



**5th Annual Recycled
FASHION SHOW**
Page 8

LAKE PLEASANT MILLERS FALLS MONTAGUE CENTER MONTAGUE CITY TURNERS FALLS

The Montague Reporter

YEAR 8 – NO. 11

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THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES

DECEMBER 10, 2009

Williams Way Closure Would Make Way for Skate Park



DETMOLD PHOTO

Montague Town Meeting will decide on Tuesday whether to close the short side street to make room for a permanent home for the Great Falls Skate Park

BY BILL DRAKE

TURNERS FALLS – The expansion of Unity Park to allow room for a permanent concrete skate park where Williams Way runs now, and a private right-of-way easement over town land next to the former Williams Garage, lie at the heart of Articles 6, 7, and 8 on Montague’s December 15th special town meeting docket. Without approval of all three articles, the Great Falls Skate Park may lose its chance to take advantage of available federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) money.

“This is our last chance,” said Bryan Dolan, head of the skate park committee, of the upcoming special town meeting. “If we don’t hit this, we’ll miss the CDBG, and it will all be over.”

In order to close the one block long

town-owned road that connects First and Second Streets on the northwest edge of the park to create room for the skate park, town meeting voters will be asked to give abutter Tim de Christopher, who owns the former Williams Garage and the adjoining lot by First Street, \$1000 in compensation for closing Williams Way.

Selectboard chair Patricia Pruitt, who said she negotiated the deal with de Christopher, explained the proposal at a public hearing on Unity Park improvements on Wednesday night: “He feels he’s losing access to his property by the closing of Williams Way and losing the 15 feet along Williams Garage, and that will compromise the value of his building.”

Pruitt called the \$1000 “a small price see **SKATE PARK** pg 12

Biomass Plants on Hold as State Studies CO₂ Impact

BY JOSHUA WATSON

GREENFIELD – In a December 3rd letter, the Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources notified “stakeholders” in pending biomass energy projects – including Pioneer Renewable Energy’s 47-megawatt biomass facility planned for Greenfield’s Industrial Park – that the DOER would be “suspending consideration of biomass energy applications for qualification” under the Massachusetts Renewable Portfolio Standard, pending a study of the sustainability of biomass technology.

The study, by the Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences, will focus on whether there are sufficient forestry reserves in the region to fuel such plants, and the potential climate change impact of the plants’ carbon emissions. The study, and the DOER’s “subsequent regulatory processes,” are expected to take about one year.

The Massachusetts Renewable Portfolio Standard determines whether biomass plants, among other “green” technologies, should qualify for Renewable Energy Credits, a certain number of which must be purchased each year by electricity providers in order to ensure that a percentage of Massachusetts energy is generated through renewable or sustainable means.

Matt Wolfe, principal of Pioneer Renewable Energy, expressed confidence that once the Manomet study is complete,

the Greenfield biomass facility will qualify under the Renewable Portfolio Standard. He said PRE’s estimates of sustainability had been appropriately “conservative,” and there were more than enough forestry reserves to adequately fuel both the PRE plant and the 50 megawatt biomass plant planned by separate developers for Russell, about 50 miles south of Greenfield.

Wolfe also said he would continue to seek appropriate permits and clearances for the Greenfield biomass plant. He said he hoped the Manomet study and the DOER’s decisionmaking to be based on it would not take too long. “If it’s six months, that’s OK,” he said, “but if it takes a year it’s more of a timing issue.”

Wendy LaPointe, of the Concerned Citizens of Franklin County, a group that opposes the Greenfield biomass facility, said the Concerned Citizens “are thrilled the state is finally paying attention to this situation.” LaPointe said she believed once the state “takes a look at this, they’ll realize the [forestry reserve] numbers just aren’t there to make this sustainable.”

In another development, on December 5th, the Massachusetts Medical Society adopted a resolution declaring its opposition to the PRE plant and to the biomass plants planned for Russell and Springfield “on the grounds that each facility poses an unacceptable public health risk,” and

see **BIOMASS** pg 6

Theater Review

So I Met Picasso in a Bar



~Picasso at the Lapin Agile~

(L-R) Kyle Dargis, Elijah Bridges, Tony Manica, Julia Sundell-Thomas, Fred Weinberg, and Mike Teroungzo perform in Picasso at the Lapin Agile Saturday and Sunday at the Sloan Theater, G.C.C.

BY DAVID DETMOLD

GREENFIELD – “I never thought the 20th Century would be handed to me so casually,” says Albert Einstein, downing a glass of absinthe at a Montmartre café, as a Parisienne named Suzanne shows him a sketch by

Pablo Picasso.

That off-hand remark pretty much sums up the subject matter of Steve Martin’s first play, *Picasso at the Lapin Agile*, a one-act that delves into the nature of genius and inspiration, art and science, warps in the web of the

space-time continuum, love, lust and tawdry commercialism – in short, all the elements that contributed to making the 20th Century great, including a sighting of Elvis Presley at a 1904 bar in the 18th *arrondissement* of see **THEATER** pg 6

Health Care, Jobs, and the Environment on Voters’ Minds as they Pulled for Coakley



DETMOLD PHOTOS

Denise Andrews, of Erving, summed up her reason for voting for Martha Coakley for U.S. Senate in one word: “Jobs.”

BY DAVID DETMOLD & BILL FRANKLIN

FRANKLIN COUNTY - Voters around the Commonwealth turned out in flurries on Tuesday, nominating Attorney General Martha Coakley, a native of North Adams, to be the Democratic standard bearer in the January 19th special election to fill the U.S. Senate seat held by the late Ted Kennedy, and his brother Jack before him, for more than half a century. State senator

Scott Brown, of Wrentham, will contest the seat for the Republicans, who have not won a Senate race in Massachusetts since Edward Brooke was re-elected in 1972.

With Democrats enjoying a 3-to-1 advantage over Republicans in party registration in the state (36% Democrats and 12% Republicans, with 51% of voters unenrolled), it would take a massive shift to the right by see **VOTER** pg 14

PET OF THE WEEK

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reporter@montaguema.net
Postmaster: Send address changes to
The Montague Reporter
58 4th Street
Turners Falls, MA 01376

Advertising and copy deadline is Tuesday at NOON.

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MONTAGUE LIBRARY NEWS

Reading Grandmother's Lace



LINDA HICKMAN PHOTO

BY LINDA HICKMAN
MONTAGUE CENTER – Author and illustrator Jan Atamian, of Lake Pleasant, read her picture book *My Grandmother's Lace* to families in the Montague Center Library's children's room on Monday, December 7th. She prepared a lovely display of

refeshements, including stuffed grape leaves and pomegranates, both of which were prominently featured in the book.

Her original art work from the story will be on display in the children's room for several weeks. For more information, call the Montague Center Library at 367-2852.

CARNEGIE LIBRARY NEWS

Gingerbread Houses a Big Hit



LINDA HICKMAN PHOTO

BY LINDA HICKMAN
TURNERS FALLS – Andrea and Tatiana Williams of Turners Falls were among the ninety people who made easy gingerbread houses at the Carnegie

Library on Saturday, December 5th. Tatiana is wearing some of the frosting because she ate more of it than she used on her project, but she was happy, according to her mother.

WENDELL SENIOR FILM SERIES

The December senior film at the Wendell Free Library is *Love Actually* (2003), a holiday-based romantic comedy interweaving a dozen varied love stories and featuring an extravagantly star-studded cast including, among others, Hugh Grant, Emma Thompson, Colin Firth, Laura Linney, Liam Neeson, and Keira Knightly. Showing is Sunday, December 13th, at the new state-of-the-art theater in the Wendell Free Library meeting room and begins at 7:00 p.m. Sponsored by the Wendell Council on Aging. All are welcome!

SENIOR CENTER ACTIVITIES – Dec 14th to Dec 18th

GILL / MONTAGUE
Gill/Montague Senior Center, 62 Fifth Street, Turners Falls, is open Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Congregate meals are served Tuesday through Friday at Noon. Meal reservations must be made a day in advance by 11:00 a.m. Messages can be left on our machine when the center is not open. Meal site Manager is Becky Cobb. Council on Aging Director is Roberta Potter. For information or to make meal reservations, call 863-9357. Feel free to call the senior center for information on any programs. Don't miss the Holiday Party on Wednesday, 12/16. Hot Cider & Music with Steve Ciechowski at 11 a.m., Roast Beef Dinner at Noon.

Monday, Dec. 14th
10:00 a.m. Senior Aerobics
10:45 a.m. Easy Aerobics
1:00 p.m. Knitting Circle
Tuesday, Dec. 15th
9:00 a.m. Walking Group

12:00 noon Lunch
1:00 p.m. Canasta
Wednesday, Dec. 16th
10:00 a.m. Senior Aerobics
11:00 a.m. Songs & Hot Cider
12:00 noon Holiday Lunch
12:45 p.m. Bingo
Thursday, Dec. 17th
10:00 a.m. Tai Chi
12:00 noon Lunch
1:00 p.m. Pitch
Friday, Dec. 18th
10:00 a.m. Senior Aerobics
10:45 a.m. Easy Aerobics
12:00 noon Lunch
1:00 p.m. Scrabble

ERVING Senior Center, 18 Pleasant St., Erving (Old Center School, 1st Floor), is open Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. for activities and congregating meals. For info and reservations, call Polly Kiely, Senior Center Director, at (413) 423-3308. Lunch is daily at 11:30 a.m., with reservations 24 hours in advance. Transportation can be provided for meals, shopping, or medical



SHAWN WOOLSEY PHOTO

Veterans gathered at the French King Bridge at noon on Monday, in honor of Pearl Harbor Day

More UFOs!

LAKE PLEASANT– The National Spiritual Alliance is sponsoring a follow-up workshop on Unidentified Flying Objects on Saturday, December 19th, from 2 - 4 p.m. at the Thompson Temple, across from the post office in Lake Pleasant.

The format will include: a film entitled "Fifty Years of Government Cover Up," information sharing regarding personal UFO experiences, and a question and answer period.

Workshop facilitator will be Kenneth Hopkins of Shutesbury, a member of the the National Spiritual Alliance board of directors. Hopkins has been researching UFOs since 2002.

WENDELL LIBRARY NEWS

Paper Pleasures

A free workshop with Luc Bodin will be offered at the library on Wednesday, December 16th, from 6 to 8 p.m. on the art of paper cutting and paper folding for the holidays. Create paper ornaments, spirals, snowflakes, birds and stars. Bring your own scissors. For more information, call: (978) 544-3559.

Vigil for Survival

Friday, December 11th

5:00 p.m. to 6:15 p.m.
Greenfield Town Common

Support a science-based climate change treaty in Copenhagen. Vigils are being organized worldwide by 350.org to coincide with the Copenhagen Climate Summit, to urge our leaders to craft an ambitious treaty that will reduce climate change emissions to levels that will ensure our future.

The Franklin County local organizing committee will take a photo and upload it on the 350.org website to document the urgency and our commitment to a strong climate change treaty.

For more information, please call (413) 325-4765.

Great Falls Middle School

Students of the Week

Grade 6
Jessica Loynd
Grade 7
Carlos Ovalle
Amber Caouette
Grade 8
Jonathan Rawls

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JESSICA HARMON ILLUSTRATION

Local Briefs

COMPILED BY DON CLEGG –

There will be a “Holiday Triple Feature” on Friday evening, December 11th, from 6 to 10 p.m. at the **Franklin County Technical School** to benefit the Senior Class of 2010. Screening will be *Elf*, Dr. Seuss’s *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*, and *National Lampoon’s Christmas Vacation*, featuring the immortal lines: “Is your house on fire, Clark?” “No, Aunt Bethany, those are the Christmas lights.” Also, a visit from Santa Claus is expected.

A donation of \$3.00 for children under 12 and \$5.00 for adults will go towards senior class activities. Drinks and snacks will also be available for purchase.

Where else can you see three family fun holiday classics all in the same evening except at FCTS?

The **Franklin County Visitors Center** in Greenfield is celebrating their 10th anniversary on December 11th, from 5 to 8 p.m. The celebration will include demonstrations by local vendors, great local crafts, holiday gift packages of local items, free raffles, and food. The visitors’ center is located at 18 Miner Street in Greenfield, just behind Applebee’s.

The **Downtown Turners Falls Improvement Association** had its first meeting on December 2nd. Over 30 citizens turned out for this initial meeting. Though the attendees had the chance to bring up issues and complaints, there were many positive topics and future agenda items also discussed. This was more than just a gripe session. Any time you have a turn out of more than 30 citizens to a local meeting including the chief of police and senior center director, that is evidence of a concerned community.

One item of discussion was the collection of shopping carts in the downtown area. Maureen, one attendee at the meeting,

returned seven shopping carts to the shopping center on Monday, December 7th by herself. The DPW may assist in the removal of unsightly furniture, left on downtown sidewalks and alleyways “for free” by departing tenants, still moldering there months later. Chief Zukowski offered good insight into the constitutional issues and common sense approaches regarding loitering and trespassing issues. Many who attended felt the meeting was a positive start to dealing with common concerns.

The next meeting of the **Downtown Improvement Association** is scheduled for Wednesday, January 6th, at 7:00 p.m. at MCTV studios, 34 Second Street, Turners Falls. If you are unable to attend but would like to email questions, concerns or comments, send them to downtownturners@gmail.com.

Northfield Mountain Recreation and Environmental Center is offering a variety of environmental education opportunities this winter. “Winter World,” for pre-school to first graders, uses games, puppets, songs, and a variety of activities to explore the world of winter. “Pine Cones and Pizza” is for second and third graders. For third grade students and older, “Twigs and Tracks” focuses on the adaptations that enable plants and animals to meet the challenge of winter survival. “The Hunter and the Hunted,” for fourth graders and above, uses games, role playing, and outdoor exploration to study the ecological relationship between predator and prey.

These educational opportunities are available Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays during January and February at Northfield Mountain Recreation and Environmental Center. Fees range from \$6 to \$7 per student. For more information, call Kim Noyes at Northfield Mountain at (413) 659-4462.

Planning Meeting Scheduled for Anti-VY Walk

BY CHAD SIMMONS BRATTLEBORO – On Monday, December 14th, the Safe & Green Campaign will hold an information session to discuss details about the upcoming “Step it Up to Shut it Down” walk from Brattleboro to Montpelier, to oppose the 20-year license extension of Entergy Vermont Yankee in Vernon. The state legislature in Montpelier will likely vote on Entergy’s license extension early in the legislative session that begins in January. If either

house fails to approve Entergy’s bid, the Vermont Yankee nuclear plant will be forced to shut down by 2012 when its 40-year operating license expires.

On the 14th, organizers will discuss activities people can participate in before the looming vote, and also discuss logistics and outreach for the upcoming walk. Everyone interested is welcome to attend the information session, 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. at the Marlboro Tech Center, second floor meeting room, on Vernon Street, Route 142, in

Brattleboro, VT.

The walk is scheduled to leave Brattleboro on Saturday, January 2nd and arrive in Montpelier on Wednesday, January 13th. For more information, call (802) 377-7403, or go to: www.safeandgreencampaign.org.

A preliminary walk is scheduled to leave the town of Gill on Friday, January 1st to walk up Route 142 to Brattleboro. For more information on this part of the walk, call Nina Keller, at (978) 544-2857.

The **Montague Elks Lodge #2521** presented a check in the amount of \$750 at the annual WHAI food drive and breakfast for the benefit of the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts on November 24th. Russ Brown, past Exalted Ruler of the Montague Elks, presented the check to the Food Bank. The event raised \$1,280 in monetary donations. With the buying power of the food bank, that amount is multiplied by nine to equal \$11,520 worth of food! Non perishable food was also collected. Thanks to everyone who made this event a success!

The **Food Bank of Western Massachusetts** annually distributes over 6 million pounds of food to over 400 nearby agencies throughout Berkshire, Franklin, Hampden, and Hampshire Counties, including soup kitchens, shelters, and food pantries. The need has never been greater in our communities. More than 100,000 people in the four counties seek food assistance at Food Bank member agencies. In some towns in our region, hunger rates are more than six times higher than the statewide average. One in ten MA residents faces hunger daily. It is never too late to contribute to this cause. Please call (413) 247-9738 to get more information on how you can help.

River Gardens Explained

BY IVAN USSACH

ATHOL – The Millers River Watershed Council will hold its annual meeting at the Millers River Environmental Center, 100 Main Street in Athol, on Thursday, December 17th, starting at 7 p.m. Following a brief business meeting, Ed Himlan of the Massachusetts Watershed Coalition will present a slideshow about the design and benefits of rain gardens for watershed communities. The workshop is free and open to the public, and refreshments will be provided.

Rain gardens attract birds and butterflies, and help to protect streams, lakes and ponds. These gardens are planted with easy to maintain flowers, shrubs, and

grasses that thrive without fertilizers and pesticides. Rain gardens have a bowl-shape design that retains storm water for a few hours, allowing it to seep into the ground. This recharge of the groundwater helps to replenish brooks and ponds between rain events. The plants and soils in rain gardens also filter storm water and remove substances that lower water quality.

The presentation will explain where to place rain gardens, how to select plants, and how to keep the garden flourishing as a special feature for your home, business, church, or other location. For more info email MRWC at council@millersriver.net, or phone (978) 248-9491.

MCTV Channel 17
visit www.montagueTV.org
for complete schedule

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The Montague Reporter

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Circulation
Suzette Snow-Cobb
Janel Nockelby

Layout & Design

Claudia Wells
Boysen Hodgson
Katren Hoyden
Karen Wilkinson
Suzette Snow-Cobb

"The Voice of the Villages"

Founded by
Arthur Evans Harry Brandt David Detmold
August, 2002

Photography

Joe Parzych
Shawn Woolsey
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Technical Administrators
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WE CAN MAKE IT HERE

BY R. THOMAS
BUFFENBARGER

UPPER MARLBORO, MD - This is not your father's recession, nor your grandmother's Depression. In size, scope and duration, this economic downturn is different. And off-the-shelf solutions will not suffice.

President Barack Obama has undoubtedly been hearing from businessmen, labor leaders and economists on how to reverse America's record high unemployment. Pedestrian proposals are inevitable. But truly innovative ideas that can be implemented immediately are what America really needs.

From my perspective, only a strong, stable manufacturing sector can rebuild our economy and create jobs. But I'm biased. Machinist Union members build the ships, planes, rockets and machinery that power our exports and defend our nation. Machinists like to make things. Millions of unemployed and underemployed Americans do, too. The White House should aim to stimulate that we-can-make-it-here spirit.

With that goal in mind, here's an innovative idea President Obama should consider: Hire the unemployed to renovate and reinvigorate America's industrial infrastructure.

Among the 31 million Americans idled to some degree in this recession, the talent pool is deep and deeply experienced. Almost 3.4 million were laid off from production, installation and construction jobs. Their skills could be put to work rehabilitating our aging factories and installing new machinery.

Another 5.3 million jobless Americans are college-educated, highly skilled, and heavy on expertise. Over 2.6 million come from management and professional ranks. Another 2.7 million

once worked in the service sector. If you drill down into the Bureau of Labor Statistics' numbers, their expertise becomes obvious. Their talents can create the strategic business, financing and marketing plans for revving up our factories.

America needs both brawn and brains to rebuild our manufacturing capacity, end this recession, and ignite a new era of prosperity.

A sustained economic recovery requires us to reassert our global leadership as the producer of innovative, high quality products. To make that happen, however, our Made In America trademark needs a new stream of investments, public and private. And Americans need jobs now!

Combining those two unmet needs creates a powerful logic for a modern version of Franklin Roosevelt's Works Progress Administration. This unique program put 3.5 million people to work in a single year – the equivalent of finding jobs for 8 million Americans today. The WPA focused on local community projects with a lasting value to the nation. It spent 85 percent of its funds on payroll, and 15 percent on materials. Some projects demanded brawn. Others relied on brain power. But all were rooted in local initiative and accountability.

A new WPA can be rolled out quickly. Americans can be put to work renovating factories, installing state-of-the-art equipment, and updating plans for small to medium-sized businesses. Local communities can use federal dollars to hire the unemployed. Local businesses can get a second chance to go global.

But let's not stop there. Public funds are being spent to help private enterprises. A new social contract can be written, one that aligns corporate responsibility

see **MAKE IT** pg 5

After calling up 30,000 more troops for Afghanistan on December 1st, President Obama flew to Oslo on Wednesday to accept the Nobel Peace Prize.



War Is Peace

PHOTO ILLUSTRATION: CLAUDIA WELLS

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



Offer Budget Alternatives when Defending Services

The report of Montague's November 30th selectboard meeting (*MR VIII #10: Montague May Turn to Student Intern to Fill Town Planner's Role*) included the testimony of several active residents about the value of a town planner, and the view that an internship may not satisfactorily meet continuing planning needs. The article also mentioned my October 25th letter to the selectboard, suggesting the town suspend filling the position for a while and indicating how some planning functions can still continue.

I do not question the value of a town planning position – the achievements of our recent planners help distinguish us from other towns in the area. I have read the town administrator's

"planner/conservation agent update" of November 12th, which catalogues open tasks and the action required for each. But the function's desirability and the array of active projects do not address my concern about limited funding.

The selectboard's ongoing review of what to preserve should include a look at the entire span of town services. Support for a service will be more persuasive if advocates can suggest which functions can be done differently, or postponed. I have heard speakers say their proper role is to advocate for a school or town function, not to suggest alternatives. This selective participation in town government delegates the balancing job to a few boards and committees, and the town is

deprived of a broader base of resident input.

The short-term issue of how to meet planning needs is a dress rehearsal for budgeting the next fiscal year, which kicks off next week. Boards and committees will make better choices in meeting resident desires if input includes ideas of how to change or temporarily postpone (not abandon!) activities as well as defending the value of things as they are.

John Hanold
Turners Falls

John Hanold is the chair of the Montague finance committee. The opinions expressed here are his own and do not necessarily reflect those of other members of the finance committee.

Hire an Experienced Town Planner

When faced with a downturn, every business must make tough choices based on finances. The matter of how a business can best maximize the resources at hand is paramount. In businesses, large and small, it can be difficult to determine which cuts help a business get through a tough time and which ones, if made, hurt the long-term prospects for the business's success.

Although it's tempting for the town of Montague to leave the position of town planner vacant because the former planner left the position, it makes little sense for the long term prospects of the town to do so. The Montague Business Association (MBA) would like to express its desire that the position of town planner and conservation commission agent, recently vacated by Dan Laroche, not be left vacant, in spite of the current fiscal situation.

If the town needs to cut expenses by eliminating part of the cost of salaries, we should do so responsibly, by selecting the positions that will least affect the development of the town. To do otherwise is to make the expedient choice rather than the wise one.

Over the past decade,

Montague has been a vibrant and growing community, in part due to the exceptional work of town planners. The Montague Strategic Plan, the Montague Economic Development Plan, and the current implementation of these plans have come about and been nurtured through the town planner's office. The RiverCulture project, which has brought in more than \$300,000 towards the largest business district in Montague by boosting the arts-based economy, would not have happened without a dedicated town planner's vision and ongoing support.

This and other planning projects contributed to Montague's recently upgraded bond rating, resulting in a giant savings in interest costs to the town and making it a safer bet for investors. Further, many businesses, large and small, have benefitted from the planner's actions on the industrial park (and share hopes for a second one), and on the

strategic vision for our downtowns.

In Montague, the position of town planner is combined with a conservation agent. With our long border on the Connecticut River, multiple important wetlands, and the unique ecological resource known as the Montague Sand Plains, the position of conservation commission agent is essential. Our conservation commissioners are volunteers, and most have full-time jobs that take up much of their time. The position of conservation agent is one that helps the conservation commission do its job. Without a conser-

see **HIRE** pg 5



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Residents Should Be Allowed to Vote on Greenfield Biomass Plant

Burning wood releases toxins into the atmosphere. Biomass uses wet wood, releasing more toxins. Seventy large diesel trucks a day will be needed to transport wood to the proposed biomass plant in Greenfield plant, plus trucks to haul away ash further compromising local air quality. Jeffrey Seyler, president of the American Lung Association of New England, said, "We do not consider burning any substance, including biomass, to be in the same category as other clean and renewable sources... But adding more pollution to any area that already has an air pollution problem raises a red flag for us." The Greenfield board of health has grave concerns regarding the proposed biomass plant, as expressed in a letter to the ZBA. The Hampden District Medical Society, representing over 1,000 physicians, opposes all biomass plants in Western Massachusetts. The Massachusetts Medical Society recently opposed all biomass plants in the state.

Is it worth trading our health for savings on taxes, from a plant that is less than 25% efficient and would contribute only about .3% of the energy on the grid? It makes more sense to explore cleaner energy options such as solar, wind, geothermal or hydro, true green energy sources that do not pose health risks. Also, let's explore refurbishing older dams which were once used to generate

hydropower on smaller local rivers. They could be brought up to date to create clean energy.

The Greenfield biomass plant would employ 15-20 people, but business owners who employ more people than that have said they will leave the industrial park in Greenfield if the plant is built.

The primary cooling source for the biomass plant would be treated wastewater from the town's sewage treatment plant. This raises another serious concern. Using treated sewer water to cool the plant would release chemicals into the air we breathe upon evaporation, which could sicken residents downwind.

Residents should be the ones to decide if Greenfield is the place for this plant, and we should have the right to decide by voting for or against the proposal. After all, we were able to do that for Wal-Mart, which doesn't pose the serious health risks of a biomass plant.

Recently, the state has formally suspended consideration of applications to build new biomass plants, including proposals for Springfield, Russell, and Greenfield, pending a study of whether biomass plants fit the definition of renewable energy, and qualify for state incentives.

Go to www.greenfieldbiomass.info to learn more, and voice your concerns!

— **Sandy Kosterman**
Greenfield

Montague shows signs of strength and vitality. A 2009 *Frommer's Guide* says that Turners is a vital place "...thanks to new artistic programming and an active partnership among cultural and commercial groups..." The RiverCulture project, which springs from the planner's office, is to be thanked for putting Montague on *Frommer's* map.

A bond rating agency says Montague is a good bet for investors interested in the long term. The MBA agrees, and we ask that the selectboard join us. Make the right — and tough — choice for Montague's future. Hire an experienced town planner.

— **The Montague**
Business Association

The Walking Lot

There are a lot of shopping carts in downtown Turners Falls. I think of them as our unofficial mascot, a symbol of our collective identity.

The practice of bringing groceries home in the cart is a natural solution to the problem of how to get your groceries home without a car, a common predicament for downtown residents. It does get a bit out of hand, though, with carts left in the ditch, buried under snow banks, and lying at the bottom of the canal. So I propose: the Walking Lot.

The concept of the parking lot is based on the premise that you drive your car to the store. This assumption works in the suburbs and rural areas. However, Turners Falls is the type of tight urban neighborhood that city planners tell us will be our salvation from global warming and sprawl. What our town needs is a walking lot. All we need to do is change the rule

that says the shopping carts can't leave the parking lot, to say they can go anywhere in downtown Turners.

The real cause of the eyesore problem is not that people bring the carts home, it's that there's no mechanism in place to return

youthful shenanigans.

It's really quite a progressive move, very Green, encouraging and enabling people to walk instead of drive to the store. Perhaps some of us who have cars would walk to the store instead of driving, even on heavy shopping trips. Instead of an eyesore, the whole thing could become a point of pride for our town: Turners Falls — We Walk to the Store. It might even catch on in other urban centers.

I would even go so far as to say that the stores in the plaza should look into fitting their carts with larger, softer wheels, both to make them easier to push on the rough sidewalks and to prevent broken eggs. It would be a great way for the stores to show their appreciation for the pedestrian customers who keep them in business. And perhaps the customers in turn would show their appreciation by taking better care of the carts.

— **Bryan Dolan**
Turners Falls



DOLAN PHOTO

Against the Bricks, 5th Street

them to the store. We would have to set up cart corrals at a handful of locations around town, such as the Keith Apartments, Power Town, and the Cutlery Block. Once every few days, someone could come to pick the carts up, keeping them from languishing on the sidewalk, getting hit by a plow truck, or falling victim to

Waiting for a More Inclusive Meeting

On Wednesday, December 2nd, a meeting was held in the hopes of forming some sort of neighborhood association in downtown Turners Falls. Some of the topics that were discussed, and the resulting article in the local daily made me feel embarrassed for taking part. There were some legitimate complaints, such as large furniture and other trash being left out on sidewalks instead of being disposed of properly.

Then there were the same old tired complaints of shopping carts being strewn about the downtown and of course the complaint about how the poor people that live downtown misbehave and disturb the masses.

Several suggestions were made that in my opinion were not very practical. People that

push their groceries home in a shopping cart have no other choice. Believe me, it is not easy to push a heavy, off balance cart along uneven sidewalks. People are not doing this for fun. To suggest that shopping cart pushers should invest in a pull cart is ridiculous. They are expensive, small, and if there are small children they cannot ride in the carts with the groceries. Of course I think the shoppers that take the carts home should return them to the store, but instead of having a meeting without them to discuss the problem, try holding a meeting with the shopping cart users.

A suggestion by one person to encourage people from Easthampton or Amherst to move here so it would be a better place to live was insulting. I

MAKE IT from pg 4 with community values, one that requires recipients to meet environmental and labor standards, and makes a long-term commitment to making it in America. To sweeten the deal, investment tax credits can help underwrite renovation costs and purchases of new equipment or processes.

live in Turners Falls because the people from Easthampton and Amherst aren't here.

Many of the things that are seen as problems in the downtown are surface issues. They are indicative of deeper problems. It costs a lot of money to throw large items away, not to mention they need to be transported somehow. People without cars need to eat. The minimum cab fare from Food City anywhere in downtown is around ten dollars.

When someone wants to start a neighborhood association inclusive of all who share the downtown, who wants to find solutions instead of placing blame, and who is willing to work towards common goals for the good of downtown, call me. My number is listed.

— **Jean Hebden**
Turners Falls

President Obama could deliver that boost simply by adding three words to his campaign slogan. "Yes, we can make it here" sounds like a clarion call to action.

R. Thomas Buffenbarger is president of the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers.

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... AND ANOTHER LETTER

Letter to the Massachusetts Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education

Commissioner Mitchell Chester,

Due to our inability to achieve approval of our fiscal 2010 district budget from our member towns, the Gill-Montague Regional School District school committee has directed Superintendent Ladd to inform you of the need for your office to exercise its budgeting authority, pursuant to Massachusetts general law.

Our second failed budget process in as many years confirms what some of our committee members have long asserted: the system is not only broke, it's broken.

In response to this challenge, our school committee has adopted a new budget process that is intensive, extensive and locally

owned. We will be working very closely with our municipal partners to define the realistic parameters for our district budget at the outset of the process. We will be evaluating all of our programs and initiatives for cost effectiveness and sustainability. We will be aggressively pursuing strategic partnerships with neighboring districts, institutions of higher learning and local businesses and industry. And, every step of the way, we will be engaging our single most potent and important partner in public education: the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. We look forward to working with you.

— **Mike Langknecht**
Chair, GMRSD
School Committee

ever dropped by for a dram, the play turns on the conceit that these two geniuses met there one night, tossed off a few, and waxed eloquent on the creative process while fending off their female admirers. Seeking a third member of their exalted rank of world movers and shakers, they conjure up yet another man, a guitarist in a white spandex jumpsuit wearing blue suede shoes, whose appearance on stage begs the question: What happened to the feminist movement that shook the world in the latter half of the 20th Century? Was it of less weight than the hip-shaking poses pulled off by Elvis Aaron Presley, that shameless imitator? Martin doesn't ask, or doesn't care.

But the outstanding performances of the two female leads in a play overloaded with stellar acting certainly put the male Super Egos hogging the spotlight on notice. They may think their performances made the 20th Century what it was, but for every patent clerk struggling to understand the relationship of energy and matter there was a Madame Curie risking her life to discover the properties of subatomic particles. For every Picasso warping the perspective of portraiture for all time, there was a Frida Kahlo baring her tortured soul on canvas. And for every man strutting his hour upon the stage, there was an equally talented woman giving him the limelight, or better yet, usurping it.

Reminding us of that, Julia Sundell-Thomas eclipsed her diligent barkeep husband, Freddy (Mike Terounzo), in her role as Germaine, the cynical barmaid toughened by years of

rough handling, who stifles her romantic yearnings and, when her husband isn't looking, takes her former lover down a few pegs in the process of delivering an anachronistic theory of Picasso's relativity.

Burning even more brightly, rising star Emily Eaton sucked the oxygen out of the room when she made her entrance as Suzanne, and proved exactly what the spotlight was made for as she took her seat at a café table and waited with less than bated breath for Picasso to follow. Her soliloquy on her first romantic encounter with the brash painter bends matter with the intense light and heat of her passionate memory. She is more than a great young actress, more a lodestar of dramatic force, directing all eyes upon her.

In contrast, Kyle Dargis plays Albert Einstein in cooler tones, but plays him to perfection. Dargis is an actor of singular self-possession and poise, and he gives a spot-on reading of the humility, humanity, impishness and charm that characterized one of the most beloved characters of modern times.

Picasso, on the other hand, is played with manic intensity by Tony Manica, in a volcanic, satyric, brute force performance that you will take home with you without question and recall with pleasure on the morning after. He loves women, Goya, red wine, not necessarily in that order, can't stand Matisse, and has a peculiar sense of his own manifest destiny to revolutionize the world of art.

But Germaine has his number.

"I know about men like you," she says.

"Men like me? Where are there men like me?" he haughtily replies.

Men who use women as stepping stones to their own advancement? Unfortunately, even in the 21st Century the answer must still be, "Everywhere."

Go see *Picasso at the Lapin Agile*. The freshness and vivacity of almost the entire cast (did we forget to mention Fred Weinberg's performance as Gaston, the aging roué with the troublesome prostate? Marvelous!) makes this a night to remember what theater should be about. There are flaws, and failings, and we could mention these. But why bother? There are also flashes of brilliance, elements of stage magic, and strong performances throughout.

Expect the unexpected. You will not be disappointed.

from **THEATER** pg 1

Paris. (But why not? He's been sighted nearly everywhere else.)

Martin's farce skates lightly over the thin ice of phenomenology, art and the enduring mysteries of male-female relations, turning pirouettes as each unexpected arrival enters bringing a new twist to the fast moving banter on the barroom floor. It is delightful theater, and you can catch the play at Greenfield Community College's Sloan Theater, where this student-run production continues for one more weekend, Saturday, December 12th at 8:00 p.m. and Sunday, December 13th at 5:00 p.m. Barry Magnani directs.

Leaving the theater, will you

understand what factors contributed to the great leaps forward in creative thought and expression that gave the world Einstein's special theory of relativity in 1905 or Picasso's *Les Femmes d'Alger* in 1907? Probably not. But the playwright makes no pretense of providing you with anything more serious than an evening of light-hearted fun, and this talented cast delivers.

The *Lapin Agile* (the Nimble Rabbit) is a real cabaret, with a proud role of its own in the history of *belles lettres* and *beaux arts*, and Picasso certainly frequented the place in his younger days, as witnessed by his oil painting of the same name. Though it is doubtful Einstein

from **BIOMASS** pg 1

and urging the state and federal government to limit the approval of new biomass plants and to remove them from eligibility for green technology-related loans and incentives.

On Tuesday night, the Greenfield Conservation Commission approved PRE's "Request for Determination of Applicability" and a "Notice of Intent" filed with regard to the route of a 5.1-mile pipeline from the Greenfield Water Treatment Plant to PRE's proposed facility in the I-91 Industrial Park. The pipeline would occasionally run

along protected wetlands, which was the subject of the commission hearing.

The pipeline would provide "Class B"-level treated water to the plant for use as coolant. While not as clean as drinking water, Class B water is considered suitable for recreational purposes and is the same treated water that would otherwise be emitted back into the Deerfield River. PRE plans to further filter and chlorinate the water before its use as coolant. Most of the water will be evaporated into the atmosphere, and 160,000 gallons per day will be returned to the treat-

ment plant.

The *Montague Reporter* and Greenfield Community College will be co-sponsoring a science-focused panel discussion on the sustainability of biomass in Western Massachusetts, and the impact the proposed Pioneer Renewable Energy facility might have on Franklin County and the surrounding region. The panel will be held early in 2010, and will be preceded by interviews in the Reporter with the panelists.

For more information on the panel, please write to Biomass-Panel@montaguema.net.



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NOTES FROM THE GILL SELECTBOARD

Recreation Commission Back on Track

BY DAVID DETMOLD – Things are going smoothly with the reorganized recreation commission, according to a report by commissioners Nate Duda and Cathy Demars at the Gill selectboard meeting on Monday, December 7th.

“We’re having a good season, with good attendance,” Duda told the board. And the soccer program, which signed up 49 youngsters to participate – all of whom paid entry fees, but very few of whom received t-shirts this year – turned a modest profit for the commission.

After the commission ran in the red last year, and failed to produce a clear accounting of revenue and expenses, the selectboard initially sought to dissolve the recreation commission at this year’s annual town meeting. But Demars and treasurer Deb Loomer joined the commission and promised to keep better track of accounts, and the board agreed to provide \$3,000 to fund the commission again, contin-

gent on the commissioners providing regular reports to the selectboard after the conclusion of each program.

Duda said most of the kids who played soccer this year were from Gill, along with a few from Northfield and some children who school choice into the Gill Elementary from neighboring towns and wanted to play soccer with their classmates. Twenty-six children played in the pre-K to 2nd grade team, 12 played on the 2nd to 4th grade team, and 11 played on the 5th and 6th grade team.

Loomer, who provided the recreation commission with a fully-stocked first aid kit as a donation at the start of the season, was not in attendance on Monday to give a financial report, but Demars and Duda said more money had come in for the soccer program than was expended, since most of the kids were able to use their t-shirts from last year, and the coaches all volunteered. “We want to

send a big thank you out to all the coaches,” Duda said.

A large donation from Dave Manning of Applied Dynamics will enable the commission to purchase t-shirts for the basketball program, now getting underway. Any children interested in signing up for basketball are welcome to contact Demars at 863-2303.

Duda said the rec commission hopes to rent two buses to go to a Boston Red Sox home game next season, as soon as the letter arrives from Fenway Park indicating dates available for group excursions to the park. Tickets for the bus to Fenway should be available before Christmas.

“They never have tickets for Yankees - Red Sox games,” said Duda, ruefully. “We get to watch them play Texas a lot.”

In other news, the selectboard held a brief liquor license hearing for the Schuetzen Verein, a social club which has long operated on the banks of the Connecticut River using a club

license to sell alcoholic beverages. Representing the Schuetz, Jeff Suprenant told the board the Alcoholic Beverage and Control Commission had changed the rules regarding social clubs recently, and if the club wants to continue being able to sell alcoholic beverages to the general public, they now must apply for a restaurant license.

Asked what the difference between a club license and a restaurant license amounted to, Suprenant said, “About \$200,” which seem to explain the reason for the rule change.

The board approved the application, and noted Bruce Merrian is the Schuetzen Verein’s new manager.

Dan Flagg, who farms along Main Road, came in to speak with the selectboard about a number of drainage problems left over from Mass Highway’s recent reconstruction of Main Road. Flagg said a large hole was left in the paving on the shoulder of the road across from the dairy barn, where a pipe had been improperly installed. Additionally, a drainage swale had been installed at a pitch that sends stormwater runoff across his field, Flagg said, rather than into a drainage catch basin. He also said one catch basin had been installed near his property above grade. He said two property pins had been removed and

not replaced by the contractor.

Selectboard chair Ann Banash promised to speak to highway superintendent Mick LaClaire about Flagg’s concerns.

The windows of the Riverside Municipal Building are being removed, one by one, and reglazed, in a volunteer effort being coordinated by Jim Tomasi and others. The project’s aim is to save energy at the building, which houses the offices of the Riverside Water District, and the Four Winds School.

Selectboard member John Ward recommended looking into installing interior storms on the windows at the Riverside building.

The board will conduct one more interview before deciding which of three consultants to hire to advise the town on the size and make-up of town departments, and the pay scale of town employees. Banash said she would like to get this consultant hired and the study completed before the FY ‘11 budget process gets underway – in other words, soon.

Monday marked the last meeting of the board with Tracy Rogers as town administrator. Ray Purington will temporarily fill the role of administrative assistant, as Rogers moves on to her new job in Northfield, and the selectboard seeks a permanent replacement.

NOTES FROM THE GILL MONTAGUE REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

School Committee Votes Against Charter School

BY ELLEN BLANCHETTE – Superintendent Carl Ladd told the Gill-Montague Regional School District school committee at their meeting Tuesday that the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) will be setting a budget for the school district that is less than the original 1/12th budget set on July 1st. Ladd said the commissioner’s new budget includes a cut of \$120,000 for the GMRSD’s \$16.65 million budget, which Ladd promised he would implement without cutting any teaching staff.

A special town meeting has been set in Montague for December 15th, at 6:30 p.m. at the Turners Falls High School, where the town will be asked to approve an assessment based on the commissioner’s budget.

Ladd attended a hearing held by the DESE on December 1st at the Greenfield Youth Center for public comment regarding the application to establish a 260-seat

K-6 Discovery Charter School of Sustainability in Franklin County. Ladd told the state representatives he felt the charter school would undermine the stability of the Gill-Montague school district by taking away funds at a time when the district is working to increase enrollment and reverse losses to school choice. Ladd told the board the establishment of a new charter school would undermine the district’s work to establish innovative educational programs, improve test scores, increase graduation rates and restore fiscal stability to the budget. He pointed out that each student leaving the district causes a loss of both state Chapter 70 and transportation reimbursement aid.

Ladd said he received a letter from Ruth Hersh, New Schools Development Specialist in the Charter School Office of the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, requesting comments

from residents of the district to help the department evaluate the proposal to create a new charter school. Comments should be submitted to Hersh at 75 Pleasant Street, Malden, Massachusetts 02148-5023, no later than Monday, January 4th, 2010.

Karl Dziura, president of the Gill-Montague Education Association, told the school committee the GMEA is opposed to a

see **SCHOOL** pg 10

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE LEVERETT POLICE LOG

Chimney Fire on Amherst Road

Tuesday, 12/1 6:10 p.m. Medical emergency at a Cave Hill Road address. Assisted Leverett Fire department. Subject transported to hospital by Amherst fire ambulance.	9:15 p.m. Assisted Leverett fire department with traffic at a chimney fire on Amherst Road. Saturday, 12/5 4:34 p.m. Domestic disturbance at a Depot Road address. Verbal	only, peace restored. 5:50 p.m. Request for officer assistance at a Depot Road residence. Assistance and advice given.
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HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE ERVING POLICE LOG

Calm Down, Move Along

Tuesday, 12/1 1:15 p.m. Report of past breaking and entering at a North Shore Road address. Checked camp and surrounding camps. Wednesday, 12/2 11:59 p.m. Alarm sounding at Christina’s Restaurant. Building checked, all secure. Keyholder on scene. Thursday, 12/3	1:05 a.m. Suspicious motor vehicle at Erving fire station. Found to be firefighter working inside, all OK. 8:50 p.m. Assisted Massachusetts state police with a suspicious motor vehicle parked on Holmes Street and Route 2. Found to be male and female subjects in verbal argument. Subjects calmed down and	moved along. Friday, 12/4 10:30 a.m. Suspicious motor vehicle parked at French King Entertainment Center parking lot. Trunk open, no one around. Saturday, 12/5 10:40 a.m. Officer at a Forest Street address for an out of control juvenile. All verbal, peace restored. 7:15 p.m. Report of erratic operation of a motor vehicle on Route 2, westbound. Stopped same, found to be	fatigued operator. Sunday, 12/6 11:15 p.m. Report of animal abuse at an East Prospect Street address. Checked same, no signs of abuse found. Monday, 12/7 10:15 a.m. Report of past phone calling credit card scam. 12:20 p.m. Report from a Mechanic Street resident that their vehicle got a nail in the tire from the construction in the area..
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Outside, the snow has formed a pale white rime on

the trees and streets and houses, where people lie dreaming in front of frozen blue tvs. But here the scene is electric, the heartbeat of a culture that is free and reinventing itself anew with each spin cycle of the dying year.

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Roots Music Ramble at the Rendezvous

BY DAVID DETMOLD

TURNERS FALLS – You may have grown up, or grown old, listening to Jim Olsen’s alt country show ‘the Back Porch’ on WRSI (93.9 FM). It used to be what you woke up to on Saturday mornings. Now it’s what you wake up to on Sunday mornings. Other than that, little has changed but the updated playlist. Olsen has been working the American Roots Music groove for 25 years, and to celebrate, WRSI threw him an anniversary party at the Rendezvous on Friday night, with fellow DJs past and present showing up to roast and congratulate him for being one of the longest- if not perhaps the hardest-working man on the local air waves.

But what locals know (and it’s been a well kept secret until now) is that Olsen and his musical portfolio are no strangers to the Rendezvous. He’s been showing up every month, at a bar stool near the juke box with a couple of well-stocked iPods and a cheap mixing board, and spinning discs (or whatever the digital analogue for that phrase might be) for fans and barflies alike – commercial free – for the past year.

By sheer coincidence, we caught up with Olsen on the night of his big party, and asked him what listeners should expect to hear at his monthly Ramble at the Rendezvous.

For one thing, you should expect to hear Lee Allen’s “Rockin at Cosimo’s”: he starts every Ramble with that jumpin’ tune. (The sound system at the Rendezvous is good enough that John Little, seated nearby, turned around to see what corner of the bar the band had started playing from.) Allen was a talented tenor sax player who backed a number of New Orleans greats like Lloyd Price and Fats Domino but never made it big in his own right. Allen’s wild sax solos helped propel Little Richard to the top of the

charts time after time.

Right off, you know you’re on a ramble down the back highways of rhythm and blues, and your driver is familiar with the territory.

“This is classic juke box music from the ‘40s and ‘50s,” said Olsen, as Etta James belted

Howlin’ Wolf started going electric, and recording at Leonard and Phil Chess’ Aristocrat Studios, later Chess Records. Pale cover versions of many of these R&B hits (once regarded as “race records”) were provided by country music artists of the era, taking them to the top of the B i l l b o a r d charts. R&B was influenced by Gospel and represented a sort of mid point between big band swing and rock and roll, Olsen said.

There is nothing pale about Hank Ballard and the Midnighters’ 1960 hit, “Let’s Go, Let’s Go, Let’s Go,” which had the Rendezvous rockin’ in time to the simple back beat, hand clapping, and guitar riff, as Ballard sang, “There’s a thrill up on the hill, let’s go, let’s go, let’s go,” and promising, “All night long we’re gonna ball, until we hear your momma call.” Again, it’s the sax player who takes the big solo at the break.

“This stuff is timeless,” said Olsen, with a touch of reverence. “The way it was recorded and the kind of music... There’s a transparency to it that’s way beyond today’s music. You went out and played it live. You got it down. You came into the studio and played it a couple of times. That’s it! It

was a completely regional thing, like ‘Second Line’ Cajun music out of New Orleans, Western Swing out of California. Nobody in New York knew what was happening.”

Olsen was playing the “Gone, Gone Song (I’m Blue)” by the pre-Tina Ikettes as he reminisced about his own career, growing up in the white suburb of Oceanside, NY, where he had “zero” exposure to R&B on local radio. He started DJ-ing at Ithaca College on the campus radio station when the Allman Brothers and the Grateful Dead were all the rage, reinventing American blues and roots music. He took an entry-level job at WERI in Westerly, RI, and followed the progressive FM banner to stations in Portland, ME and Peterboro, NH, before landing at WRSI, where he features artists like Buddy and Julie Miller, Levon Helm, Lucinda Williams and Steve Earle on his Sunday morning show.

“Congratulations,” said one fan. “You’ve been doing that for longer than I’ve done anything in my life.” Another came up to thank him just, “for playing the music. I listen to you every Sunday morning.”

At the Rendezvous, when Olsen drops by with his library of 13,000 tunes cached in a pair of iPods, it’s strictly R&B, with just a smattering of country to leaven the dough.

Why did he choose the Rendezvous to download his R&B treasures for listeners’ pleasure?

“This place is awesome. It’s my kind of neighborhood

scene.”

With the exception of last Friday, when his 25th anniversary party was well advertised, Olsen’s Rambles at the Rendezvous are indeed a well-kept secret. Looking around the packed bar on Friday, he remarked, “It’s nice to have people here. I’m usually like, ‘Another Thursday night, I cleared the place again.’”

Olsen will be back, doing what he does best, with no commercial breaks, no unnecessary chatter, playing classic R&B on Friday, January 8th, segueing into the next appearance of Jeff Foucault’s High County Low-Fi at the Rendezvous.

For more info, go to rendezvousfma.com/events.



DETMOLD PHOTO

Jim Olsen will take listeners on a Ramble through the back highways of Rhythm & Blues on Friday, January 8th at the Rendezvous, 3rd Street, in Turners.

out “I’m a Woman,” an answer record to Bo Diddley’s “I’m a Man.”

R&B took root in the mid-section of the Mississippi, centered around Memphis and Chicago, as the great blues guitarists like Muddy Waters and

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SCHOOL from pg 7

new charter school, because “we cannot afford to spread out the district’s already limited resources any further if we hope to improve education for all students in the district. The way Massachusetts funds charter schools will punish the school district unfairly. The district will either suffer a reduction in educational quality due to diminished funds, or the town will have to increase its financial support for the district to make up the shortfall.”

Joyce Phillips, committee member from Montague, offered a resolution asking the school committee to take an official position on the charter school. The resolution stated, in part, the Gill-Montague Regional School District “opposes the opening of a charter school in the area because it will damage the existing district schools financially and any resulting loss of stu-

dents and state aid, both Chapter 70 aid and regional transportation aid, will increase the structural budget gap.”

Sandra Brown of Gill spoke in support of the Discovery Charter School, and said her only concern was over the state’s method of funding charter schools. Jeff Singleton of Montague proposed an amendment to the resolution saying the committee respects the differing views of school committee members.

This sparked further debate.

Jennifer Waldron of Gill said, of the proposed charter school, “We can take the things that are good and bring them to our own schools. Supporting this charter school is against fiscal stability in the district.”

Singleton said he was concerned about the “repressive view” of the charter school issue. Bringing up a subject that had not as yet been directly addressed in Tuesday’s school

committee meeting, he said, “There is no conflict of interest in [school committee members] serving on an advisory board for the charter school.”

Kristin Boyle of Montague said that “conflict of interest is perceived by the community – charter schools create fissures in the community. We should support our own teachers and administrators in their innovative programs.”

Michael Langknecht, school committee chair and a supporter of the charter school, told Boyle “your comments are completely over the line.”

Boyle stood her ground and said she had spoken to the Montague town clerk and that members who were working in advisory capacity for the charter school should officially disclose that.

Singleton said there was only a conflict of interest if a school committee member stood to gain something personally by their actions.

Emily Monosson of Montague said she “couldn’t get a foot in the door” with her offer to volunteer as a trained science researcher in the district schools, so she “jumped at the chance as an environmental toxicologist” to act as an advisor in developing a school that would focus on science and sustainability.

Waldron, responding to Langknecht’s remarks to Boyle, suggested he step down as chair for this portion of the meeting and let Sandy Brown, as vice chair, take over. He did not respond to this request.

Phillips pointed out that included in the list of agreed upon school committee goals was one to “increase enrollment, reduce choice out. We’re talking about our own goals of increasing enrollment,” she said.

Singleton withdrew his amendment, saying that as long as there was a respectful discussion of the issues he was OK with the resolution as it stood.

Sorrel Hatch of Gill said, “This school district doesn’t have enough children in it. Taking yourself outside the box and joining with other people who agree with you – as nice as the charter school idea is, it’s not real.” Hatch emphasized the importance of supporting the schools and the students in the

district that already exist and making them stronger, instead of looking outside for solutions that will, in her opinion, only hurt the students in the district.

In a vote of six to three, the school committee voted to support Phillips’ resolution in opposition to the charter school.

Sandra Brown offered an amendment to the list of school committee goals to include, “Educational excellence which enables every student to fully develop his or her talents.” Members questioned how this could be measured but in the end it passed with a simple majority, five to four.

The effort to develop a Readiness school at Sheffield came to an impasse last Friday as the group of teachers and educators involved voted against continuing the development process. The main reason for the vote was a lack of clarity from the state on the basic definition of the school configuration. Dziura said, in his opinion, legislation should have been enacted first that defined the design of the Readiness schools. Instead they asked the schools to develop the design themselves, without parameters set by the state, which left those involved confused about how to proceed. There is legislation pending which will address the guidelines and expectations for developing what are now being called Innovation schools.

Ladd said part of the problem is that state grant money that was expected to be made available to develop Readiness schools seems to have “gone away.” Add on top of that the subcommittee looking at reconfiguring schools to combine all elementary grades in Montague into Sheffield, and there were – according to Chip Wood who has been working on the Readiness school proposal for Sheffield for months – simply too many questions and not enough answers for the teachers and others involved to continue to put time and energy into this project.

At Superintendent Ladd’s request, Ken Rocke, former GMRSD superintendent and now director of the Pioneer Valley Regional District and School Assistance Center (DSAC), and Linda Foisy,

Associate Commissioner of the DSAC, came to the school committee meeting to provide information and answer questions regarding the services they will be offering to the district.

Foisy gave a presentation explaining the designations of districts. There are five levels, with level one and two being the best-performing schools and districts, level three being those in need of some help, and level four being underperforming schools and districts in need of support.

The Gill-Montague school district is the only level four district in the Pioneer Valley region. There are no level five schools.

Foisy said the DSAC will work to find solutions to help underperforming schools and districts provide better educational outcomes for students. The DSAC has concluded that working at the individual school level will not help, as the work must be with the district as well. She said that when the state worked directly with underperforming schools, improvement would be seen as long as the state remained involved, but that once the framework of support ended, progress would be reversed.

Foisy said the DSAC will be concentrating on building trust and listening to people in the field, and providing more professional development. With a level four school district like Gill-Montague, the DSAC will provide a lot of targeted support.

Ken Rocke said the DSAC will be rolling out a growth model for the district. Not all schools in the district are underperforming, but with the new model, all schools and districts will have access to the menu of professional development and assistance offered by DSAC. He said they will be concentrating on level three and level four schools. His staff consists of education specialists in math, literacy, English language learners, technical support, and data analysis. Informational sessions will be provided to the districts in the next several months so administrators can plan how best to utilize the services offered.



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NOTES FROM THE MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD

Student Town Planner Intern to Be Temporary

BY BILL DRAKE

MONTAGUE – Town administrator Frank Abbondanzio tried to assuage concerns over the fate of Montague’s town planner position on Monday, December 7th. Abbondanzio told the selectboard he has been in contact with the UMass landscape architecture and regional planning department, and hopes to review resumes in the coming week to fill the town planner position temporarily with a graduate student internship, lasting from January through May.

“It’s a temp-to-hire, without being guaranteed a job,” said Abbondanzio of the position, for which the selectboard motioned to set up a selection committee. Representatives from the planning board, conservation commission, Montague Business Association, RiverCulture, Abbondanzio himself, and possibly someone from the Economic Development and Industrial Commission would review potential student candidates.

“Ideally, we’d like to see someone who wants to stay in the area,” said Abbondanzio of the internship applicants, “and get into municipal planning. They would have to have done most of their course work already, because with the 20 hours they’re putting in here and their thesis, that is the limit to their work load.”

After five months, the 20-hour a week part-time position would

end.

“We’d be hiring in the spring for an entry-level position starting at \$40,000,” said Abbondanzio.

“We hope to have a full-time planner by June,” added selectboard member Pat Allen.

Chris Janke, president of the Montague Business Association, raised concerns over the talent pool from which a candidate might be drawn. “Are we looking at the best of the class?” asked Janke.

“These are people coming out with a Masters degree in planning,” said Abbondanzio. “[In the past] I’ve actually hired two people straight out of the program.”

Abbondanzio asserted there are three key areas a town planner must become proficient in: “conservation, planning, and economic development. Of the four planners I’ve hired, none of them came in mastering all three parts.”

“If we were not in a series of cutbacks, would the town be looking to go this route?” asked Janke.

“I don’t totally see it as a cost-cutting measure,” replied Abbondanzio.

But the town does stand to save money. The part-time hire would cost the town \$8,000.

“Fully staffed, it would be \$27,000 or \$28,000 until spring,” said Abbondanzio. The full-time, entry-level position could save

the town money compared with the current town planner salary, budgeted for the fiscal year ending in June of 2010 at \$58,000.

“Trying to satisfy all realities,” said selectboard chair Patricia Pruitt, “to some extent, I’m concerned we would have diminished services to what we’ve become accustomed to.” Pruitt went on to say, “I’m concerned there’s no direct supervision for [the intern], concerned we are downsizing the position.”

Michael Muller, founder of Montague Web Works, asked if the town would look to a part-time replacement if the internship did not work out.

“I don’t know that we’ll go that way,” said Abbondanzio. “We’ll be making up our minds as it proves itself through the internship. The budgeting

process coincides with that.”

“Basically, we’re hiring a temp,” said selectboard member Mark Fairbrother. “That’s what it amounts to.”

In other news, the selectboard agreed to approve directional signage for the Rendezvous along Route 2. Tourist-oriented directional signs alert drivers to potential stopping points off Route 2.

“We’re petitioning the state,” said Emily Brewster, co-owner of the Rendezvous. “We’re interested in following through with the process and seeing the results.”

Brewster needed written permission from the Montague selectboard in order to petition MassHighway to place a trail blazing sign, a sign used to indicate direction and mileage to a specific point of interest, with succeeding signs at every deci-

sion making point for drivers. In this case, that would mean the town approving a directional sign to the Rendezvous at the corner of Avenue A and 3rd Street.

“Right now, there is a sign on a signal post [at Avenue A and 3rd] for the Airport Industrial Site,” said Brewster. “I talked to Tom [Bergeron, superintendent of public works], and he said it was a ‘tricky site’ but that he could possibly find a spot.”

Currently, Oak Ridge golf course in Gill, the Hallmark Institute of Photography, the Great Falls Discovery Center, and Historic Deerfield, all have blue trailblazing signs on Route 2 with white lettering. The sign could draw more tourists off Route 2 and into downtown Turners Falls.

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Community Hanukkah Celebration Tuesday, December 15th, 4 to 5:30 p.m.

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SKATEPARK from pg 1

small price to pay for his uncertainty.”

Montague owns the 15-foot strip of land adjacent to Williams Garage, which the town has used for overflow parking for ball-games and other events at Unity Park. Except for those occasions, de Christopher has enjoyed the use of that land since he bought the property eight years ago.

As part of the agreement, Article 7 of the special town meeting warrant looks to grant de Christopher a 15-foot by 240-foot easement across the town's land, adjacent to the garage, in consideration of his signing a quit claim for the closure of Williams Way.

“Were we not to make this agreement,” said town administrator Frank Abbondanzio, “he would have a right to say that we are depriving him of his easement rights.”

De Christopher is currently able to use a curb cut off Williams Way to access the lot behind Williams Garage. At a special town meeting on April 30th, de Christopher objected to the closure of Williams Way, delaying action on that warrant

article, though former town planner Dan Laroche made the point that de Christopher does not, in fact, own any frontage on Williams Way, has plenty of access to the rear of his property from 2nd Street, and has adequate sight lines on First Street to request a curb cut be installed there at his own expense, should he so desire.

The planned location for the skate park includes the 25 feet of land beneath Williams Way, which will be added to Unity Park if town meeting votes to close the road. The town land next to Williams Garage would remain undeveloped for use as a fire lane, as the Turners Falls Fire Department requested.

De Christopher was unavailable to comment for this story. On Tuesday, he was reached at work, but said it was a bad time to talk. On Wednesday, reached in the evening, he said he was shoveling snow. Two more phone calls to de Christopher were not returned by press time.

The Unity Park Redevelopment Committee supports the creation of the concrete skate park as an extension of the Unity Park redevelopment. At the Wednesday night meeting, lightly attended at the police station community room on Turnpike Road, Bruce Hunter of the Franklin County Regional Housing and Redevelopment Authority said the town would seek to construct the skate park in a second phase of construction work at Unity Park, since the April delay at town meeting caused the design phase of the skate park to be pushed forward to next year, at the earliest.

In 2010, the town hopes to

combine at least \$500,000 in CDBG funds with about \$30,000 in town program income funds to reconstruct the playground area and access points around the field house at Unity Park, incorporating plantings, shade trees, a small spray apparatus, and handicapped accessibility features, new signage and an improved parking area at that northwest end of the park.

If town meeting closes Williams Way, design of the skate park will proceed using more than \$16,000 in program income funds set aside previously by the selectboard for that purpose, and be incorporated into the following year's CDBG application, along with a number of other improvements to Unity Park.

“Parks are key,” said Dolan. “We have a really nice population density [in Turners Falls], but that means a lot of kids without yards. Their yards are alleys and side streets. The park gives them a place to go.”

“When the skate park originally started, I knew some of the kids involved because of my daughter,” said Jean Hebden of Turners Falls, “and I was really impressed with the way they used the system to get a park. You know, they went to the town meetings, and really did their research.”

Hebden's daughter was 15 at the time, and is 27 now. In the intervening years, the skate park has been locked for five consecutive years for lack of funds to resurface the original plywood ramps, then forced to move to a location on 11th Street, away from the downtown center, when de Christopher, the park's former landlord, declined to renew the skate park's lease. He also kept the \$4,000, one-year-old chain link fence the skate park committee raised funds to install, at the town's insistence, at the former skate park – an investment

which, at the time, represented approximately 80% of the committee's available funds.

Recently, de Christopher made a payment of \$100 to the skate park committee in consideration of the investment the committee made installing the new fence.

Currently, kids using the pint-sized skate park on 11th Street, crowded with plywood ramps and welded rails, skate on land donated for the purpose by James Capen. The town has a three-year lease on the site. Though still serviceable, the ramps' plywood is delaminating, and the green paint job faded and peeling.

“Right now, this one works,” said Dolan, “but it's kind of [lousy].”

A permanent concrete skate park costs between \$20 to \$25 per square foot, and at a proposed 4800 square feet, the skate park addition to Unity Park would cost around \$100,000. The CDBG funds would cover quite a bit of the cost of the park, but not all the expense of pouring thousands of yards of concrete and shaping the hardening mixture into a skateable surface. Aside from the hoped-for CDBG money, Dolan has raised private funds for the skate park through fundraisers, and has applied for a Tony Hawk Foundation Grant.

Through his foundation, iconic skater Tony Hawk promotes the construction of high-quality, public skate parks in low-income areas throughout the United States. The grant application is stringent and the maximum allocation is \$25,000.

Dolan said the permanent skate park planned for Unity Park would be “big enough to be world-class. It hits the whole spectrum of skating. We're thinking of making it a destination. We're hoping to bring some tourism to the town.”

Located near the Connecticut

River, with a picnic area on the river side, one feature in the proposed skate park is shaped like a large in-ground swimming pool, with seamless curves. This component features sloped walls ten feet high in the deep end, and is dubbed ‘the bowl’.

“Etiquette dictates one person in the bowl at a time,” explained Dolan. Past the bowl and toward Unity Park would be a large sunken plaza. The plaza would be surrounded by a seamless sloping wall, a pyramid with a bar to grind on, and a pair of stairs leading out of the skate park and toward 2nd Street.

“It's designed for endless flow,” said Dolan of the proposed skate park layout. “You want to kick flip the stairs, then do a trick in the center where everyone can see you. You could be a pasty 14-year old dude with acne, wearing your sister's pants, and you'll get a standing ovation if you do something cool.”

It is those 14-year-olds, and others around the same age, the skate park is designed for.

“I thought it was important for teenagers to have a place to play, and they were always getting in trouble skateboarding around in town,” said Hebden. “The kids deserve a permanent home.”

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HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE GILL POLICE LOG

Hunters Trespassing

Wednesday, 12/2
11:29 a.m. Report of trespassing hunters on Barney Hale Road.

Friday, 12/4
8:15 p.m. Welfare check on Bascom Road.
8:50 p.m. Disturbance on Chase Road.

9:40 p.m. Erratic vehicle complaint on French King Highway.

Saturday, 12/5
7:20 p.m. Report of trees blocking roadway on Hoe Shop Road.

Sunday, 12/6
1:41 a.m. Report of suspicious vehicle on West Gill Road.

6:20 p.m. Assisted disabled motorist on Gill-Montague Bridge.

Tuesday, 12/8
11:25 a.m. 911 mis-dial on French King Highway, all OK.

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JESSICA HARMON ILLUSTRATION

THE HEALTHY GEEZER:

Relieving Stress

BY FRED CICETTI
LEONIA, NJ – *Q. I don't handle stress very well. I was wondering if you had any recommendations to deal with my problem.*

The American Psychological Association reports that one-third of Americans are living with extreme stress. Money and work are the leading causes of stress for three quarters of Americans. Nearly half of all Americans report that stress has a negative impact on both their

personal and professional lives. We respond to stress with a "fight-or-flight" reaction. It's our natural response to a perceived threat. In the old days, that threat was something simple like a beast chasing us up a tree. Now we have all kinds of "threats" that include shrunken nest eggs, caring for a sick loved one, getting stuck in traffic, dealing with a blankety-blank computer.

Here's what happens in your body during a stressful event:

An alarm goes off in your brain. Your adrenal glands atop your kidneys are told to release adrenaline and cortisol. These hormones pump up your pulse, blood pressure and sugar levels in your blood. They get you ready to shinny up that tree.

The stress response is complex. It also suppresses

nonessential functions, controls mood, and increases the availability of substances that repair tissues. When the threat is removed, the body returns to a normal state.

Your health can be damaged by unrelenting stress. Overexposure to stress hormones can lead to depression, heart disease, impaired memory, insomnia and obesity.

We can't escape all stress, so we have to learn how to deal with it. Here are what I consider the best tips for handling stress:

Exercise

Exercise can decrease the production of stress hormones and elevate the level of endorphins, the brain's neurotransmitters that make you feel good. Exercise can increase self-confidence and lower the symptoms

associated with mild depression and anxiety. I'm listing exercise first because I believe it is the most important technique for alleviating stress.

Meditation

Meditation can give you peace of mind. Focusing your attention is an important part of meditation because it liberates your mind from distractions that cause stress and worry. It's easy and you can do it whenever or wherever you want. Prayer is the most widely practiced example of meditation. Other methods of meditation include:

- Mantra meditation. You silently repeat a word, thought or phrase to prevent distracting thoughts. Transcendental meditation is a type of mantra meditation.

- Guided imagery. You summon images that are relaxing to you, such as a tropical island with palm trees and clear blue water.

- Yoga. In this practice,

which originated in India, you perform a series of postures and controlled breathing exercises.

- Tai chi. This form of Chinese martial arts involves slow movement and deep breathing.

- Qi gong. This practice, part of Chinese medicine, combines meditation, relaxation, physical movement and breathing exercises.

Positive thinking

Thoughts run through our minds constantly. Some are negative and self-defeating. Others are positive and empowering. You can control what you want to dwell upon. If a negative thought pops into your consciousness, you can block it out and replace it with a positive thought. It takes vigilance and an act of will. This technique will reduce stress, alleviate depression and anxiety, and lead to better mental and physical health.

Here's a wonderful variation on the Golden Rule: Don't say anything to yourself that you wouldn't say to anyone else.

Sleep

Sleeping well restores the mind and body. Lack of sleep is ranked with obesity and smoking as a leading danger to your health. Try to set aside enough time to sleep. Take naps.

Music

Listening to restful music will reduce stress. MP3 players have become an inexpensive way to have music in your life whenever you want. And you can play up-tempo tunes on a player to motivate you during exercise.

If you would like to ask a question, please write fred@healthygeezzer.com.

Shoveling Their Way to Montague

BY JOSEPH A. PARZYCH – The boy seen shoveling his way from Gill to Montague for three hours on Wednesday, after the first real snowstorm of the season called it quits, was fifth grader Mitchell Waldron, known as the Mayor of Riverside. Close behind, and helping him perform this generous act of public service on the Gill-Montague Bridge was Claire Chang, Gill finance committee member, who commented, "We shouldn't wait for the state or the town to do everything for us."

The question is, did they ever do it for us?

Cleaning the snow off of the Gill-Montague Bridge used to fall under the domain of the state bridge crew, operating out of their garage on Locust Street in Northampton. A man with a snow blower could make short work of clearing the sidewalk from Gill to Turners Falls. But that isn't the way the state does things.

They'd wait until the snow and slush froze solid before sending a crew of a half dozen men up from Northampton. It would take a while to get there. But first they'd report to the state garage in Erving. From there,

they'd drive to the Gill side of the bridge, get out shovels and ice chippers to begin pecking away as effectively as woodpeckers pecking on a steel telephone pole.

Soon it would be time to go for coffee at the Shady Glen. On



Mitchell Waldron and Claire Chang clear a path on the sidewalk across the bridge from Gill to Turners Falls on Wednesday

their return they would resume pecking away. At 11:30 it would be time to go for lunch, back to the Erving garage. Then, after lunch, a ride back to the bridge. Another work break and back to the Shady Glen, with a final work break before going back to Northampton.

There was no sense in getting too industrious with the project,

because they were never going to get it cleaned more than half way, anyway, before the next storm dumped a new layer on the part they'd chipped off. Plus, the next storm would add a few more layers on the section they never got to clear. By the end of winter,

the snow would be nearly up to the top of the guard rails.

Meanwhile, pedestrians were taking their life in their hands by walking in the traveled way, while kids trudged along the tops of the snow banks on the sidewalk. They had great fun throwing chunks of snow over the guardrail, now a foot high.

Sometimes when I was clean-

ing snow banks off of the bridge with my bucket loader, the bridge crew foreman would ask Bird Girard a favor. Girard was in charge of the snow plowing and sanding crew at the Erving garage. He was blessed with some rare common sense. The bridge foreman would ask Girard if he could spare me for a few minutes to loosen some of the frozen slush on the sidewalks so there would at least be the appearance of progress. This was not a kosher deal, because the request for my services should have been processed through proper channels, meaning daffodils would be in bloom by the time the paperwork filtered through the system, and the frozen snow and ice would have melted.

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VOTER from pg 1

Independents for the little known state senator from Wrentham to beat Coakley in the general election.

About 20.6% of Massachusetts' four million registered voters turned out to vote on Tuesday. Coakley walked away with 47% of the Democrats' vote in a four-way race.

Locally, health care, jobs, and the environment topped the list of concerns voters brought with them to the polls as they cast ballots for nominees to fill the first open seat for U.S. Senate in the Commonwealth since 1984.

"Health care," said Bud Meattay, naming his number one issue as he left the Erving town hall after voting on Tuesday afternoon. "I want to see our new Senator straighten that out. I'd like to see everyone have equal health care, no matter what their gender, race, or economic status. It ought to be available to everyone."

Meattay voted for Celtic co-owner Steve Pagliuca, who spent millions of his own money promoting his candidacy but came in fourth with just 12% of the vote. "If he can turn around the Celtics, he ought to be able to do it for health care," said Meattay.

"Jobs," said Denise Andrews, who emerged from the polling booth a few minutes later, the 60th person to cast a vote in Erving, as the afternoon drew on toward evening. Though she thought City Year founder Alan Khazei (who came in third for the

Dems, with 13%) and Pagliuca both had excellent ideas for creating jobs, she liked Coakley's economic platform better. "She wants to invest in innovation and sustainable jobs, rather than pave more roads and build homes no one can afford to buy. Our country needs some work," she added.

Dan Botkin and Divya Shinn-Botkin were voters number 108 and 109 in Gill at 3:15. Dan



Jim Paulin voted for Coakley. "One of the candidates is strongly opposed to possession of guns," he said.

Botkin said the election, for him, was a close call between two good candidates, Coakley and Congressman Mike Capuano of Somerville (who trailed Coakley with 28% of the vote). "Capuano seems to be a little more unequivocally anti-nuclear. Coakley might, under certain circumstances, be willing to accept new nuclear plants. On foreign policy, women's issues, and the environment, both would make good representatives for us."

Jim Paulin said, "One of the candidates is strongly opposed to possession of guns. He's for gun control. One of the candidates has

helped me out personally. Martha Coakley, that's who I voted for."

Up in Wendell, 105 voters had turned out by quarter past four. "I got a good feeling off of Alan Khazei," said Beth Erviti. "He has made efforts in his political life to educate people about the issues, to become more politically active. That's in the spirit of Ted Kennedy."

"I picked the one I didn't get any telemarketing calls from," said Todd Sunderland.

Paul Godfrey said combating climate change was his top priority in choosing a Senate candidate. "Stop putting carbon dioxide into the air. And of course, the economy, jobs and health care." For all of these reasons, he tapped Coakley for the job.

As dusk deepened in Leverett, a woman pushing a walker left the voting booth at town hall and paused long enough to say health care and government spending were the issues that motivated her to vote in the primary. "Leave things alone. We don't need 2000 pages to solve the problem [of health care]. It's all government pork." She voted for Jack E. Robinson, the perennial Republican candidate, who came in second in the two-horse race for the GOP nomination, with 11% to Brown's 89%.

"Health care and the war," said Dennis Lombardi, when asked about his main concerns in the Senate race. "Like, get out of the war, and get into health care." Lombardi said he could never vote for a multi-millionaire like Pagliuca. "I want more equality. I want the rich to get poorer and the poor to get richer."

The environment was Don Ogden's main concern. "I voted for Capuano because of his position on biomass, nukes, global warming, and his experience." Capuano has served in the House for six terms, after five as mayor of Somerville.

Almost 350 voters had turned out in Leverett at 5:00 p.m., and school committee chair Kip Fonsch was one of them. "The fiscal state of the state and the fiscal state of the nation" were uppermost in his mind as he came to vote, but Fonsch would not reveal his pick for Senate. "Several candidates attracted me. There was no great difference between them."

Jan Tyner simply wanted to elect "a Democrat, and a woman while I'm at it." And that sentiment carried the day statewide.

Over in Montague a random survey of two dozen voters at precincts 2, 3 and 4 on Tuesday evening revealed most voter concern centered on health care. By a margin of two to one, voters said they were looking for a U.S. senator who would work with President Obama, rather than against him, to create a health care plan that would cover all Americans.

A strong runner-up was the economy, jobs and unemployment. While a large majority of the voters interviewed at the polls in these precincts appeared to be 65 or older, and likely out of the job market, they expressed great concern for younger workers



Laura Thorne said universal health care and help for the homeless were issues that affected her vote.

affected by the present economic downturn.

In addition to health care and the economy, voters expressed concern that the next senator from Massachusetts be a strong Democratic advocate for our state, able to fill the shoes of the late senator Ted Kennedy.

Finally, a small but vocal number of those questioned believed it was important to have someone from Western Massachusetts represent them in the U.S. Senate. Favoring Coakley, these voters said the western part of the state has been ignored in the past in favor of projects such as the "Big Dig" in Boston.

She would not name her candidate of choice, but as the clock ticked toward eight and poll workers got ready to close up shop, Laura Thorne cast the 119th ballot in downtown Turners Falls, precinct 5, saying "universal health care and more help for homeless people," were her top priorities.

Sounds like you voted Democratic?

"Yes."



APPLICATION FOR PERMIT

Pursuant to Chapter 21, Section 43 of the General Laws, and 314 CMR 7.00 and 2.06, notice is given of the following application for a sewer connection permit and proposed actions thereon:

CITY/TOWN: Greenfield
PROJECT NAME: Pioneer Renewable Energy Sewer Connection Permit
APPLICANT: Pioneer Renewable Energy, LLC
LOCATION: 37 Butternut Street, Greenfield, MA 01301
PURPOSE: Permit for Industrial Sewer User, BWP IW 39
TRANSMITTAL NO.: X230370
PROPOSED ACTION: Tentative Determination to Issue

The above application, and applicable laws, regulations, and procedures are available for inspection at the above address and on the MassDEP website http://www.mass.gov/dep/public/public.htm. Comments on the proposed actions or requests for a public hearing on the proposed actions must be sent in writing to the MassDEP address listed at the top of this notice within thirty (30) days of the date of publication of this PUBLIC NOTICE.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MONTAGUE POLICE LOG
Scam Phone Calls Annoy Residents

Thursday, 12/3

1:30 a.m. Report of an unwanted person at a Fourth Street address. Peace restored.
9:30 a.m. Assistance to New York State police department at a Fourth Street address for a welfare check. Services rendered.
12:05 p.m. Assistance to Greenfield police department in Greenfield. Services rendered.

Friday, 12/4

1:35 p.m. Report of fraud, identity theft, at a Twelfth Street address. Investigated.
3:17 p.m. Report of burglary / breaking and entering at a South Prospect Street address.
9:19 a.m. Report of burglary / breaking and entering at a Third Street address.
3:28 p.m. Officer wanted at a Fourth Street address. Caller advised of options.

4:28 p.m. Report of a scam phone call to a Millers Falls Road resident.

6:18 p.m. Report of a scam phone call to a Montague Street resident.
6:19 p.m. Report of a scam phone call to a Turnpike Road resident.
6:22 p.m. Report of a scam phone call to a Norman Circle resident.

Saturday, 12/5

1:21 a.m. Report of a missing person from an L Street address. Subject returned to home or family.

11:56 a.m. Report of trespassing hunters at a Mineral Road address. Services rendered.

Monday, 12/7

1:56 a.m. Report of burglary / breaking and entering at a Park Villa Drive address. Investigated.
5:36 p.m. Report of a domestic disturbance at an L Street address. Peace restored.
8:41 p.m. Report of a domestic disturbance at a Randall Road address. Investigated.

Pam Veith Real Estate advertisement featuring Barbara A. Edson-Greenwald, REALTOR, with contact information and a slogan: "My Office is Always Open to You!"

About Face Computer Solutions advertisement listing services like Computer Repair, IT Support, and Network Installation, with contact number 413.367.0025.

B. RUBIN & SONS INC. advertisement for complete auto repairs, including shocks, tires, batteries, and starters, with a 10% senior discount and free estimates.

Renaissance Builders advertisement emphasizing quality, craftsmanship, and original thought, with contact information for 390 Main Road, Gill MA.

COUNTRY OIL advertisement for heating, cooling, and plumbing services, established since 1986, with contact information for 540 Northfield Rd.

MONTAGUE INTEGRATIVE HEALTH advertisement for Dr. Emily Maiella, a Naturopathic Physician, with contact information for 432 Greenfield Road.

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT



JACK COUGHNIN ILLUSTRATION



Welcome Yule at the Shea Theater in Turners Falls. Music, dance, stories to drive the dark away. Friday to Sunday, December 11th to 13th. (Photo from the 2005 performance, taken by Carol Pike.) This is Welcome Yule's 25th Anniversary performance!

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 10th
At the Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Bok Choy Jazz*. 8 p.m., no cover.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Free Range*, rock out with Betsy, Mark and Bruce to classic rock & dance music, 8 to 10 p.m.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 11th
Open House and 10th Anniversary celebration at the Visitor Center, Greenfield. 5 to 8 p.m. Great holiday gifts, local crafts, food, vendor demos, free raffles.

Great Falls Coffee House: Tom Carroll Holiday Concert. 7 p.m. in the Great Hall of the Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. Coffee & homemade baked goods will be available. The museum and Museum Store will be open during intermission. Sliding scale donation: \$6 to \$12; children free.

At the Rendezvous, Turners Falls: Ben and Ansel have a Holiday Party! DJs, 9:30 p.m.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Cosmic Moxa*, Hip, modern, worldbeat, funk, 9 to 11 p.m.

Route 63 Roadhouse, Millers Falls:

Jonathan Scott & the Blazing Hearts, rockin' country, 9:30 p.m.

Burrito Rojo, Turners Falls: *Infinite August Soul*, rock. 8 to 11 p.m.

FRIDAY TO SUNDAY, DECEMBER 11th to 13th
Welcome Yule! At the Shea Theater, Turners Falls. Fri & Sat at 7:30 p.m. Sunday at 2 p.m. Welcome Yule is a wonderful evening of old-time Yuletide and Wassailing. Great music and skits, and lots of fun. \$10. \$7 for children & seniors. welcomeyule.org/contact.

SATURDAY & SUNDAY, DECEMBER 12th & 13th
Montague the Montague Farm Zen House is holding a weekend workshop, *Leadership with the Alinsky Method of Community Organizing* with Alisa Glassman, lead organizer for Action in Montgomery. Sat 9 to 5 p.m. and Sunday 9 to 3 p.m. at 177 Ripley Road, Montague. Sliding scale, \$0 to 100. Info: Karen (413) 367 5275 or karen@zenpeacemakers.com

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 12th
At the Discovery Center, Turners Falls: All About Snow! What is snow, and why is it important to so many living things? Have you ever wondered about the beautiful patterns of snowflakes? Learn the answers, and make paper snowflakes to bring home! 1 to 2 p.m.

Annual Make-It-Yourself Family Craft Fair at the Montague Grange, 10 to 3 p.m. Guided craft activities for all ages to make great gifts! Cool jewelry and jewelry boxes, beeswax candles, painted glass ornaments, gnomes, paper crafts, picture frames, lavender sachets, and lots more. Proceeds to benefit the Montague Grange Building Fund. Info & directions: www.MontagueMA.net/Montague_Grange

Wendell Full Moon Coffee House: *Mass Production*, a reggae, hip-hop, and dub conglomerate that has earned a well-deserved reputation for creating the dance experience you've been looking for. Benefit for *Good Neighbors*. In Old Town Hall, Wendell center. Open Mic begins at 7:30 p.m. www.wendellfullmoon.org.

At the Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *The*

Warblers and *The Original Cowards*, indie, experimental, garage rock! No cover, 9:30 p.m.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Richard Chase Group*, acoustic driven originals, 9 to 11 p.m.

Route 63 Roadhouse, Millers Falls: *Turn It Loose*, rockers, their only area show, 9:30 p.m.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 13th
Deja Brew, Wendell: *Steve Crow, Peter Kim & Joe Fitzpatrick*, Acoustic Trio - Warped Americana, 8 to 10 p.m.

At the Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *TNT Karaoke* with Opa Opa specials and swag, free.

MONDAY, DECEMBER 14th
At the Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Slope Poetry*, Sean Casey, Seth Landman, 7 p.m.

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 15th
The Wendell Real World Film Series presents *Why We Fight*, Eugene

Jarecki's 2005 Sundance Grand Jury Award-winning feature-length documentary which dissects America's military machine with a keen eye to answering a necessary question: Why do we engage in war? Through personal stories of soldiers, government officials, scholars, journalists and innocent victims, the film examines the political and economic interests and ideological factors, past and present, behind American militarism. 7 p.m. at the Wendell Public Library. Free.

A Community Hanukkah Celebration from 4:00 to 5:30 p.m., sponsored by Greenfield's Temple Israel and Green Fields Market, held upstairs at 144 Main Street, Greenfield. Join us for a dreidel-spinning contest, a donut-eating contest, Hanukah songs and stories, menorah lighting, and more. The event is free, and latkes and drinks will be available for purchase.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 16th
Holiday Concert - Mid-Week Concert Series Featuring: *Mohawk Trail Regional High School Select Chorus*, directed by Dorothea Kostenoff. Held at All Souls Church, Greenfield. Suggested donation \$2 to 5. 12:15 to 12:45 p.m.

At the Rendezvous, Turners Falls: Quizmaster Chad's Quiznite Quiz! 8 p.m.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 17th
At the Rendezvous, Turners Falls: Holiday Classics by Lisa Davol and

Steve Alves, 7:30 p.m. Special performances by: Linda Hickman, Zach Holmes and Hilary Graves. Also joining in will be Patricia Pruit, Leo Hwang-Carlos, Jamie Berger, Janel Nockleby, Kevin and Hillary Smith, and Kenny Butler.

Special Screening of *The Deerfield, a Working River* at the Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls. Come view this excellent film produced by Riverbank Media. It's an in-depth look at the Deerfield River, with great interviews regarding the past, present, and future of this interesting river, 7 p.m.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Wailin' Dave Robinson, Tommy Filault & Co.* Blues Based Roots Music, 8 to 10 p.m.

Burrito Rojo, Turners Falls: *Ghost Quartet*, 9 p.m.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 18th
Deja Brew, Wendell: *Josh Levangie*, singing all your favorite Johnny Cash tunes and many more. 9 to 11 p.m.

At the Rendezvous, Turners Falls: D. Hales & Friends' *Velvety Visions at the Voo* (Velvet Underground action) 9 p.m. No cover.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 19th
Santa's Breakfast at the Montague Elks Lodge, Turners Falls. 7 to 11 a.m. \$6, or \$3 for kids.

At the Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls: What's that tree? How to identify common trees in winter! Learn how to identify a tree without its leaves. You will learn about tree shape, bark, and buds of our local trees. This presentation is geared towards folks 12 years of age and older. 1 to 2 p.m.

Reverend Billy's Christmas Revival at All Souls Church, Greenfield. Featuring *The Life after Shopping Gospel Choir*, 2 p.m. Suggested donation: \$10. www.revilly.com.



Bev Grant and the Dissident Daughters at the Echo Lake Concert Series, Town Hall, Leverett on Saturday, December 19th at 7:30 p.m. \$10. (413) 548-9394.

Bev Grant and the Dissident Daughters will present radical social commentary in 3-part soprano and alto harmony at the Echo Lake Concert Series, Town Hall, Leverett. Potluck at 6:15 p.m.; show starts at 7:30 p.m.. Admission: \$10. Info: (413) 548-9394.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Kristen Ford Band*, Indie Rock, 9 to 11 p.m.

SATURDAY & SUNDAY, DECEMBER 19th & 20th
The Ja'Duke Holiday Spectacular, presented by the Ja'Duke Center for the Performing Arts, Sat at 7 p.m. and Sun. at 2 p.m. at Greenfield High School Auditorium. Seasonal program of dancing, singing and acting that will leave you filled with a warm holiday spirit of joy and friendship that will last the whole year long. \$12 for adults, and \$10 for those 12 and under or 65 and over. For reservation: (413) 863-0001 or www.jaduke.com.

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2. THE PRINCESS AND THE FROG DAILY 6:30 9:00 in DTS sound
FRI, SAT, SUN 12:00 3:00 PG

3. 2012 PG13 in DTS sound
DAILY 6:30 9:30
FRI, SAT, SUN 12:00 3:00

4. PLANET 51
DAILY 6:45 9:15
FRI, SAT, SUN 12:15 3:15

5. BROTHERS R
DAILY 6:45 9:15
FRI, SAT, SUN 12:15 3:15

6. THE BLIND SIDE PG13
DAILY 7:00 9:45 in DTS sound
FRI, SAT, SUN 12:30 3:30

7. TWILIGHT: NEW MOON
DAILY 7 9:45 PG13 in DTS sound
FRI, SAT, SUN 12:30 3:30

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Sunday, 12/13 8 to 10 p.m.
Steve King, Peter Crow & Joe Fitzpatrick Acoustic Trio

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MARY AZARIAN WOODBLOCK

BY LESLIE BROWN

MONTAGUE CITY – The recent snowfall has frosted the trees and bushes and the wreath hanging on the garden shed, setting the tone for the Yule season to come.

A long time ago my family moved from a Chicago suburb to the meadows and mountains of mid-state Vermont. The kindly owner of the village general store allowed us to hike in to his woodlot to cut our first fresh, family-harvested Christmas tree. Thus began a tradition which lasted us through two more moves and several years until it ended with the gentle-

man's death at a ripe old age. First we piled into the car with all the necessary gear: two kids, four adults, one dog, a sled, an axe, snowshoes and high boots, matches and paper, and a picnic. We drove a few miles further into the wilds, parked the car and geared up. The landowner had a camp deep in the woods and we began our serious hiking from there.

We trekked, always through deep, pure snow, through the woods of pine, spruce and the most prized balsam, searching for the perfect tree, round and full and not too tall.

We circled a few likely candidates, holding hands and singing carols until the best one was found, cut and hauled out on the sled. We always chose one meek and scrawny tree to celebrate with song and then to leave to the woodland creatures.

Back at the camp we built a fire to warm our hands and toes and ate our picnic seated on logs around the outdoor fireplace. It was a full day's adventure, and we returned home with red cheeks and happy hearts. As soon as we got home and the kitchen woodstove was rekindled, we sat down for hot soup, the dog dozing by the warm hearth. I think we all slept especially well those evenings.

After I was married, Woody and I hiked out each year up Spaulding Brook to the pasture edged by Christmas trees planted years before and chose one to cut and bring home to decorate. Once we dug a live tree and then replanted it after the holidays.

Now I have my own small balsam plantation. Each summer in Maine I dig a couple of tiny three- or four-inch trees and bring them home in paper cups to plant at the edge of my yard. There are six- and eight-inch seedlings in the nursery bed, as well as two- and three-foot trees marking the boundaries of the

yard.

My Mom made beautiful wreaths of balsam, Princess Pine, spruce cones, and red berries I don't remember the name of. They stayed fresh and fragrant for weeks, and we filled bags of fabric with the leavings of the needles to make pillows to scent a room or a drawer. I know how to do this, but rarely bother now.

I don't cut my Maine balsam because these trees are a part of my extended garden. I bought a wreath made by the students from the Landscaping and Horticulture shop at the Tech School where I work; I will likely find a small Christmas tree to buy that someone else has cut.

The days are short now, and the time seems filled with other things more basic: cleaning, cooking, laundry and hauling firewood. Today I hung my new squirrel-proof bird feeder and set a chain of lights on the garden shed to welcome travelers down the road. Perhaps if my grandchildren lived closer, I

would teach them these family traditions. It is for children, after all, that these rituals start, and fuel memories that last well into adulthood.

These days no one wants to receive the dried, hard, tasteless brick that passes for fruitcake in the stores. But my mother made the real thing from scratch: rich batter filled with nuts, dates, raisins, and dried pineapple and citrus peel laboriously cut thinly with scissors; all stirred together and baked in small loaves, then wrapped in cheesecloth and aged with brandy.

If you haven't enjoyed the poignant memories of creating such splendid food, search the local library or print off the internet Truman Capote's short southern memoir, *A Christmas Memory*. This description of childhood, the baking of the traditional cake and the loving relationship with an older relative, is a gift. Just what we need for the season: the gift of memories.

TALKING PICTURES

THE MESSENGER

Fails to Deliver



1 eagle = the pits 4 eagles = the heights

BY TODD DETMOLD

CHICAGO – Opening with a series of rules that will predictably all be broken in the emotional downward spiral of the American soldiers at its center, *The Messenger* quickly establishes itself as self-important and methodical "issue" filmmaking with an original hook and not much else to contribute to the conversation. It's understated enough, for the most part, to go down easy, and is buoyed by a pair of strong – albeit inappropriately cast – performances.

The dynamic duo we're following here is Captain Tony Stone and Staff Sergeant Will Montgomery, the latter taking up an apprenticeship with his elder superior officer in the duties of the Casualty Notification service following a nasty and near-fatal tour of duty in Iraq. Together the odd couple – a wise-cracking recovering (for now) alcoholic, and his ward, a grizzled shell of a young man unable (for now) to feel emotion since coming home – go wandering around a small

Anytown, USA informing mothers, fathers and wives that their loved ones have just been killed in action. Presumably this is an Army town, but there isn't much detail given: there's a bar and a base within driving distance of each other, and recruiters are working the teenagers at the mall.

Where it goes from there is, sadly, the stuff of already-tired Iraq War clichés and some particularly bad writing.

Along with the machismo rules about crying and drinking (in the beginning, Stone is drinking O'Doul's as Montgomery takes prescription eye-drops – very symbolic), a strict MO is laid out for their professional mission. There is a tight script that must be followed to the letter, with no breathing room allotted for tact. Touching a Next-of-Kin is strictly forbidden unless they collapse from a heart attack – although Montgomery is chastised later in the film for physically supporting a man who has just vomited all over the place.



The Messenger stars Ben Foster and Woody Harrelson as U.S. Army officers delivering fatal news.

What makes the movie watchable are the two men playing the two stereotyped leads, Woody Harrelson and Ben Foster. They keep the movie afloat, but Harrelson and Foster are scenery-chewing character actors heretofore best found in supporting roles. There's no doubt either can carry a movie; the problem is that Harrelson's expert pot-head jesting and Foster's smoldering, sociopathic intensity consistently expose the movie around them as devoid of anything worth their time.

The best scenes in the film operate as self-contained vignettes, and these usually involve the notification duties that must be fulfilled before they

can head to the bar and emote. Some great actors pop up in these for cameos – Steve Buscemi as a bereaved father, Halley Feiffer as a young army wife – but they only left me wanting more, and not in a good way. I wanted more for *them*.

The plot of the film, such as it is, tries to anchor itself to Montgomery's flirtation with a widow played by Samantha Morton. The girl he left behind when he went overseas is getting married, so they have both lost somebody, but the depth of their surrogacy ends there. There is a relationship of lustful glances and unpoetic, monosyllabic exchanges – it recalls the vampire-on-teenager relationship in

the *Twilight* films, only with better actors.

Nothing is offered in contribution to the conversation about any of our wars. I honestly couldn't remember whether Montgomery is said to have returned from Iraq or Afghanistan – I had to look it up in the press notes. The film has no interest in being relevant to our current situation. I suppose it's aiming at timelessness but ends up dealing in War Movie platitudes ("It's like we got back from another planet"; "He didn't smell like my husband, he smelled like rage"), complete with a tearful final-act monologue about War being Hell. Yes, we know.

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