but she grew up two houses away from one of his studios. Her biography, *An Artist Against All Odds: the Story of Robert Strong Woodward*, was written

to introduce a new generation to the work of an inspiring Franklin County artist.

Born in Northampton in 1885, Woodward spent his youth travelling the country with his family while his father earned the family's bread and butter in real estate development. He claimed to have attended 18 different grammar schools, yet spent his summers in Buckland at his grandparents' farm. His roaming life ended in Peoria, IL when he won a full scholarship to the Bradley Polytechnic Institute. Woodward stayed to study liberal arts while the family went on to the West Coast.

Woodard intended to pursue further schooling at Leland Stanford, but on a camping trip

in 1906 the accidental discharge of a revolver lodged a bullet in his spinal cord. He spent four years living with his parents in California recovering from the accident and learning to adjust to life in a wheelchair. His paralysis from the waist down meant travelling with a contingent of nurses and attendants, though he maintained an independent streak and strongly disliked being pitied.

Woodward returned to the East Coast in 1910 where he spent a few months at the Museum of Fine Arts School in Boston before moving to Buckland in 1911, where he lived with his aunt Tella and uncle Bert Wells and created his Red Gate studio at their farm.

For a time he earned money by making illuminations and book plates, but by 1916 his desire to paint landscapes took hold, and his skills developed rapidly.

Woodward approached Colrain artist Gardner Symons for criticism and advice on pursuing a career in art - and Symons was so taken by his work he advised entering a piece in the 1919 national Academy of Design in New York. Not only did Woodward win the first Hallgarten prize of \$300, but Mr. Hallgarten purchased the painting for \$500.

Over the next few years Woodward's reputation as a landscape artist grew, and his paintings were shown in prominent galleries in the northeast (National Academy in New York, Boston Art Club, Worcester Art Museum and many others).

Tragedy struck again in December 1922, when a fire burnt Red Gate studio, destroying the building along with more than 50 paintings

and other belongings.

Woodward started over at the Hiram Woodward farmstead, just a quarter mile from Red Gate. Many renovations were needed to make the farm accessible and create a new studio.

Woodward's fame grew over the next decade and his paintings made their way into the homes of such notables as Robert Frost and Bartlett Arkell (the owner of the Beechnut Company).

It was during this decade that Woodward started painting landscapes looking through the panes of windows, and incorporating the window frames into the paintings. He travelled the county roads to find bucolic scenes of New England, often returning over and over again to paint a scene from every angle. A fascination with farm buildings was evident in many of his paintings and pastel drawings. I instantly recognized the silo and barn of the old Barnard farm up on Patten Hill in Shelburne where I lived for a time in 1980.

Sadly, the Hiram Woodward studio was struck by lightning in 1934, and completely destroyed by the ensuing blaze. Woodward was not home at the time, but his neighbors managed to save most of his paintings and some of his furniture.

Woodward then bought the Southwick place on Upper Street in Buckland. At that time, he was befriended by an extremely wealthy widow, Ada Strong Moore, an admirer and collector of his work.

She completely financed the renovation of the Southwick house, overseen by Woodward. The renovations included extensive changes to the property and grounds: moving a barn that obscured an excellent view; moving

a chicken house; converting the former blacksmith shop to a studio and raising it six feet to enable the building of a ramp from the house to the studio. It was two years before the project was complete and Woodward returned to painting.

He continued to paint at Southwick and at a second rustic studio on Burnt Hill in Heath - a 140 acre property he acquired in 1937. Known as the Pasture House, Woodward painted many scenes that featured an ancient spreading beech tree.

It was a place of magical import for the artist, and in 1941 he wrote to a friend, "I do wish I might take you and your wife up to my Heath Pasture House so you could share its holy peace with me. It is one place where one actually forgets - for entire spaces of moments - the word 'Hitler.' We'll cook our meal, up under the Beech Tree."

In 1950, yet another fire destroyed the Heath studio. Woodward continued to paint in the Southwick studios until 1951 when his health began to decline. He passed away in 1957 of gastric cancer.

Many of the images in the slide presentation were used with the permission of Dr. Mark Purinton who grew up near the Southwick house (and now owns it with his wife Barbara). He worked for Woodward as a young man and developed a close lifelong relationship. Purinton maintains the website www.robertstrongwoodward.com which contains an extensive collection of clippings, photographs, art history and other memorabilia.

It is well worth the visit.

From Purinton's website, you can also purchase Janet Gerry's biography of this inspiring local artist who triumphed over many adversities.

Dear KB,
Thank you again for that dinner party. The food was incredible. And when you showed us the recipes, we were amazed at all the effort to make just one dish. Spiced butters, custom-blended seasonings, long slow cooking of onions to bring out the sugar and all that ginger to give it a nice bite. Wow. What a treat. It's certainly not an easy middle-of-the-week in-a-hurry kind of recipe. Not the kind of thing you can just whip up on a whim. Oh the time and perseverance you put in; it's what we love about your cooking. A certain slowness makes the flavor. Not too spicy... that perfect sweet-to-acid ratio... Hearty and unusual and comforting all at the same time. Gosh I could eat it every day - but who has the time to make it?

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