



CHROME DREAMS
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Page 8



ENERGY CORNER
THE WINNER is...
Page 10

LAKE PLEASANT MILLERS FALLS MONTAGUE CENTER MONTAGUE CITY TURNERS FALLS

The Montague Reporter

YEAR 8 – NO. 12

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THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES

DECEMBER 17, 2009

Town to Meet with Ancil on Strathmore Maintenance



DETMOLD PHOTO

The selectboard will meet with Strathmore owner John Ancil on January 5th to discuss building security and maintenance at the vacant mill. With problems at the Strathmore and the former Railroad Salvage building (page 9), building inspector David Jensen asked the board on Wednesday, "Are you sure you don't want to redraw the town line at the power canal?"

BY DAVID DETMOLD

MONTAGUE – "We're looking to getting through the winter with Mr. Ancil," said selectboard chair Patricia Pruitt on Wednesday.

John Ancil owns the Strathmore Mill in Turners Falls, and hopes to someday develop that 244,482-square-foot, 1871 former paper mill into a Green

campus for a professional video and television school and production studios. He was set to meet with the Montague selectboard at 3 p.m. on Wednesday, but that meeting has been delayed until January 5th at 4:30 p.m.

Reached by phone, Pruitt said the selectboard hopes to focus on the town's concerns over building security and maintenance at the

Strathmore on January 5th. Ancil intends to bring a PowerPoint presentation to that meeting, to update the board on his progress with the building. Among other things, since assuming ownership in April of 2008, Ancil said he has worked to secure the building, boarded up windows, helped to maintain the sprinkler system, see **STRATHMORE** pg 9

Skate Park a Go!



PHOTO COLLAGE CLAUDIA WELLS

Turners youth have long dreamed of a professional skate park in town. With Tuesday's affirmative town meeting vote, that dream may now come true.

BY DAVID DETMOLD

TURNERS FALLS – Voters at the Montague special town meeting approved three articles intended to clear the way for a permanent concrete skate park Tuesday night, causing the entire high school auditorium to break into sustained applause.

A permanent home for the Great Falls Sk8 Park has been a long term goal of the youth of the community, and their adult supporters, for more than a decade. The town will seek funding to construct the concrete skate park, which may cost around \$100,000, from a federal

community development block grant, in conjunction with a second phase of renovations at Unity Park.

A deal with abutting landowner Tim de Christopher, the skate park's former landlord, removed the last obstacle to closing Williams Way, a short connector between First and Second streets, bordering Unity Park. With the closing of Williams Way, the land beneath the road, and twenty-five feet of town land on the side abutting de Christopher's property at the former Williams Garage, will

see **SKATE PARK** pg 16

Northfield Campus of NMH to House Christian College



JOSEPH A. PARZYCH PHOTO

The announcement on Wednesday by (l-r) Steve Green, President of Hobby Lobby Stores, Dr. Stan Mattson, President, C.S. Lewis College, and Northfield Mount Hermon President Tom Sturtevant of the sale of the Northfield campus brought back memories for the author.

BY JOSEPH A. PARZYCH

NORTHFIELD – At a Wednesday afternoon press conference, Steve Green, president of Hobby Lobby Stores, Inc., an Oklahoma City-based chain of retail arts and crafts stores, announced it has purchased the Northfield campus of Northfield Mount Hermon School for \$100,000 to serve as the home for the C.S. Lewis College, a planned Christian institution of great books and visual and performing arts. The sale includes 217 acres comprising the core campus and the 35 buildings thereon. It does not include the D.L. Moody birth-

place, the Moody homestead, or the golf course, water department, and 2,000 acres of adjoining woodland.

The campus will be returning to its Christian roots.

In 1879, Evangelist Dwight L. Moody, who grew up in poverty, was inspired when he chanced upon the sorry scene of two girls weaving baskets to help eke out a living for their family, whose father had been crippled in a farm accident. Moody felt it a pity that these young women were not able to earn a decent living for lack of an education. He decided, that see **CAMPUS** pg 14

New Start Ups in Millers Falls Beckon for the Holidays



ANNE HARDING PHOTO

CJ's Cafe and Bakery has recently opened on East Main Street

BY ANNE HARDING –

Montague has more than one downtown, and new business owners who have opened a gift store, a gallery and now a new

café bringing new commercial life to Millers Falls want you to keep that in mind this holiday shopping season.

Cassie and John Holmes

recently opened CJ's Cafe and Bakery at 29 East Main Street in downtown Millers Falls. Sandwiched between Carroll's Market and Dips & Clips, they fill a badly-needed breakfast niche in the village.

Former owners of the Candy Apple in Gill, the Holmeses are thrilled with their new location, and customers are happy to have them in town. Serving fresh coffee and standard breakfast fare along with a variety of home baked goods, the couple caters to the early-morning working crowd. The café is open from 5 a.m. to 2 p.m. Monday through Friday, and Sundays from 7 a.m. to 11 a.m. There is a WiFi connection for those interested in keeping a seat warm for while.

CJ's is the perfect place to spend some time to wait while your dog has a trim and wash next door, or between holiday shopping stops. You might not be able to take care of your entire holiday shopping list, but downtown Millers Falls has a

see **HOLIDAYS** pg 10

PET OF THE WEEK

Care for Me?



Ernest

My name is Ernest and I'm a two-year-old male domestic short hair cat in need of a good home. I'm a friendly guy, and I would love to live with some humans who will care for me for life. You won't regret it! For more information on adopting me, please contact the Dakin Pioneer Valley Humane Society at (413) 548-9898, or via email at info@dpvhs.org.

Great Falls Middle School Students of the Week

Grade 6

Jenna Putala
Alexandra Vieira

Grade 7

Danielle Conant

Grade 8

Dan Costa

LEVERETT LIBRARY NEWS

Book Discussion

BY LINDA WENTWORTH - Leverett author Gail Hornstein will discuss her new book, *Agnes's Jacket: A Psychologist's Search for the Meanings of Madness* at the Leverett Library on Tuesday, January 5th, at 7:00 p.m. Copies will be available to purchase.

A vast gulf exists between the way medicine explains psychiatric illness and the experiences of those who suffer. Hornstein's work helps us bridge that gulf, guiding us through the inner lives of those diagnosed with schizophrenia, bipolar illness, depression and paranoia, and emerging with nothing less than a new model for understanding one another and ourselves.

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MONTAGUE LIBRARY NEWS

Craft Items Requested

BY LINDA HICKMAN
TURNERS FALLS - The cardboard tubes from used-up wrapping paper rolls are very useful for craft projects at the Carnegie Library. For example, in March they will be used to make rain sticks at a Saturday children's

program. At this point we can also use paper towel and toilet paper tubes. Clean baby food jars with lids and no labels are also needed for the snow globe making program on January 23rd. Please bring them to the Carnegie Library, 863-3214.



LINDA HICKMAN PHOTO

MONTAGUE CENTER - The Friends of the Montague Public Libraries hosted an evening of Cookies and Cocoa at the Montague Center Library on Monday, December 14th. Members of the Friends baked a tempting array of cookies, and there was a huge urn of warm cocoa.

Some people came for the treats, for others it was a pleasant surprise when they came to pick up or return library items.

The refreshments provided many with a good excuse to stay and socialize. At the end of the evening, the Friends exchanged the cookies that were left among themselves.

The Friends of the Montague Public Libraries provide public programs for adults and raise funds to help support the three Montague Public Libraries. For more information, call the Carnegie Library at 863-3214.

WENDELL LIBRARY NEWS

Community Chorus Forming

WENDELL - Basses, tenors, altos and sopranos are wanted to join a Wendell Community Chorus this winter, free and open to all adults and teenagers. No previous singing experience or sight reading skills required, just a love of singing.

Sponsored by the Friends of the Wendell Free Library, the group will meet once a week, mid-January through mid-April, at the library.

The chorus will be directed by Morning Star Chenven, who

directs a number of choral groups in the area. The focus will be on traditional folk music from around the world, including South African, Balkan, Celtic, Guatemalan, Gospel, American R&B and more, emphasizing the joy of music and harmony while chasing away the cabin fever blues.

If you are interested please contact the library at (978) 544-3559, and state your preference for Sunday or Tuesday evenings.

Stuffed Animal Fundraiser

A friend has donated over 75 new or lightly used stuffed animals to the Friends of the Wendell Free Library.

They are currently on display and for sale at the library.

Proceeds will help support programming.

Small stuffed animals are \$1 each; larger animals are \$2 and up.

SENIOR CENTER ACTIVITIES - Dec 21st to Dec 25th

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.

Monday, Dec. 21st

10:00 a.m. Senior Aerobics
10:45 a.m. Easy Aerobics
1:00 p.m. Knitting Circle

Tuesday, Dec. 22nd

9:00 a.m. Walking Group

12:00 noon Lunch
1:00 p.m. Canasta
Wednesday, Dec. 23rd
10:00 a.m. Senior Aerobics
10:30 a.m. Monthly Health Screenings
12:00 noon Lunch
12:45 p.m. Bingo
Thursday, Dec. 24th
10:00 a.m. Tai Chi
12:00 noon Lunch
1:00 p.m. Pitch
Friday, Dec. 25th
Senior Center Closed
Merry Christmas

ERVING Senior Center, 18 Pleasant St., Ervingside (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

FACES & PLACES



DETMOLD PHOTO

Norman Dugay and Linda Piragis delighted listeners with their renditions from the American Songbook at Christina's Pizzeria and Tavern on Route 2 in Erving on Friday

New Years Day Sawmill River Run

MONTAGUE CENTER - This popular New Years tradition is scheduled for Friday, January 1st, 2010 in Montague Center. The 10K road race will begin promptly at 10:00 a.m. at the village common on Main Street. Divisions include Youth (18 years and under), Open (19 to 39 years), Master (40 to 49 years), Senior (50 to 59 years), and Senior Plus (60 years and up). Entry fees are \$20 (paid before January 1st), or \$25 (on the day of the event).

The event benefits Montague parks and recreation department services, including the sponsor-a-child scholarship program. The Sawmill River Run is a USA Track & Field sanctioned event. You may pre-register by contacting MPRD at (413) 863-3216, or online at RunReg.com. Race day registration and check-in begins at

9:00 a.m. Volunteers are needed; they receive a free event t-shirt, even though a warm overcoat might be more welcome.

Psychic Fair

LAKE PLEASANT - The National Spiritual Alliance will sponsor a Psychic Fair Saturday (December 26th) from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Thompson Temple across from the post office in Lake Pleasant. Divination methods include astrology, hand reading, vibration connection, and tarot cards.

Consultation is with a medium of choice. Reiki and spiritual healing services will also be available. For more information, see: www.thenationalspiritualallianceinc.org.

Montague DPW Holiday Schedule

Due to the holidays the trash and recycling schedule for next two weeks will be as follows: Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, no Change. Friday will be picked up on Saturday.

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JESSICA HARMON ILLUSTRATION

Local Briefs

COMPILED BY DON CLEGG – The **Gill Congregational Church** will be holding its annual Candlelight Service on December 24th at 5:00 p.m. The church is located across from the Gill town common. All are welcome to attend this traditional service of music, Christmas stories and, of course, candles.

For those who missed out on the Christmas Tree lighting and decoration festivities at **Peskeomskut Park** in Turners

Falls, don't forget you can stop by the park any time through the holidays and add your own decoration to the growing collection already adorning this beautiful community tree.

The Montague parks and recreation department is in great need of some volunteers to help with the popular New Year's Day tradition of the **10K Saw Mill River Road Race**. The race begins at 10:00 a.m., with volunteers needed at 9:00 a.m. Hot and cold refreshments will be provided,

and if you help out you'll get a free event t-shirt. This event benefits MPRD's Sponsor-A-Child scholarship program. Contact the parks and recreation at (413) 863-3216.

Bring on the snow! The snowshoe and ski trails are now open at **Northfield Mountain Recreational Area**. Discover the 25-plus miles of trails designed specifically for cross country skiing and groomed for both classical and free style skiing. These trails offer some of the finest Nordic skiing in the region. Trails vary from beginner trails to the demanding 800-foot vertical climb of Tenth Mountain Trail.

During the winter season, the trail system is open Wednesday through Sunday from 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Northfield Mountain Recreation is located on Route 63

in Northfield. Always call ahead first to the 24-hour snow phone for the most current conditions: (800) 859-2960.

Come take a Hayride with Santa at the **Greenfield town common** on December 18th. All the proceeds will benefit the Greenfield Family Inn. Enjoy hot chocolate, cookies and sounds of the season with DJ "Bobby C" and the Holy Trinity School Choir. Hayrides, for \$5.00, will be departing from Greenfield town hall, Court Square in Greenfield from 4:00 to 7:00 p.m. This event is sponsored by the Muddy Brook Farms, and organized by the Greenfield Police Association.

The **Montague Reporter** will be being printed and distributed to local stores on Wednesday, December 23rd, instead of our

normal Thursday. It appears our editor is in the Christmas Spirit and won't force the staff to mail and distribute the paper on Christmas Eve. Now if we can get him to put a few more coals on the grate, it would be a Merry Christmas for Everyone.

Send local briefs to reporter-local@montaguema.net

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Volunteers Needed for Personal Care Program

BY ANNA VIADERO MONTAGUE CITY – The Personal Care Attendant (PCA) program at Franklin County Home Care seeks volunteer surrogates. Volunteer surrogates provide management assistance only, no hands-on care. Anyone of any age can be a surrogate. Surrogates can make a huge difference in the quality of life of a person with a disability.

What is the PCA Program?

The MassHealth Personal Care Attendant (PCA) program offered by Franklin County Home Care (FCHCC) helps people with permanent or chronic disabilities keep their independence, stay in the community, and manage their own personal care by providing funds to hire personal care attendants (PCAs). The PCA consumer (the person receiving PCA services) is the employer of the PCA, and is fully responsible for recruiting, hiring, scheduling, training, and, if necessary, firing PCAs. FCHCC trains people to manage their PCA.

What if the consumer can't manage the PCA Program?

The consumer may need assistance to manage the PCA program. This assistance is provided by a "surrogate" who could be a spouse, parent, family member, friend, or neighbor. But some people don't know anyone to ask. FCHCC can match the consumer with a volunteer surrogate.

Who can volunteer?

There are no specific educa-

tional or experiential requirements for surrogates. A volunteer surrogate is someone who cares about others and is committed to helping a person with a disability be as independent as possible.

What are the responsibilities?

Responsibilities of a surrogate include understanding and ensuring consumer choice so the person with disabilities can live with dignity and perform management tasks that the consumer is unable to perform on their own.

Tasks may include:

Hiring, training and supervising PCAs to maintain consumers' health and safety.

Assuring that time sheets and all other necessary paperwork are in on time.

Directing PCAs as specified in the consumer's personal services agreement.

Being available for all consumer reviews.

Firing PCAs when needed.

Tasks do not include:

Hands on care of consumers.
Acting as a PCA.

How do I get started?

If you are interested in becoming a volunteer surrogate contact FCHCC to speak with the PCA volunteer surrogate coordinator. The coordinator will give you an orientation to the PCA program and what it means to be a surrogate, and match you with a consumer. As with anyone working with FCHCC, you will be required to have a CORI (Criminal Offender Record

Information) check done.

Contact the PCA coordinator at (413) 773-5555 or (978) 544-2259, or via: info@fchcc.org

OMISSIONS:


In reference to the final photo, of an unnamed model wearing an unattributed designer's outfit in the display of photos from Suzee's Laundromat last week (*MR VIII #11: Recycled Cling Free Fashion*), Sarah Pruitt writes to tell us:

"What's in a name? Tina Bodensteiner created that 40s-inspired piece of beautiful workmanship out of clothes that someone had forgotten or no longer wanted. Tina was a newbie to Suzee's fashion extravaganza this year and helped raise the bar by displaying her awesome talent in such a playful and delicate manner. Kudos to her and her models (Drea pictured) for stepping up and doing it right. Can't wait to see what she does next year."

Neither can we.

And Rose LeVasseur called to say we had inadvertently left her name out of the list of recreation commissioners who have successfully revived the fortunes and turned around the finances of the towns recreation department (*MR VIII #11: Recreation Commission Back on Track*).

We apologize for the omissions.

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STOP SENATOR KERRY FROM NUKING OUR FUTURE

Last week, Massachusetts senator John Kerry teamed up with Republican senator Lindsey Graham and Independent Joe Lieberman to announce the framework for a climate change bill in the Senate that will rely on more offshore oil drilling, more coal production, and more nuclear power. The latter proposition is being advanced on the basis that operating nuclear plants do not emit carbon dioxide.

We will let others argue the advisability of fighting global warming by burning more oil and coal. We want to address our senior senator on the issue of going nuclear to combat climate change. He may as well propose burning down the henhouse to fry some eggs.

After 50 years of trying to "solve" the problem of how to deal with the commercial nuclear power industry's high-level radioactive waste problem, the federal government has finally pulled the plug on plans for a taxpayer-financed permanent graveyard for the nation's nuclear waste at Yucca Mountain. But first, the government devoted \$9 billion to design and construct that underground storage facility in the geologically active, hydrologically porous, politically blast-hardened Nevada site.

Consequently, the nation's 104 commercial nuclear plants have nowhere to go with their spent fuel rods. They have piled up more than 50,000 tons of high level radioactive waste at reactor sites around the country, with more being produced every day. If anyone needs reminding, this is the most lethal, carcinogenic waste human kind has ever produced, with some byproducts of the fission process – notably Plutonium-239 – having a radioactive half

life of 24,000 years, so long-lived that its environmental threat will not be erased for hundreds of thousands of years.

A millionth of a gram of plutonium, if inhaled, is known to cause lung cancer. To consider producing more of this stuff with no known method of disposing of it safely – much less of guarding it or securing it from being released to the environment for millennia to come – in order to provide "low carbon" electricity in the present century is folly on an order of magnitude usually found only in the ravings of Bedlamites. Yet this is what Senator Kerry proposes to do.

Wall Street watched in horror in March of 1979 as a brand-new \$900 million asset became a multi-billion dollar liability in a matter of fifteen minutes, as inexperienced operators at Three Mile Island failed to head off a core melt accident that doomed that reactor and led to unmeasured releases of radiation raining down on states and communities downwind. Since then, no commercial reactors have been built in the United States. (For a cogent refutation of the nuclear industry's favorite canard, "No one was harmed at Three Mile Island," go to: www.freepress.org/columns/display/7/2009/1733. People died – and are still dying – because of Three Mile Island.)

Yet Kerry is determined to revive America's flatlined commercial nuclear industry with billions in federal loan guarantees for utilities willing to take the plunge and build new nukes. The expected price tag, based on proposals already in, could range anywhere from \$9 to \$15 billion per reactor, and Republicans are pushing a plan to build 100 new nukes. If the federal government

see **FUTURE** pg 5



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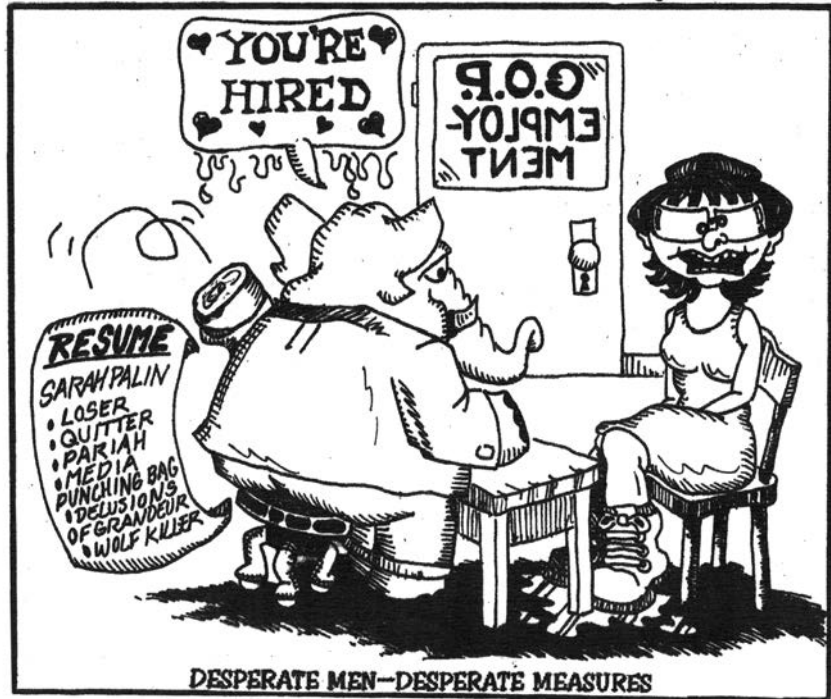
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The Year in Review

BORDEAUX WHINE

by denis bordeaux



GUEST  EDITORIAL

Western Mass Activists Plan New Years March to Vernon Nuke

BY NINA KELLER

WENDELL – On January 1st, New Years Day at 10 a.m., Massachusetts residents who live downwind of the Vermont Yankee nuclear power plant will hold a walk to the Vermont Yankee Nuclear Reactor, from Route 142 in Gill to the gate of the Vernon nuke, calling for that reactor to be safely decommissioned. Weather permitting, the walkers will continue on to the center of Brattleboro to connect up with the Safe and Green walk leaving for Montpelier on January 2nd.

Walkers converging from Vermont, Massachusetts and New Hampshire plan to walk 120 miles to Montpelier in mid-winter to arrive at the Vermont statehouse at the beginning of the legislative session on January 13th, prior to the expected vote on relicensing Vermont Yankee.

Entergy Vermont Yankee, the plant's owner, is seeking legislative permission to extend the reactor's operating license by 20 more years. Walkers from the 20-mile radius of the nuclear plant will carry petitions calling on Vermont legislators to shut the plant down on schedule in 2012, when its original 40-year operating license expires. They will also carry the collective resolve of residents who live downwind of the reactor, across state lines, to have their concerns heard by Vermont legislators in the upcoming vote.

We in Massachusetts want to be included in the serious and dramatic visibility of the wintertime walk so our elected representatives will also consider the threat to our Valley posed by this aging, accident-prone reactor, across the border in Vermont, and so we will add an extra day – New Year's Day – to walk the ten miles to Vermont.

In the mid-'70s, anti-nuclear activists from the Valley held the first "Shut Down the Vernon Reactor March." That protest was sponsored by the Alternative Energy Coalition and the Nuclear Information Commune of

Montague – now the home of the Zen Peacemakers on Ripley Road. The march took place in the months immediately following the toppling of the Northeast Utilities weather tower gathering data for the planned construction of a twin nuclear reactor on the Montague Plains by NICM member Sam Lovejoy.

Anyone who participated in or remembers those groundbreaking days of the global campaign to halt the construction of nuclear power reactors – which got their start with Lovejoy's act of civil disobedience, trial and acquittal here in the Valley – are warmly welcomed to usher in the New Year by joining the walk from Gill to Vernon, some 35 years later.

Newcomers are equally welcome to make their voices heard, joining old stalwarts to say, "No Radiation without Representation," and "Shut it Down Now," to our dangerous neighbor, Vermont Yankee Nuclear.

"The Lemon Nuke," as it was called, got its local nickname because of the many accidents, leaks and mishaps that plagued the reactor in its early years. Since Entergy purchased the plant from a consortium of local utilities in 2002, the Vernon nuke has earned an even worse reputation for accidents, poor maintenance, and workers showing up under the influence of drugs and alcohol. Since 2002, Vermont Yankee has suffered a serious fire in the transformer room, discovered extensive (still unrepaired) cracks in major plant components and pipes, seen the repeated collapse of water cooling towers,

experienced unexpected shut downs from stuck valves, misplaced high level nuclear fuel, and exceeded radiation limits at the fence line, to name just a few reportable occurrences that threaten the health and safety of workers and area residents alike. A million pounds of radioactive waste is stored in a seventh story cooling pool at Vermont Yankee, and in concrete storage casks on a peninsula of the 500-year flood plain of the Connecticut River. The spent fuel and the reactor core itself contain enough radiation to render a large portion of New England permanently uninhabitable if released by accident or attack.

We invite our state representatives and senators to join us on this walk, to highlight the threat to our communities posed by this dangerous nuclear reactor, and to urge their counterparts in Vermont not to re-license Vermont Yankee.

The New Year's Day walk will leave at 10 a.m. from the home of Arthur Cohen, 9 Mount Hermon Station Road, in Gill. For information about the walk, call (978) 544-2857.

– Nina Keller
Wendell

Nina Keller is the hazardous waste coordinator for the town of Wendell.

American Dead in Iraq and Afghanistan as of 12/14/09



We Welcome Your Letters!

Montague Reporter

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reporter@montaguema.net

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Rural Communities Stranded without Right to Repair Act

The National Grange is the nation's oldest general farm and rural public interest organization, representing nearly 200,000 Grange members affiliated with 2700 local, county and state Grange chapters. We call on Congress to pass the Motor Vehicle Owners' Right to Repair Act (HR 2057) in order to protect individual vehicle ownership rights, especially for residents of farming, tribal and rural communities.

Grange members believe American motorists should have to the right to choose how, where and by whom their cars, trucks, motorcycles and other motor vehicles are maintained and repaired. We believe consumers are entitled to full access to all of the repair information for the vehicles they purchase.

However, vehicles are becoming more sophisticated than ever before; virtually every system is either monitored or controlled by computers. Millions of vehicle owners could potentially be forced to return to dealerships for service because their preferred, local repair facilities have been denied access to computer

codes and service information from the vehicle manufacturers.

Motorists in rural communities, where there are few dealerships, are particularly vulnerable. They may decide to forgo important vehicle repairs which could jeopardize their safety and the safety of others.

With record numbers of dealerships closing, many motorists are performing their own repairs or are turning to local repair shops for service. In order for these shops to be able to serve those in their community, they must also have full access to the codes and information necessary to diagnose and repair all types of vehicles.

The National Grange encourages our members and all Americans to visit www.righttorepair.org to send a letter to each of their Congressional representatives, urging them to support the Motor Vehicle Owners' Right to Repair Act (HR 2057).

- Leroy Watson
National Grange
Legislative Director
Washington, D.C.

GUEST EDITORIAL

Biomass Harvesting Considered

JONATHAN VON RANSON - WENDELL - Other writers have recently argued against the proposed 47-megawatt biomass electric generation plant proposed by Pioneer Renewable Energy for Greenfield, discussing the climate change causing CO2 emissions, air pollution, truck traffic, and inefficiency of the proposed plant. I've tried to focus, in the following article, on just the effects of biomass harvesting on the local forests.

In order to learn more about "biomass" cutting, and bring the information to the Wendell Energy Task Force, Bob Shulman and I toured some recent logging sites on December 7th, with Dave Richard, the state forester for this district. The sites we saw were both in and outside Wendell's 2006 tornado-damaged area, and both in and outside Wendell State Forest.

Richard said right off that the Massachusetts Department of Conservation & Recreation (DCR) doesn't specifically sell contracts for biomass cuttings. Instead, it lets contracts for the logging of marked trees - marked for "good silviculture practice," - with an eye to ongoing production of economically valuable timber, and to benefit wildlife. Where that harvested wood goes is entirely up to the logging company.

Richard said there've been no harvests purely for biomass generation in Wendell State Forest, to his knowledge. It wouldn't make economic sense for the logger, he said, because saw logs are more valuable for lumber. He claimed biomass today is basically a break-even proposition for the logger, not a big money-maker.

We pointed out that economics do change - and will, as they did a couple of years ago when some saw logs were actually going for firewood. If the proposed local biomass generating plants do get built, local stumpage prices will surely respond. Cordwood is likely to skyrocket in price and farmers and landscapers - the "little guys" - will pay more for sawdust and chips. Even today, anything woody in our forests is potential fodder for the energy sector. To supply it, several loggers have already brought huge chippers into the Wendell forests. Economic factors assure that phenomenon will increase if large scale proposed biomass plants are built.

For biomass, the top of trees as well as some of the smaller, poorer logs are fed into the chippers and sent out in trailer trucks to the plant to be burned wet. Richard said he didn't know how many truckloads of chips have gone out of Wendell in the last couple of years, but indications are that

dozens have gone out, and they've gone as far as Portsmouth, N.H., 2-1/2 hours away. Asked how the demand from three or four new biomass plants in Western Mass could be met locally when there's already competition from so far away, he admitted, "You can't have more than a certain number," of the plants, but didn't say where to draw the line.

In the plots we saw where biomass plants had been among the logger's customers, the forest floor was extremely clean - no tops or branches worth mentioning. In a nearby plot (the large one bordered by Wickett Pond Road and Montague Road), where only sawmills and pulp plants had been customers, branches and tops were in evidence, cut down low.

In non-biomass cuttings, the tops of the felled trees serve as the cover, habitat and food supply for the forest biotic community, for ever-smaller creatures as it rots down. This is food that harvested

see **BIOMASS** page 10

FUTURE from pg 4

guarantees 80% of the cost of construction loans, as planned, the eventual cost could easily surpass a hundred billion of dollars to build just ten reactors.

Why should the taxpayers guarantee construction costs for the commercial nuclear industry, which will pocket the profits while avoiding the risks? The industry already enjoys a federal shield from liability in the event of a catastrophic accident at any operating nuclear plant (check your insurance policy).

To top it off, nuclear power is not even a carbon-neutral source of electric power. The complete lifespan of a reactor, from construction to decommissioning,

needs to be considered in assessing nuclear power's carbon impact. And carbon-based fuels are used intensively in the mining, milling, transportation, fuel fabrication and particularly in the enrichment end of the nuclear fuel cycle. The Paducah, Kentucky plant where the nation's nuclear fuel enrichment takes place releases 800,000 pounds of chlorofluorocarbon emissions - 10 to 20,000 times more damaging in terms of heat-trapping potential than carbon dioxide - annually, and relies on the power from two nearby coal plants for its daily operation. It is estimated that 1% of the nation's electricity production is consumed in the enrichment of nuclear fuel alone, and 87% of America's industrial CFC emissions have come from the nuclear fuel enrichment process.

sumed in the enrichment of nuclear fuel alone, and 87% of America's industrial CFC emissions have come from the nuclear fuel enrichment process.

Spending taxpayer dollars to subsidize more production of coal, oil, gas and nuclear power is a sure way to delay the coming transition to renewable forms of power production that work with, rather than against, the natural cycles of the Earth. Solar electricity, wind power, run of the stream hydro, geothermal, and above all conservation - we still waste 50% of the energy we produce - are all proven technologies working now to reduce the carbon footprint of humankind. But they are starved for the kind of federal subsidies

Kerry wants to keep dishing out to oil, coal, and nuclear interests. A solid investment in a widespread conversion to Green energy production would put Americans back to work building a truly sustainable future, instead of pushing our energy grid out of the carbon frying pan and into the radioactive fire.

Call Senator Kerry at (202) 224-2742 and let him know how you feel about his plan to bail out the nuclear power industry and divert scarce taxpayer dollars from proven sources of clean, Green power. Uncounted future generations depend upon the choices we make, in haste and under pressure from vested interests, today.

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GUEST EDITORIAL

Ed Reform: Vision or PowerPoint?

BY JEFF SINGLETON
GILL-MONTAGUE

Gill-Montague superintendent Carl Ladd suggested that we express our concerns about the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's (DESE) newly formed District School Assistance Centers (DSAC) before the December 7th school committee meeting. The DESE has formed six regional District School Assistance Centers to provide professional and technical assistance to targeted school districts. Former Gill-Montague superintendent Ken Rocke leads the Pioneer Valley DSAC, and appeared at the December 7th meeting to promote its offerings to Gill-Montague.

Since that meeting, DESE sent a request to local school districts asking them to sign a "memoran-

dum of understanding" with the state supporting a set of policy initiatives resembling the policies promoted by the District School Assistance Centers. These memoranda are designed to support the state's application for federal "Race to the Top" (RTT) grants. Both the DSAC program and the memorandum were justified only by Powerpoint presentations.

Let me start by saying that while I value PowerPoint, it is not acceptable to ask the school committee to support major changes and policy initiatives, (by January 13th of 2010 in the case of the memorandum), based on presentations using this software alone. We still use traditional writing techniques (sentences, paragraphs, chapters) to support proposals, and teach our students to do the same.

The purpose of the new state regional District School Assistance Centers appears to be to provide assistance to underperforming districts. The theory is perhaps that such districts lack sufficient "capacity," a popular concept among state policymakers. The DSACs seem to provide a range of specialized services, particularly in areas like professional development, curriculum and evaluation.

Thus the DSACs are consistent with the state effort to promote consolidation and collaboration to provide services not otherwise financially viable for smaller districts. With this I have no problem. My problem is with the vision of education they embody, the justification for that vision, and its relationship to our efforts to achieve fiscal stability.

The recent memorandum of understanding requested of the district in conjunction with the state application for federal "Race to the Top" money appears to embody a similar vision.

The DSACs at first glance seem to be promoting a vision of education in fact at odds with what makes schools succeed, and at odds with other state initiatives, particularly the Readiness/Innovation School initiative. The latter is designed to bring the coherence, leadership and sense of mission of charter schools into the mainstream public system.

The vision reflected in the DSACs and the Race to the Top memorandum seems to embody opposite markers. It is disaggregated, fragmented, excessively professionalized, and technocratic. There is a focus on training at

staff development meetings, labor-intensive tracking of students, and micromanagement of curriculum. The idea seems to be to improve test scores of underperforming students by targeting them with constant data-based analysis.

For example, the PowerPoint justifying the "Race to the Top" initiative explains that the program to improve our schools will emphasize "summative, benchmark, formative assessments and curriculum-embedded performance tasks, *exemplar curricula* and instructional units, educator *professional development* and innovative *technology*." (*Emphasis in the original.*)

Do the high performing and popular schools in our region really succeed because of this

see REFORM page 11

NOTES FROM THE MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD

Montague Agrees to Pay Sewer Overhaul's High Engineering Fees

Camp Dresser and McKee's Fee Totals \$1,618,500 on the \$6.7 Million Project

BY BILL DRAKE

MONTAGUE – The Montague selectboard moved to finish the \$5.7 million combined sewer overflow remediation project, and to go ahead with a million-dollar solids handling upgrade at the treatment plant, after representatives from Camp Dresser and McKee, the engineering firm overseeing the construction, addressed the town's concerns over steep engineering fees associated with the project.

"This is the final piece of the overall project," said Paul Gilbert, CDM project manager,

who oversaw Montague's sewer overhaul and treatment plant upgrade since 2004, referring to the solids handling upgrade, planned for the coming year.

Gilbert, along with CDM's Robert Button, appeared before the selectboard on December 14th, for a face-to-face conversation about the engineering fees and CDM's role in the overall project. Bob Trombley, superintendent of the Water Pollution Control Facility, sat between the two CDM representatives.

"We want to work with you to feel that the work done is benefi-

cial to the town," said Button before he introduced Gilbert, who outlined three major points: excessive fees, town expectations, and hidden savings found in CDM's work to date, in response to a selectboard letter dated December, 1st.

In that letter, the selectboard wrote, "The fact that we are even having this discussion is particularly bothersome given the town's early concerns about CDM fees.... [T]he expectation that your firm's familiarity with the town and our waste water treatment plant might translate into greater efficiency and a reduced cost of delivering the final product... has not materialized."

As reported, the United States Department of Agriculture will only pay engineering fees up to 25% of the overall project cost, while the CDM's engineering fees for both phases of the CSO remediation project, combined with the upcoming solids handling upgrade at the treatment plant came to 32% of total project expenses, or \$1,618,500. The selectboard hoped to reduce those fees, but CDM addressed the issue at the meeting, and the selectboard signed off on CDM's

bill.

"[The USDA] doesn't give us any considerations for special services," said Gilbert who cited hazard assessments and wetland delineations among services included in the engineering fees but not directly associated with engineering.

The town will pay the remainder of CDM's fee not covered from USDA funds with money taken from the roughly \$1 million federal State and Tribal Assistance Grant Montague recently received with the help of Representative John Olver to help cover the cost of sewer upgrades.

"We have the grant," said town administrator Frank Abbondanzio, reached by phone for comment. "We just need to finish the paperwork."

Gilbert noted the complexity of bringing an older sewage treatment plant in compliance with current Massachusetts building codes as one reason for the high engineering costs.

"Laying on top a new electric system on what, at best, is 20 to 30 years old was a challenge," said Trombley, "and that's the bottom line."

As for savings, Gilbert cited

evening meetings never charged for; support obtaining operating permits; pursuit of hydroelectric generation at the treatment plant as a cost-saving or revenue-producing possibility (which didn't pan out); removal of two sludge storage tanks; and a \$10,000 solids handling assessment as expenses CDM never submitted for payment.

"Bottom line, we feel you've got a good project," Gilbert said.

In his final analysis, Gilbert noted that there is \$1,300,000 remaining to complete the sewer project, excluding engineering fees. "And that's hard cash for construction," said Gilbert.

Button stated the remaining sewer work, which will involve installing a Fournier rotary dewatering press for solids handling, to reduce the amount of annual tonnage hauled to the landfill, should go to bid in March of 2010.

In a follow-up interview, Trombley said the solids handling upgrade would cost an estimated \$1.1million, and would be covered by the money left over from the CSO project. He said the improved dewatering system would result in annual operating savings for the town.

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NOTES FROM THE ERVING SELECTBOARD

Semb Seeks Tax Relief

DAVID DETMOLD – Ralph Semb, co-owner with his son Erik of the French King Entertainment Center and Weatherheads Apartments and Storage on Route 2, has written to the town seeking tax relief on his properties.

Semb listed a series of business reversals, including the closing of Jillian's on the 2, the restaurant that took the place of Countree Living, vacancies in both the apartments and storage units, and a decline at the bowling alley among the factors complicating his finances amid the general economic downturn.

But the major factor Semb cited in the three-page letter to the selectboard received November 23rd was the denial of a building permit to put up a gas station and drive-through fast food restaurant on the lot where the Countree Living once stood, following the defeat of zoning bylaw changes at a special town meeting at the beginning of October.

The Sembs had sought revisions to the zoning bylaws to allow the construction of a gas station in the town's aquifer protection zone, and to allow for a drive-through restaurant window, currently prohibited in Erving.

"As of now," wrote the elder Semb, "I see no reason to continue to try to build anything. We now live under a government that is in my opinion very close to Socialism, or even

Communism. If the homeowners had a bigger responsibility in the taxes in town, maybe they would act a little differently."

Under Erving's split tax rate, commercial and industrial properties are grouped together in one category, and residential properties in another, with First Light Power's Northfield Mountain Pumped Hydro Facility paying about 85% of the property taxes in town.

Semb said he would like to see commercial properties valued in a separate category than industrial properties, because, "the commercial business deals locally, and it is very difficult to put increases on the local people, while the industry can pass any increase on to the world."

Semb also asked for unspecified tax relief, or abeyance of the town's 14% interest fee on late payment of taxes, in order to stave off bankruptcy.

After reviewing Semb's letter on November 30th, the selectboard took no action. At the request of the town administrative coordinator, Tom Sharp, the selectboard took a second look at Semb's letter on December 14th, and delegated Andrew Goodwin to work with Sharp on a letter in reply.

"He's asking for tax relief," said board chair Andy Tessier. "He needs to file with the assessors."

Among the hardships Semb cited in the letter

were the imposition of a new state regulation requiring the bowling alley to install a sprinkler system, "another high cost item," and the routing of a new sidewalk which cuts into the bowling alley's parking lot, "which in my many years on the property, not a handful of people walk down that road."

But Tessier noted that the sidewalk was installed at Mass Highway's authority, after the Sembs reviewed the construction plans, and the state fire code was also beyond the board's control.

As to the denial of the Semb's plan to build a gas station and drive-through restaurant on their property, Goodwin said matter of factly, "The town voted the way they did."

In other news, the selectboard approved the appointment of Harry Sharbaugh to the conservation commission (filling the seat left vacant by the departure of Carol Gregory), and the return of Annmarie Gilbert to her former position as a member of the council on aging. The board called for a joint meeting with the recreation commission to elect a new member; Rebecca Leclerc has expressed interest in joining that board. Jacquie Boyden is seeking appointment to an empty seat on the finance committee. Sharp will speak to town moderator Rich Peabody about making that appointment.

Peter Valinski, engineer for Tighe and Bond, the town's consultant on a number of recent construction projects, reported to the board that work on the \$6.2 million renovation of the Erving wastewater treatment plant is "substantially complete," with a punch list of about \$90,000 worth of projects still to go.

see **ERVING** pg 11

NOTES FROM THE WENDELL SELECTBOARD

Neither Snow nor Ice will Keep these Officials from their Appointed Tasks

JOSH HEINEMANN – Snow and rain failed to stop the Wendell selectboard from meeting on the evening of Wednesday, December 9th. The finance committee also made it to the meeting, as did Shay Cooper who, as the meeting opened, arranged rental of the town hall for the afternoon of December 27th for a yoga class.

The parking lot had not been plowed, so arriving vehicles bumped over lumps and ruts to pull up in a semblance of a parking place. During the meeting, the town bucket loader made several passes through the center of the lot, missing all the vehicles by avoiding the deep snow where they were parked.

After the meeting people waited until all the cars were out of the snow and slush and on the plowed pavement before leaving for the night. Finance committee member Jim Slavas found, inside the building, the sand and shovel needed to free one car.

Town treasurer Carolyn Manley made an unscheduled stop at the beginning of the meeting to ask for authority to consult town counsel for a recommendation about tiered benefits for town employees, some of whom are part-time, less than 20 hours per week, but occasionally more. The highway crew works ten-hour days in the summer, but the personnel policy authorizes sick days and holidays on the basis of eight-hour days, so Manley felt the wording of benefit policy needs to be adjusted.

Town coordinator Nancy Aldrich prepared copies of the town ban on roadside parking within

four feet of the travel lane, ready for posting. The ban is in effect year-round, but it is essential for road clearing during the winter.

Aldrich said she sent an email to state representative Steven Kulik inquiring about the \$150,000 in approved state reimbursement to pay for damages and cleanup from the July, 2006 tornado. That money has still not been received by the town.

Kulik thought the town had already received the reimbursement, and said he would look into what was causing the delay. He also agreed to look into the matter of low-flying helicopters that bothered residents last summer and fall.

Aldrich reported that the generator for the town well has been installed, and the propane tanks are in place and filled. The gas company planned to connect the gas line on Monday, December 14th, so the generator will be in place to keep the pump operating and the above ground water from freezing if normal electric supply is interrupted. Emergency generators for the library and the town hall are still in transit, as they have been since spring.

Selectboard member Dan Keller asked, "From what part of the galaxy?"

Aldrich said the town property clean-up account has a balance of \$7,595.47, which should be enough to board up the windows and doors of the house on Wickett Pond Road formerly home to Marion Herrick. Jean Forward, of the town historic commission, will come to the next selectboard meeting to give the commission's view of what to do with the house

and property.

Aldrich said runoff from the town hall roof, the police station roof, and the sump pump in the town hall basement has been directed onto a neighbor's land, creating a nuisance. Plumber Bruce Whittier looked at the situation, and came up with some ideas for redirecting the water, but Keller said finance committee member Jim Slavas had what appeared to be a better idea. An eight inch sewer line already connects the town hall's former tight tank with the town septic system, and Slavas suggested a smaller line could be snaked through that pipe and connected with storm drainage that flows down Morse Village Road by the Meetinghouse.

Manholes are already in place where connections would be needed, and the process would be much simpler and cheaper than digging a new trench for the roof runoff and cellar drainage. With new double-walled oil tanks for the town hall furnace, and a concrete berm around them, the cellar drainage would not be considered hazardous waste. Keller said the matter could be brought to a special town meeting for authorization.

The lot on which the town hall sits is so small, the back line is too close to the building to allow for even the placement of a ladder for painting. Keller suggested that if the runoff issue, which has been a problem for years, is corrected, the neighbor might be more amenable to maintenance workers who step over the property line in the course of building repairs.

Keller said that the cir- see **WENDELL** pg 13

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE WENDELL POLICE LOG

Copper Theft at Transfer Station

Friday, 12/4

Unauthorized firewood cutting on a Wickett Pond Road property.

Salem Road, no injuries. Motor vehicle accident on Montague Road, no injuries.

Tuesday, 12/8

Saturday, 12/5

Motor vehicle accident on Depot Road, no injuries. Motor vehicle accident on New

Three cartons of scrap copper reported taken from a locked room in the Wendell Recycling and Transfer Station building.

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Chrome Dreams at the Wendell Free Library



Lug Nuts of the Sky – Gloria Kegeles

Kegeles, is being presented this month at the Wendell Free Library's Herrick Room Gallery in Wendell, Massachusetts. The bold and colorful images of restored vintage cars and trucks are created "in-camera" and are not computer-generated or altered. Often mistaken for paintings or computer-generated abstractions, her images are created simply with single exposures of available light, without filters, manipulations or digital enhancements.

Kegeles combines the vehicles' unique design features with the reflections in the mirror-like

unpredictable reflections, thus recapturing an altered dimension of photographic ingenuity and magic.

Kegeles, a Wendell resident, has been a fine arts photographer for 28 years. Her initial work involved long-exposure night photography, first using city lights while flying at night. Later her night images included moonlight and nature compositions, and sometimes incorporated streaks of car taillights and streetlights.

An artist

reception will be held on Saturday, December 19th from 1 to 3 p.m. Chrome Dreams will be at the Wendell library gallery through December 30th and can

be viewed during regular library hours: Tuesdays 3 to 6 p.m., Wednesdays 10 a.m. to 8 p.m., and Saturdays 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.



Holy Heat Shield – Gloria Kegeles

CHRISTINE TARANTINO – Chrome Dreams, an automotive photography exhibit by Gloria

chrome and highly-polished car bodies. The results are bright and swirling distortions of

Leveling on the Leverett Elementary School Budget

BY BILL FRANKLIN – Responding to a request by the selectboard and finance committee to produce a level funded budget for the coming fiscal year, school committee members Kip Fonsh, Farshid Hajir and elementary school principal Anne Ross presented a budget with an overall increase of 3.9% over last year's expenditures, amounting to an increase of approximately \$66,000.

Initially, board members questioned the form in which the budget was presented. Finance committee member Tom Powers wanted to know

what the "drivers" were in the budget, meaning the items responsible for either an increase or decrease in the bottom line over last year's revenues and expenses.

Kip Fonsh, responded, "Your request for documents is made in a very negative way."

Selectboard member Peter d'Errico said the selectboard's "impatience" was real and based on what he called the school committee's "opaque budget presentations."

D'Errico asked for "actual, true total costs and revenues." Are there funds designated of earmarked for a particular purpose, for example?" asked d'Errico. "We need to

know if something has already been covered by a grant," and what elements of the budget need to be covered by town revenues.

Farshid Hajir, school committee member, suggested the board's "irritation has more to do with mechanical things" than with substantive issues, and assured the board he did, indeed, have the cost breakdowns and revenue projections the board requested, and promised to provide them a week before the next selectboard meeting to give members time to digest them.

"Let's make the true costs known and turn over a new leaf," Hajir said.

Some discussion of specific expenditures ensued. Fonsh explained the single greatest "driver" in the FY '11 budget was the cost of accommodating two special needs children, at a cost of \$50 thousand. This year's school budget increase, Fonsh said, would be pegged at

has been contaminated by proximity to the town's former landfill, and the town has been supplying the home with bottled water, along with at least one other nearby home on Teawaddle Hill Road.

On October 20th, town meeting approved spending up to \$30,000 to drill, test and connect a new well at the Duffy residence, since the former well had shown spikes in the last year from .03 parts per million to 30 parts per million of manganese, considered a precursor of further contaminants like benzene and toluene in the former landfill's plume, and charcoal filtering was no longer adequate to preserve water quality to the household.

According to preliminary tests, the new replacement well has shown elevated levels of sodium, Brazeau said. Additional tests will be conducted this week to determine if the initial test was an anomaly, or perhaps an aftereffect of the drilling process itself. High sodium levels can be mitigated by using charcoal filters, once an accurate reading is established.

High sodium levels can affect people with high blood pressure, and can affect treatment systems designed to eliminate volatile organic compounds.

"Let's make the true costs known and turn over a new leaf."

– Farshid Hajir
Leverett School Committee

1.8% without this single item.

In other news, selectboard chair Richard Brazeau provided updated information on the new well drilled at town expense for a the Duffy residence at 7 Cushman Road. The household's water supply



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GREEN SEEN Mail Art

BY CHRISTINE TARANTINO

WENDELL – The Wendell Free Library is hosting the GREEN SEEN Mail Art Exhibit. Co-curators Christine Tarantino and Richard Baldwin, artists and Wendell residents, have invited artists worldwide to join with our community in creating postcard-sized art work on the theme of "Green," as in sustainability, conservation, freecycle, the color...Green.

All postcards will be displayed in the library as they are received. In addition, the art works will be scanned, document-

ed, and posted at the library website, and all contributors will receive printed documentation of their participation.

GREEN SEEN Mail Art will be an ongoing exhibit, accepting postcard submissions (maximum size 5-1/2 by 8-1/2 inches) through March 21st, 2010. Participation is free and open to all, artists and non-artists, all techniques and media. In June when the exhibit closes, all art works received will become part of the permanent art collection of the Wendell Free Library.

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STRATHMORE from pg 1 and invested about \$80,000 in cleaning up the interior of the property and removing about six tractor trailer loads of recyclable paper, some of it quite soggy, from the mill, which suffered a serious arson fire one year earlier.

Following that blaze, on May 26th, 2007, Building #10 of the Strathmore Mill was reduced to a pile of asbestos tainted rubble. Montague subsequently invested more than \$277,000 to replace the roof on Building #2 and convert the sprinkler system in that building to a dry release system.

The town was involved in a lengthy tax taking of the Strathmore with previous owner Jerry Jones, who owned the property and lived in the mill at the time of the arson fire. In April of last year, the town was in land court in Boston to complete the taking when Jones transferred the deed for the Strathmore through a salvage contractor from upstate New York named James Bent, for one dollar, and then to Anctil, for \$50,000. Both Jones and Bent have since worked for Anctil cleaning up and maintaining the property, and salvaging materials from the mill for resale. Town officials fear Jones may still be living in the mill.

Bent recently signed a \$25,000 purchase and sale agreement to buy the crumbling Railroad Salvage building (see sidebar).

At the time ownership of the Strathmore transferred to Anctil, the town was owed about \$170,000 in back taxes for the mill. Anctil signed an agreement with the town to pay off the taxes in quarterly payments. But on Wednesday, tax collector Patti Dion said Anctil has made no tax payments to the town for the Strathmore Mill. She said the town is now owed \$238,680.71 in back taxes, \$86,574.58 in interest on the taxes owed, \$15,091.33 in legal fees on the Strathmore, and \$277,181.78 on the lien for the town's improvements to the property, for a total of \$530,890.82, "and counting."

But Pruitt said the town does not intend to focus on the overdue taxes with Anctil at this time, nor immediately pursue the land taking in court, where the matter remains in legal limbo. "I don't think we have any expectation of that [Anctil paying the taxes]," she said. "We have a smaller,

Power Street Reopening Awaits Next Step in Railroad Salvage Demo



TOM BERGERON PHOTO

A contractor from Valley Crane worked to demolish upper stories of the former Railroad Salvage building on November 23rd.

BY DAVID DETMOLD

THE PATCH – At a special meeting of the Montague selectboard on Wednesday afternoon, the board discussed prospects for completing enough demolition of the former Railroad Salvage building to finally be able to reopen Power Street, one of two arteries leading to the densely populated island neighborhood of the Patch. Since the former 19th century cotton mill (and late 20th century discount store) began to actively collapse three and a half years ago, Power Street has been blocked to traffic.

Building inspector David Jensen said the town is waiting for James Bent, of St. Johnsville, NY, who is in the process of buying the Railroad Salvage building from the court appointed receiver administering the derelict property, to complete demolition of the building's rear upper story walls before reopening the road. Jensen said Bent is expected to have a demolition crane back at the site early in January to complete that step in the demolition process.

The town also has to determine whether Power Street will be opened as a one-way street only, and if so, which way traffic will flow, Jensen said. The street light at the Canal Street end will then have to be reset, at which point Power Street can finally be reopened to traffic, and made available for emergency vehicles to serve the

Patch again.

The board discussed the financial problems surrounding the property, and shortly closed the meeting to hold an executive session on the subject.

After the meeting, Jensen said to date Bent had paid \$15,000 of the \$25,000 purchase price for the building, the town of Montague had put in \$5,000 (voluntarily) to assist with the building's demolition, and former building owner Gary Kosuda, of Fort Lauderdale, FL, had put in \$7,000 of the \$90,000 the land court had ordered him to contribute toward the property's cleanup. Of this pool of money, less than \$14,000 remained, Jensen said, and the receiver, Mark Draper, is now demanding payment of his bill, for slightly more than the funds available, before proceeding to complete the sale of the building.

Tax collector Patti Dion said the town is due \$13,000 in back taxes on the property.

Jensen said the crane operator, Valley Crane of Vernon, had been paid, and should return as planned in early January to complete demo on the upper walls. But should there be a delay in the crane's return, Jensen said there was at this point no practical obstacle remaining to opening the road anyway, since the walls facing Power Street had already been reduced to the second story level, and could no longer endanger passing traffic.

more doable thing in view: that the sprinkler system function through the winter, and the building remain closed up."

To that end, the selectboard quizzed building inspector David Jensen on Wednesday, in Anctil's absence.

Jensen said, "My understanding is Mr. Anctil has verbally committed to maintenance at the Strathmore, but if anything serious happens there he is not prepared to foot the bill."

Jensen said in terms of recent maintenance, "He hasn't done much of anything except attempt to drain down the sprinkler system." He said there was a water leak in the wall of Building #2.

Later, Jensen said there had been break-ins at the mill recently, during one of which a sprinkler head was damaged, tripping the alarm system. He said the sprinkler alarm frequently rings in the middle of the night, and he is often called to respond, instead of Anctil, who is not always reachable at those hours.

The board asked Jensen to inspect the property to see if all doors and windows were boarded up, and to make sure Jones was not using the industrial building as a private residence.

Anctil, reached by phone, asked if the building was secure, answered, "Probably not quite,

honestly. It's a beast. We drained the sprinkler system, but it could be a brutal winter. I'm crossing my fingers, but I'm willing to bet I'll be down there at 2 a.m. dealing with the system."

As to his plans to develop the mill into a film and television school and production facility, Anctil replied frankly.

"Economy-wise, we couldn't make the numbers ever get close to a viable project. We're looking at a phased approach."

He added, "Parking's obviously the biggest issue there."

Pruitt said the town will not be endlessly patient with Anctil on the matter of back taxes, but on the other hand showed no eagerness to have the town assume landlord responsibilities for the mill just yet.

"If Mr. Anctil is not able to do anything with the building, it's not an indefinite arrangement, I would think. But there is no specific endpoint."

For his part, Jensen said, "Ultimately, given the position Anctil is in, the problem [of the mill] will ultimately be ours. Miracles do happen, but we should not be banking on miracles."

He added, "I hope I don't spend my winter chasing fire trucks down to Strathmore."



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HOLIDAYS from pg 1

lot more options than it did just a year ago.

Karen Baker of Doggie Dips and Clips has a ready supply of pet needs – from collars and cages to toys and grooming supplies.

Across Bridge Street, the Faces and Places Gallery is offering 20 percent off all items in the shop. George (Moonlight) Davis offers beaded jewelry by Yellow Bird, a nice selection of note cards and affordable art ranging from collage and magnet art to photos, paintings and shadow boxes. The gallery is well-stocked for the holiday season and well worth a visit.

You can also take a short walk across the bridge into Ervingside to visit Angela Lake, owner of the “Olde Time Market 1871.” The shop has been open a little more than a year right at the Erving side of the bridge, and is chock-a-block full of home-

made soaps, botanicals, candles, and primitive collectibles. Lake tries to purchase locally or American made goods where possible, and makes the soaps and wax tarts herself. When time allows she makes primitive dolls as well.

The “tarts” are among Lake’s best sellers. These small wax tarts are used in scent diffusers, and sit in a small ceramic bowl that sits atop a heat source (either a light bulb or tea light). The tarts slowly melt, releasing the scents. The shop smells a bit like a bakery when you walk in because many of the wax tarts are scented with holiday specialties like gingerbread, hazelnut raisin cookies, and other mouth-watering scents.

So take a stroll in Millers Falls this week, shop locally for the holidays, and support new start-up enterprises that are changing the face of this old mill village, centrally located on Route 63.



KAREN WILKINSON ILLUSTRATION

BY DAVID DETMOLD – Paul Voiland, owner of Deerfield Valley Heating and Cooling and member of the Montague Energy Committee, stood before a restless crowd of town meeting members on Tuesday night waiting for a quorum to show up, and gave them something to pay attention to. He gave away a free fuel efficient Lennox gas furnace, installed. The lucky winner, and two runners-up, were drawn by town meeting member John Reynolds, of Precinct 1. Proving there was no hanky panky involved, Reynolds drew winners from Precinct 2 and Precinct 3.

All the entrants were from Montague citizens who had attended energy saving workshops sponsored by the Montague Energy Committee over the past 12 months or so. A similar drawing last November had failed to produce a qualifying winner, one whose home was

heated by a less efficient gas warm air furnace. The committee hopes a qualifying winner is found among the three winners picked Tuesday night.

Third runner up was Barbara Turner Delisle, of Broadway, in Lake Pleasant.

Voiland said during the runup to the drawing, a number of town



Paul Voiland (l-r) receives a winning entry from John Reynolds in the fuel efficient furnace giveaway at Tuesday’s town meeting, as members of the finance committee (Mike Naughton, John Hanold and Carolyn Olsen) look on.

The first name drawn was George Shapiro, of Montague Avenue in Lake Pleasant. Second runner up was Rachel Stoler, of Turnpike Road in Turners Falls.

meeting members told him they did not realize Montague even had a town energy committee. Don’t they read newspapers in this town anymore?

BIOMASS from pg 5

plots where chippers operated won’t enjoy. The crown has lots of nutrients – more, foresters say, than the part that gets taken away as logs. What they don’t mention is that the logs have most of the carbonaceous fiber, the “bulk” for the forest’s digestion and the organic matter for the soil. Both

crown and “bole” of a fallen tree make the forest’s soil, trees and wildlife. Even with optimal silviculture, most of us would recognize that logging negatively impacts forests. Breaking nature’s patterns has consequences. Biomass takes it a step further.

Richard generally seems to speak favorably about biomass.

He guaranteed that “regeneration will occur” in stands that are cleanly swept for chippers, as it will in simple, old-fashioned clearcuts. At least two “biomass clearcuts” were done in the tornado’s path, with chippers.

In some cases, he said, bringing chippers into a forest area marked for improvement thinning allows for “better forestry” in the form of culling of marginal (sick, deformed, etc.) trees. A straight talker, he nonetheless allowed that the equipment used for chipping operations doesn’t fit well into lighter cuttings, meaning anything less than a “shelterwood” (50% crown removal) harvest. He believes in prescribed clearcutting because he says it imitates the helpful effect for wildlife of tornadoes and “100-year hurricanes.” It’s clearly only a partial imitation, though, since storms may open up the canopy, but, unlike biomass operations, they leave all the woody material behind.

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REFORM from pg 6

sort of thing? The approach does not seem justified as a way to improve schools that are experiencing enrollment losses, including school choice and charter school losses.

What we may have here, unintentionally perhaps, are two separate visions of education. For charter schools, and more affluent school choice receiving schools, we get a coherent vision of mission-driven schools as a whole. For poor, underperforming schools, we get "formative assessments and curriculum-embedded performance tasks," and "exemplar curricula and instructional units."

The affluent districts get

resources, and involved parents to ensure they are used innovatively and effectively. The passionate teachers, administrators and parents in the poorer districts get micromanagement and PowerPoint presentations.

The Pioneer Valley DSAC is now involved with the Gill-Montague Regional School District because, we have been told, the district has been declared a "Level 4" underperforming district. Hopefully the definition of a Level 4 district will be provided, along with an explanation of why the district was so declared, in something more substantive than a PowerPoint presentation.

It is important to emphasize the underperforming status of the district was not simply the

product of low test scores for subgroups at particular schools or the need for more centralized curriculum coordination. It was the result of a critical analysis of school district leadership by the Department of Education. A key assumption of the state evaluation of district leadership was that resolving the issue of the configuration of the elementary schools would improve the status and reputation of district leadership within the community. Will there be any revisiting of this assumption in light of subsequent events?

Such a review would show that a core assumption of the state evaluation was misguided for two related reasons. First, resolving the elementary school issue, while perhaps necessary, was bound to alienate one large segment of the local population without improving the reputation of the district as a whole. Secondly, the elementary school question was not the main cause of institutional instability and the lack of support for the district in the broader community. The cause was chronic fiscal problems and the tendency to pass these problems on to the member towns in the form of unaffordable assessment requests. This reality has

been consistently documented, including by former superintendent Ken Rocke's "Turnaround Plan." Thus, despite making significant progress in resolving the elementary school configuration issue (a good thing in my opinion, though I disagree with the result), school district budgets have been voted down by large cross sections of voters at town meetings and district meetings ever since.

The school district leadership has now resolved to tackle this issue head on by creating a "long-term plan for fiscal stability" in collaboration with the state and member towns. The town selectboards and finance committees have endorsed and applauded this new leadership role by the school committee, thus potentially addressing one of the key reasons for our underperforming status.

But will the state work with us? Does this new DSAC-Race to the Top initiative further this process or undermine it? The memorandum of understanding we are asked to sign is based on the desire of Massachusetts to be eligible for federal Race to the Top funds, estimated to total perhaps \$250,000,000 over a four-year period for the state as a whole. But will these funds,

when they trickle down to local districts, really address our structural budget problems? The answer is certainly, "No." In fact, there is the real possibility they will represent more state-federal initiatives that eventually will be passed on to local cities and towns to finance.

Without a coherent vision that links education reform to education funding reform, these initiatives will probably not succeed.

Until the vision behind these initiatives is more clearly justified, brought into coherence with other state policies and aligned with our goals as a school district, we should not support these new policies or sign any memoranda.



ERVING from pg 7

The board signed a payment of \$285,328 to contractor R.H. White for work completed there.

Valinski also said work at the Farley sand filter wastewater treatment plant is also "substantially complete," with a much smaller \$4,000 punch list awaiting the attention of contractor Waterline Industries of Seabrook, NH. The board approved a payment of \$21,198 to Waterline.

Elsewhere, Valinski reported the relining of sewers to reduce inflow and infiltration in Erving Center had hit a snag in the form of a ten-foot section of pipe near the intersection of North Street and Route 2, where roots had so clogged a length of sewer that it was impossible for the contractor to insert a liner. The board instructed Valinski to have a sub-

contractor be hired to clear the clogged section.

Finally, Valinski said MK Painting had completed the repainting of the Erving's water tower, opposite Christina's Pizzeria and Tavern on Route 2. "They did a good job," said Valinski, "No VOCs [volatile organic compounds] tested." The board approved final payment of \$87,786 on that job, which has a two year warrantee.

Sharp reported that a representative of Tower Investments had called him at town hall to see if the town might be interested in buying the former IP paper mill in Erving, which the California-based firm purchased several years ago as an investment property. The board said they were not interested in owning the old paper mill. Sharp said Tower is current on its taxes.



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HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE ERVING POLICE LOG

Motor Vehicle Rollover

<p>Tuesday, 12/8 11:34 a.m. 911 hang up call French King Highway, found to be in Gill, advised Gill Police.</p> <p>Wednesday 12/9 9:10 a.m. 911 Call to Northfield Road residence for knee injury, BHA transported subject.</p> <p>11:55 a.m. Report from a Wheelock Street address of past credit card fraud.</p> <p>7:39 p.m. Found tan/brown dog running on Route 2 near a State Road residence. Returned dog to owner,</p>	<p>verbal warning given for leash law violation.</p> <p>Thursday 12/10 6:44 a.m. Report of a motor vehicle roll over accident on Route 2 west bypass, no injuries. Massachusetts State Police covered.</p> <p>1:40 p.m. 911 hang up call from an Old State Road residence. Verbal domestic between mother and son. Son left residence.</p> <p>Friday 12/11 9:30 a.m. Assisted Gill police with a disabled vehicle by the French King Bridge.</p>	<p>3:06 p.m. Officer to an Old State Road address for an unwanted party, subject removed without incident.</p> <p>10:50 p.m. Assisted Northfield Police with alarm on Holl Avenue, secured residence.</p> <p>Saturday 12/12 1:05 p.m. 911 hang up call, Old State Road, confirmed child playing with phone.</p> <p>Sunday 12/13 9:58 p.m. Spoke with a Pratt Street resident regarding stolen items, report taken.</p>
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NOTES FROM THE MONTAGUE TOWN MEETING

Gill and Montague Reap \$120,000 Assessment Windfall in Commissioner's Final Budget

BY DAVID DETMOLD – Town meeting members in Montague approved an \$81,253 increase to the assessment for the Gill-Montague Regional School District on Tuesday evening, in order to meet the mandated \$16,537,788 budget set for the district by the commissioner Mitchell Chester of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) earlier this month.

For the second year in a row, the DESE has taken control of the district's finances, because, as superintendent Carl Ladd put it Tuesday, "The school district and the towns were unable to come to an agreement as to the dollar amount of the district's operating budget."

But the final assessment figure the town of Montague will pay

(\$7,120,370 previously approved by town meeting, plus the \$81,253 agreed to Tuesday night), \$7,201,623 is in fact a little over \$100,000 lower than the amount town meeting members had been told to expect from Commissioner Chester if they refused to support the school committee's budget number (based on Chester's so-called 1/12th budget issued in July) of \$16,657,788. Chester had even written to the GMRSD in July to say his 1/12th budget would become the final budget number if the towns and the district failed to come to agreement by December 1st.

Chester in fact reduced that 1/12th budget number by \$120,000 earlier this month; the town of Gill will also receive a nearly \$19,000 windfall in their assessment figure as a result.

Ladd said, "I am not exactly sure how the commissioner came up with the budget reduction," but "we're definitely getting closer to cutting the budget gap," between assessments the towns consider affordable and the operating budget the school committee deems essential to run the schools.

But Precinct 4 town meeting

member Garry Earles credited town meeting members and town boards for forcing the DESE commissioner to lower the budget figure by their refusal to agree to assessments they consider to be unaffordable. He called on the school committee to lower their sights and meet the towns' affordability targets in upcoming budget years.

In last year's budget impasse, former school committee chair Mary Kociela told the second district meeting considering the '09 operating budget on November 18th that the commissioner of the DESE had signaled his intention to impose a 3.5% budget increase on the Gill-Montague district if the towns failed to support the 3% increase being sought by the school committee at that time. Instead, the voters of Gill and Montague rejected the school committee's budget, and Chester came back with a mandated budget for the district \$40,000 less than the school committee had sought.

On Tuesday, one town meeting member was overheard to say, "If we were B.F. Skinner rats, we'd keep rejecting the school committee budgets. We get rewarded each time we do."

GILL NEWS AND NOTES

Town of Gill Winter Parking Ban in Effect

With the recent snowstorms behind us, and with more inclement weather certainly yet to come, the town of Gill wishes to remind residents the town-wide winter parking ban is in effect. No on-street parking is allowed between the hours of 1 a.m. and 6 a.m. through April 15th.

Gill Town Hall – Holiday Closings

The Gill town hall and the offices of the assessors, collector and treasurer, town clerk, and administrative assistant will be closed on Thursday, December 24th and Thursday, December 31st, in observance of the Christmas and New Year's holidays.

Recycling Totes Available to Gill Residents

The town of Gill has received 50 blue recycling bins from the Franklin County Solid Waste Management District. The bins are available at no charge to Gill residents, with a limit of one per household. Bins may be picked up at town hall during regular hours of operation, Monday: 9 a.m. to 6:30 p.m., and Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday: 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Gill Trash & Recycling – Holiday Schedule

Trash and recycling pickup in the town of Gill will be postponed due to Christmas and New Year's falling on Friday. Pickups will occur on the Mondays following the holidays: December 28th and January 4th.

Low Power FM May Be Comin' To Our Town

BY MICHAEL MULLER

MONTAGUE – With the passage by the U.S. House of Representatives of the Local Community Radio Act (HR 1147) by overwhelming voice vote on Wednesday afternoon, the way may soon be open for Montague to have our very own low-power FM station. MCTV is holding our collective breath, and calling our senators urging them to pass the Local Community Radio Act (S592), now!

Please, call your senators this week and ask them to get S592 on the Senate agenda. Your call is essential. If we don't get a Senate vote this session, the bill dies and we have to start over. The deadline for this vote is Christmas Eve.

A short history of LPFM in Montague:

In 2001, when it appeared that MCTV was about to lose its assignment for the public access television channel, board members applied for a coveted low power FM "construction permit" so as to create a radio station for the town of Montague, in lieu of a TV station. During the years it took the FCC to approve that request, a commercial radio station moved a repeater into our area, blocking MCTV from

broadcasting on the frequency we had been approved for. Additionally, the owner of the land who had given us permission to build the radio antenna on Chestnut Hill had also changed his mind!

MCTV researched their options and found a spot off Dry Hill Road they could broadcast from, on a different frequency, with "third adjacency" interference only from WGAJ of Deerfield Academy. Deerfield Academy was no longer broadcasting on a daily basis, and MCTV thought they could fill the gap. The FCC said no, since DA's license was still active. We thought the effort to bring community low-power radio to Montague was over.

However, under the pending legislation that just sailed through the House of Representatives, the "third adjacency" restrictions that prevented us from being approved at the new location would be relaxed, so it is quite possible our application could be grandfathered in. All we need is for the Senate to approve the bill.

So please, let Montague citizens get on the air, by calling our senators today. Ask them to get the Local Community Radio Act (S592) on the Senate agenda. Call John Kerry at (617) 565-8519, and Paul Kirk at (202) 224-4543.

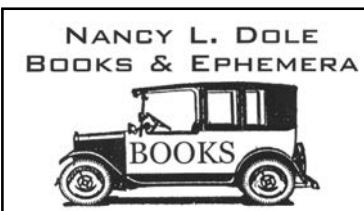


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AUTHOR TED GRAVELINE**

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MONTAGUE POLICE LOG

Vehicle Theft In Turners

Tuesday, 12/8

1:08 p.m. Report of larceny at St. Mary's Cemetery.
2:15 p.m. Annoying, harassing phone calls at an Avenue A address. Advised of options.

Wednesday, 12/9

Five reports of motor vehicle accidents on a snowy day.
11:41 a.m. Suspicious person on L Street, investigated.

Thursday, 12/10

12:55 a.m. Investigation of a suspicious auto by Creemee, on Millers Falls Road. Citation issued.

7:00 a.m. Assisted with towing of Third Street parking lot, services rendered.

8:45 a.m. Assisted with towing of Fourth Street

parking lot, services rendered.

10:20 a.m. Report of larceny at Franklin County Technical School. Referred to an officer.

2:40 p.m. Report of disorderly conduct at Montague Town Hall, Avenue A Street. Peace restored.

Friday 12/11

11:32 a.m. Report of a safety hazard investigated at a snowmobile trail off of Montague Avenue.

Saturday 12/12

11:54 a.m. Accident with property damage at 5th and L Streets, services rendered.
12:10 p.m. Annoying, harassing phone calls at a Turners Falls Road address. Advised of options.

12:46 p.m. Report of a motor vehicle theft on L

Street.
6:10 p.m. Report of an accident with property damage on Central

Sunday 12/13

4:45 a.m. Unwanted person on Second Street. Peace restored.

3:54 p.m. Accident with property damage on Montague City Road. Citation issued.

Monday 12/14

9:08 a.m. Report of an accident with personal injury on Montague City Road.

Tuesday 12/15

1:16 a.m. Suspicious person on Turners Falls Road, investigated.

8:19 a.m. Report of an accident with property damage, Route 47 near Sunderland line.

11:01 a.m. Report of larceny at a Third Street address.



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JESSICA HARMON ILLUSTRATION

THE HEALTHY GEEZER:

Pros and Cons of Probiotics

BY FRED CICETTI

LEONIA, NJ – Q. *Are probiotics safe?*

There is debate over the precise definition of probiotics. The United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization and the World Health Organization call probiotics “live microorganisms, which, when administered in adequate amounts, confer a health benefit on the host.”

Microorganisms – or microbes – are living organisms that can be seen only under a

microscope. Microbes are everywhere; the human body contains billions of them.

Some microbes cause disease. Others are essential for health. Most microbes belong to one of four major groups: bacteria, viruses, fungi, or protozoa.

Less than one percent of bacteria cause disease in humans. Harmless bacteria live in human intestines, where they help us to digest food.

Viruses, which consist of one or more molecules, contain the virus’s genes surrounded by a protein coat. Most viruses cause disease.

There are millions of types of fungi, which are primitive vegetables. Some live in the human body, usually without causing illness.

Protozoa are single-celled animals. In humans, protozoa usual-

ly cause disease.

Probiotics is a term that refers to foods or supplements that contain beneficial bacteria that can help with digestion and defend against dangerous bacteria. The bacteria in probiotics are similar to those normally found in your body.

Probiotics are in foods such as yogurt and other dairy products, miso (soybean paste), tempeh (soybean cake), and some juices and soy drinks.

Some probiotics have been used for centuries. These include fermented foods and cultured milk products. Interest in probiotics in general has been growing. In the USA, alone, spending on probiotic supplements nearly tripled from 1994 to 2003.

Are probiotics safe?

Some live microbes have a long history of safe use as probi-

otics. However, the safety of probiotics has not been thoroughly studied scientifically. More information is needed on the safety of use in older people, young children, and people with compromised immune systems. Seniors should consult their physicians before beginning any new therapy.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration does not strictly regulate herbs and supplements. There is no guarantee of strength, purity or safety of products. So buyer beware.

There is increasing scientific interest in probiotics. Some researchers believe probiotics may improve general health.

There is evidence that probiotics may help treat diarrhea, vaginal yeast infections, irritable bowel syndrome, and inflammation following colon surgery. There is also data to support the

benefits of probiotics in reducing bladder-cancer recurrence, shortening the duration of intestinal infections and preventing eczema.

Probiotics are helpful in combating *C. difficile* (a.k.a. *C. diff*), a common and potentially fatal infection in hospitals.

C. diff bacteria are omnipresent, but they don’t pose a threat unless they multiply abnormally in the intestines. This can happen when you take antibiotics.

Antibiotics often destroy beneficial bacteria while trying to kill off the ones that are making you sick. If you don’t have enough good bacteria in your body, *C. diff* can proliferate.

Saccharomyces boulardii, a probiotic, is helpful in treating *C. diff* infections. *Saccharomyces boulardii* is a natural yeast, a fungus.

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

WENDELL from pg 7

culating pump for the library heat stopped working. The floor around the pump was littered with filings from the coupling between the motor and the pump. He said Slavas had replaced the destroyed coupling with one that has a greater tolerance for misalignment.

Circulating pumps have failed three times in the short life of the new library and town office buildings. Normally those pumps last for decades. The pump sales representative came up with a theory for why this is happening, which he sent to the engineer and architect. The original warrantee period has passed, but none of the replacement pumps or repairs have lasted.

Selectboard chair Christine Heard suggested the town should bargain more aggressively with the installer, and the company, and send an invoice for all the work Slavas has done to keep the heating systems functioning.

Selectboard member Jeffrey Pooser suggested a thermostatically triggered light in the library would alert a passerby that the library is not getting heat.

Bob Wilber from National Grid was the only concerned person who attended a pole hearing for a new guyed pole across from pole #55A to serve #135 Farley Road, and allow service to 137 Farley Road as well. Wilber said the pole would be six feet from the road, to satisfy the highway department. The selectboard approved the request.

Representing the Wendell energy task force, Laurie Didonato met the selectboard to initiate collaboration between the task force and the selectboard, and to find out what the town is already doing to conserve energy. The town is in the process of insulating the town hall, and has signed up for a preliminary energy-saving audit through the Franklin Regional Council of Governments. Along with Athol, Erving, New Salem, Orange, Phillipston, and Royalston, Wendell is applying for technical help from FRCOG to achieve Green Community status from the state Department of Energy Resources. That status would allow Wendell, and the other towns, to apply for state grants from a pool totaling \$10 million annually, which could be used to reduce energy consumption and promote ener-

gy saving technology in town.

In order to qualify as a Green Community, the town must first establish the current baseline of municipal energy use, and put in place a program to reduce that baseline by 20% within the next five years. The town must agree to purchase only energy-efficient vehicles in the future, with the exceptions of vehicles for police, fire and highway departments, the only vehicles Wendell owns. The planning board must also adapt zoning bylaws to allow designated sites for alternative energy research and development or manufacture, and must expedite the permitting process for any such firms that seek to locate in town.

Didonato had gone to a workshop on how to make simple interior double-pane storm windows, which cost about \$12 for a three-foot by five-foot window. The windows in the town hall are much taller than five feet, but after insulation, cutting heat loss from those windows would seem to be the energy conservation step with the quickest payback for the town.

The selectboard approved a renewal of the Class III automobile salvage license for Scot’s Garage, on Mormon Hollow

Road, the only Class III license in town.

Finance committee members Jim Slavas and Michael Idoine met the selectboard to report on their continuing work with school committees. Slavas had gone to the Mahar regionalization planning committee, where several other members criticized the proposal he and Idoine had prepared to bring down Wendell’s per-pupil assessment to make it conform with the town’s aggregate wealth, in comparison with other towns in the Mahar district. On questioning, only superintendent Michael Baldassarre had in fact read the proposal.

The regionalization committee seems set on pursuing a split region, with Orange and Petersham forming a new K-through-12 region, Orange,

Petersham, Wendell and New Salem remaining in a 7-through-12 region, and Wendell and New Salem remaining in Union 28 for elementary grade education. Slavas feels that option raises too many complications. Orange school committee members do not seem inclined to address the concerns voiced by Wendell representatives, but any agreement must be approved by all of the four towns before it is implemented.

The state has authorized reimbursement to towns for expenses resulting from the December 2008 ice storm. Wendell’s share, when it comes, will be \$9,366, and is in addition to federal money that the town has already received to pay for storm cleanup.



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CAMPUS from pg 1

very day, that he would found a school to educate poor girls.

Moody founded the Northfield Seminary in 1879, and Mount Hermon School for Boys shortly thereafter, to provide educational opportunities to the poor and minorities. In the early days, students worked to help construct many of the Mount Hermon buildings, to cut costs. To defray the expense of free schooling for the poor, girls from wealthy families were also accepted.

The term "seminary" in the school name offered the comforting connotation that this school, while not cloistered, was perhaps second cousin to a nunnery.

Of course, the boys on the Mount Hermon campus were seething with the hormones of male teenhood, but there was the wide Connecticut River to keep them at bay. Though when the bridge was built across the river, it may have given parents some sleepless nights. Despite that, the young ladies of the Seminary behaved as ladies. They still do, even though the schools have long since gone co-ed and, in 2005, consolidated on the Gill campus, which may taken much of the mystique out of the other sex.

During the era I attended Mount Hermon, the Mount Hermon boys invited Northfield girls to dances and ball games – chaperoned, of course. Northfield

girls also invited Mount Hermon boys to their campus for afternoon teas in the parlor.

The girls suppressed giggles while the boys sat up straight, dressed in jackets and neckties, sweating profusely under the watchful eye of a chaperone while they sipped tea out of thimble sized tea cups, trying not to break wind. Mr. Pieneske, in charge of the Mount Hermon dining hall, had a diabolical humor. He scheduled baked beans for lunch on days when the boys visited the Northfield campus for afternoon teas.

Two of my daughters and a son-in-law graduated from Mount Hermon. I also graduated from the school, but in a convoluted manner, managing first to get expelled. The summer after I fell asleep in Advanced Grammar class in my sophomore year, I received a letter from NMH suggesting I would be happier going to school elsewhere.

O! that memorable day in Mr. Louis Smith's grammar class. I can still see him turning purple with rage at my implication that his classes might just possibly be a tad dull. Mr. Smith, noted for his perpetual smile, bore the student pet name "Laughing Louie," but he was not laughing that day.

After the letter of dismissal from the assistant headmaster, I slunk off in disgrace to sign up for an 18-month hitch in the Army. While in the service, I

graduated from Pittsburg Evening High School in California. In Japan, Hokkaido University accepted me in an evening math class while I served in the paratroops. I didn't write Mr. Smith informing him that the Army had assigned me the job of public relations writer for fear he'd burst a blood vessel, if he hadn't already done so.

Upon discharge from the Army, I attended Turners Falls High for the second half of the senior year before graduating.

Mount Hermon re-admitted me after I assured them that I was all settled down, managed to get on the honor roll at Turners High, was a partner in a used car business, and most importantly, that I was well rested and promised to stay awake.

My new Advanced Grammar teacher was a native of Egypt. The students named him "The Pharaoh," for his regal bearing. He was a good teacher who took an interest in me.

Despite graduating from three high schools, I never did attend school, anywhere, as a junior.

My daughters restored the luster of our family name at Mount Hermon. They were both excellent students; one of them graduating *cum laude*.

Years after I left Mount Hermon, someone informed me they'd run across my old Mount Hermon school records, complete with teachers' notations.

"Biting sarcasm," wrote one. "Delightful sense of humor," wrote another. Then there was an excused lateness to class – "Ran over a rooster." The implication being that I'd stopped to deal with the owner. In truth, I'd been speeding, and I drove even faster after I hit the rooster, leaving the irate farmer's wife waving her broom at me in a cloud of dust and a shower of feathers. The

rooster ran off, minus more than a few feathers.

Despite my flawed high school performance, in college I earned a degree in business administration, and later studied at various universities and colleges up to the present, staying awake enough to be inducted into an international honor society. (Are you listening, Mr. Smith?)

As an excavating contractor, I returned to both the Northfield and Mount Hermon campuses as a sub-contractor to Warner Brothers, while they were revamping the entire underground steam main systems on both campuses.

During Wednesday's press conference, I drifted in nostalgia, being back on the Northfield campus, involved in public relations concerning my alma mater, wondering if Mr. Smith, wherever he is, would appreciate the irony and forgive me for my lack of attention in his class.

One of my Mount Hermon classmates was David Powell, grandson of the school founder, Dwight L. Moody. He commuted from Northfield to Mount Hermon classes with a Crosley automobile, not much bigger than an enclosed go-cart. Dave also attended the Northfield Mount Hermon press conference on Wednesday, where he reminded me that my "soggy first day of school" story became a hit at a Mount Hermon reunion.

"That's the best story I ever heard," Dave said.

He was talking about the story, familiar to readers of *Jep's Place*, of my first day at Mount Hermon, when I got in line to meet the headmaster, Dr. Rubendall, who stood on the Administration Hall steps greeting students and parents.

Things had not gone well that day. I set off from home on my bicycle, wearing a new suit and tie, with my hair neatly slicked down, knowing I'd make a good impression. Halfway to the school I was caught in a sudden downpour. I soon looked like a drowned rat wearing soggy burlap. Water dripped from my hair, now plastered to my head. The bike handle grips were made of some sort of fake rubber that stained my hands black.

At the school administration building, a fancy automobile driven by a uniformed chauffeur pulled into the parking area as I

was leaning my bike against a stately elm. The chauffeur held the rear door open for Mommy and Daddy as they exited the limo with their darling, and got in line behind me.

I climbed the stairs, shoes squishing step by step. The headmaster seized my black stained hand, commencing to pump my arm with enthusiasm while he looked past me to greet Mommy with a smile.

"How nice to meet you," the headmaster gushed. "So this is your son."

"Good heavens, no!" she answered, brushing her sleeves to rid herself of the vermin she suspected had migrated to her. The regal family was soon back in their Caddy and left, never to be seen again, apparently not wanting their heir to associate with such riff-raff as the sodden wretch dripping water in front of them.

D.L. Moody was born in poverty. His goal for the schools was to educate the poor and minorities. The tuition, now, is over \$43,400 per school year for boarding students and \$30,500 for day students. Average grants are \$31,800 for boarding students and \$19,400 for day students, leaving a considerable gap.

With the Northfield campus renewing the mission of contributing to the education of young people, Steven Green, president of Hobby Lobby pointed out that his company and the C.S. Lewis Foundation share a vision of preserving and honoring the legacy of D.L. Moody.

The C.S. Lewis College, projecting to enroll 400 and employ a staff of 90, will provide more than an education for its students. It will also provide a shot in the arm to Northfield's sagging economy. Hobby Lobby will invest more than \$5 million in operations and capital improvement projects to support the new college, Green said. In addition, the college projects a budget in excess of \$20 million within five to seven years.

The C.S. Lewis Foundation has already begun working with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts for a projected opening date of in the fall of 2012, according to Dr. Stan Mattson, founder and president of the C.S. Lewis Foundation. Northfield looks forward to that day.



PUBLIC NOTICE, MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION, BUREAU OF WASTE PREVENTION
 Western Regional Office
 436 Dwight Street, Springfield, MA 01103
 (413) 784-1100

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 at www.mass.gov/dep/public/publiche.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.

Saadi Motamedi, Section Chief
 Bureau of Waste Prevention

TAX CLASSIFICATION HEARING

The Gill Selectboard and Assessors will meet December 21st at 5:00 p.m. in the Town Hall to determine the percentages of the local tax levy for each class of real estate and personal property for Fiscal Year 2010, as defined in Section Two-A of Chapter fifty-nine of the Massachusetts General Laws. Time will be set aside at the public hearing for residents to present oral or written testimony.

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JACK COUGHLIN ILLUSTRATION

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 Pruitt, Leo Hwang-Carlos, Jamie Berger, Janel Nockleby, Kevin and Hillary Smith, and Kenny Butler.



FRED ASKEW PHOTO

The brilliant and hilarious anti-consumer performance artist Reverend Billy and the Life after Shopping Gospel Choir perform at All Souls Church, Greenfield on Saturday, December 19th at 2 p.m.

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.

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Multi-award winning songwriter *Tom Neilson* performs at 86 Sanderson St, Greenfield. Come on out and support a local musician who combines art and activism with thoughtful sophistication and wit. Potluck 6 p.m., Concert 7 p.m. Info: 774-2112, \$10 donation.

The Pioneer Consort, concert to celebrate the release of a new holiday CD "Noel" at 7 p.m. at the First Church of Deerfield (The Brick Church). Info: www.PioneerConsort.com. \$10 donation requested at the door.

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.

Chocolate Tasting and Holiday Sale! Free samples and deep discounts on organic raw chocolates and more. 12 to 4 p.m. Community Superfoods, 432 Greenfield Road, Montague (next to the Book Mill). Info: (413) 205-6971.

Reverend Billy's Christmas Revival at All Souls Church, Greenfield. Featuring *The Life after Shopping Gospel Choir*, 2 p.m. Suggested dona-

tion: \$10. www.revilly.com.

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.

Movie night: *Lifepod* at the Wendell Free Library at 7:30 p.m. Free Admission (but seating is limited).

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

Burrito Rojo, Turners Falls: *Richard*



Dan Boulger, the 2006 winner of the Boston Comedy Festival, headlines the New Year's Eve Comedy at the Shea, Thursday, Dec. 31, at 8 p.m. He appears with Jennifer Myszkowski, Steve Macone and Alvin David. \$20.

Chase (folk pop) at 8 p.m. then at 10:30 p.m., catch a set of *Snarlin Brando* (hip hop).

At the Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Rockit Queer* dance party, \$3 cover.

Arcadia Players Presents Handel's *Messiah*, 7:30 p.m. at St. Mary's Catholic Church, Northampton. Advance tickets: \$25 General admission, \$35 Preferred seating, \$10 Students. Info at (413) 586-8742 or www.CABOTIX.com. At the door: \$30 General admission, \$40 Preferred seating, \$10 Students.

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.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 20th
Voo Caroling Night at the Rendezvous, Turners Falls. 7 p.m. for "warm-up," then outside for 8 p.m.

MONDAY, DECEMBER 21st
Evening Sing-A-Long, Montague Center: 6:30 p.m. Children of all ages and their families are invited to join Children's Librarian Linda Hickman for a fun informal live music program. Montague Center Library. Linda plays a variety of children's music on the guitar and banjo, and there are bells and shakers for the children to play. Info: call the Carnegie Library - 863-3214.

Yankee trade, white elephant Bingo! At the Rendezvous, Turners Falls. 8 p.m.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 31st
New Year's Eve *Comedy at the Shea*, with Jennifer Myszkowski, Dan Boulger, Steve Macone and Alvin David. The Shea Theater, Turners Falls. Showtime 8 p.m., doors open at 6:30 p.m. Beer & wine served in the lobby before show and at intermission. Tickets \$20, available on-line at www.sheacomedy.com, Call the Shea at (413) 863-2281.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 7TH
Echo Lake Concert Series: *Emma's Revolution, Pat Humphries & Sandy O*, 7:30 p.m. at Leverett Town Hall. \$12 to \$15. No advance sells or reservations. Info: (413) 548-9394. Doors open at 7 p.m. Emma's Revolution is also currently touring in support of their new CD collaborative with Holly Near, "We Came To Sing!" Tender and daring a cappella vocal arrangements of some of Holly Near's most requested songs are paired with some of emma's revolution's most popular songs and some new tracks that perfectly fit the three women's voices!



The hilarious Jennifer Myszkowski is again the host for New Year's Eve Comedy at the Shea on Thursday, December 31st at The Shea Theater, Turners Falls. Showtime 8 p.m., doors open at 6:30 p.m., beer and wine will be served by the Shea's Board of Directors.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 26TH
At the Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *The Raised 5th*, jazz at 6:30 p.m. No cover.

THROUGH JANUARY 31ST
The Gallery at Hallmark, Turners Falls: *MySight* gallery exhibition, featuring work by Hallmark institute Class of 2010.

HOT SPOT TEEN CENTER
MONDAYS - Drop-in, 3 to 6 p.m.
TUES & WEDS - Ongoing Music Project, 3 to 6 p.m.
THURS - Drop-in, 3 to 6 p.m. & Movie Night, 6 to 8 p.m.
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- 2. AVATAR** PG13 in DTS sound DAILY 7:15 FRI, SAT, SUN 12:00 3:00
- 3. 2012** PG13 DAILY 6:30 9:30
- 4. OLD DOGS** PG FRI, SAT, SUN 12:00 3:00
- 5. THE BLIND SIDE** PG13 DAILY 6:45 9:45 FRI, SAT, SUN 12:15 3:15
- 6. TWILIGHT: NEW MOON** DAILY 6:45 9:45 PG13 FRI, SAT, SUN 12:15 3:15
- 7. DID YOU HEAR ABOUT THE MORGANS?** PG13 DAILY 7:00 9:30 in DTS sound FRI, SAT, SUN 12:30 3:30
- 8. PRECIOUS** R in DTS sound DAILY 7:00 9:45 FRI, SAT, SUN 12:30 3:30

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FRI: 12/18 | 9 PM | FREE
D. Hales & Friends' *Velvety Visions at the Voo* (Velvet Underground celebration)

SAT: 12/19 | 9:30 PM | \$3
ROCKITQUEER! (THE dance party)

SUN: 12/20 | 7 PM | FREE
Voo Caroling Night! - come at 7 for warm-up, we hit the streets at 8!

MON: 12/21 | 8 PM | FREE
Yankee Trade White Elephant BINGO!

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TALKING PICTURES

Bad Filmmaking and Blaxploitation:
A PRECIOUS MESS

1 eagle = the pits 4 eagles = the heights

BY TODD DETMOLD
CHICAGO —

Precious: Based on the Novel PUSH by Sapphire is this year's "Assuaging White Guilt" float in the Oscar parade, and what a doozy it is. Much like 2008's entry *Slumdog Millionaire*, this feature-length portrait of a hapless victim getting beaten, tortured, and then kicked-while-down somehow has folks crying "life-affirming!" In no way disguised as a "feel-good" film, however, *Precious* takes any bad taste you might have watching one of the less-fortunate walked all over and ratchets it up to eleven. But that's not even the worst of it.

The film follows a malnourished, overweight and undereducated black teenager played by newcomer Gabourey Sidibe. Stuck in 1987 Harlem, she must struggle against illiteracy, mean classmates that prey on her social ineptitude, a mother that regularly throws appliances at her head, a rapist father that has knocked her up twice and, worst of all, monotonous, hackneyed dialogue. Her name, by the way, is Precious, which is convenient given that hers is a story of self-worth lost and regained.

The film's root problem is the incompetence of the filmmakers. Directed by Lee

Daniels and written by Geoffrey Fletcher, the film patches itself together like an Unsolved Mysteries dramatization. It's pretty funny that Daniels and Fletcher are so blatantly trying to smudge the authorship of the movie by awkwardly foisting the source material and its poet/novelist into the title and then handing over shilling duties to celebrity-investors Oprah Winfrey and Tyler Perry, none of whom had anything to do with the production.

Is it possible that Daniels is trying to pay homage to his illiterate heroine by constructing a film rife with glaring continuity errors, characters that fall off the board or show up as part of the ensemble with no introduction, and lazy, iMovie editing and photography? A red scarf makes appearances throughout the film with about the same frequency and subtlety as the little girl in red from Schindler's List. I'm not sure what it symbolizes, though: Precious' tenacity? Her hopes and dreams? Given some third act references to the forthcom-

ing AIDS epidemic, it's terrifying that Daniels at one point has Precious drape the scarf over the head of a small girl. (I propose that the scarf merely represents Daniels' own dream to one day conceive of and then execute something symbolic in a movie.)

The opening credits are

skinned" boyfriend while daydreaming about her white math teacher. It follows that the heroes in her life are the comparatively light Paula Patton and her social worker, who is played by Mariah Carey as a character of indeterminate ethnicity (Precious asks her if she is Italian at one point, presumably confused by Carey's speaking with a different accent in every scene). Finally, there's the scene where Precious is doing her hair and imagining herself in the mirror to be a skinny blonde white girl.

I guess this is all supposed to be representative of Precious' self-loathing. The only thing she's ever been good for is acting as receptacle for her father's demons and the story, such as it is, charts her ascent into self-worth and independence (or rather, dependence on the lighter people teaching her the alphabet and handing her welfare checks instead of dependence on her useless mom).

But any empathy I could dredge up for this character's journey is drowned by Daniels' tonal inconsistency and blaxploitation. His treatment of this character is downright condescending; the most he can muster for her is pity. He scores one moment with "Did You Ever See a Dream Walking?" Is that supposed to be funny?

In the end Precious will get the chance to tell off her evil mom without, for once, having something potentially fatal aimed at her skull and then she will walk off into the sunset with not one but both babies in her arms. This is supposed to be a win, I guess, even though her sensible teacher has spent much of the previous hour of the film trying to convince her to give them up for adoption. Why? Because there's no way for Precious to balance raising two kids, getting her GED, possibly getting AIDS and dealing with the psychological aftermath of being impregnated twice by her own dad. The film lobs so many insurmountable obstacles in Precious' path, but the implication is that if she can, you know, carry two babies out of a building and down the sidewalk, she will also find a cure for AIDS. Whatever. You go, girl. Triumph over that adversity.



Gabourey Sidibe plays a Harlem teen facing insurmountable obstacles in Precious

spelled out the way Precious herself might have spelled them. His production outfit is listed as "LE DNLS TIN-MINT" or something like that, with "Lee Daniels Entertainment" underneath in parentheses. If that seems a little cutesy to you for a movie allegedly dealing in harsh realities, then wait until you see all the post-Scrubs fantasy sequences in which Precious imagines herself to be rich, white and adored.

Oh, right: she wants to be white. I was wondering if that was the direction we were headed when the very dark-skinned Precious monologues that she wants a "light-

parks and recreation department, and the Brick House, delineating tasks and responsibilities for skate park maintenance.

She said it will probably be two more years before construction on the park can begin. In the meantime, skaters will continue to use the temporary skate park, now located at 11th Street.

Sixteen year old Micah Snow said the new park "is going to be a big deal for skaters in Turners Falls. Its going to be a place where they can all meet and hang out, without people yelling

at them for being in front of their stores. Down by Cumberland Farms," where a small temporary skate park is now located, "is too far away."

Snow said the new concrete skate park, with its planned curved walls, stairs, pyramidal shapes and other elements intended to create a seamless flow of skating surfaces, would make Turners and destination point for skaters, and "bring more people, and probably a little more business, into town."

SKATE PARK from pg 1

now be merged with Unity Park to form the footprint for a 4800-square foot skate park.

Town meeting approved giving de Christopher \$1000 in return for his signed waiver of damages and release of claims in connection with the 25 feet of land adjoining Williams Way, on which de Christopher held a deeded easement. A memorandum of understanding now conveys a 15-foot-wide easement to de Christopher, on the side of the 40-foot strip of town-owned land nearest to Williams Garage. The town will have rights to use this 15 feet of property, including as a fire lane, and for the public to pass back and forth. De Christopher, his tenants, or future owners will also have rights to pass back and forth on this land. The town will not be obligated to plow the property, or maintain it other than to allow for unimpeded passage.

Once these were particulars were explained to the satisfac-

tion of the town meeting members — who questioned town administrator

Frank Abbondanzio closely on the topic, requiring him to read the deeded easement from 1953 and review the memorandum of understanding with de Christopher — agreement to all three warrant articles concerning the skate park was nearly unanimous.

After the meeting, skate park committee spokesperson Ellen Spring said she the committee was "psyched" by the outcome of the vote. "I'm just thrilled were going to have a permanent skate park." She said a community celebration was in the planning stage for next spring at the Brick House, which has consistently supported the efforts of the skate park committee for the past decade, and will continue to lend the support of Americorp volunteers to the project.

Spring said the committee has signed agreements with the town highway department and

NEW YEAR'S EVE
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Dan Boulger

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