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THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES

NOVEMBER 21, 2012

G-M Wins School Recycler of the Year



ANN HARDING PHOTO

Thumbs up for GMRSD's green team!

By ANN HARDING

The Gill-Montague Regional School District has been named the 2012 School Recycler of the Year, awarded by MassRecycle, the statewide recycling coalition. It's been just over a year since the Gill-Montague Regional School District began its composting program with the help of Amy Donovan, program director of the Franklin County Solid Waste Management District. They have come a long way in just 12 months.

The district schools have been separating recyclables since 2010, diverting considerable volume from the landfill, so it was a natural next step to begin cafeteria and kitchen composting in November 2011. During 2011-12 this effort paid off, with the collection of eight cubic yards per week trucked to Martin's Farm for commercial composting. This amounts to approximately one

school bus full of waste each week.

Donovan spearheaded the program with educational presentations to the students and staff about the difference between backyard composting and commercial operations. The schools can send all food waste, meat, bones, and dairy products as well as paper waste like plates, napkins and even milk cartons to be composted.

The students also learned that composting is healthier for the planet because turning composted soil introduces air to the waste and allows it to decompose without producing methane gas. On the other hand, landfills create an anaerobic environment by burying trash, which releases considerable quantities of methane, a greenhouse gas 23 times more potent than carbon dioxide.

Members of MassRecycle visit-

see RECYCLER page 3

NEWS ANALYSIS

Montague ZBA Decision: What is 'Substantial Hardship'?



JEFF SINGLETON PHOTO

Controversy continues over the redevelopment of the Montague Center School.

This is the second part of a two-part series on the proposed conversion of the Montague Center School into an apartment complex.

By JEFF SINGLETON

On Oct. 17 the Montague Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) voted to approve two special permits and a variance to allow Mark and Barbara Zaccheo of Olive Street Development, LLC to turn the former Montague Center School building into 22 "high-end" apartments. The vote was taken quickly with virtually no discus-

sion by the board, which had sat through over seven hours of testimony, most of it in opposition to the project.

Opponents from the Montague Center neighborhood also collected over 150 signatures and filled two file folders with written comments opposing the project.

"I do not envy [the Montague ZBA]," Leverett resident Don Putnam said. "These are hard decisions, and no matter what you do someone is going to be unhappy."

Putnam should know. He is the chair of the Leverett zoning board,

see ZBA page 5

ZBA Decision on Montague Center School Appealed

By DAVID DETMOLD

Seven of the 24 abutters to the former Montague Center School have filed an appeal of the Montague Zoning Board of Appeals' October 31st decision granting a variance and special permits to Olive Street Development, LLC to redevelop the Montague Center School into 22 high-end, solar-powered

see APPEALED page 5

Montague Retreat Center: 'People, Community and Place'



LEE WICKS PHOTO

Owners William and Beth Jacobson at the Montague Retreat Center.

By LEE WEEKS

Kind spirits must hover over the land on Ripley Road in Montague where the Montague Farm once stood. After the commune disbanded, that particular piece of property attracted the Zen Peacemakers, a group committed to spiritual and social action. Now it is being developed by William Jacobson into the Montague Retreat, an educational center that will build community, enrich the local economy, and preserve the pastoral beauty and ecosystems of the land. The essential elements of community building and sustainability that inspired the founders of the Montague Farm

will remain intact, with enhancements to secure long-term viability.

On a clear fall afternoon, Jacobson spread out the site plan pointing this way and that to parts of the land that delight him. "After twenty years working in finance," he said. "I am back on the tractor." (He worked in the foreign exchange department at JP Morgan Chase from 1996-2001, and now works from his home in Shelburne Falls). His smile declared that he is loving every minute of it.

His wife, Beth, was working in the huge garden with John Barrett, a carpenter and experienced farmer who once grew vegetables for the farmers market in Great Barrington.

Mira Nussbaum, operations manager, was cooking lunch made from homegrown organic vegetables. Currently, the management staff includes Jacobson, general manager; Barrett, in charge of buildings and grounds; and Nussbaum, as operations manager.

Everyone was in fine spirits because the Montague Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) had recently approved modifications to the site and extended the religious and educational use of the property to include monthly potluck dinners, yoga classes, meditation sessions, cultural performances, private functions and multi-day retreats. In his

see RETREAT page 10

State Board to Rule on Vermont Yankee's Continued Operation



DETMOLD PHOTO

The commissioners of the Vermont Public Service Board will rule next year on issuing a Certificate of Public Good for the continued operation of the Vermont Yankee.

By DAVID DETMOLD

VERNON – Located about 1,000 yards away from the 40-year-old Vermont Yankee reactor, the Vernon Elementary School is the closest school in the country to an operating nuke. As more than a hundred Vermont Yankee supporters marched up the brightly lit Governor Hunt Road from the nuclear plant on Wednesday, Nov. 7 for the opening of a critical public hearing before the Vermont Public Service Board, it seemed even closer.

By the time the school janitor interrupted the hearing at 10 p.m. to clear the gymnasium, VY supporters had made it clear to the PSB that the town of Vernon is solidly in support of Entergy VY's bid to extend the reactor's operating license 20 more years.

Vernon selectboard chair Patty O'Donnell spoke for many when she

said, "We here in Vernon support Vermont Yankee because it's a high-quality nuclear power plant, one of the best in the country. We support Vermont Yankee because we have the honor of knowing many of the people who work at that plant. They live in our community. Their spouses teach in our elementary school. You look around this room tonight. You look at the faces of the people that run this plant. That's Vermont Yankee. And there's not a single one of them that would work here, and run that plant, if it wasn't a good plant."

Opponents of the reactor turned out in force at the hearing as well, and the setting was rendered even more dramatic, not only by the proximity of the reactor, but by the close quarters in which nuclear plant workers, their wives and children, were seated next to graying veterans of the

see YANKEE pg 6

PETS OF THE WEEK

Black Friday \$5 Felines



Shoppers in the market for love this holiday season are encouraged to visit the Dakin Pioneer Valley Humane Society adoption center in Leverett to celebrate Black Friday in a brand new way!

Dakin has many adult cats awaiting new homes. All felines (six months and older) can go home for just \$5. The low adoption fee includes: spay/neuter surgery, vaccinations, testing, microchipping, a jewel-tone collar and ID tag, and a starter bag of food, too!

Visit Dakin on Nov. 23, between noon and 5:30 p.m., to meet some loving four-legged companions who will warm your heart and home this holiday season. Come find your new best friend and family member!

Executive Director Leslie Harris said "We're eager to see great cats find new homes and, in addition, adopting one of our \$5 felines helps Dakin make room for cats in need of placement from shelters in Hurricane Sandy-ravaged areas. Together, we can save lives!"

For info contact Dakin at (413) 548-9898 or info@dpvhs.org.

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(Every other week in July and August.
Wednesday paper fourth week of
November. No paper last week of
December.)
PHONE (413) 863-8666
reporter@montaguema.net
Postmaster: Send address changes
to
The Montague Reporter
58 4th Street
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Advertising and copy deadline is
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WENDELL FREE LIBRARY

Make Holiday Presents

Make Holiday Presents with Miss Deb!

This free after-school program is intended for 3rd to 6th grade children. It will be offered over three Wednesdays in December (12/5, 12/12, 12/19) from 1:15 to 2:30 p.m. Each week, Miss Deb will offer a different craft for holiday gifts.

WENDELL FREE LIBRARY

Movie: *Carnival of Souls*

On Saturday, Dec. 15, at 7:30 p.m., *Carnival of Souls* will be screened at the Wendell Free Library, as part of the monthly series of Science Fiction and Horror movies at the Library. Admission is free.

Mary Henry is enjoying the day riding around in a car with two friends. When challenged to a drag race, the women accept, but are forced off of a bridge. It appears that all are drowned, until, quite some time later, Mary amazingly emerges from the river. After recovering, Mary accepts a job in a new town as

Space is limited. To register, call the Wendell Free Library at (978) 544-3559.

Parents can make arrangements with the Swift River School to have the bus drop children at the Library.

This program is sponsored by the Friends of the Wendell Free Library.

a church organist, only to be dogged by a mysterious phantom figure that seems to reside in an old run-down pavilion. It is here that Mary must confront the personal demons of her spiritual insouciance.

Carnival of Souls is considered a masterpiece and classic of the low-budget cult horror flick genre. It is a creepy, eerie, brilliant movie. The photography and lighting contrasts are atmospheric, and the characters and "ghoul" are extremely effective.

For more info, call the Wendell Free Library at (978) 544-3559.

K-9 Police Dogs Smell Good

By JOHN FURBISH

TURNERS FALLS – The police departments of Montague and Erving teamed up, and brought their police dogs with handlers, to the Turners Falls branch of the Greenfield Savings Bank on Saturday, Nov. 17. This instance of "community policing" was well-received and barely turned the heads of bank customers.

Sunny, a German shepherd, was the star of the show. He amazed the two dozen adults and children present by sniffing out a small vial of (faux) drugs in a closed tackle box. And then he was clever enough to lie down on all fours so that we would know that he had found something.

His handler is Montague police officer John Dempsey, who began working with dogs while serving in the Air Force. Dog work takes more than an eight-hour shift, so Sunny lives with Dempsey's family. When he retires, Sunny will still live with his handler, along with his K-9 replacement, because police dog work is a lifelong thing.

Dempsey believes that obedience is the foundation for everything that a police dog does, and that's how he starts his training. In the end, it's the rewards that are most important for the dog, and that is how they get "paid" for working. They do what they have been taught for a chance to



JESSICA LARKIN ILLUSTRATION

By FRED CICETTI

This is the fourth and last column in a series about vision correction.

There are three basic ways to correct faulty vision: eyeglasses, contact lenses or surgery. This column will cover surgery.

Surgery is used to correct a variety of eye disorders. Surgery for cataracts is of special interest to seniors, so we'll start there.

A cataract is a clouding of the lens, the clear part of the eye that helps focus images like the lens in a camera. Cataracts can blur images and discolor them.

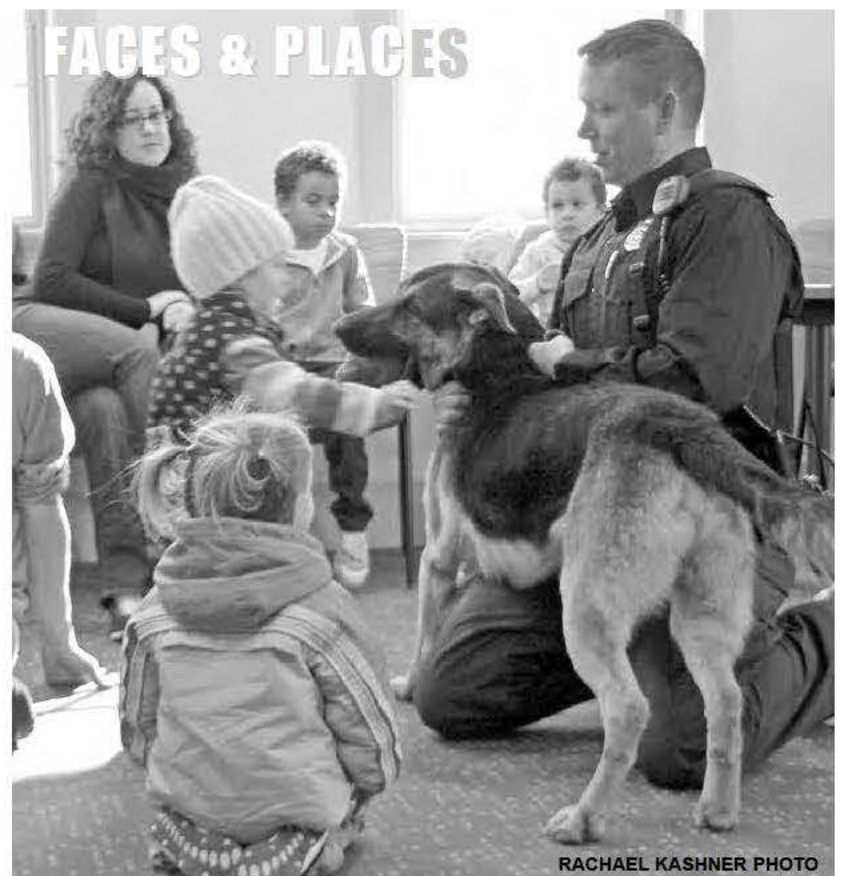
Most cataracts are related to aging. By age 80, over half of all

Americans either have a cataract or have had cataract surgery. Cataract removal is one of the most common operations performed in the United States. About 9 out of 10 people who have the surgery have improved vision.

Common symptoms of a cataract are: blurred images, faded colors, glare, poor night vision, double vision, and frequent eyeglass or contact lens prescription changes. If you have any of these symptoms, see your doctor, because they can be signs of other eye problems.

The most common procedure used for removing cataracts is *phacoemulsification*. A small incision is made in the side of the cornea, the front part of the eye, where the physician inserts a tiny instrument that uses high-frequency ultrasound to break up the center of the cloudy lens and carefully suction it out.

After the cloudy lens has been removed, the surgeon will replace it with an intraocular lens (IOL)



RACHAEL KASHNER PHOTO

Officer John Dempsey introduced K-9 Officer Sunny to the public at Greenfield Savings Bank on Saturday, Nov. 17.

tug on a coiled up towel or to chew on a toy.

Sunny left the room, and Badge, a young, long-eared, droopy-jowled bloodhound, came in for the second part of the show. Badge and Officer Rob Holst of Erving are certified as a "Canine Team," and the dog is part of Holst's household. Badge's primary command is to be given a scent (from a missing person, a lost child, a lost pet, or a criminal) and to be told to "seek." Then he will run along the trail of this smell with unbelievable tenacity, tracing scents that can be days old, even trailing smells across water. Badge's long ears actually help him to find scents better, as they waft up smells from the ground to the dog's nose.

We are lucky to have K-9 police dogs in our local police departments. If we did not have them, we would might have to wait for hours until state police dogs responded in the case of a crisis – a delay that might regrettably make all the difference in the world for you or for a loved one.

CARNEGIE LIBRARY

Gingerbread House!

On Saturday, Dec. 8, children of all ages are invited to make easy gingerbread houses with Ruth at the Carnegie Library. All materials will be supplied.

This free program will be held from 10:30 to 11:30 a.m.

THE HEALTHY GEEZER:

Vision Correction Surgery

implant made of plastic, silicone or acrylic.

Another form of surgery to correct vision is called LASIK, which stands for Laser-Assisted In Situ Keratomileusis. LASIK improves vision by reshaping the cornea, the clear covering of the front of the eye.

Using a laser, an eye surgeon can free patients of eyeglasses and contact lenses altogether.

LASIK is a relatively new technology. The first laser was approved for eye surgery in 1998. The long-term safety and effectiveness of LASIK is still unknown.

LASIK results have been improving due to technological advances and the increased experience of surgeons. More than 90 percent of people who've undergone refractive (vision-correction) surgery don't have to wear glasses or contacts most of the time.

LASIK is an option for people who are nearsighted, farsighted or have astigmatism. Some people

with presbyopia – a vision error that comes with age – may benefit from LASIK eye surgery as well.

For patients with presbyopia, it's important to note that LASIK cannot correct vision so that one eye can see both far and near. However, LASIK can be done to allow one eye to see near and the other far, which is called monovision. If you can adjust to this correction, it may eliminate or reduce the need for reading glasses.

During the eye exam before LASIK, the surgeon charts the eye to determine which areas of the cornea can be altered. The surgery is done with a laser programmed to remove the right amount of tissue in each location on the cornea.

Refractive surgery is usually considered elective. Medicare and most insurance companies won't cover the costs. LASIK costs anywhere from \$800 to \$3,000 or more per eye.

Send questions to fred@healthygeezers.com.

SENIOR CENTER ACTIVITIES – November 19th to 23rd

GILL-MONTAGUE

Gill/Montague Senior Center, 62 Fifth Street, Turners Falls, is open Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Congregate meals are served Tuesday through Thursday at noon. Meal reservations must be made by 11 a.m. the day before. The Meal Site Manager is Kerry Togneri. 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. For more information, to make meal reservations, or to sign up for programs, call (413) 863-9357. Leave a message if the center is not open.

Monday, November 26th

10 a.m. Aerobics
10:45 a.m. Chair Exercise
1 p.m. Knitting Circle

Tuesday, November 27th

10:30 a.m. Chair Yoga
1 p.m. GMRSD Focus Group

Wednesday, November 28th

10 a.m. Aerobics
10:30 a.m. Monthly Health Screenings
12:45 p.m. Bingo

Thursday, November 29th

9 a.m. Tai Chi
12 p.m. SHINE Appointments

1 p.m. Pitch
Friday, November 30th
10 a.m. Aerobics
10:45 a.m. Chair Exercise
1 p.m. Writing Group

ERVING

Erving Senior Center, 1 Care Drive, Erving, is open Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. for activities and congregate meals. Lunch is at 11:30 a.m., with reservations required 24 hours in advance. Call Mealsite Manager Rebecca Meuse at (413) 423-3308, for meal information and reservations. For information, call Polly Kiely, Senior Center Director, at (413) 423-3649. Transportation can be provided for meals, shopping, or medical necessity. Call the Center to confirm activities, schedule a ride, or find out when is the next blood pressure clinic.

Fuel Assistance Applications

New applications for this heating season are available at the Senior Center. Help completing forms and obtaining the necessary paperwork is available. To find out income availability and other information, call Polly at (413) 423-3649.

Monday, November 26th

9 a.m. Tai Chi
10 a.m. Osteo-Exercise
12:30 p.m. Quilting

Tuesday, November 27th

8:45 a.m. Chair Aerobics
12:30 p.m. Painting

Wednesday, November 28th

8:45 a.m. Line Dancing
10 a.m. Yoga
12 p.m. Bingo

Thursday, November 29th

8:45 a.m. Aerobics
10 a.m. Posture Perfect
12 p.m. Cards

Friday, November 30th

9:00 a.m. Bowling

LEVERETT Senior Activities

For information, contact the Leverett COA at (413) 548-1022, ext. 5, or coa@leverett.ma.us.
• Take-It-Easy Chair Yoga – Wednesdays at 10 a.m. at the Town Hall. Drop-in \$4 (first class free).

• Senior Lunch – Fridays at 12. Call (413) 367-2694 by Wednesday for a reservation.

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

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Local Briefs

JESSICA LARON ILLUSTRATION

COMPILED By DON CLEGG

A focus group at the Gill/Montague Senior Center, 62 Fifth Street, in Turners Falls on Tuesday, Nov. 27, at 1 p.m. will be a chance for all interested **senior citizens** to meet with a representative from the Massachusetts Association of School Committees and give input that may assist in developing a profile for a new Superintendent of Schools of the Gill/Montague School District. A second focus group will be held for interested **parents and community members**

on Wednesday, Nov. 28, from 4:30 to 7:30 p.m., at the Turners Falls High School Theater.

The winter holidays can be a challenging time for people who are grieving. For the bereaved, instead of bringing joy, holidays can intensify the pain of sorrow. **Hospice of Franklin County** recognizes that members of the Franklin County community as well as our hospice families could use extra support at this time of year. Hospice is offering two holiday memorial candle decorating workshops where attendees will create a beautiful keep-

sake in their honor.

The first workshop is Friday, Dec. 7, from 12:30 to 2:30 p.m. at Bernardston Senior Center. The second workshop is Tuesday, Dec. 11, from 6 to 8 p.m. at Our Lady of Peace in Turners Falls. To register for either workshop, please call Hospice of Franklin County at (413) 774-2400 by November 26, 2012. All programs are free and registration is required.

Our Lady of Czestochowa Church, 87 K Street, in Turners Falls is hosting the annual **Polish Christmas Bazaar** on Saturday, Dec. 1, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. The bazaar offers Polish crafts and home-made foods, raffles and more. To rent a table at this popular annual event, or for more information, contact Shirley at (413) 773-7202.

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

RECYCLING from page 1

ed the district to get a clear picture of the recycling efforts. They were particularly impressed with the full district participation and the expansion of compost collection into the classrooms at the Gill Elementary School and the Montague Elementary Sheffield campus. MassRecycle videotaped the second grade classroom of Susan Pellis, and brief clips of the video can be seen by visiting <http://vimeo.com/53124217>.

Each classroom has a 5-gallon bucket to collect snack remains, paper towels and other compostable materials in addition to container recycling bins, paper recycling bins, juice box collection bins and a trash bin. Pellis acknowledges the in-class composting is more work for the faculty but enthusiastically supports the efforts.

She has noticed a considerable reduction in classroom waste and has a rotating team of Friday helpers who bring the compost to the wheeled totes placed throughout the school. The fifth grade stu-

dents in Montague and sixth grade students in Gill are responsible for bringing the collection totes outside to the compost dumpsters.

The school also has an active worm composting system that is maintained by the after-school program where children feed the worms with snack wastes and harvest compost for their gardens. Christine Bates, coordinator of the Montague After School Program, says more than half the 48 students in the program participate in the gardening program. With local farm partners, the students have plenty of hands-on practice, though they particularly enjoy the harvesting.

This year they harvested radishes, carrots, lettuce, potatoes, greens and other crops. On one occasion, they even made kale chips for their snack. Recently, they planted garlic to harvest next spring, and winter rye as a cover crop. They also started transplanting lettuce that was propagated from their own seed collection. They hope to get their hoops covered with plastic before long and harvest some greens in the

winter. It's an exciting program and an excellent opportunity for students with minimal garden exposure to learn to grow their own food.

The gardens have recently expanded with the assistance of Nourse Farms, which donated asparagus, currants, gooseberries, blackberries, and raspberries for the perennial beds. Bates says the support of maintenance staff has been invaluable in keeping the gardens going and delivering grass clippings and other mulch for the on-site composting.

MassRecycle was impressed to see so many facets of recycling and composting, and was enthusiastic about commitment to caring for the environment exhibited across the curriculum. Art teacher Nancy Meagher has used art as a forum for education in many ways – from the painting of the dumpsters at the Gill Elementary School to Earth Day projects to the annual Connecticut River Source-to-Sea Cleanup.



Looking Back

Here's the way it was 10 years ago this week. News from The Montague Reporter's archive.

Crime on the Rise

According to Montague acting Police Chief Gary Billings, downtown Turners Falls has seen an increase in drug-related crime and gang-related activity over the past year. "The rate of reported crime has been down in the other villages by 10 percent," said Billings in a recent telephone interview. But reported crime "has been up about 10 percent in that same period for the downtown." This does not come as news to a group of downtown Turners residents and business owners, who have been meeting lately in response to the spike in criminal activity.

Eyes on the Prize

The Turners Falls High School girls volleyball team came within two points of bringing home the Western Mass Championship banner Nov. 9. In the tie-breaking fifth game of the finals match held at Holyoke

High, Turner Falls lost to Belchertown High, 15-13. Turners Falls captured the Franklin County Volleyball League Championship earlier in the season with an 18-3 record. The team then advanced to the Western Mass Championships, beating Pioneer Valley Christian School of Springfield, 3-0, in the quarter-final and Frontier Regional of South Deerfield, 3-1, in the semi-final match.

Bicycle Sale to Benefit Veterans Memorial

Basically Bicycles honored the new Veterans Memorial Park in Montague by having a special fundraising day Nov. 29. On that day, 15 percent of the store's proceeds were donated to the effort to build a new, consolidated memorial in Montague. "This will give people a great opportunity to do some shopping in Turners Falls and help make the community a little better by providing some funding for the veterans memorial project," said shop owner David Carr.

This week on MCTV

By CYNDI TARAIL - Don Clegg filmed the Veteran's Day Ceremony in Turners Falls at the Montague Veterans Memorial. Clegg said, "We haven't missed a Veteran's Day or a Memorial Day ceremony there since [MCTV] got the license, whether it was done by me or Anne Harding. We've been there for civic events all that time." Don hopes that "will inspire others to cover public events, whether patriotic in nature or a different kind of event." The community depends on volunteers to video most local events, as MCTV has a part-time staff.

MCTV's newest Quick Shot video, created by Owen Weaver for the Northeast Organic Farming Association of Massachusetts, is about the benefits of local organic systems in agriculture. Viewers can

find these videos online at MCTV's vimeo.com/mctvchannel17 or airing on Channel 17.

For more information contact Cindy Tarail, MCTV Outreach and Communication Coordinator, at (413) 863-9200, or check montaguectv.org.

Watch locally produced video on demand at: vimeo.com/mctvchannel17.

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Poets Wanted!

to submit original poems. Please email: reporter-poems@montaguema.net for consideration in the monthly Poetry Page. Include 25-word bio. Poems may also be posted to Montague Reporter, 58 4th Street, Turners Falls, MA 01376. No prior experience necessary, as a poet.

WE WELCOME YOUR LETTERS!

Montague Reporter

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HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MONTAGUE POLICE LOG

Burglary, Breaking and Entering; Larceny Reported; Vandalism

Tuesday, 11/13

12:27 a.m. Suspicious auto investigated at Bob's Auto Body Inc., 303 Avenue A.

1:30 a.m. Motor vehicle violation citation issued at Rau's Sunoco & Towing, 531 Turners Falls Road.

2:29 p.m. Accident with property damage, services rendered. Third Street & Avenue A.

4:31 p.m. Medical emergency, services rendered. Crocker Building, 54 Avenue A.

5:29 p.m. Assist motorist, services rendered. Turnpike Road.

6:34 p.m. 911 call reporting assault at Avenue A & Fourth Street. Advised of options.

6:48 p.m. Threatening, harassment at Winthrop Street. Advised of options.

10:24 p.m. Burglar alarm. Subway

of Turners Falls, 57 Avenue A. Check completed.

Wednesday, 11/14

6:42 a.m. Accident, property damage at Unity Street. Services rendered.

9:30 a.m. 911 call reporting disturbance by neighbor at Avenue A. Services rendered.

11:15 a.m. Accident, property damage, walk in report taken. Greenfield Savings Bank lot on Avenue A.

12:36 p.m. Fraud reported, walk in report taken on Lake Pleasant Road. Advised of options.

6:02 p.m. Suspicious person investigated at Hillside Avenue & Millers Falls Road.

6:31 p.m. Larceny at Second Street. Report taken.

Thursday, 11/15

3:14 a.m. Domestic disturbance. Montague City Road. Investigated.

6:06 p.m. Motor vehicle violation. Montague City Road and Turnpike Road. Citation issued.

12:15 p.m. Fire alarm. Main Street and School Street. Services rendered.

6:37 p.m. Summons issued to [REDACTED]. Charged with A&B with dangerous weapon.

8:44 p.m. Suspicious person investigated at Highland School Apartments, 446 Millers Falls Road.

Friday, 11/16

12:34 p.m. Larceny report taken at G Street.

12:17 p.m. Burglary, breaking and

entering report taken at Avenue A.

5:16 p.m. Accident property damage. Scotty's Convenience Store, 66 Unity Street. Advised of options.

8:29 p.m. Threatening, harassment, referred to officer. Millers Falls Road.

9:06 p.m. Report of disturbance by neighbor at Central Street. Investigated.

10:57 p.m. Traffic hazard. Turners Falls Road and Turnpike Road. Unable to locate.

Saturday, 11/17

7:41 a.m. Vandalism, services rendered at Central Street.

8:06 a.m. Medical emergency. Central Street. Removed to hospital.

1:40 p.m. Officer wanted and summons issued at Powertown

Apartments.

1:42 p.m. Traffic hazard between Third, Fourth Street & L Street. Dispersed gathering.

Sunday, 11/18

12:14 a.m. Larceny report taken at Avenue A.

4:27 a.m. Animal complaint at Cumberland Farms, 10 Montague City Road. Services rendered.

10:02 a.m. Animal complaint at Montague Street & Griswold Street. Services rendered.

10:43 p.m. Suspicious auto. Sheffield Elementary School. Services rendered.

Monday, 11/19

12:03 p.m. Larceny investigated at Con Agra, Industrial Blvd.

6:02 p.m. Suspicious person, advised of options. Third Street.

4:04 p.m. 911 call reporting domestic disturbance. Arrest made at Hatchery Road.

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"The Voice of the Villages"

Founded by
Harry Brandt, David Detmold
August, 2002

Arthur Evans

Hello ...

This column space deserves to go mainly to David Detmold, who has created an amazing thing, this newspaper, from scratch. That it has not only survived, but prospered – with the help of many talented and committed people – is a great accomplishment. He can be proud, just as I am proud and delighted to take over the reins from him.

I'm a relative newcomer to the Pioneer Valley; I've only lived here for the last year. Before moving here, I lived in Brooklyn, N.Y., for 20 years, but during all that time, I often came to the Valley because I love this area. I love the Valley's people, culture, and natural beauty. I've been privileged to work as a writer and editor for many New York magazines, covering everything from politics to the arts. In recent years, I've worked for a number of nonprofit

organizations, primarily in the environmental arena. The *Reporter* is also a nonprofit, which gives it the freedom to create a different and, I believe, deeper kind of journalism. The *Reporter* is a wonderful opportunity for me to draw on my experience in both worlds – journalism and non-profits.

I started out years ago as a cub reporter at a small rural weekly paper in Texas, covering sports, small businesses and local schools. I feel like I've come full circle.

I look forward to working with the *Montague Reporter's* great staff and getting to know all of you better. As David writes, this is the Voice of the Villages. I would just add that it is really the *voices* of the villages. I want your voices to be heard.

— Peter Kobel

... and Goodbye

Way back in 2001, when the nation was in the grips of major catastrophes like the George W. Bush administration and the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, Montague was dealing with its own minor kerfluffles. The selectboard had unceremoniously given the chief of police his walking papers, which led to a major hearing before the Civil Service Commission, and for good measure, the board had yanked the public educational and governmental access assignment from the local cable TV provider, Montague Community Television, and awarded it to Greenfield Community Television instead.

Citizens of the town got more incensed by the loss of local control over the public access TV station than they did about the loss of former Chief Patrick O'Brien, and mounted a petition drive to call a special town meeting on the issue. At that meeting, town meeting members voting overwhelming to ask the selectboard to reconsider their decision to hand the cable access TV station to Greenfield's control. The selectboard, dominated by Sam Lovejoy and highway clerk Ed Voudren (who subsequently presided over another town kerfluffle, when a bagman under his authority was found to have been pocketing trash sticker receipts, among other items paid for by the public), duly reconsidered the cable TV assignment, and reaffirmed their original decision to give the cable access station to Greenfield.

This arrogant act led directly to the founding of the *Montague Reporter*. Citizens of town felt, justifiably, that Montague residents were just as capable as Greenfield residents to own and operate their own media organizations, to report the news and views of their own community. And so, in the unplugged offices of the former Montague cable TV station, a new town newspaper was born, and immediately set out to expand coverage to the towns MCTV had covered – Gill and Erving.

A few months later, Wendell, where the revered Wendell Post had recently gone into a deep dor-

mant phase, was added to the masthead. More recently, instead of driving through the town of Leverett each week to deliver papers to Wendell, our board made the decision to expand coverage to Leverett as well, and outreach efforts have been undertaken in all these communities to involve their own residents in reporting the news of their own towns.

Montague Community Television has long since come back into its own, and is now cooperating successfully with, rather than being colonized by, GCTV. And somehow, in the rush to meet deadlines, I look back and find that ten very productive years have passed. At the *Montague Reporter* we are now doing our best to bring the Voice of the Villages to 2,600 local readers, and encouraging more to sign up for home delivery every week.

It has been a hectic, rewarding time for me, in the role of editor of the *Montague Reporter*, made easier by the high quality of writing, reporting, cartooning and proofreading provided by the volunteers and contributors from the communities we serve.

Now, as I step down from the post of editor to join the ranks of staff writers for the *Montague Reporter*, leaving the paper in the capable hands of our new editor, Peter Kobel, I want to thank each and every one of the readers, writers and illustrators who have made my job and the finished product so interesting each week. A special shout out to Joe Parzych, David Brule, Karen Wilkinson, Fran Hemond, Chris Sawyer Laucanno, Anne Harding, Patricia Pruitt, Leslie Brown and – whoops! I've exceeded my word count for this valedictory farewell.

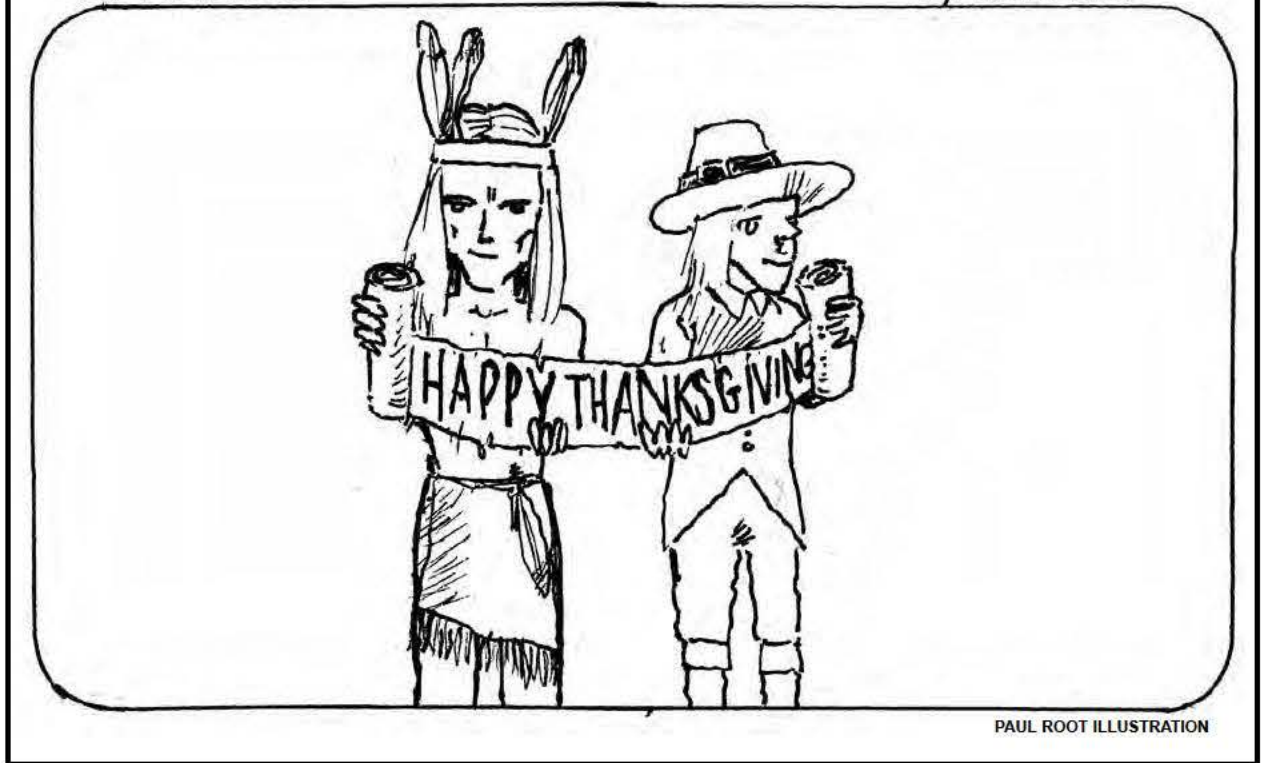
The board may allow me to go on at a little more length at my "retirement" party – at the French King Restaurant in Erving, on Friday, Dec. 7 at 7 p.m. So come to that, and continue – as I will – to help us provide the best little newspaper in the Valley, the *Montague Reporter*, for many years to come.

Thank you.

— David Detmold

5 VILLAGES

by Paul Root



PAUL ROOT ILLUSTRATION

LETTER TO



THE EDITOR

Call for Culinary Chemists

Going into my kitchen these days is feeling more and more like going into a laboratory. I have become very intrigued by why things happen the way they do – in the oven, in the microwave, in the freezer, in the toaster, etc. As much as it is satisfying to eat, I now want to know more about what is actually happening in the process of food preparation. I want to know, for example, how the lurking sugar in certain foods is best drawn out, why some cheese works best in grilled sandwiches, what is the secret of capturing jam at its peak, etc. etc. etc. So many questions, so many meals!

I have come upon two books that

make my mouth water just to read through the chapter titles. The first is *Kitchen Mysteries: Revealing the Science of Cooking* by Hervé. This, and *The Kitchen as Laboratory* an edited book by many authors. Here's a sample of the things covered in these small, but exciting texts: "Faux Caviar and Skinless Ravioli," "Ice Cream Unlimited," "Baked Alaska and Frozen Florida," "The Boiled and the Bouillon," and "The Egg's Incarnations." However, the laboratory can be a lonely place, so I am putting out feelers for a lab partner...or two...or three...or more.

Never having been in a book club, I understand from those who are that

it can be a grand place to discuss ideas, debate differences and drink wine. Should there be anyone in the *Montague Reporter* readership who might care to join me and take a closer look at these two books, I would be happy to host such a gathering. Just bring your curiosity, your scientific bent, and your lab coat. Well, no, the bent and the coat are unnecessary. Just an interest in uncovering some of the mysteries of the kitchen and maybe even doing a few stovetop lab experiments. You can reach me at: njjohnson@verizon.net.

— Norma Johnson
Montague Center

Thanksgiving and Giving Thanks

By MARVIN SHEDD

BERNARDSTON – Thanksgiving is a day to gather family together to celebrate and to give thanks for the many blessings in our lives. For the 29th straight year, my wife, Sue, and I will host a gathering at our log home high atop Snow Hill in Bernardston. Hosting family and friends is something that we enjoy and look forward to. Maintaining and passing on family tradition is of prime importance to us and to our absolute delight, our two sons have always embraced the notion and often offer their own contributions. In recent years the day has featured visits from Sue's family, although it's not uncommon for one of my brothers to drift in late in the day to have a cup of coffee and maybe a piece of pie, by the fire.

For a number of years now, my oldest son, Michael, has done the lion's share of the baking. Interested in baking since he was a little boy, he often spent time with me in the kitchen. It was there that I taught him the tricks of the trade that I learned from my mother and grandmother. His offerings vary from year to year, but often include homemade bread, cookies and candy. Typically,

he makes extra, which he gives to family and friends. He takes justifiable umbrage at the occasional assumption that he uses a bread machine or a store-bought mix. Not to be outdone by my 24-year-old son, I usually add an item or two to the mix just to show that the old man still has the touch!

After a meal of turkey, mashed potatoes, stuffing and various vegetables, most will retire to the living room to sit by the fireplace, where talk may turn to the recent election or the various issues facing the nation, or less contentious issues like recent movies we've seen or books we've read. Others will retain their seat at the dining room table to continue whatever conversation they were in the midst of, and still others will don their coats for a walk around the land my family has lived on for over 150 years. One thing is certain this year – my youngest son will be showing off his new Martin guitar, along with the Fender Telecaster electric guitar we bought him as a graduation present.

Thanksgiving this year finds many Americans struggling to find a light at the end of the proverbial tunnel. Many, still unable to find work, are wondering if there actually is a

light, while others are dealing with the destruction wrought by Hurricane Sandy. Issues like health care, gay rights, climate change and women's rights have divided the country, all too often along strict party lines, even though most of these issues should be nonpartisan. It remains to be seen whether our leaders will move beyond the partisan politics that have characterized the last four years and, instead, begin the dialogue that will move the country forward in a positive and constructive way.

Despite the many issues facing the country, most of us can find plenty to be thankful about. In most cases, we don't have to look very far. Remember loved ones past and present, those who helped shape our lives, and those who make our lives complete by their presence in it. Call an old friend and tell them how your life has been enriched by their friendship. Tell your kids you love them – they need to hear it. Tell them again tomorrow. This Thanksgiving, after the football game and that second piece of pie, when the guests have returned home and the leftovers put away, may we all find time to reflect on all that is good in our lives.

The First Week in January

By ELIZABETH WARREN

CAMBRIDGE – I'm honored to serve the people of Massachusetts in the United States Senate, and I'm grateful for everything you've done to help send me to Washington.

When I'm sworn in just a couple of months from now, I want to fight for jobs for people who want to work. I want millionaires and billionaires and Big Oil companies to pay their fair share. And I want to hold Wall Street accountable.

But here's the honest truth: we'll never do any of that if we can't get up-or-down votes in the Senate.

Remember Jimmy Stewart's classic film *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*? I love that movie. That's what most of us think of when we hear the word "filibuster" – a single passionate senator speaking for hours about legislation they fiercely oppose until they literally collapse with exhaustion.

But that's not what today's fili-

see WARREN page 10

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Shea Theater Seeks Aspiring Comedians to Open Popular New Year's Eve Show

TURNERS FALLS - Did you hear the one about the former Massachusetts governor who ran for president of the United States?

The Shea Theater is encouraging all area comedians - new and experienced - to audition for a slot as an opening act during the Shea's popular New Year's Eve comedy show.

Anyone interested should prepare a three-minute routine to present.

Auditions will be held at the Shea Theater, 71 Avenue A in Turners Falls on Monday, Nov. 19 and on Tuesday, Nov. 20 at 7:00 p.m.

from **APPEALED** page 1

apartments.

In order to fit eight of those apartments into the existing structure of the historic school building, developer Mark Zaccheo told the ZBA he needed a variance from the town's zoning ordinance requiring a minimum residential dwelling size of at least 700 square feet. One of the one bedroom apartments would wind up being 430 square feet in total area, seven others would range in size from 500 to 700 square feet under the proposal approved by the ZBA.

The plaintiffs in the appeal, who include Mary Averill, Virginia Rose, Richard Dingman, Olga and Kenneth Holmberg, Jenne Merrill, and Brian Pierce, maintain the ZBA

acted improperly in granting the variance and special permits for the project, since the property does not meet the minimum lot size requirements needed for that number of apartments, and because the developer did not meet the legal burden of proof of "hardship" needed to receive a variance on the minimum floor area for apartments.

The plaintiffs have hired attorney Thomas Lesser of Conway, one of the area's premier trial attorneys, to represent them.

For the last four years, Montague has been trying to find a viable reuse for the 14,182 square foot building, which the town has invested some hundreds of thousands of dollars in for a new roof, new water line, heat and mainte-

nance since the regional school district consolidated the Montague elementary grades into Hillcrest and Sheffield in 2008.

Zoning board enforcement officer David Jensen said he felt the ZBA's decision was entirely defensible. "I think they met all the burdens in their findings of terms of relations with the neighborhood and hardship to the owner. The hardship to the owner and by extension the developer in order to make this a productive building is close to obvious."

Jensen said the town's 700 foot minimum floor area was antiquated. "Times have changed," he said, since the zoning act establishing this requirement was passed in 1973. Changing demographics have

made a single-room apartment an attractive option for many people, whereas two-bedroom apartments were considered a societal norm in past years, Jensen said.

But former selectboard member Sam Lovejoy, speaking at the public hearing on Oct. 17, just before the ZBA voted 4-1 in favor of granting Zaccheo's requests for special permits and a variance, reminded the board, "Variances should not be granted lightly, or for a self-created hardship. The petitioner has created a situation of self created hardship. I don't know how the ZBA is going to get around the court cases on this, up to a few weeks ago... I can't imagine how this variance can be granted under the law."



from **ZBA** page 1

which is in the midst of a complex and contentious controversy of its own. A landowner applied for a permit to expand a gravel pit located in a commercial zone on Route 63, just down the road from Montague Center. The decision was strongly opposed by neighbors. The ZBA majority approved the request, but failed to achieve the two-thirds vote required, in effect rejecting the permit.

The applicant is now challenging the decision in court.

As in the case of Montague, the Leverett controversy pitted the need for economic development against a desire to maintain the character of the neighborhood. A 2003 decision by the Gill planning board to grant a special permit for an outdoor paintball field raised similar issues. The proposed business, located in a relatively secluded section of town, was opposed by neighbors as undermining the quality of life in the area. On appeal, a district court judge sent the decision back to the town for further action, noting that the board had not followed the permitting procedures in its own bylaws. At that point a planning board with new members rejected the proposal.

These two controversies concerned special permits. The Montague ZBA decision involves two special permits, but also a variance, to allow the developer to construct apartments below the 700-square-foot minimum threshold in the town bylaws. The legal barrier for approving variances is significantly higher than for special permits.

"We always warn people seeking variances that the criteria are extremely narrow," said Putnam. "There have been only one or two approved [in the 15 years] I've been here."

According to a detailed study of variance law produced for the Cape Cod Commission, a regional planning agency, the courts have consistently stressed that "no person has a legal right to a variance, and they

are to be granted sparingly."

The 2007 study continues:

"Since its introduction in the early 1920s, the variance - both area and use - has generated more controversy and debate than any other land use tool available to cities and towns across the country. Case law is replete with exhortations to local zoning boards about their misuse and abuse of power and state legislatures have often responded with limitations, prohibitions and a strict narrowing of the opportunities for zoning boards to grant variances."

The reasons for this rigidity are embedded in the history of variances. Contrary to popular opinion, they were not originally created to give local governments flexibility to encourage economic development. That is the purpose of special permits. Variances were designed to protect local governments in unusual situations where, due to the unique conditions of a property, enforcement of zoning laws would cause significant "harm" to the owner. Cities and towns could be vulnerable to the challenge that zoning constituted an "illegal public taking," that is, a virtual seizure of property without appropriate legal protections. The purpose of the variance is to "provide a kind of administrative escape hatch to protect the ordinance from being held unconstitutional," writes Mark Bobrowski in *Handbook of Massachusetts Land Use and Planning Law*.

The Massachusetts law on variances was part of the state's Zoning Enabling Act passed in 1924. In response to the tendency of local boards to approve variances inconsistent with their original intent, the language of the law has been tightened over the years, and a large body of generally restrictive case law has developed.

According to the current statute, three inter-related tests are required to approve a variance. First, the board must find that there is something wrong and unusual about soil conditions, shape or topography of

the land or structure. Secondly, the board must find that "a literal enforcement of the provisions of the ordinance or bylaw would involve substantial hardship, financial or otherwise, to the petitioner or appellant." Finally, a board must find a variance will not cause "substantial detriment to the public good."

This is a very high hurdle to jump, and it is not entirely clear that the Montague ZBA decision does so. Particularly problematic is the notion that the shape of the Montague lot or building would lead to "substantial hardship" to the prospective developer, requiring apartments below the 700-foot threshold. The initial application for a variance did not mention any unusual features of the structure, but instead based its request on the need to "provide a more diverse product mix with apartments from 400 square feet to 1,800 square feet." This creates the impression that the variance request was needed to make the building a viable investment. Yet the courts have ruled, in the words of the Cape Cod report, that "a landowner's desire to maximize his profit does not constitute substantial hardship."

Critics at the hearings questioned whether a developer who does not yet own a building can claim hardship. If he deems that existing zoning laws threaten the viability of his business plan, he can simply walk away from the project and not purchase the building.

The ZBA variance decision, as filed with the Montague town clerk on Oct. 31, does directly address the criteria in state law discussed above. Yet the ZBA board itself never discussed these criteria prior to its Oct. 17 vote. The document with the justification was filed after the vote and was never approved by the board. This creates the impression that the variance was approved due to the board's estimate of the quality of the proposal and the need to "do something with this building," as was stated a number of times during the hearings, as opposed to the criteria in state law.

It is not clear that the rationale for the variance, as stated by the developer during the hearings, was the same as that which appeared on the document filed with the town clerk. The developer stressed the internal structure of the building as requiring a variance to the 700-square-foot rule, whereas the final decision was based on the limitations of the parcel of land on which the building was located.

The board did not request evidence that the shape of the lot or structure would create hardship, but appeared to accept the verbal testimony of the developer. According to the Cape Cod report, "the required finding is likely to trigger the need for expert testimony beyond the expertise of the applicant and members of the Board of Appeals. This point is crucial with

regard to the requirement that the Board rest its decision on factual information - studies, reports, and expert testimony."

During the course of the ZBA hearings, strong arguments for and against the project were made. The board bent over backwards to allow the critics to have their say. There is a legitimate argument that the 700-square-foot minimum in the town bylaws is unreasonable. (Greenfield does not even have a minimum requirement.) But it is not clear that the board followed the criteria for variances in state law and in decades of legal precedent. With abutters on School Street now appealing the ZBA's decision on the Montague Center School, that matter will now be up to the court to decide.



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Peter Cooper, of Brattleboro, asked the Public Service Board members, "Look at this photograph. Does this look like reliability to you?"

from YANKEE page 1

decades-long struggle to retire and decommission Vermont Yankee. Together they were forced to listen to, and reckon with, the arguments and impassioned pleas of both sides.

And opponents of the continued operation of the reactor have gained some important allies in recent years, including Vermont's recently re-elected Gov. Peter Shumlin, Sen. Bernie Sanders, and recently re-elected Attorney General Bill Sorrell. Sorrell continues to press an appeal of the federal district court decision that blocked the 26-4 bipartisan vote of the Vermont State Senate in 2010 to close Vermont Yankee at the end of its original 40 year operating license, which expired in March of this year. However, the same lower court ruling left intact the Vermont PSB's power to issue – or deny – a Certificate of Public Good for the continued operation of the reactor, without which Entergy cannot keep the plant running. The hearing that began in the Vernon Elementary School on Nov. 7 holds the potential to be as important to the future of Vermont Yankee as the federal court appeal, which both sides predict will wind its way to the Supreme Court.

Though outnumbered by the nuclear plant workers and their professional supporters who got to the hearing early and crowded the podium for the first two hours – many reading speeches with which they appeared not entirely familiar, as if the speeches had been written by a PR firm – nuclear opponents held their own as the hearing wore on. And while VY proponents hit the same arguments repeatedly and effectively – the multiplier effect of the nuclear plant's \$65 million annual payroll, the reliability of the reactor's 620 megawatts of "clean, safe, no-carbon" power – opponents talked of everything from Fukushima to corporate influence on democracy to the fears of first-time home buyers in the Windham County area when evacuation sirens go off for their periodic tests.

Though PSB chair James Volz reminded anti-nuclear speakers repeatedly that his board was proscribed from considering issues of radiological health and safety, which the federal government has preempted from state oversight, and though the PSB is supposed to ignore politics as it rules on the issue, the full range of issues related to VY's continued operation managed to work

their way into the testimony.

"In the case of Vermont Yankee," said Georgina Forbes, of Norwich, VT, "we have a classic exercise in peaceful, democratic process, where for 40 years citizens have educated and mobilized fellow citizens to vote by town, and then to elect a state legislature, a governor, and an attorney general who all clearly express the majority will of the people, and want Vermont Yankee to close, and expect Entergy Corporation to obey the dictates of the legal contract they entered into with the state regarding timely closure and full decommissioning of the plant. Will the Public Service Board uphold the democratically expressed will of the people of Vermont as an essential public good that cannot be trumped by a Louisiana corporation for profit?"

Or will the PSB listen instead to proponents for 20 more years of operation of VY? Philip Steckler, a business broker from Brattleboro, told the PSB that Entergy Vermont Yankee provides "650 good local jobs, has a payroll of \$65 million, with the average wage plus benefits of \$100,000, which is more than twice the average family income in the state of Vermont. It provides \$100 million a year in economic benefits to Windham County and Vermont, through taxes, and purchases of materials and services from Vermont businesses." He also asserted that it gives \$300,000 a year to charities.

Nuclear plant worker Ellen Coda, mother of two, who lives in the emergency planning zone, said, "I'm responsible for reviewing industry events and insuring that VY learns from them and from the issues, and that it takes the [industry's] best practices and implements them at the site."

"The reality of climate change is becoming more real with each named storm," she continued. "I'm proud of working in an industry which is helping to combat climate change. Nuclear energy provides electricity 24/7. It is the largest source of carbon-free baseload

power. It doesn't emit air pollutants or greenhouse gases, and rather protects our health, and our land and our air quality."

But Brother Tobey, a Buddhist monk from the Leverett Peace Pagoda, countered such arguments, saying, "Nuclear power is the other side of nuclear weapons. Ever since we've had the first chain reaction in 1938 in a Chicago stadium, we've been producing a waste we do not know what to do with: poisons that are going to stay poisons for countless generations ahead."

"We've had some wakeup calls," he said. "We've had Three Mile Island – that was a warning. We had Chernobyl, but then the industry here said we use a different kind of reactor, that we don't use the graphite moderated reactors, which are more dangerous. But then a year or so ago in March 2011 – Fukushima, which is the same model Mark I GE reactor that's used in Vermont Yankee."

duce carbon dioxide, but there's a tradeoff."

As Brother Tobey concluded his testimony, Volz reminded speakers that the Public Service Board is not allowed to consider radiological health and safety when making its decision.

The board heard more testimony about jobs, payrolls, and baseload power. But even if the PSB could not consider the health and safety of citizens, those issues loomed large. The aging reactor has been responsible for the repeated collapse of cooling towers, radioactive leaks polluting groundwater and affecting workers, and misplaced spent fuel rods, all in the decade since Louisiana-based Entergy took over ownership of VY in 2002.

The public – including the public in Western Massachusetts – is welcome to provide written testimony concerning the continued operation of Vermont Yankee to the Vermont



"You look around this room tonight," said Patty Murray, chair of the Vernon selectboard. "You look at the faces of the people that run this plant. That's Vermont Yankee. And there's not a single one of them that would work here, and run that plant, if it wasn't a good plant."

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Public Service Board at the following web address: psb.vermont.gov/docketsandprojects/public-comment?docket=7862 or in writing to:

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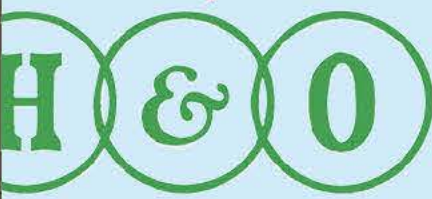
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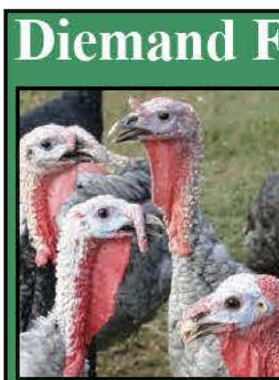
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Action on Native Battlefield Grant Delayed



Artist Francis Back's sketch of the attack at Peskeompskut.

By DAVID DETMOLD

MONTAGUE – On Oct. 31, the selectboard put off a scheduled discussion to authorize town of Montague to oversee an American Battlefield Protection grant application to the National Park Service. The \$30-\$40,000 grant application, which is being prepared by Paul Robinson, former state archeologist for the state of Rhode Island, is intended to map and preserve records of the battlefield where the May 19, 1676 "Falls Fight" took place. The combatants were a colonial militia, under the command of Captain William Turner, and Native Americans of various tribes camped mainly in a village on the Gill side of the Connecticut River,

refugees from the broader conflict engulfing the New England colonies at that time, known as Metacom's Rebellion or King Phillip's War.

Earlier in the fall, the Montague selectboard voted to approve the grant application, in a 2-1 vote, with Mark Fairbrother adamantly opposed. Fairbrother called the idea "bass-ackwards," saying Robinson, and Narragansett Indian tribe preservationist Doug Harris should have first approached Gill, or Greenfield, where the battle and retreats mainly took place, before coming to Montague for support.

On Oct. 31, with board member Pat Allen away for an extended vacation, Fairbrother asked town administrator Frank Abbondanzio

if the board would have a second chance to vote on the grant application once it was completed. Abbondanzio affirmed the board would have a chance for a second vote, and promptly dropped the item from the agenda. It has

remained off the board's agenda all month, though the deadline for the grant application to the National Parks Service is approaching.

According to selectboard secretary Wendy Bogusz, the battlefield grant is not on the agenda for the meeting on Nov. 26 either. Pat Allen is due to return home in time to attend the selectboard meeting on Dec. 3rd.

On Oct. 31, Abbondanzio defended the Montague board's majority position to authorize the Falls Fight Battlefield Protection grant, saying, "The grant would have to be issued in the name of the town of Montague," but, "the only work the town would have to do is to issue a request for proposals, hire a consultant, and submit quarterly reports."

The town manager went on to speak personally about his own support for the proposal.

"I feel there is a strong connection with any future development

of any kind of Native American heritage center for historical tourism in the area. We're trying to seize the initiative and be proactive, so if there is a Native American heritage center for this region we're out front, so that it is placed in Turners Falls, which could have major economic development potential for this town... perhaps in conjunction with the Great Falls Discovery Center. It's one piece, an important piece, that connects us to other Native American history in New England," Abbondanzio said.

Robinson said the grant would enable the town to "draw together all of the published sources that deal with the Turners Falls, Montague, Gill area and that old massacre there, to talk to local people and look at artifact collections, draw together the Indian oral history and do what the military term a terrain analysis. It would bring all of those approaches together," Robinson said, "to narrow down where the battle took place."

Robinson said completing that phase of research would enable the town of Montague to go back for one or two more phases of funding from the National Parks Service, to fund an archaeological research design for the battlefield, and then finally to provide

see **BATTLEFIELD** page 9

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NOTES FROM THE MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD

Millers Falls Buildings Available for Development

By PETER KOBEL

The Montague select-board voted Monday, Nov. 19, to declare several properties in Millers Falls available for disposition under the town's commercial homesteading program. The move makes the buildings, at 26-28, 30 and 34 E. Main Street, a large section of downtown, available in pieces or whole, for free or for a small fee. While the new owners will get them at low cost, they must come forward with plans for developing new businesses there.

The program, conceived by Town Administrator Frank Abbondanzio, seeks to take unused properties and, by incubating businesses, put them back on the tax rolls. The town has successfully employed a similar strategy in downtown Turners Falls, leading to the creation of Ristorante DiPaolo and the Northeast Foundation for Children's workshop facility over the past few years.

These properties, like the three in Millers Falls, were offered for a nominal sum to prospective owners who presented concrete business plans showing dollar investment required for renovation and the number of job that could be created. One

of the buildings is a substantial, three-story commercial block called the Powers building. The other two are adjacent wood-framed structures. All have commercial potential. They have been in disuse for years and have been a blight on the potential for business development of downtown Millers Falls.

Lahri Bond, head of the Lake Pleasant Village Association, asked the selectboard to amend monies outlaid for refurbishing the Bridge of Names, which needed repairs before winter comes. Costs totaled just over \$2,400. Bond also reported progress in restoring the bell that used to grace the tower of the New England Spiritualist Campmeeting Association temple, which was destroyed by arson in 1955. However, no decision has yet been made as to whether the original bell tower is salvageable. It may be restored or replaced entirely.

The bell tower and the damaged bell has lain at the west end of the Bridge of Names for several decades at the approximate location of the old temple, reportedly burned by the son of the former Lake Pleasant fire chief who disappeared mysteriously after the incident.

In other news, Turners

Falls resident John Furbish had submitted a letter of interest to be appointed to the board of the Montague Economic Development Industrial Corporation for the seat reserved for representatives of low-income community. Selectboard member Mark Fairbrother objected to his appointment because of what he called a "conflict of interest." Fairbrother said that because Furbish writes occasional articles for the *Montague Reporter* he would be conflicted serving on the EDIC board, because the *Montague Reporter* is an "offshoot" of Montague Community Television. MCTV is seeking to purchase and renovate the former Cumberland Farms building, which the EDIC currently owns.

However, MCTV president Michael Muller said this week that MCTV had severed all ties with the *Montague Reporter* years ago, and currently shares no board members or financial interests with the *Reporter*. Fairbrother allowed that Furbish could present his application in person at a subsequent board meeting.

The selectboard also announced a sand pile is available for residents across from the Department of Public Works garage.

Meadow Road residence. Subject transported to Cooley Dickinson Hospital

by Amherst fire department ambulance.
5:01 p.m. Wires burning near Teawaddle Hill Road residence. WMECo notified and responded.
Wednesday, 11/14
9:30 a.m. Attempted breaking and entering at a house under construction on Rattlesnake Gutter Road. No entry gained; door jamb damaged. Under investigation.
2:02 p.m. Walk-in subject reported car damaged by debris on Route 63 in Montague. Referred to the Montague police.

NOTES FROM THE GILL SELECTBOARD

Voting Booths May Return to Town Hall

By DAVID DETMOLD

The next time Gill voters cast ballots in a general election, they may be voting on the second floor of town hall, rather than at the meeting room of the fire station.

For the last 20 years or so, since Gill combined its former two voting precincts (Riverside and Gill Center) into one townwide precinct, all Gill voters have made their way past the fire engines and turnout gear in the fire station to the bunker-like meeting room in the safety complex to cast ballots in town, state and national elections.

On Monday, selectboard member Randy Crochier proposed moving the polling place from the fire station up to the town hall.

Crochier said he is worried that the fire station, which serves as the town's emergency operations center (EOC), may find itself trying to do double duty in some future emergency, juggling incoming voters — who sometimes park too close to the building for fire trucks to easily exit — and outgoing fire engines.

Ann Banash, participating in the meeting by telephone from her vacation home in Florida, said, "It seems to me [that] if we are operating the EOC, we're probably not going to be voting at the same time." And she reminded the other board members, "A long time ago, there used to be a real division between Riverside and the rest of town. The people in Riverside," where Banash lives, "didn't want to come to town hall. The fire station was picked as a neutral location," for voting, as it was geographically midway between Riverside and the town center, she said.

Fire chief Gene Beaubien told the board he likes having the public come through the fire station each year to see the condition of the fire

engines (shiny), and the gear on the wall, but, "My biggest fear is the fact that it is the EOC. We've been lucky the last 20-some-odd years nothing has happened." Beaubien said he'd like the polling place moved to town hall.

Town clerk Lynda Hodsdon Mayo said she appreciated the support of the workers at the safety complex to help her set up the polling station each election, but that the second floor of town hall — which is accessible for handicapped voters via a rarely used, but expensively maintained, elevator — would give her more room to conduct elections.

The upshot of the conversation: Hodsdon-Mayo will ask someone for the Secretary of State's elections division to come inspect town hall, to make sure it meets state requirements for a polling site. If it gets the OK from Boston, Crochier recommended putting the matter to the voters at a town meeting, to get a sense of how the town would feel about moving the polling place to town hall.

The board held a tax classification hearing on Monday, and heard from town administrative coordinator and chair of the board of assessors Ray Purington that values have declined overall in town, and since the town's budgetary needs have remained constant, tax rates will need to go up.

Purington said total valuation in town declined from \$152 million to \$149.2 million in the past year, largely due to a drop in the value of homes as reflected through recent sales. He recommended a new tax rate of \$15.34 per thousand, up from last year's rate of \$14.55. He said the property tax bill for the average single family home would go up to \$3,108 from \$3,031, an average \$77 hike, for about a 2.54% increase.

Purington said Gill currently has the 71st lowest average single-family tax bill

in the state, out of 338 cities and towns. In the 28 towns of Franklin County, only seven have lower single-family tax bills than Gill.

Members of the select-board commented that it is hardly fair to count Rowe, Monroe, and Erving among the towns with lower tax bills, because utility companies pay such a disproportionate share of the tax bills in those three county towns, which rank second, third, and fifth, respectively, for the lowest statewide average single family tax bills.

Before everyone in town packs up their jalopies and heads to the hills of Monroe Bridge, the board has decided to seek traffic calming devices, such as traffic cones, new speed limit signage, and possibly painting the word SLOW across both lanes of traffic near the center of town.

Crochier proposed the idea, in response to concerns raised about traffic speeding down the hill approaching the Gill Tavern, or around the bend by Slate Library. The board will also seek better signage from the Mass Department of Transportation to turn onto Main Road from Northfield Road (Route 10).

While they were discussing traffic problems, the board agreed with Riverside resident Peter Conway that the potholes on the one lane entering Turners Falls over the Gill-Montague bridge are getting worse, and getting patched more slowly than ever.

"They can knock your car tires out of alignment," said Conway, who admitted to hugging the guard rails to avoid them. Purington will contact the Mass DOT about this problem, too.

Problems have also cropped up with the recently-installed heating system upgrade at the safety complex. Beaubien said it took four hours to raise the tem-

see GILL page 9

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE LEVERETT POLICE LOG

Credit Card Fraud, Wires Burning

Tuesday, 11/6

3:25 p.m. Officer attempted to stop two unregistered all-terrain vehicles on Montague Road. Vehicles fled down Rattlesnake Gutter Road; unable to locate.

6:09 p.m. Larceny of two propane tanks at a Long Plain Road residence. Later discovered to have been mistakenly removed by the gas company.

Wednesday, 11/7

7:15 p.m. Credit card fraud of a Long Plain Road resident.

Thursday, 11/8

4:03 p.m. Wisconsin resident received threatening and harassing calls and emails from a Leverett resident. Under investigation.

Friday, 11/9

8:40 a.m. Wood cord stolen from Putney Road residence. Under investigation.

Saturday, 11/10

5:10 p.m. Suspicious silver van in area of North Leverett Road. Gone upon arrival.

Tuesday, 11/13

10:30 a.m. Medical at a Juggler

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NOTES FROM THE ERVING SELECTBOARD

New Tax Rates Do Not Compute; Usher Plant Cleanup Plan Approved

By KATIE NOLAN

When assistant assessor Jacqueline Boyden entered the “minimum residential factor” voted recently by the selectboard into the state’s real estate tax software, the system would not accept the new MRF value, the board learned on Nov. 19.

The selectboard had approved a 63 percent MRF for 2013 during the tax classification hearing, increasing the residential tax rate by approximately 30 cents per thousand dollars value and the commercial/industrial/personal property rate by approximately 50 cents per thousand dollars value over 2012. With a split tax rate, use of the MRF shifts the tax burden away from residential property owners and onto business properties.

After Boyden questioned the state Department of Revenue, the DOR’s Bureau of Local Assessment used its response to Erving’s situation as a feature in its November “City and Town” newsletter. Over the last year, Erving’s commercial/industrial/real property values have increased and residential property values have decreased. Therefore, the 63 percent factor shifted more of the tax burden to businesses than is allowed by state law. According to Boyden, the lowest allowable MRF for the town this year is 65 percent, potentially resulting in a 2013 rate of \$0.01 per thousand higher than with the 63 percent MRF.

Boyden said she would seek ratification of the MRF at the Dec. 3 selectboard meeting, after she has received approval from DOR for the town’s property valuations and new growth figures.

Selectboard member and town treasurer Margaret Sullivan reported that a five-town agreement on Union 28 (U28) employee and retiree benefits is not final yet. Sullivan, Shutesbury town administrator Becky Torres and town counsel Donna MacNicol are still working on language concerning how to share the role of benefits administrator.

Currently, Swift River Elementary (New Salem/Wendell) is the administrator, paying the employee or retiree and then being reimbursed by the other towns for their proportion of the costs.

Providing benefits to U28 employees and retirees has been contentious for the five towns (Erving, Leverett, New Salem, Shutesbury, and Wendell) because the current benefits package for shared U28 employees is set by the package for the “lead town” (the town with the most students enrolled).

Erving, the lead town, offers more generous benefits for town employees than do other towns in U28. In order to protest paying more in benefits to U28 employees and retirees than to its own town employees, Leverett has withheld its share of U28 insurance costs.

Since passage of Chapter 206 of 2012 session laws in August

that allows each town to pay U28 employees and retirees according to the town’s own rate, the five U28 towns have been working out an agreement on how to fund benefits.

Sullivan said that the agreement should be signed and in effect by Dec. 1. However, because the language of the agreement was not ready for selectboard approval at the Nov. 19 meeting, it will not be considered again until the selectboard’s next meeting on Dec. 3.

School regionalization planning committee chair Beth Lux told the board that only two of the three members had been attending meetings, and that the “incredibly important” work of the committee was falling to the other two members. Lux said that they had asked the third member to resign, but had not received a resignation yet.

Klepadlo remarked that the committee has “an aggressive timetable” to meet. U28 towns Leverett and Shutesbury formed a joint regionalization planning committee with Amherst this summer. If these towns ultimately regionalize with Amherst and withdraw from U28, continuation of the superintendency union by the remaining three towns would be difficult.

Klepadlo suggested that town moderator Rich Peabody could appoint an alternate member to the committee, who could vote in the absence of the third member. He asked Sharp to forward names of likely alternates to Peabody.

Lux said that she had talked

with Pioneer Valley region about their interest in working with Erving on regionalization. If U28 “falls apart,” she reported, “Pioneer is absolutely willing to take in Erving – and to take in Wendell and New Salem as well.” She said that the Pioneer region and Erving are “culturally similar – we’re all small towns.”

Selectboard chair Eugene Klepadlo met Nov. 15 with the Northfield selectboard and Northfield emergency medical services director Mark Fortier to discuss a two-town shared ambulance service. He reported that he, Fortier and a representative of the Northfield selectboard will work on a mission statement for the shared service.

Klepadlo and Sullivan commented that Erving residents are not dissatisfied with the current ambulance services, supplied by Orange for the eastern portion of town and by Northfield and Baystate Ambulance for the western portion of town. Selectboard member Andrew Goodwin replied “there is no pressing need to take action, but it would be a potential source of revenue.” Sullivan said, “I don’t see a revenue stream there.”

The board also agreed that the town should try to find a qualified volunteer to attend a Franklin Regional Council of Governments emergency medical services meetings to find out more about county regionalization efforts.

Town administrator Tom Sharp told the selectboard that the

Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection had approved the Usher Plant cleanup plan submitted by environmental consultants Tighe & Bond on behalf of the town. Sharp said that initial work, such as placing erosion control barriers, would start this week.

Checking the scheduling chart, Goodwin noted that mobilization, sanitation control and 50 percent of erosion control should be completed by the end of this week. The board asked Sharp to contact Tighe & Bond to be sure that all tasks are completed as scheduled.

Sharp told the board that James Hackett, Cyd Scott and Philip Wonkka had applied for the job of emergency management director. However, because the town does not have a formal job description for the position, the board asked Sharp to draft one for their review before scheduling interviews with the candidates.

The board also decided to give the three applicants some “homework” – developing their own job descriptions for EMD. Applicants will also be asked to submit resumes, a list of certifications each one considers applicable to the position, and a list of certifications the applicant has achieved.

The board approved a \$10,450 contract with Tighe & Bond for MassDEP-required post-closure monitoring of the former Maple Avenue landfill. The contract will cover costs of analysis of groundwater samples, on-site monitoring and reporting.



DETMOLO PHOTO

Narragansett Tribal Preservationist Doug Harris (left, foreground) and Paul Robinson, former Rhode Island state archeologist, won approval for a Battlefield Protection grant from the Montague Selectboard earlier this fall.

BATTLEFIELD from page 7

resources for public interpretation and education on the battlefield’s history. That final phase, Robinson said, would be several years down the road.

Robinson said among other artifacts that would be searched for, “A forge and large amounts of lead were thrown into the river as part of the attack.” He noted, though the Native village attacked and wiped out in the Falls Fight is often characterized as a refugee camp, “The Indians were using this as part of a base camp to resupply people who are going out and fighting.” He said the grant would allow historians to look at

the battle over a large enough area. “For instance,” Robinson said, “Turners’ retreat through Greenfield, Smead Island down river where a large camp of Indian defenders was based, who came out and cut off Turners’ retreat. Another possibility is to look at some of the activity on the Montague shore. You read the reports and some suggest some of the battle was taking place on both sides of the river.”

Robinson said if the grant proposal is approved, work on the first phase of research would probably commence in July of next year.



GILL from page 8

perature just four degrees in the fire station garage one recent night, and the extremely loud blower in the meeting room makes it hard for people using that room to hear each other. The contractor who installed the system will be called in for consultation.

Hodsdon-Mayo requested a

\$200 stipend to allow newly elected town moderator John Zywna to attend training sessions for moderators.

Selectboard member John Ward said, “The moderator has a very important job in town; it would be nice to have him up to speed.”

Unless he is trying to cross the Gill-Montague bridge.



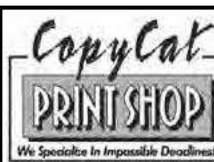
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“The perfect remembrance”

RETREAT from page 1

appeal, Jacobson wrote, "Currently, the property is over-built, unfinished and non-conforming. There is a commercial water system and a 1,200-square-foot conference center, but no code-compliant guest rooms or cooking facilities." Those issues are addressed in his long-range plan.

The Montague Retreat Center will undergo a building program stretching out over the next four years. When all is done in 2016, there will be 54 guest beds, four beds for staff and a four-bedroom home for the owners, 10 small cabins, a bathhouse with sauna, and a commercial kitchen. The existing farmhouse will be completely renovated.

The revenue needed to sustain the center will be generated from functions such as weddings, family reunions and corporate retreats, with the corporate retreats providing revenue significantly higher than educational retreats.

Sensitive to concerns of the neighbors, Jacobson told the ZBA that people who come to a retreat are quiet by the nature of the event, and that cars will arrive and depart at roughly the same time, generally staying on the grounds for the duration of the retreat. "A peaceful atmosphere is integral to the marketing and appeal of all retreat centers," he wrote. "To compromise that by allowing raucous use of the facility for functions would be against our own



The Montague Retreat Center

best interest."

Also sensitive to economic issues, Jacobson emphasized that the structure of the Montague Retreat Center as a for-profit LLC means that it will generate tax revenues for Montague and boost the local economy through several channels. "The center has hired

and sourced locally so far and will continue to do so," said Jacobson, adding, "The more we trade with one another, the more sustainable the local economy becomes. The Montague Retreat Center will develop ongoing business relationships with farms, local caterers, rental equipment suppliers, florists

and more."

Those grand plans do not mean that the property is lying fallow now. There are yoga classes, meditation sessions, belly dancing lessons and various events throughout the week. These are posted on Facebook, but those without Internet service can call (413) 834-

0855 for additional information.

Jacobson is eager to share the beauty of the land. He invites artists and photographers to come, pointing out a shock of fading wildflowers backlit by the sun. "I care about people, community and place," he said. "It's all here."



WARREN from page 4



U.S. Senator-elect Elizabeth Warren (D-MA)

buster looks like. In reality, any senator can make a phone call, say they object to a bill, then head out for the night. In the meantime, business comes to a screeching halt.

Senate Republicans have used this type of filibuster 380 times since the Democrats took over the majority in 2006. We've seen filibusters to block judicial nominations, jobs bills, political transparency, ending Big Oil subsidies — you name it, there's been a filibuster.

We've seen filibusters of bills and nominations that ultimately

passed with 90 or more votes. Why filibuster something that has that kind of support? Just to slow down the process and keep the Senate from working.

I saw the impact of these filibusters at the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. Forty-five senators pledged to filibuster any nominee to head that new consumer agency, regardless of that person's qualifications. After I left the agency, they tried to hold Richard Cordray's nomination vote hostage until the Senate agreed to weaken

the agency to the point where it could no longer hold the big banks and credit card companies accountable.

That's not open debate — that's paralyzing progress.

I learned something important in my race against Senator Brown: voters want political leaders who are willing to break the partisan gridlock. They want fewer closed-door roadblocks and more public votes on legislation that could improve their lives.

On the first day of the new session in January, the senators will have a unique opportunity to change the filibuster rule with a majority vote, rather than the normal two-thirds vote. The change can be modest: If someone objects to a bill or a nomination in the United States Senate, they should have to stand on the floor of the chamber and defend their opposition.

I'm joining Senator Jeff Merkley and six other newly elected senators to pledge to lead this reform on Day One, and I hope you'll be right there with us. Our campaign didn't end on Election Day — and I'm counting on you to keep on working each and every day to bring real change for working families. This is the first step.

Democrat Elizabeth Warren is the U.S. senator-elect from Massachusetts.

To contact United States Senate

majority leader Harry Reid and register your support for filibuster reform, call (202) 224-3542.



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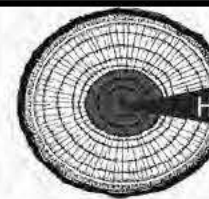
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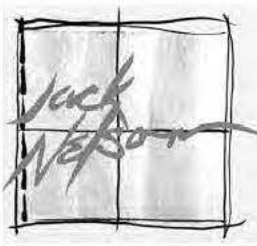
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Route 63 Roadhouse, Millers Falls: Free Texas Hold 'em Poker tournament, with cash prizes.

EVERY WEDNESDAY

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

Winterland, Greenfield: TNT Karaoke, 9 p.m.

EVERY THURSDAY

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

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

EVERY FRIDAY AND SATURDAY

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

ART SHOWS:

NOW through NOVEMBER 29th

Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls: Photographs by John Grabill.

Hampden Gallery, UMass, Amherst: Stories Set in Stone, Sculpture by Tim deChristopher. DeChristopher is a sculptor who works primarily in stone and steel. His work is deeply rooted in the tradition of architectural stonework, masonry and sculpture with a contemporary sensibility.

NOW through DECEMBER 12th

LOOT, Turners Falls: Separated at Birth – paintings and installations by artists Cathe Janke and Stephen Cahill.

NOW through DECEMBER 27th

Wendell Free Library, Wendell: A small retrospective of watercolors by former Wendell resident Craig Letourneau. Focuses on New England landscapes, English urban scenes and portraits.



Guy McPherson, professor emeritus at the University of Arizona, presents on "Developing Durable Living Arrangements in Light of Climate Change and Energy Decline", noon to 1 p.m., Wednesday Nov. 28, at Greenfield Community College.

LOCAL EVENTS:

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 21st

Between The Uprights, Turners Falls: Gobble Til You Wobble. Outdoor liquor license, food, meriment all day starting at noon. At 9 p.m., DJ Jill spins at the Extra Point Nightclub.

People's Pint, Greenfield: Quebecois Session. 8 p.m. Free.

Deja Brew, Wendell: Simon White, acoustic reggae. 8 to 10 p.m., free.

Route 63 Roadhouse, Millers Falls: Rock 201, Thanksgiving Show. 9:30 p.m. to midnight.

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 23rd

Mocha Maya's, Shelburne Falls: Moonlight Madness at 4 p.m. Seth Adam, pop rock, 6 p.m.

Deja Brew, Wendell: The Wildcat O'Halloran Band, guitar-based blues, 9 to 11 p.m.

Route 63 Roadhouse, Millers Falls: Sharp Dressed Man, classic rock. 9:30 p.m. to midnight.



PHOTO COURTESY ROOGAROOS FACEBOOK

The Roogaroos play '60s and '70s classic and radio rock. Come out to the the Route 63 Roadhouse this Saturday night, Nov. 24, at 9:30 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: Tawdry, with Dana Osterling, alt-folk and olde tyme, 9:30 p.m., free.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 24th

Mocha Maya's, Shelburne Falls: Joe Young, americana folk pop, with special guest Ashley Jordan, country folk rock. 7:30 p.m.

Arts Block Café, Greenfield: John Sheldon and Blue Streak, rock, jazz, blues, middle eastern grooves. 8 p.m., \$.

Route 63 Roadhouse, Millers Falls: Roogaroos, classic rock. 9:30 p.m. to midnight.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: Sandy Bailey & family & friends, 9:30 p.m., free.

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 25th

Mocha Maya's, Shelburne Falls: Celtic Session. Musicians of all levels can sit in and perform traditional Irish music. 10:30 a.m.

Deja Brew, Wendell: Guberman & Paradis, classic rock duo, 8 to 10 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: TNT Karaoke, 9 p.m. to 1 p.m., free.

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 26th

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: Dada Dino's Open Mic. 8 p.m.; sign up at 7:30 p.m.

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 27th

Bezanson Recital Hall, UMass-Amherst: Mary Halvorson/Jessica Pavone. This guitar and violin duo plays art song, chamber music, free improv. Open to the public. \$

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 28th

Greenfield Community College, Main Campus, Stinchfield Lecture Hall: Award winning conservation biologist and professor Guy MacPherson visits Greenfield Community College on November 28 from 12 to 1 p.m. to deliver his presentation "The Twin Sides of the Fossil-Fuel Coin: Developing Durable Living Arrangements in Light of Climate Change and Energy Decline." Free and open to the public.

The Wheelhouse, Greenfield: Creative Networking Buzz, artist networking. 6 p.m. Free.

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 29th

Deja Brew, Wendell: Blue Pearl, blues, jazz. 8 to 10 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: Ray Mason and Robin Lane. 8 to 10 p.m., free.

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 30th

Greenfield High School Auditorium: GCC Dance Department presents their annual fall Student/Faculty/Community Dance Concert. Special guests include GCC's

Mixed Company, KDS Dance Company, BodyWave Belly Dance, CRAZEFAZE, and more. 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. \$

Next Stage, Putney, VT: A celebration of Froggy Bottom guitars, featuring acoustic guitarists Will Ackerman, founder of Windham Hill Records, with Scott Ainslie and David Surette. 7:30 p.m., \$.

Mocha Maya's, Wendell: Marji Zintz, contemporary folk rock jazz. 8 p.m.

The Shea Theater, Turners Falls: A Christmas Carol Radio Show. 8 to 10 p.m. \$.

Burrito Rojo, Turners Falls: As The Dead Rise, melodic thrash metal, OFC, thrash/ska, Rebel Base, and Piece By Piece. 8 p.m., all ages, free.

Deja Brew, Wendell: Hobson's Razor, rock, reggae & funk. 9 to 11:30 p.m.

Route 63 Roadhouse, Millers Falls: Miles Band, classic hits. 9:30 p.m. to midnight.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: Fireseed, old time, jazz, celtic. 7:30 p.m., free.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: Bright Lines, countrybilly. 9:30 p.m., free.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 1st

Franklin Community Co-op, Greenfield: Film Showing and Member Craft Fair. Shop local and have fun! Local filmmaker Steve Alves will screen and discuss his new, internationally recognized documentary short, Food for Change, every 1/2 hour on the mezzanine. Co-op member craft fair in the meeting room. Refreshments too! 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Montague Grange: Square Dance, with caller Will Mentor. All are welcome. 7 p.m. to 10 p.m., \$.

Mocha Maya's, Shelburne Falls: The Chickenyard, americana rock, with special guest Annalise Emerick. 7:30 p.m.

Full Moon Coffeehouse, Old Town Hall, Wendell: Open mic at 7:30 p.m. Primate Fiasco, dancable jam americana, at 8 p.m.

The Shea Theater, Turners Falls: A Christmas Carol Radio Show. 8 to 10 p.m. \$.

Deja Brew, Wendell: Jim Matus Duo, world fusion, 9 to 11 p.m.



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Route 63 Roadhouse, Millers Falls: 91 North (Heroes), classic rock. 9:30 p.m. to midnight.

CALL for ART SUBMISSIONS

Nina's Nook, Turners Falls: "Triple S: Sensual> Sexual> Smul" show in February 2013. Artists may submit up to three works for consideration. Email jpegs to naban@verizon.net, with "SSS" in the subject line, OR mail jpegs on disc to Nina's Nook, 125A Avenue A, Turners Falls MA 01376. Include a non-refundable fee of \$10 (check to Nina's Nook or PayPal to naban@verizon.net) by Jan 20, 2013.



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By LESLIE BROWN

MONTAGUE CITY – The mild, blue days following the windy departure of Sandy lulled us into an unseasonable state. I retrieved a pair of sandals from the back of the closet for our trip to Rhode Island and dreamed of a walk on the beach. Of course, the dark still fell early and with it the temperature, but the daytime beckoned us to walks, stretching out in the sun and sitting by the fire pit with a huge fire late into the evening.

Now, although the nights are frosty, the ground is still workable so that the willing gardener can finish up the delayed tasks of putting the garden to bed. It's still not too late to plant flowering bulbs for the coming

THE GARDENER'S COMPANION

End of the Garden Season

spring and summer. I have at last put in the last of the daylily bulbs and will look forward to their bright colors next June and July. It pays to choose bulbs cultured for naturalizing, whether you love daffodils and the other bright lights of spring, or you want to increase the summer flowering in your garden with lilies. They require little fuss and will last for many seasons with no further intervention. If you have a bulb planter it will simplify the job, but you can also dig a hole with any tool available. Small bulbs like the crocus should be planted at a depth of about three inches; larger bulbs should be buried about six inches deep. A little bone meal planted in the hole will fertilize the plants, but truly these bulbs have all of the food they need right at hand.

Most gardeners used to believe it was important to turn over garden plots at the end of the season, and looked upon the fall as one last sea-

son of drudgery. We know now this isn't necessary and really isn't recommended: all this digging interferes with the valuable work of the earthworms, and can potentially tuck in weed seeds for spring germination, or bury unhealthy fungi and other disease spores.

The most important steps are to remove weeds and old plants, especially any which were unhealthy. Do not add these to your compost pile. There are plenty of healthy products to compost for future use. Save vegetable garbage, coffee grounds, grass clippings, and leaves. This will make for a powerful additive to your spring garden. We have left whatever errant leaves have escaped into the garden beds alone; the snow will break them down and they will do next year's garden no harm. Similarly we have left the black plastic on the beds where the vine crops grew. It will bake the soil and help to deter the growth of any

spores mildew and other wilts. In the spring we can pull it up just in time for new plantings, leaving the areas weed free as well.

This is also a good time to mulch any delicate plants like roses. Since these plants are not set deeply, it's wise to bank up leaves or soil around the plants to give them a little more protection against the coming cold. Shrubs and trees have deeper roots and should not require mulching. Some like to protect shrubs around the house to prevent damage from falling snow.

Now, before the ground hardens permanently, is a great time to gather the plants you can use to make a winter garden. Choose mosses, Partridge Berry, Princess Pine, or small evergreens, all of which can be found in any woody area of your yard. Find an old fishbowl, wine-glass or brandy snifter, and line it with a layer of small pebbles and some soft soil. Set in your plants and

sprinkle them gently. Cover the mouth of the container with saran wrap and tie it with a bright ribbon. This plastic lid will keep your plants happy and fresh for the entire winter season. One of these little winter gardens can make a great gift for a friend or fellow gardener.

Enjoy also forcing some flowering bulbs, such as narcissus, for the holidays. These can be grown on pebbles or small rocks or in soil. The bulbs can be set right on top of the pebbles or nestled into the dirt. Simply water and place in a dark place until the green tops start to show. If you start some of these bulbs in the next week or so, you will be rewarded with intensely fragrant white blooms by Christmas time.

It's no surprise that we decorate at the coming holidays with evergreens. It's like bringing the garden into the house, reminding us that the long cold season will not last forever and that the growth of all things green will return. Brighten your home with greenery and seasonal flowers, and look forward to curling up with those bright, colorful garden catalogues that will begin to fill up your mailbox before you know it.

Happy winter gardening!

Craig Letourneau: a Retrospective



Craig Letourneau's "Jordan and his Uncle." Photo by Sally Stiffin.

By RICHARD BALDWIN

WENDELL – The Wendell Free Library is especially pleased to present a small retrospective exhibition of works by Craig Letourneau, a former resident of Wendell from 1986 until 1991. Letourneau made his permanent residence in Worcester, England, where he died in December 2011. This show is presented by his close friends in Wendell and his parents who own most of the work exhibited here.

Letourneau had a nearly life-long involvement with the arts, and over time perfected his style of painting in watercolor. Early on he was

inspired by the work of Andrew Wyeth, particularly the latter's use of texture and his somber palette. Many of the pieces in this show are painted in muted browns and greens, favorite earth tones common in much of Wyeth's work. However, unlike Wyeth's regular use of dry-brush watercolor technique, where most of the water is blotted from the brush, Letourneau had to develop his own way of developing texture.

Letourneau had lived with MS throughout his life, miraculously overcoming the effect of this disease to be able to make beautifully crafted watercolors. Where most artists would use their arm, wrist and fin-

gers to manipulate brush and paint, he had to figure out how to use his whole body, as well as his wheelchair, as integral parts of the painting process. It is hard to imagine, looking at his highly developed technique, that he was forced to paint this way.

Letourneau wrote on his website: "For over 25 years I have been developing my approach to watercolor. My watercolors rely on a balance of techniques – soft watercolor blends contrasting fluid color, hard and soft edges, transparent washes and bold strokes. I am not a watercolor purist. I often use the taboo titanium white to achieve rich body

color or use opaque mixes to form a veil to the underpainting. Also I may use ink, gouache, oil pastel or even liquid gold and silver leaf mixed in gum arabic to achieve a desired effect."

The subject matter of these paintings reflects his major interests: rural landscapes, urban scenes largely done in England, and portraits. The exhibition includes early work and fairly recent paintings done in his home town of Worcester, England. He made many paintings of the beautiful Worcester Cathedral, some of these commissioned by the church. Some of the England urban scenes here are indicative of his later style, which was looser and more colorful than his earlier work.

Letourneau loved music and was able to establish relationships with numerous singers, Lucinda Williams and Emmylou Harris among them, the latter having commissioned paintings by him. Here there are several portraits of musicians done loosely, and their spontaneous feel skillfully conveys the experience of performing on stage as well as Letourneau's enthusiasm.

Letourneau was not only a prolific artist but also was very active in the social life of the arts in Worcester, England. According to a Worcester News obituary piece, he had opened the Kestrel Gallery in 2007, organized a local folk music concert, and illustrated CDs that the Worcester Cathedral Chamber Choir produced. He had also been very active in helping young adults with physical disabilities at Camp Allen in Bedford, N.H., and in England as

well. Letourneau had exhibited his work in numerous shows in the U.S. and in England and was a member of the American Society of Marine Artists.

A reception was held in his honor at the Wendell Library on Nov. 3, attended by his parents and friends here in town.

We are grateful to Sally Stiffin and Rosie Heidkamp, our librarian, and Mr. and Mrs. Letourneau for arranging this exhibition.

Visit Letourneau's gallery website, www.kestrelgallery.com, to view more of his amazing work and see this show in the Herrick Room at the Wendell Free Library. The exhibition runs from through Dec. 27.

Library hours: Tuesday 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.; Wednesday 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.; and Saturday 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

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