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(no paper next week)

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YEAR 9 - NO. 13

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THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES

DECEMBER 23, 2010

Good Samaritan Seeks Improvements at the Montague Kennel



Rich Briere

BY JANEL NOCKLEBY

Few residents may know the town of Montague maintains a dog kennel facility behind Judd Wire off of Sandy Lane, for stray dogs found in Montague, Deerfield, and Greenfield.

Perhaps equally surprising is the statistic that up to 900 stray dogs were found in the last year in Greenfield alone, and many of them arrive at the kennel.

But newcomer Rich Briere approached the Montague selectboard Monday night to tell his story of chasing around Poet's Seat in Greenfield hoping to help a clearly distressed lost dog, and using Facebook to track that same runaway dog a couple of days later. Ultimately, Briere met up with Greenfield's animal control officer, Calin Girugiu, at the Montague dog kennel, where Briere said he found conditions to be so bad for the animals, he knew, "This cannot continue."

Briere has already mobilized resources at the Franklin County Technical School to repair the building to better accommodate the basic needs of the dogs inside. Briere stressed that Girugiu was doing an excellent job, given the resources available, and that, "The animals love him." But, the lack of heat, now that the oil has run out, chewed up doors and pens, and lack of sanitation had created what Briere called, "abominable, very very bad conditions."

He described dogs shivering on rubber mats on days when the temperature outside was as low as twelve degrees. "No creature should be in those con-

ditions," he said.

Briere is working with John Carey, academic and vocational curriculum director at Franklin Tech, to have students complete the bulk of the work to upgrade the kennel and also for the school to coordinate fundraising for the project, so the town of Montague will not need to provide funds. Students would be able to include this work on their resumes.

"Everybody wins," Briere said.

Briere, a musician currently living in Sunderland, hopes to move to Montague soon.

Briere said he was driving down Main Street in Greenfield one day this fall by the Ford dealership when he noticed a small collie running in and out of traffic down the yellow line, at noon.

"I jumped out of my car and started giving chase; others joined me. I personally chased the dog for two and a half hours, up to Poet's Seat; police officers tried to help. Finally I saw the dog scrambling up the hill, and I said, "I'm cooked."

Two days later a couple saw the same dog collapsed by the side of River Road in East Deerfield, and pulled over thinking the dog was dead. When the dog raised its head to greet them, they brought it to the Deerfield police, who brought the collie to the Montague kennel.

A neighbor noticed Briere's posting about the stray dog on Facebook, and told him where he could find it.

Briere said the dog had to remain kenneled for ten days, during which time he found a home for the collie in Boston. The collie is living there now, "in the lap of luxury."

Briere also took matters into his own hands to try to improve conditions at the kennel, after seeing what tough shape the facility was in.

The selectboard recommended that Briere work with chief of police Ray Zukowski to coordinate see MONTAGUE pg 8



School Consolidation Barrels West

BY DAVID DETMOLD

GREENFIELD - A week after the *Boston Globe* editorial board blasted Franklin County for "dusty thinking" and "stubbornness" in maintaining 20 school districts to serve a mere 9,750 students, a dozen members of the Franklin County School Committee Caucus sat around crisp white tablecloths in the banquet room of the Greenfield Grille to plot their counterattack.

"We've already regionalized," Bill White, a member of the Frontier Regional school committee, pointed out. "We're already in collaboratives.

Our superintendents already meet together and discuss how to improve our curriculum."

Now how does Franklin County get that message out to the legislators in Boston and the bureaucrats in Malden at the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) who seem intent on reviving the issue of forced regionalization, regardless of the cost?

And cost is an issue that cuts both ways in the regionalization debate.

The *Globe*, citing a study performed by the New England School Development Council in

2009 on the cost savings that could accrue from regionalizing all of Franklin County into one school district, said the potential is there to save up to \$12 million, about 10% of overall costs.

But Kevin Courtney, for 20 years the superintendent of the Pioneer Regional School District, now a consultant for the Collaborative for Educational Services, which provides professional development training, special education programs, and bulk purchasing of supplies and utilities for all Franklin County school districts, see SCHOOL pg 7

She Won't Be Boxed Out of the Box Car



DETMOLD PHOTO

At annual town meeting last May, Sharon Poirier received a commendation for quick action clearing a customer's windpipe at the Box Car using the Heimlich maneuver.

BY JONATHAN

VON RANSON IRVING CENTER - Sharon Poirier, a gregarious and outspoken woman who seems born to cook food and serve it, is apparently winning a fight with difficult credit conditions to have her Box Car Diner

reopen in the middle of January.

The popular Irving Center eatery was hit by arson fire last August 17th. Since then the landmark building has been gutted, and is now nearly rebuilt.

The setbacks Poirier has experienced, and the effort

she is expending to get her business up and running again, shift her story out of the business category into the realm of higher calling... or maybe love affair with your hometown.

"I love this town," she acknowledged. "It's one reason I started the business."

Poirier has lived in Irving for 30 years.

Some of Poirier's passion for running the diner, and a bit of what she's been through since the fire, could be seen Monday at lunch in the kitchen of her home on High Street.

"Some of my customers who went in every day, I invited them into my home," she explained. "It's a way to stay busy."

Slender, fast moving and frank to the bone, Poirier had no trouble keeping up her side of the conversation as she, or some automatic pilot that's on board, stirred pots for the meal and adjusted the stove. "I don't give people a bill; I just tell them to cover the cost of the food. But it keeps me cooking."

Three of her longtime

Charter Schools: Models for Public School Reform - or a Drain on Public Education?

BY DAVID DETMOLD

AMHERST - Advocates for traditional public schools say charter schools in Massachusetts are cherry picking higher performing students and diverting scarce funds from mainstream schools, which are left to educate the broad base of students without adequate resources to do the job.

"I don't believe there should be an alternative public school system," said Richard Seelig, of Pelham, one of the organizers of a meeting on the impact of charter schools that drew about a dozen parents, school committee members and educators to the Bangs Community Center in Amherst on December 13th. "We don't have an alternative police department. Why do we have an alternative public

see CHARTER pg 10

restaurant patrons entered, and while Janice Lanou, Kathy Harty and their brother, Tom Harty, and I were getting acquainted, Poirier put a heaping plate of grilled corn muffins in the center of the table and served out the main course - a thick Italian sausage tortellini soup with beans. Testimonials, of the totally non-soupy variety, ensued from the others about the quality of her always homemade cuisine.

Poirier admitted she doesn't cut corners, and told a little story. "I generally come out and talk to my customers while I'm cooking. A while back a guy, obviously a businessman, came to the restaurant and ordered a fish chowder. He told me, 'I work for Legal Seafood in Boston, I can't give you my name - I'll lose my job - but this is the best chowder I ever had'.

"Even over there," she continued, "I made my own bread, soups, everything." This isn't her first restaurant; in the early '90s she owned and operated the see BOX CAR pg 9

PET OF THE WEEK
...I'm still waiting



Harriet

My name is Harriet and I'm a six-year-old female short hair cat in need of a good home. I haven't had an easy time of it. I was rescued from a hoarding situation and was in kind of rough shape when I came to Dakin. I'll brighten the lives of my new family with my cheery cow-cat markings and my pretty yellow eyes. I do want you to know that I have a bit of a heart murmur; my Dakin friends will explain to you about that. I promise you - my heart may be murmuring, and yet I know it's also saying "I'm a good, good cat, I can't wait to love and be loved, and have the happy life that I deserve." That's the real story. To find out more about adopting me, please contact the Dakin Pioneer Valley Humane Society at (413) 548-9898 or via email at info@dpvhs.org.

Shining a Light on Domestic Violence in the North Quabbin

BY CRYSTAL MCNEIL

ATHOL - During just the last three months there were four domestic violence homicides in Massachusetts, in which nine adults and one unborn baby were killed. Eight children, aged two to adult, were left without parents.

Last year in Massachusetts, there were 23 victims of domestic violence homicide.

inaugural campaign there would be 23 lives in the Commonwealth [lost to] domestic violence."

In response to the September, 2010 murder at the hands of her husband of 42-year-old Joanne Johnson, of Athol, a mother of two who worked at the Starrett tool company, MacDonald is continuing the V-Day North Quabbin campaign for the 2011 season with renewed determination.



Marie MacDonald

"I find these numbers disturbing," said Marie MacDonald of Athol. "I began the V-Day North Quabbin campaign in 2009 to bring awareness of the impact of domestic violence and sexual assault to our region. Little did I know that during the year of our

V-Day North Quabbin is a series of events taking place in Athol from February to May of the coming year to bring awareness to domestic violence and abuse. MacDonald first organized the V-Day program in 2009 in Orange.

V-Day is a global program of consciousness raising on violence against women started by Eve Ensler, playwright of *The Vagina Monologues*. When the play came out in 1994, many women approached Ensler to tell their stories of rape, abuse, and survival. Ensler realized her play could become a vehicle to raise awareness and to campaign for an end to rape and abuse.



Abbe Bryant, (left) who works at the Montague Elementary School's before and after school program and Heather Poirier, administrative assistant for student services, prepare toys for distribution Tuesday at the Sheffield building. With 56 receiving families, the school's Toys for Tots program more than doubled this year.

Historic Bridge Facts

PROVIDED BY ED GREGORY, OF GREENFIELD - from the Gill-Montague Bridge dedication booklet, published for the ribbon cutting ceremonies that took place on Saturday, September 10th, 1938.

- The longest single span in the Gill-Montague Bridge is the 450 foot span between piers three and four.
- Shortest span is the 50-foot one across the old railroad track bed (now the bike path.)

More bridge facts next week!

The V-Day mission is to demand that violence against girls and women must stop. The V in V-Day stands for Victory, Valentine's Day, Violence, and Vagina. In 2009, over 5400 V-Day benefit events were held worldwide, raising over \$4 million to advance the cause.

A long-time resident of the North Quabbin area, MacDonald said she is concerned by the fact that the North Quabbin area has one of the highest rates of domestic violence and sexual abuse in the state. She says domestic violence and abuse is on the rise, and regardless of the causes it must stop. Domestic violence homicides shine a light on the ongoing tragedy of violence and abuse against women, but only for a short while. As the shock of the tragedies fade in a community, the awareness and interest in doing something to stop the violence fades too.

MacDonald feels one of her roles is to be vigilant about keeping the light shining on domestic violence and abuse so people cannot forget, so women and children living in fear and suffering in silence can have a voice, find a safe haven, and find a way out of the abuse.

V-Day North Quabbin is organizing three main events in Athol to bring awareness to domestic violence and to raise funds for NELCWIT (New England Learning Center for Women in Transition), an organization in Greenfield and the North Quabbin which provides confidential counseling, safe homes, advocacy, and education for women and children exposed to abuse. In February there will be a community screening of the movie *Until the Violence Stops*. Tickets will cost \$5 each, with group discounts available. In see QUABBIN next pg

Writers Wanted



The Montague Reporter
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MONTAGUE LIBRARY NEWS

Millers Falls Library Club's Holiday Architecture



LINDA HICKMAN PHOTO

MILLERS FALLS - Kartyr Lankowski of Millers Falls and other Millers Falls Library Club participants enjoyed making easy gingerbread houses at the library on Tuesday, December 21st.

The Library Club is a free drop-in after school program that meets every Tuesday at 3:30 p.m. at the Millers Falls Library.

For more information on library programs, call 863-3214.

SENIOR CENTER ACTIVITIES - December 27th - December 31st

GILL/MONTAGUE Senior Center, 62 Fifth Street, Turners Falls, is open Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Congregate meals are served Tuesday through Thursday at Noon. Meal reservations must be made one day in advance by 11:00 a.m. The meal site manager is Kerry Togneri. Council on Aging Director is Roberta Potter. All fitness classes are supported by a grant from the Executive Office of Elder Affairs. Voluntary donations are accepted. For more information, to make meal reservations, or to sign up for programs call (413) 863-9357. Messages can be left on our machine.

Monday, December 27th
10:00 a.m. Senior Aerobics
10:45 a.m. Chair Exercise
1:00 p.m. Knitting Circle

Tuesday, December 28th
1:00 p.m. Canasta
Wednesday, December 29th
10:00 a.m. Aerobics
Thursday, December 30th
9:00 a.m. Tai Chi
1:00 p.m. Pitch
Friday, December 31st
Senior Center Closed

ERVING Senior Center, 18 Pleasant St., Ervingside (Old Center School, 1st Floor), is open Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. for activities and congregate meals. For information and reservations, call Polly Kiely, Senior Center Director, at (413) 423-3308. Mealsite Manager is Jim Saracino. Lunch is daily at 11:30 a.m., with reservations 24 hours in advance. Transportation can be provided for meals, shopping, or medical necessity. Please call

the Senior Center at (413) 423-3308 to find out when the next flu clinic will be held.

Monday, December 27th
9:00 a.m. Tai Chi
10:00 a.m. Osteo-Exercise
12:00 p.m. Pitch
Tuesday, December 28th
8:45 a.m. Chair Aerobics
12:30 p.m. Painting
Wednesday, December 29th
8:45 a.m. Line Dancing/Zumba
12:00 p.m. Bingo
Thursday, December 30th
8:45 a.m. Aerobics
Friday, December 31st
Senior Center Closed

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

Great Falls Middle School Students of the Week

- Grade 6**
Savannah Donahue
Emily Watrous
- Grade 7**
Maggie Sroka
- Grade 8**
Nick York

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QUABBIN from page 2

March, there will be two performances of *The Vagina Monologues*. Time and location for these first two events are still to be determined. On May 1st, a benefit show by local musicians and performance artists will be held at the Unitarian-Universalist Church in Athol. Because the sensitive, difficult nature of the topics of domestic violence and abuse presented at the V-Day events can trigger participants' emotions and memories, abuse prevention service providers and discussion groups will be avail-

able after the events in order to provide support and counseling.

MacDonald's goal is to present the V-Day program over the next eight years in all nine towns of the North Quabbin region. Community involvement in 2009 in Orange was sparse, possibly because of discomfort with the dialogue and title of the play, *The Vagina Monologues*, the only event held. For 2011, MacDonald decided to promote additional events to provide more comfort for attendees.

A survivor of abuse herself, MacDonald understands how important it is for people to be

aware of and not turn away from people being abused. She shared that she was able to leave her abuser when she was holding her infant son and faced her abuser threatening to hit her. She decided she would no longer put up with that treatment, called her sister for help, got out, and never went back.

MacDonald said she feels honored to be organizing the V-Day events because they give women a voice who don't currently have a voice. She hopes the programs and community support made available will help provide a catalyst to empower women living in abusive situations and help them break free from that abuse.

For more information go to www.vdaynorthquabbin.org, www.vday.org, or www.nelcwit.org.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MONTAGUE POLICE LOG
Drunk Driving, Assault and Battery

Wednesday, 12/15
8:48 a.m. Structure fire on Greenfield Road. Services rendered.
5:12 p.m. Suspicious auto on Masonic Avenue and Rod & God Shop Road. Services rendered.
Thursday, 12/16
8:55 p.m. Larceny at JK's Liquors on Avenue A. Investigated.
10:02 p.m. Arrest of [redacted] for operating a motor vehicle under the influence of alcohol, marked lanes violations, and operating to endanger.
10:37 p.m. Suspicious person on Third Street. Referred to an officer.
Friday, 12/17
8:06 p.m. Hit and run accident at Food City on Avenue A. Services rendered.
11:35 p.m. Domestic disturbance on Second Street. Summons issued.
Saturday, 12/18
3:43 p.m. Burglary, breaking and entering on Seventh Street. Report taken.
4:02 p.m. Suspicious other in front of Erving Fire Department. Investigated.
Sunday, 12/19
6:19 p.m. Arrest of [redacted] of Millers Falls, for second offense of operating a motor vehicle under the influence of alcohol, marked lanes violations, operating a motor vehicle with a suspended license from operating under the influence, operating to endanger, and speeding.
Monday, 12/20
7:04 p.m. Fraud on Laurel Lane. Services rendered.
7:37 p.m. Fight at Franklin Emergency Shelter on Farren Avenue. Peace restored.
9:03 p.m. Arrest of [redacted] for domestic assault and battery on Avenue A.
Tuesday, 12/21
2:59 p.m. Restraining order violation on Third Street. Referred to an officer.
4:02 p.m. Structure fire on French King Highway in Gill. Referred to other agency.
4:16 p.m. Arrest of [redacted] for domestic assault and battery, intimidating a witness, and resisting arrest on Avenue A.



Local Briefs

COMPILED BY DON CLEGG - Our Lady of Peace Church, 90 K Street, in Turners Falls will be holding Christmas Eve services starting with a children's mass at 4:00 p.m., followed with an "almost midnight" mass at 10:00 p.m. Christmas Day service will be at 10:00 a.m.

Our Lady of Czestochowa Church, 84 K Street in Turners Falls will hold Christmas Eve mass starting with a 4:00 p.m. service. Later in the evening the church will offer a "Concert of Carols" starting at 11:00 p.m. followed by a midnight service. Christmas Day service will be held at 10:30 a.m.

Montague Community TV, Channel 17, will be broadcasting holiday classics starting at 11:00 p.m. on Christmas Eve and continuing throughout the weekend. Some of the programs schedule include "Scrooge" from 1935, the original "Rudolph the Red-nosed

Reindeer," "Santa Martians" and many more. For a complete listing of programs go to MontagueMA.net and click on the MCTV selection.

The **Annual Starry, Starry Night** held on New Year's Eve offers many venues at varied locations throughout Orange. Entertainment, hay rides, food at local eateries, ice sculptures at Memorial Park, a parade and fireworks will be featured. More info is available at starrystarrynightorange.blogspot.com

As a reminder the *Montague Reporter* does not publish between Christmas and New Years. **Our next issue will be out January 6th, 2011.** If you have delivery issues at any time of the year, call 413-336-3648.

Happy and safe holiday wishes from the *Montague Reporter* staff, board of directors, carriers and volunteers.

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Editor
David Detmold

Editorial Assistants
Hugh Corr
Shira Hillel

Circulation
Janel Nockelby

Layout & Design
Claudia Wells
Boysen Hodgson
Katran Hoyden
Karen Wilkinson
Suzette Snow Cobb

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Don Clegg

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Michael Muller

Down December Days

BY DAVID BRULE

ERVINGSIDE - It seems the snowless cold and chill came with the turn of the calendar, and it's still here as we make our way through the last days of December.

Porch sitting at seven a.m. in what seemed October warmth that could last forever, suddenly now is Arctic cold at five degrees.

Shrill winds blow, birds hop from one foot to the other to keep warm out here. Jays pour into the yard in a blue swirl of azure on the wing; demure juncos friendly and confident peck at the deluxe bird seed mix on the picnic table. At the rate the birdseed is disappearing, the Farmers Supply will keep their tills full, and my own pockets empty.

Cheeky squirrels scrutinize the Chock Full o' Nuts coffee can from whence flows their breakfast. I've already emptied the seed from that can twice into the frigid yard. They've made the connection long ago between the can and the birdseed, pushing it around if I leave it behind after making the rounds and filling the feeders. They bang it like inmates waiting for their grub.

The winged winter population out here is growing. The suet post has pulled in all the woodpecker clan of red-bellied, downy, and hairy, even a yellow-bellied sapsucker looking quite miserable, longing for his woodland home in Virginia or the Carolinas. The cedar waxwings have resumed their winter night roosting quarters in the rhododendron. They peer out at me with jet-black eyes first thing in the morning, their leafy cover shrunken and wrinkled in the

sharp wintry wind.

Two pheasants sprint across the back lawn every morning on the way to cracked corn and breakfast under the burning bush. These two female companions have sought sanctuary here, probable refugees from the Montague Plains drawn down across the river by the activity of the other birds in the yard. Pen-raised birds, looking for a handout, they've escaped for now from being blasted out of their flight by the local, ahem, sportsmen, looking for a pheasant trophy dinner, having paid their money, after all.

A few weeks before Christmas, like most of our neighbors, we decorated the tree, after scouring the local tree farms for the perfect one. Up in the north bedroom, the one we call the Cold Room since all winter the pale northern light filters in through the frost-swirled arabesques of the vintage wooden storm windows, is the cranny where the Christmas books, music, garlands and wrapping paper are stashed.

Down came the boxes of decorations from under the eaves in the far upstairs corners, and from grandmother Hannah's china closet where they were safely put away last January. Ornaments, bulbs and balls both new and from long ago have been put on the tree for decades, survivors and relics from many generations of past childhoods. There are the rare ones from the grandparents' tree, more recent ones representing the creatures that live in our woods: the jays, cardinals, chickadees, ducks, geese, owls, squirrels, deer and beaver, all have their place of honor in our tree. Tucked away here and

see **DECEMBER** pg 16



Peace on Earth and Best Wishes in 2011

Golgotha a Lost Opportunity

I read the December 16th *Montague Reporter* as I would a front-line news magazine, with in-depth articles local, regional and international. I marvel at the scope and energy that goes into producing the Reporter. Although a Greenfield resident, you provide me a real connection with our larger area, and I attend programs noted in your columns. New Start Treaty, Leverett Peace Commission, and Vermont Yankee Decommissioning are among this issue's full, informa-

tive articles.

I might not have written, except for your account of Adrian Montagano's painting *Golgotha*, that was removed from this month's art show at the Leverett Coop. What a profound, but lost, opportunity for the community of Christian persuasions and other faiths to consider the effects of the key episodes of Christianity – the death and resurrection of Jesus – upon history.

There was a great variety of Christian conviction and church

life, led by apostolic fathers for several hundred years after the life of Jesus, before the Roman emperor pressed Christians to deny all but one persuasion and church order. However, dissent regarding theology, church polity, and moral practice has persisted to this day. Amazingly, some dissenters from the relatively recent past have become today's absolutists. Jesus was a gifted listener.

- John Preston
Greenfield

Call to Resist Censorship

Your article about the recent removal of Adrian Montagano's painting from his Leverett Coop show upon pastor Douglas Macleod's complaint (*MR IX #12*) demonstrates that censorship of artistic expression is alive and well in the Valley.

Artists' images are capable of evoking as many different reactions as there are viewers. It is wonderful when a work of art evokes a strong emotional response. Visual art should not be

expected to be limited to pleasing pictures of beautiful flowers that disturb nobody's sensibilities.

It is another matter when a viewer who is offended by a work of art goes on to demand its removal from public view. That is known as censorship. Macleod calls the work's depiction "religious intolerance". He is totally entitled to his own emotional response to the painting. He is not entitled to tell others that their interpretation should be the same

as his, or that they should not be allowed to view the work of art. There are no constitutional provisions that give religious considerations preemption over freedom of speech.

Macleod's assertion that artists would not portray the Dalai Lama or the Buddha "the way they did" is patently false. There is no one way to depict religious leaders, and portrayals which may evoke Macleod's "intolerance" reaction see **CENSORSHIP** pg 5

Where There is a Will There is a Weight Room

After several years of being relegated to an outdoor equipment shed, athletes and others at Turners Falls High School who want to exercise with free weights will finally be getting a normal indoor weight room. This is long overdue and the administration at the high school should

be applauded for finally making progress on this issue. The high school appears to be one of the few facilities in the area that does not have good space for free weights despite the fact that member towns and the state spent nearly \$30 million on a renovation a few years ago that was advertised as having one.

Unfortunately the solution seems to be to spend more money turning a meeting room into a new weight room. The new room

needs a good deal of work, including a second exit. The district will need to allocate funds left over from the high school building project and sports parents, who already spend a good deal of time fundraising for their programs, will have to raise money.

In my opinion this is unnecessary. We already have two large, new exercise rooms that were designed (and advertised!) for a variety of purposes – cardiovascular machines, aerobics and free weights. For some reason, free weights for the sports teams were eliminated and the space taken completely over by other programs. This is not fair and can be remedied without constructing a whole new space. I would add that the proposed new room is a concrete space with no windows

see **WEIGHT ROOM** pg 5



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GUEST EDITORIAL

Nuciforo Calls for Public Hearings on 2012 Redistricting

PITTSFIELD, MA – Federal officials announced census figures this week that will require a substantial redrawing of Congressional districts in the Commonwealth, as Massachusetts is reduced from ten Congressional representatives to nine for the next ten years.

Berkshire Register of Deeds Andrea F. Nuciforo, Jr. is calling for a series of hearings to ensure that the interests of small cities and towns are fairly represented as redistricting proceeds.

Nuciforo has written to the chairmen of the redistricting committee in the State House, asking them to conduct public hearings in Pittsfield, Westfield, Greenfield and other locations in western and central Massachusetts.

“The people of western and central Massachusetts deserve a district comprised entirely of small cities and towns,” Nuciforo said. “The most populous city in the first congressional district is Pittsfield, with Westfield, Leominster, Fitchburg and other small cities close behind. These small cities and towns have common interests, distinct from the interests of large urban areas.”

The Massachusetts legislature will use the updated census figures to redraw the districts in accordance with federal law. Pursuant to a series of federal court rulings, newly-drawn districts must contain approximately the same number of people, and all must be contiguous, compact, and respect communities of similar interest.

“Two districts are currently based in western Massachusetts: one built around Springfield, and one rural district running from the New York border on the west to Fitchburg and Leominster on the east,” Nuciforo said. “Many residents believe, as I do, that the preservation of two districts in western and central Massachusetts is important for the families, businesses and communities of our region.”

The drawing of new districts will have a major impact on federal funding allocations for economic development, higher education, transportation, housing, and environmental protection.

Andrea F. Nuciforo Jr. served as state senator for the Berkshire district from 1997 to 2007.

WEIGHT ROOM from 4

and inadequate ventilation. It is not a workout room.

If we proceed to create a new weight room, we are in essence saying that the \$30 million building project, with its much vaunted exercise rooms, was inadequate. I do not believe this is the case but if it is, everyone should

adapt. Some of the machines can be removed from the cardio space and be placed in the essentially empty aerobics room. This will create plenty of space for free weights. Where there is a will there is a way.

Athletes and their parents have been adapting to this situation for at least four years. It is now time for other programs that use the

facility to adapt.

Jeff Singleton is a member of the Gill Montague regional school committee. The opinions expressed here are his own, and do not necessarily reflect those of other members of the school committee.

**- Gill-Montague
Jeff Singleton**

CENSORSHIP from 4

may have nothing to do with the artist's opinion of the religious leader. The depiction of the religious leader may rather be a vehicle for making a statement unrelated to religion, as was the case in the recent Smithsonian censorship incident (where a short clip of a Jesus statue with ants crawling on it was intended to symbolize the suffering of AIDS patients). The comparison of the physical ravages of AIDS with the extreme suffering of the commonly recognizable Christ

figure likely was the reason for Christ's depiction, rather than sacrilegious motives which far-right extremists and some GOP leaders seem to have surmised.

As an artist, I believe that the greatest creativity is possible when no external cultural or social limitations are imposed upon the artist's thought process or feelings and their end results. When such limitations are imposed, evoking strong emotional reactions, great art is also created in response.

I would challenge local

artists to put together a group show (any offers for a venue?) to respond to censorship of artistic expression once again rearing its head in the Valley. In so doing we can protect our First Amendment freedom of speech and expression, and stand up to intolerance of all kinds. And who knows, the Buddha may appear to us in previously unknown incarnations, which may surprise and enlighten Pastor Macleod.

**- Gloria Kegeles
Wendell**

QUABBIN from 3

Athol to bring awareness to domestic violence and to raise funds for NELCWIT (New England Learning Center for Women in Transition), an organization in Greenfield and the North Quabbin which provides confidential counseling, safe homes, advocacy, and education for women and children exposed to abuse. In February there will be a community screening of the movie *Until the Violence Stops*. Tickets will cost \$5 each, with group discounts available. In March, there will be two performances of *The Vagina Monologues*. Time and location are for these first two events are still to be determined. On May 1st, a benefit show by local musicians and performance artists will be held at the Unitarian Church in Athol. Because the sensitive, difficult nature of the topics of domestic violence and abuse presented at the V-Day events can trigger participants' emotions and memories, abuse prevention service

providers and discussion groups will be available after the events in order to provide support and counseling.

A survivor of abuse herself, McDonald understands how important it is for people to be aware of and not turn away from people being abused. She shared that she was able to leave her abuser when she was holding her infant son and faced her abuser threatening to hit her. She decided she would no longer put up with that treatment, called her sister for help, got out, and never went back.

McDonald said she feels honored to be organizing the V-Day events because they give women a voice who don't currently have a voice. She hopes the programs and community support made available will help provide a catalyst to empower women living in abusive situations and help them break free from that abuse.

For more info go to www.vdaynorthquabbin.org, www.vday.org, or www.nelcwit.org.



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NOTES FROM ERVING SELECTBOARD**Erving Looks Ahead to Share Sewer Costs with Montague**

BY KATIE NOLAN – The town of Erving has proposed adding \$70,000 to Montague's annual bill to help cover capital costs at the Ervingside wastewater treatment plant, which the town of Montague shares. The proposal came toward the end of a December 16th meeting between the selectboards of the two towns, who came together at Erving's request to discuss the joint agreement governing cost sharing at the treatment plant.

"Not bad for a first meeting... very civilized" said Erving town administrative coordinator Tom Sharp after the meeting.

Sewer systems were certainly one of the early hallmarks of civilization, but the agreement between the towns of Montague and Erving to share costs on maintaining the wastewater treatment plant in 1973 might have just been ancient history if the Erving board had not unearthed it earlier this year.

Unfortunately, the town of Erving had already gone ahead on its own and spent \$5.6 million to renovate the treatment plant on the Erving side of the Millers River, without first notifying the town of Montague in advance.

The meeting last Thursday was an attempt to bring both towns to the table to talk about the past agreement, how the cost of current improvements should be divided, and what should happen next.

According to the 1973 agreement between the towns, Montague should share the costs of any upgrade at the treatment plant proportionally to the amount of flow Montague contributes to the treatment plant, which processes sewage from both the Erving side and the

Montague side of Millers Falls. Now that the Millers Falls paper mill is closed, Montague contributes about half the flow to that treatment plant.

Currently, Montague pays approximately \$166,000 per year to Erving in sewer user fees.

"We had no idea that you were our partner. We thought you were our customer."

**– Tom Sharp
Erving
Administrative
Coordinator**

If Montague were to share capital costs for the recent upgrade half and half with Erving, that would result in Montague paying Erving an additional \$230,000 per year, according to initial estimates.

Montague selectboard chair Patricia Allen opened the discussion saying the Montague board was present to talk about "where we are and how we got here."

Erving selectboard chair Andrew Goodwin said, "None of us were here at the beginning of the [treatment plant upgrade] project." But he said it was important for both towns to review expenses and decide what costs should be shared. He said, as a new selectboard, he and his colleagues were "turning over every rock" when they discovered the 1973 agreement.

Sharp said, "We had no idea that you were our partner. We thought you were our customer."

Goodwin said in addition to the capital costs, the salary for the environmental supervisor for the three Erving treatment plants is not currently included in the operating costs shared with Montague. He estimated 40% of the environmental supervisor's salary is attributable to the Ervingside plant.

Allen said if Montague had known about the proposed upgrade and costs when the town was conducting its combined sewer overflow (CSO) study, the flows to Ervingside would have been included in the town study and might have changed how grant applications were written and increased grant awards to Montague. Now, it is too late for the town to apply for grants to pay for upgrades that have already been completed and paid for by Erving.

Goodwin said Erving had "knowingly built the plant at excess capacity, thinking of future industry." He agreed that Montague should not be responsible for excess capacity costs. Erving's environmental supervisor Art Pace said the Ervingside plant is rated for one million gallons per day, but average flows are just 80,000 to 200,000 gallons per day.

Montague town administrator Frank Abbondanzio asked, "What would happen if Montague did not send flows?" and instead routed Millers Falls wastewater to Montague's own treatment plant, by pumping it up the hill from Millers Falls, rather than under the Millers River to Ervingside. Pace replied cutting flows would change the way the plant runs and "would be a challenge."

Sharp added, "And Erving would have \$166,000 less revenue."

Allen said, "If we keep going the way we've been going, it makes sense to continue." However, she added, if an annual capital cost of \$230,000 is added to the town of Montague's annual \$166,000 assessment, "It makes sense to bring back the flow."

see ERVING pg 12

NOTES FROM LEVERETT SELECTBOARD**Affordable Housing Plan Finalized**

BY DAVID DETMOLD Karen Sunnaborg, of Jamaica Plain, the town's affordable housing consultant, met on Friday morning with the selectboard along with Ken Kahn and Sarena Neyman, two members of Leverett's affordable housing trust, to finalize the town's plan for providing affordable housing.

With ten percent of the funds generated from Leverett's 3% surcharge on local property transactions mandated by the Community Preservation Act to be set aside to provide affordable housing options in town, the selectboard has been working with Sunnaborg for the last six months to develop a plan.

The affordable housing trust currently has about \$70,000 set aside in trust, with more deposited annually from CPA receipts.

Selectboard member Peter d'Errico said the board had come close to finalizing the affordable housing plan with Sunnaborg, who will take home revisions to prepare a final draft, along with an affordable housing brochure, which will be available at town hall and on the town's website.

Given the amount of money the town has available to further the goal of affordable housing, d'Errico said the main focus of the plan would be to provide zero interest mortgage assistance loans, as well as loans for home repairs, or accessibility rehab loans to allow seniors to be able to stay in their own homes.

Permanent affordability deed restrictions on properties purchased with assistance from the town's affordable housing trust were another component of the plan, d'Errico said, but lower down on the

board's priority list. It was felt that larger sums would be required per unit to interest homebuyers in a deed restriction making a property permanently affordable, and that no interest mortgage assistance loans, repayable at the time a property is sold, would accomplish much the same end, for perhaps a smaller dollar amount invested.

In order for people to access the funds, d'Errico said, "We would be required to do a lottery. We're putting the burden on people themselves, if they meet the guidelines for low or moderate income households, to come to us," and inquire about the availability of funds once the program gets up and running next year.

The board has expressed the hope that town employees and children of current residents could find it more affordable to buy homes in town if some help were provided by the options described. D'Errico said the selectboard the affordable housing trust would jointly oversee the program, and the town would seek administrative help to run it, possibly from the Franklin Regional Housing Authority.

Trucks on Jackson Hill

Art Meldon and Don Robinson came before the selectboard on Tuesday, December 14th, with a petition signed by several of their neighbors on Jackson Hill Road, asking the board to close Jackson Hill Road to through truck traffic.

"We've seen logging trucks heading down there recently," said Robinson, "and we expect more with the sale of Barry Black's sawmill on Hemenway Road."

Robinson said the neighbors on that road are concerned because of the narrow width of the roadway, and the sharp drop-offs in the steeply inclined section in the middle.

"There are safer roads to travel on," to get between Route 63 and Cave Hill Road, Robinson said.

Richard Roberts III, who lives on Hemenway Road, said it was not easy for truck drivers to execute a right turn off Cave Hill Road onto Montague Road, or to get underneath the 13 foot railroad overpass on North Leverett Road. "There's no alternate route for a truck," Roberts maintained.

Robinson replied, "That's ridiculous."

Meldon said, "The car traffic has gone up exponentially since we moved here. He said the speed at which cars negotiate the curving dirt sections of the road added to the danger for pedestrians and other drivers."

Robinson added that Jackson Hill Road, a 1759 county road originally laid out to a width of six rods (about 99 feet) to provide a stage road to Boston, was now as narrow as nine feet wide in some sections, "and getting narrower all the time. There've been close calls there. To me, it's a mitigation of risk. The probability of an accident is increasing as the traffic increases."

He pointed out that Leverett's scenic road bylaw would make it very difficult to widen the road now.

Selectboard chair Rich Brazeau said, "Since it's a county road, we'll have to research what the town's authority is. Then we would hold a public hearing at one of our meetings," perhaps in January, see LEVERETT pg 12

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UP TO THE MINUTE TECHNOLOGY
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SCHOOL from pg 1
said the results of the twelve regionalization planning studies paid for with grants up to \$25,000 by the DESE last year were clear. Regionalization, while it may be an attractive idea in the abstract, will cost local communities money.

“Essentially, what most of those studies found, including the study we conducted at Frontier [for forming a K-12 region of the four member towns], and the Hadley-Hatfield study [for creating a K-12 region] showed advantages and disadvantages. But the biggest problem is it would cost money, not save money, and therefore until we can get over that hump we’re really not able to consider this any further.”

Courtney recalled, “At Frontier, they brought in the legislators and essentially said to Steve Kulik and Stan Rosenberg, ‘Look, this isn’t a bad idea, but it’s going to cost us \$400,000 to \$500,000. Are you able to help us?’”

Courtney said the discussion ended right about there.

Farshid Hajir, who served as the chair of the Amherst-Pelham Regional School District during the time their regionalization study was conducted said, “For Amherst, the regionalization study found there was no financial imperative, no measurable savings to be had [to regionalize K-12 with the four member towns] and in fact whatever small savings could be found were predicated on very generous predictions of regional transportation reimbursement in the range of 75%.”

The state has long promised 100% reimbursement for transportation disbursements for school districts that choose to regionalize, but none of the administrators or school committee members interviewed for

this article could recall the state ever fulfilling that pledge. At present, Hajir said, Amherst receives regional transportation reimbursements from the state in the range of 52% - 57%.

Mohawk superintendent Michael Buonoconti, who oversees a nine town district that busses students from as far afield as Plainfield, Hawley, Rowe and Shelburne, said his district spends more than a million dollars on transportation each year. The failure of the state to fully reimburse the region for those costs, as promised, cost Mohawk more than \$420,000 last year.

One commonly voiced fear at the meeting Monday was that the state’s push to force regionalization on the 26 towns of Franklin County could lead to the concentration of power in the hands of school committee members from Greenfield and Montague, and the closing of small schools in outlying towns.

“The only way to save real money is to close schools,” said Leverett’s Kip Fonsh. “At a time when I believe we should be extending the school day, that would lead to kids spending more time each day on the school bus instead.”

Erving school committee member Mackenzie Bailey asked, “Where would we go? We’re already part of a union. My kid spends 40 minutes on the bus just within the town of Erving. If she had to go to Greenfield, she’d be all day on the bus.”

Buonoconti said if legislators want to get serious about saving money on public education, they should eliminate the teachers union de facto veto on school districts joining the state’s Group Insurance Commission.

“Mohawk saved 7 - 10% on our budget by joining the GIC,”

Buonoconti said.

When he added, wistfully, “Imagine if there was one state negotiated union contract,” Jed Proujansky from Pioneer spoke up.

“If you want to balance the budget on the backs of the unions, it’s going to be a very long drawn out fight,” he advised. “Work with the unions.”

Glenn Koocher of the Massachusetts Association of School Committees said school committees should at least try to gain the power to institute “local plan design” for employee health benefits. “That’s a money saver under almost every alternative.”

But Koocher also warned against the creeping tide of executive control spreading west from Boston and Malden.

“After they come for us, they’ll come for Berkshire County,” he said, echoing Martin Niemoller. “After they come for the school committees, they’ll come for the town meetings and selectboards. Once you give the executive branch the power to dissolve a legislative assembly...”

Koocher let this remark dangle in midair and devil take the hindmost.

He pointed to hypocrisy in the DESE’s view that, “It’s OK for charter schools to operate with 140 students and a head of school and a special education director,” while small towns trying to maintain their high performing schools are guilty of stubborn, dusty, bureaucratic behavior. For emphasis, Koocher added, “I have nothing but disdain for the regulatory class.”

Reached in California on a rare vacation, Hajir, who is the sole Franklin County representative to the newly formed legislative committee on school

collaboration and regionalization, said this is a time for any rural town with a small school district to be wary of Beacon Hill.

“Certain people have made up their minds about regionalization being necessary or good, and they are not willing to look at the facts or the numbers,” Hajir said.

Not coincidentally, the first meeting of that legislative committee took place two days after the *Globe* editorial was published.

Hajir said, “Regionalization puts an upward pressure on salaries for teachers that would cost the small districts. These costs would accrue not just for one year or two; they would be permanent.”

He explained that joining unionized worker forces from smaller districts with larger ones would result in lower paid teachers getting their salaries equalized to the higher paid bargaining units.

“Leverett teachers get paid less than Amherst teachers do,” for example, Hajir said, “but they haven’t been flocking to Amherst because they like being

in a small district where they have a voice. That’s the main reason small districts save money.”

Hajir said the fact that towns like Leverett are able and willing to pay more for programs to enrich students’ education should not be taken as a negative in comparing per pupil costs in small districts with the statewide average, as the *Globe* editorial sought to do.

The schools in Union 28, see **SCHOOL** pg 16

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MARY AZARIAN WOODBLOCK

THE GARDENER'S COMPANION

Winter Garden Season

BY LESLIE BROWN
MONTAGUE CITY - It seems that the holiday season has telescoped. Barely has the soup from the Thanksgiving bird been consumed when it is time to for the next celebration.

As the days shorten and the dark falls earlier, the cold increases. Each morning I energize myself with a cup of coffee and list the shopping, cooking or decorating errands I want to accomplish at the end of the workday. Every day as I leave work at sunset, I pare down my three-stop plan to the one most necessary because what I long for most is to return home, light the lights and prime the wood stove.

Clearly there is great reason behind nature's plan of hibernation. The notion of filling up on carbs and protein and settling in for a long winter's nap is com-

ing. Imagine the bear, fast asleep, dreaming perhaps, until the light and increasing heat of spring bring him out, ferocious appetite in tow. I love the choosing of small gifts, the baking and decorating of Christmas even more than I care for the day itself, so I would stretch out the time of preparation longer if I could. Last Sunday, I went with a friend to choose and cut a tree. It was bitter that day, with a sullen sun, but the tree farmer and his family were cheery, as were the families with small children who trooped the lot wavering between this tree and that.

We brought our small balsam prize home, decorated it lightly and drank a toast of warming red wine. At night the fairy lights on the tree sparkle in the darkness.

Last Saturday's holiday concert by the Pioneer Valley Symphony and Chorus did much to fuel the mood of the season. The somber yet joyful dissonance of the Poulenc "Gloria" decorated by the exquisite soprano of guest soloist Diana McVey was spine-tingling. The chorus's near perfect a capella rendition of Lauridsen's "O Magnum Mysterium" was beautiful. For the lighter side, the orchestra played Dave Brubeck, an arrangement of Christmas music from the movies, and "An Old English Christmas" by a local composer David Kidwell.

At the end of the program, the chorus and the audience rose for a rousing performance of Handel's "Hallelujah." Two encores of traditional songs wrapped the evening. The warmth and good humor of the departing crowd were palpable in the chilling night air.

Just behind us now, the winter

solstice, shortest day of the year. This year it fell on December 21st in conjunction with the month's full moon and an early morning lunar eclipse. While this day brings the longest night it also marks the gradual lengthening of the days.

The return of the light in the darkest cold of winter has been celebrated for centuries with festivals of light, with bonfires, with dance and drink. It reveals the deepest fears of the soul, death and darkness, with the promise of rebirth and spring to come.

It is a time to gather with friends and family, to build a roaring fire and light the lights, to call up the memories of the past and to plan for the brightening future. Bring in some evergreen to garland your home, create an indoor winter garden of

poinsettias, some forced narcissus bulbs and a cut or living tree of fragrant balsam. Buy a gift for someone who really needs it, send a card to a friend you haven't seen in who knows when, and send pictures of family to those far away. Enjoy the hearty soups and vegetables of the season and indulge yourself in baking some special seasonal treats.

May the warmth of love, the fire and the anticipation of the returning light embrace you and guard you from the cold and the dark.

Holiday Topsy Treats

- 1 cup confectioners' sugar
• 2 Tablespoons of dark cocoa powder
• 2 1/2 cups finely crumbled vanilla wafers
• 1/2 teaspoon ground clove
• 1/2 cup spiced dark rum
• 2 Tablespoons dark corn syrup
• 1 cup finely chopped walnuts

Mix the dry ingredients except the cookies in a large bowl. Stir in the rum and corn syrup. Add the vanilla wafers and walnuts and stir well. Refrigerate until you can form balls in your hand.

Create 1 inch balls, roll in confectioner's or granulated sugar.

Place on waxed paper and store in a tight tin or plastic container. Setting a sheet of waxed paper between layers.



For another agreeable variation substitute bourbon for rum, pecans for walnuts and Light corn syrup for dark. Best when made a week or two ahead with time to blend the flavors.

Enjoy at room temperature.



Forced Narcissus

Simply bury a few bulbs in potting dirt or set on small stones or florists' marbles.

Water, set in a dark place until the shoots start, then move to a cool yet bright location.

Enjoy the sweet beauty and fragrance of these blooms in a few short weeks.

MONTAGUE from pg 1



DETMOLD PHOTO

New doors have already been installed on the dog runs at the Montague kennel

next steps for improvements at the kennel, and noted the building may soon become the responsibility of the Franklin

County sherriff's department.

At the present time, Montague shares dog pound expenses with Greenfield and

Deerfield.

In other selectboard news, water pollution control facility superintendent Bob Trombley

reported on Monday that the town of Montague and the WPCF have received an excellence award from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for operation and maintenance of the town's combined sewer overflow project. Trombley described the award as "totally unexpected, which makes it that much nicer." There will be a ceremony in Boston in January.

In other sewer news, the Erving selectboard appears to be "open and receptive and flexile" on the topic of the shared sewer agreement with the town of Montague, according to Montague selectboard chair Pat Allen. She said "no reimbursement is expected," from Montague for Erving's past improvements to the Erving sewer facility. The

Montague village of Millers Falls uses the Erving sewer system. A 1973 agreement obligates Montague to share capital costs at the facility with Erving, but over the years this agreement was forgotten by both towns. A meeting on December 16th held in Erving between the two selectboards seemed to indicate "the past is the past," said Allen, and the tone of discussions so far were "cordial."

However, if needed, there is still a placeholder article for the special town meeting on January 6th, "to see if the town will vote to authorize the selectboard to terminate the inter-municipal sewer agreement with the town of Erving or pass any vote or votes in relation thereto."

see MONTAGUE pg 9

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Strathmore Mill: A River Runs Through It

BY JANEL NOCKLEBY

TURNERS FALLS - "A phenomenal amount of water" poured through one of the Strathmore Mill buildings on Friday night, December 10th, said Montague building inspector David Jensen, after a pipe in the building's sprinkler system broke.

"It is part of a dry release system," Jensen told the selectboard on Monday. "But when the pipe broke, it charged the system, and it just rained down all five levels. There's still ice on the floors. Most of it ended up in the basement," he explained.

Jensen said he has been working along with members of the highway department to drain down the sprinkler system. He said ice in one of the lines was the likely culprit in Friday's burst pipe debacle.

December temperatures this year have been colder than last, noted Jensen, and selectboard chair Pat Allen agreed. "Global warming is fickle, isn't it?" Jensen said, on a day in which he was called to the Strathmore Mill

complex three times to investigate problems there.

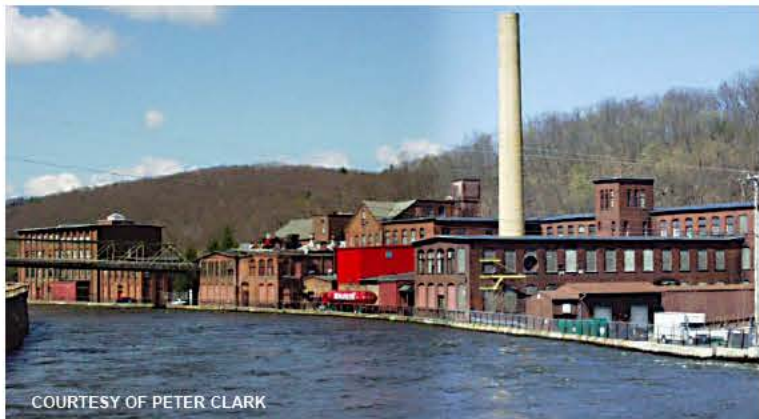
On the plus side, Jensen enumerated a few successful projects completed at the Strathmore since the town took ownership of the mill in March of this year. More debris from the 2007 arson fire was removed, "Franklin County inmates have cleared out a bunch of recycling," and many points of possible illegal access to the mill have been blocked.

But there is still much to do. Selectboard members Pat Allen and Mark Fairbrother asked Jensen and town administrator Frank Abbondanzio to schedule a meeting next week with Swift River Hydro and First Light Power to determine how best to ensure that water from the power canal does not cause a deluge in the buildings.

Jensen reported, "Swift River has disconnected their sprinkler service from the fire pump room." The fire pump, no longer in operation, existed to pump canal water into the mill to the sprinkler system in the event of a fire.

In the past, the fire pump room has been heated, but now Jensen and the town need to determine not only which lengths of pipe may need heat tape or how to bring heat to the underground room, but also which pipes may still be carrying water into the mill from the power canal. Jensen said pressure in the water pipes may indicate that canal water is still pushing against safety valves in that room, although First Light claims that is not so.

"It would be my opinion that it would be Swift River's responsibility to isolate the canal water, because one of the paths is in their building. We don't know if there is another path. If there's a break in any of those pipes, you'll



COURTESY OF PETER CLARK

The power canal flows by, if not through, the Strathmore Mill

have big water," said Jensen.

The selectboard was not interested in waiting until the usual late summer drawdown of the power canal to determine which pipes carry canal water into the complex. The selectboard asked for a meeting to be set up quickly

with Swift River and First Light to get to the bottom of it.

Fairbrother stated, "I don't want to have to face this town, and say well, because we couldn't arrive at a decision, we've now got a building that's got a river flowing through it."

MONTAGUE from pg 8

Additionally, Article 9 for the special town meeting, asks town meeting members to consider whether \$35,000 should be appropriated "for the purpose of paying engineering and legal expenses associated with the evaluation of the town's inter-municipal agreement with the town of Erving."

Article 7 is also sewer related - it asks town meeting members to consider using \$60,000 from the sewer enterprise fund retained earnings "for the purpose of stabilizing or reducing the sewer rates" for the fiscal year beginning July 1st, 2011. Trombley noted that he had originally recommended spending \$35,000 to reduce sewer rates, but he recalculated and determined \$60,000 could be spent for this purpose instead.

Also on the special town meeting warrant is an article asking the town to allocate \$1,781,128 from stabilization to provide the remainder of the town's assessment for the current fiscal year to fund the operating budget of the Gill Montague Regional School District.

If approved, the article will "mean we won't have the state

looking over our shoulders at the moment on this issue," said Allen.

Additional topics for town meeting include setting up an aquifer protection zone around the town's new backup water supply at the Hannegan Brook Well; tax levy reductions for FY'11 of \$58,337.89, the amount of excluded debt budgeted for the current fiscal year in excess of what the town actually spent on projects such as the new police station and the combined sewer overflow project; setting up a tax incentive financing agreement over ten years, with a 14% property tax reduction in the first year, for the \$1.5 million expansion of Mayhew Steel in the industrial park.

The town will also be asked to accept of a gift of three quarters of an acre of land off of Gunn Road near the Leverett line from current owner James Mizaur, since he cannot afford to keep the property. According to Allen, Mizaur has chosen to give the property to the town rather than having both incur expenses in land court, and he plans to pay the taxes that he already owes once the article is approved.

BOX CAR from page 1



VON RANSON PHOTO

Sharon Poirier hopes to have the Box Car up and running in January. A \$5,000 reward has been posted, but Meattey wouldn't say if there were any suspects.

The conversation around the table tended to be lighthearted and irreverent. Poirier, who busied herself off to the side, participated, but didn't dominate. After dessert of a thick slice of moist chocolate cake, I asked my fellow diners how they felt about Poirier's situation.

"This is great for us," quipped Janice, gesturing at the table, our host and the cozy room. "... but of course we want the Box Car to open, because we know how many people want to be able to go back to the Box Car."

After Janice and the others had left, I learned they'd eaten at the diner "every day of the week."

Earlier, Poirier revealed some of the troubles she's had in connection with the fire.

"It was arson. More than likely kids caused it," she said.

Erving fire chief Bud Meattey confirmed the arson ruling by the Massachusetts state police. The incident is still under investiga-

tion. A \$5,000 reward has been posted, but Meattey wouldn't say if there were any suspects.

"There was a training going on right then at the fire station across the street. Nobody could've driven up and done it; they wouldn't have been that stupid. I think they came up through the woods and over the tracks," Meattey said.

One of the firefighters at the fire station spotted the smoke, but despite the quick response the restaurant suffered \$140,000 worth of damage. Much of the equipment got damaged too.

"What the fire didn't do, the firefighters did," Poirier added. "It can't be helped."

The back wall had to be rebuilt and the building gutted... again.

Said Poirier, "I'd gutted it the first time too. I begged, borrowed to get it open; I put \$167,000 in it before I even opened the doors." The family business, as she called it, run with Poirier's daughter, Jocelyn, and friend Erika Lemire, had been operating for "almost three years" before the fire.

Poirier said her insurance "covers the rebuilding" but not

start-up costs like replacing equipment or restocking food.

"I lost nearly \$1,000 worth of food. I've got to come up with that. The list goes on and on. It beat my credit up pretty bad.

"Everything I own is in that restaurant," she said. "Having to start from scratch again is really kicking my rear end."

Poirier tried to get a loan through the Community Development Corporation (CDC). "First they said I didn't have enough money put into it. I put in another \$27,000. I went back and they said, 'We're not loaning to restaurants.'

"After that I went to the selectmen. I have a good reputation, and two selectmen went to bat for me. Then the answer was there's not enough working capital. Those people are frauds - nothing can help a French Indian white girl. No, I don't have any faith in the CDC. They kicked my rear end credit-wise."

Said Poirier, "I always lived my life by saying somebody else has it worse, but it doesn't work so good these days. It's rough."

The solution, she said, may be to take a personal loan for the necessary operating capital.

The trouble hasn't seemed to hurt her cooking. The Italian sausage tortellini soup was one of the best soups I've ever had - a fact that the second bowl helped confirm. The cake was a chocolate brown trapdoor right down through my plate, around and back up to heaven.

I hope to pay more than the cost of the food for that experience again.

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CHARTER from pg 1

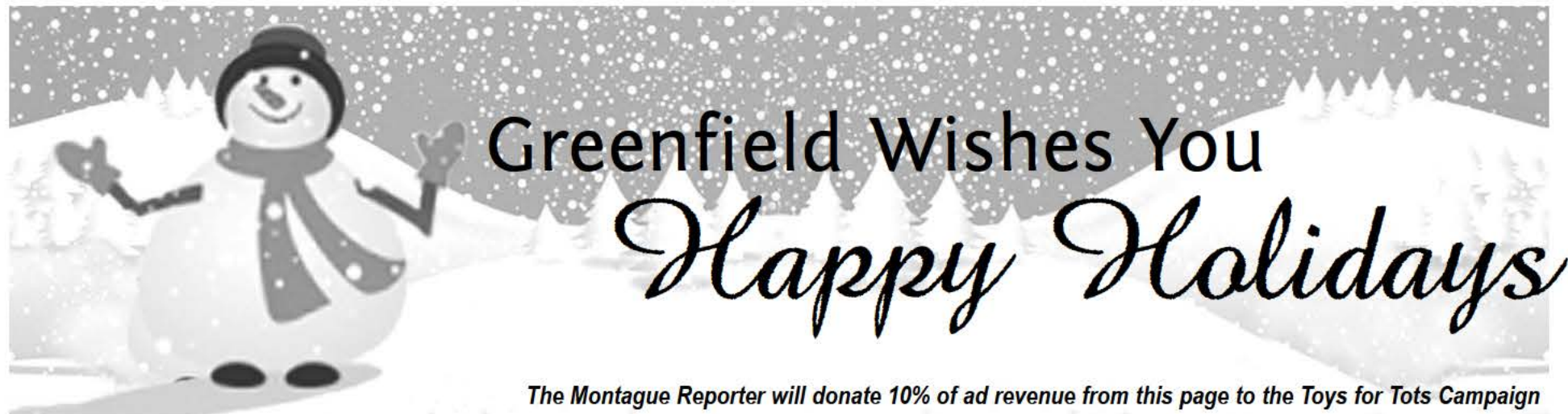
system?" Residents of Pelham have reason to be particularly concerned about the impacts of charter schools. Under the formula devised in Massachusetts in 1995 to provide public funding for privately run charter schools, small school districts like Pelham's are particularly hard hit. The formula calls for dividing the cost of all aspects of operating a school district by the total number of students who live in the district in order to derive the amount that district will pay for tuition to send a student to a charter school. Since Pelham has only about 81 students attending Pelham Elementary School who live within the borders of the town (the rest of the students at that 120 pupil school 'choice in' from out of town), the sending cost for the two students now attending charter schools from Pelham is

\$20,800 each. The state reimburses 100% of any increase in a school district's charter school tuition costs in the first year, then the amount of reimbursement falls to 25% for the next four years. "What's painfully ironic about Pelham's experience is that the financial drain from charter school tuition threatens to force a small community based public school out of business to open or expand small privately run charter schools," said Paul Dunphy, aide to state representative Steve Kulik (D-Worthington). Marilyn Segal, director of the Boston-based Citizens for Public Schools said in the Pioneer Valley, where students are drawn to arts based or language based charter schools like the Pioneer Valley Performing Arts School in South Hadley or the Chinese Immersion Charter School in Hadley, "You are taking kids out

of the regular schools to immerse them in the arts [or languages], and depriving the regular schools of the funding they need to provide any arts education at all for the rest of their students." Dunphy was the main speaker at the meeting at the Bangs Center last week. He gave a thumbnail sketch of how charter schools Massachusetts have grown from a \$12 - \$16 million annual expenditure in 1996, when the first charter schools opened in the state, to a \$305 million expenditure today. Dunphy called this a "dramatic period of steady growth, even as other state programs have been cut back and eliminated," and a testament to the power of the charter school lobby in Massachusetts, an unusual amalgam of liberal reformers and conservative Boston pols. "It grew out of court ordered bussing in Boston," Dunphy

claimed. He said former state senate president William Bulger, angered by court ordered bussing to desegregate South Boston public schools, tried twice by backing statewide initiative petitions in the 1980s to change the state constitution to allow public funding of private and religious schools. After those initiatives were soundly defeated, the incoming administration of governor William Weld took an aggressive approach to privatizing government services and pushing back against public sector unions, Dunphy argued. Weld appointed Steve Wilson as his point man for privatization. Wilson envisioned entrepreneurs running public schools. "He was the architect of the charter school initiative," Dunphy said, and it was Wilson who came up with the formula for funding charter schools in the

Commonwealth by totaling up all the expenses public schools face and dividing them by the total number of students in a district to determine how much state aid would follow students to the charter schools. (This formula ignores the fact that fixed costs like staff salaries can not be easily reduced at the sending districts by the departure of a handful of students.) Wilson teamed up with Bulger to make sure a provision allowing for the creation of the first 25 charter schools was included in Massachusetts landmark education reform law passed in 1993. At the same time the state was attempting to level the playing field so all school districts across the state would have equitable access to funding, charter schools not only began draining away millions in state aid. "They entirely disenfranchised local see CHARTER pg 13



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the poetry page

It is difficult to get the news from poems yet men die miserably every day for lack of what is found there.

- William Carlos Williams

The editors would like to thank the following for their generous financial underwriting of The Poetry Page: -

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Readers are invited to send poems to the Montague Reporter at 24 3rd Street, Turners Falls, MA 01376; or email us your poetry at reporter-poems@montaguema.net

Yesterday, I died.
Life was good, I was enjoying the ride,
I had my honey by my side,
and without a sign, I just up and died

I didn't want to go
I wasn't ready, you know?
I fought it with all I had
I didn't want everyone to be sad
But in the end, they all cried,
cause I just couldn't do it, I up and died

Essence

Fluorescent tubes buzz
A stingy blue halo
Playing hot potato
With the embers of sunset
Chicken wire divides us and
The bright nucleus of dry-goods
Blurred pastels meld
And run weeping toward
Jagged tire treads
Where they rest in sloppy pools
Cupped in red clay
Contemplating the sky

--Gini Brown
Berkeley, CA



Enumeration

Go to the window. Count the birds.
How many seagulls are there? How many cries?
You must work hard. Like this. Like this.
The single musical phrase practiced over and over.
The work is intricate he said, running his fingers over the carved green wood. Sometimes it was iron, sometimes tin. Tin squares on the ceiling and every one a branch, a flower, a leaf. Crystal in the window seemed most beautiful in the sun.
The small cut circus. The dog with small gold teeth.
The light as it looked coming through the leaves on that particular summer night, when I was eight or nine. The light and its withering into dusk.
The circle, sometimes leaf and sometimes stone. The single recitation, over and over:
I said He leadeth me into pastures of green and gold I made it up I said He maketh me lie down beside the still, blue waters, where all is still and still is still the work is intricate where He annointeth my head in oil a single musical phrase in the presence of mine enemies the buzzing of the mower. The buzzing of my father, working harder. How many seagulls, then? How many psalms? Or was it water, running from the hose?
I do not count the cries of gulls.
I count the birds in flight, the stones, the picnic table.
The girl who found the mussel on the beach.
The single stand of crabapple, like smoke.

--Anne Shaw
Providence, RI

A Christmas Sestina

He was born on this day,
The immortal mortal soul
Sucking sacred food
From the bosom of peace,
Bethlehem's windy streets
Lulling him to sleep.

Townspiece, aroused from sleep
By visions of a special day,
Flocked in the streets.
Liturgies filling their souls,
They witnessed the child-prophet of peace,
His message their only food.

Like mold invading food,
A fog of sleep
Covered the village called "Almost Peace,"
Closing the eyes of day
And imposing its gray soul
Upon partially-lit streets...

On shivering side streets,
Beggars receive yule food.
Charity chimes in the soul,
And hateful thoughts sleep,
During Christmas Day's
Ephemeral peace.

Allowed little peace
From loudspeaker choirs in the streets,
Shoppers recover from hectic days
With brandied eggnog and rich foods.
After a year-long sleep,
Seasonal spirit rekindles their souls.

Dirty snow in my soul
Yearns for springtime's peace,
While His message sleeps
Under tinsel trash streets.
Tired, I look for substantial food
On an overcast December day.

Souls starve, on desolate streets.
Peace, discarded like unused food,
Sleeps at the feet of an elusive day.

--Kevin Smith
Turners Falls

Leaves

Like feathers of angels
falling to the ground
leaves descend without a sound
until the wind whips them round
and they sing their whiskery melody,
their colors a cheerful rhapsody
orange yellow red maroon
that cause some to rake `til noon.
And in permaculture lore
leaves make the best compost, give them more
bagsful please, to fill their harvests' ease:
see how full their garden are before the freeze,
pumpkins covered with sheets again the frost,
more leaves bagged to bank the house, extra loft,
and then the rakers can lay their heads
to dream of the angels pivoting above their beds.

--Laura Rodley

Don't get me wrong, I got a lot done
I caused a little trouble and even had some fun
I camped on a lake and heard the cry of the loon
I got to take a few flights in a hot air balloon
I threw a fly in Guatemala and caught huge fish with sails
I flew on the Concord and rode on the rails

But...

There was so much more I was supposed to do
The time just flew, and as it turned out,
I didn't know all I thought I knew
I had so many things to do in my head,
but before I got to any of them, I was dead!

I wanted to complain and hate a little less
I wanted love to be neat, not a jumbled mess
I wanted to give with all my heart
I wanted people to think I was smart
I wanted to fix just one tiny place
I wanted a legacy, not just a dead face

I was supposed to share more of my love
I was supposed to hug not always shove
I was supposed to get just a little bit more money
I was supposed to make people laugh and they'd say I was funny
I was supposed to be closer to all around me
I was supposed to make the time to stop and really see

I should have listened to everything more
I should have tried to change to my core
I should have called more family and friends
I should have written notes with cool quill pens
I should have lost that extra weight
I should have cared a little less if I was late

Next time around I'll know what to do
You'll see that I changed, thought about it and grew
I'll do all those things that I now regret missing
And smile through life hugging and kissing
even in times of strife I'll find that strength
to go the distance, the full race length
But for now I'll accept my painful fate
I knew more near the end but still way too late
And even though I say I really tried
It wasn't enough for now, I still died...

--Lou Ekus
Montague

Ain't that somethin'

I almost fell in love
Twice
But I waited

Chris was perfect for me
We both loved poetry
And movies that make you cry
But we're still friends

Shannon loved to cook for me
What a treat
We'd talk for hours
Finishing each other's thoughts
And we're still friends

And now you want me to be happy
For you
That you have fallen in love
With someone else?

Ain't that somethin'

--Trish Casimira
Shutesbury, MA

Yin/Yang

Viewed
thru
the dryer
porthole
my white
turtleneck
dolphins
with
darker dolphins

--Art Stein
Northfield



CONTRIBUTOR'S NOTES:

Art Stein lived in Northfield, was one of the founding members of Slate Roof Press, and a well-known local architect. He wrote poems in the Japanese forms of Tanka and Senryu, in addition to free verse.

Kevin Smith is 52 years old, a Turners

Falls resident, tubist and therapist as well as poet.

Gini Brown is a Berkeley mom watching life go by and kids grow up. Some moments feel like poetry.

Trish Casimira has been writing poetry for more than 20 years. She is a contributing author and assistant editor of Michael

Newton's newest book "Memories of the Afterlife". She is a hypnotherapist specializing in past life and between life regression with a private practice in Greenfield. She has 4 grown sons and three grandchildren. Trish was a Wendell resident for 8 years and now resides in Shutesbury, MA.

Anne Shaw is the author of *Undertow* (Persea Books), winner of the Lexi

Rudnitsky Poetry Prize. Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in *The Harvard Review*, *Black Warrior Review*, *Beloit Poetry Journal*, *Drunken Boat*, *Green Mountains Review*, and *New American Writing*. She has also been featured in *Poetry Daily* and *From the Fishhouse*. Her extended poetry project can be found on Twitter at twitter.com/anneshaw.

Laura Rodley teaches As You Write It at Montague Senior Center and has a new chapbook *Your Left Front Wheel is Coming Loose* released this fall.

Lou Ekus is a Montague resident who frequents the Rendezvous open mic on the last Monday of every month with his poetry, and who co-owns Holy Smokes BBQ

LEVERETT from pg 6

in advance of any town meeting action on the residents' petition.

Wired West

The board agreed to schedule a special town meeting sometime in February to hold the first of two votes on establishing a municipal lighting plant. Using a 1920s-era law that has recently been amended to allow for towns to establish telecommunications infrastructure within their boundaries, proponents hope speedy passage of the measure will allow Leverett to join with other underserved towns in Western and Central Massachusetts in a municipal cooperative called Wired West, to bring 'last mile' fiber optic cable to any homeowners that would like to have high speed internet access.

The Massachusetts Broadband Initiative is working with \$72 million in state and federal funds to bring 'middle mile' fiber to town centers and landmark institutions in 123 underserved

communities over the next two years. Wired West hopes to pick up where MBI leaves off, and hook up all residents in member communities that would like to access to the worldwide web. The planned town meeting votes are looked at as the next step in positioning towns to do that.

Rob Brooks, speaking in favor of the proposal, told the board, "The town meeting votes do not compel the town to join Wired West," nor would they commit the town to expend any funds. Once the votes are taken, if they reach two thirds majority approval, then Leverett could decide to join Wired West for a nominal entrance fee, "probably in 2012," Brooks said.

The Wired West coop would seek private investment to hire a subcontractor to wire individual homes, Brooks said, and individuals would pay a monthly fee to pay off the costs associated with establishing the fiber optic network. Once those costs are paid off, profits would revert to the

member towns, Brooks said.

Brazeau, who had previously advanced the concept of Leverett borrowing on its own to provide internet access to any and all residents, and paying off the bond with a dedicated tax, said, "There is nothing I'd love more than to set up our own utility to provide fiber optic to people's homes for internet, phone and television. We could pay off the bond and subsidize our town budget with the rest."

Brooks said Leverett would lack economy of scale in taking a go-it-alone approach. Brooks said the Leverett broadband committee had "decided to throw their weight behind Wired West."

D'Errico said, "I'd like to see a business plan," and asked whether local residents would be able to invest in Wired West. "We're holding out this big pie to people. How realistic is this pie?"

Brooks said he would try to get members of the Wired West executive committee to come to

a selectboard meeting in January to answer the board's concerns.

Brazeau Hired

The board hired Neil Brazeau to replace outgoing transfer station coordinator Nate Burckert at a stipend of \$7,099 a year. Brazeau said the next task would be to find others interested in working part time shifts at the transfer station. This led to a discussion of surveying residents about the preferred hours of operation for the station. Brazeau thought it might be possible to find people interested in the working at the station if it were open all day on Saturday, rather than part of the day Saturday and Sunday.

Selectboard chair Rich Brazeau, Neil's father, excused himself and left the room during this discussion.

The town of Leverett is pursuing a Green Buildings Repair grant from the state to fund about 51% of the expected \$600,000

cost to replace windows and part of the roof at the elementary school. Meanwhile, local roofer Don Ogden has offered to help maintain the existing slate roof at the school at no charge to the town.

The board instructed town administrative assistant Marjorie McGinnis to write to local legislators to ask their help in opposing a change in state law that would require local boards of health in small towns to assume responsibilities for monitoring transfer stations, rather than the chronically underfunded Department of Environmental Protection.

The selectboard said the change would amount to an unfunded mandate, forcing unqualified volunteers in small towns to assume duties better left to professionals at the DEP.

"I personally like being able to breathe the air and drink the water in this state," said board chair Brazeau.



ERVING from pg 6

Goodwin said, "I don't think it's fair to look back. From my point of view, we need to look forward."

He provided an estimate of future costs he thought would be fair for Montague to pay in addition to the current assessment: \$12,000 per year for the supervisor's salary and \$70,000 per year for capital expenses stemming from the recent upgrades.

The boards decided the two town administrators should refine that estimate and continue the discussion. Both boards agreed to meet again, but no date was set.

Erving Paper Revenue Sharing

Also at their December 16th meeting, the Erving selectboard released November executive session information about negotiations with Erving Paper Mills

about revenue sharing for the Erving Center wastewater treatment plant.

This treatment plant is owned by the town, but operated by the paper mill for a \$1 annual lease. The Erving Center plant processes wastes from the mill, and also, for a fee, from third party septage haulers. Under a contract between the town and the mill, a share of revenues from outside septage haulers is owed to the town.

Goodwin said the paper mill had requested relief from the town from the burden of revenue sharing for treating third party septage. At the April 5th special town meeting this year, residents supported the paper mill's request in order to protect jobs in town. Erving Paper has been operating under Chapter 11 bankruptcy since April of last year.

According to Goodwin, after

negotiating with Erving Paper Mill, the selectboard recently proposed to forgive past due revenue sharing payments and any payments until July 2011, an agreement characterized by Goodwin as worth approximately \$150,000 to the paper mill.

"We wanted to help them," Goodwin said.

However, in a letter to the board dated December 16th, paper mill president Morris Housen stated the written proposal received from the town "differs significantly from those we discussed at two separate meetings with the board. We would like to discuss this matter further to better understand how and why the proposal framework is so different from the discussions that we had."

The letter also stated, "As you know, the company is in serious financial trouble at this time."

Housen asked for the current contract be extended to July 1st, 2011 to allow the company and town more time to discuss a long-term agreement.

The board did not take any formal action on the matter.

Contacted for a comment, Erving Paper Mills chief financial officer Denis Emmett said, "We're asking them to continue negotiations. We're hopeful we'll be able to reach an agreement."

Slow Start for Senior Center

Informed that Bruce Hunter, owner's project manager for construction of the new senior center, estimated the project was approximately one week behind the schedule, Goodwin said he expected to see a plan with action items showing how the project would be brought back on track. "They shouldn't be late," this

early in the project, Goodwin said.

Groundbreaking at the new senior center took place on the week of Thanksgiving.

The selectboard also discussed the proposed temporary construction sign at the building site. "Why spend \$1,000 to say we're building the senior center?" asked selectboard member Eugene Klepadlo.

Regarding the sign, Goodwin advised, "Kill it. Don't spend the money."

Cyd Scott of Flag Hill Road volunteered for the vacant board of health seat. The selectboard will meet jointly with the board of health on January 13th to discuss the appointment.

The board awarded the road salt contract to Eastern Salt Co. for \$57.67 per ton, and the sand contract to Bob Cook for \$9 per ton.



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THE HEALTHY GEEZER:**Costs and Benefits of Dental Implants****BY FRED CICETTI**

LEONIA, NJ - Q. *I'm considering a dental implant for a missing tooth. How reliable are they? Are they expensive?*

Dental implants, which started to become accepted in the 1980s, are both reliable and expensive.

Dental implants are among the most successful procedures in dentistry. Studies have shown a five-year success rate of more than 90 percent. After more than 20 years of service, the vast majority of dental implants still function. With proper care, den-

tal implants can last a lifetime.

Cost is dependent upon the dentist, the type of implant and the materials used. A single implant costs between \$1,000 and \$5,000. The cost of dental implants for an entire mouth can be as high as \$100,000.

Removable dentures rest on the gum line. Fixed bridges use adjacent teeth as anchors. Dental implants, which are designed to replace a single tooth, are made up of a titanium screw that fuses with the jawbone; the abutment, which fits over the part of the implant that protrudes from the gum line, and the crown, which is fitted onto the abutment.

Dental implants look like real teeth and are more durable than dentures and bridges. A single implant can be used to support a

bridge and increase the stability of dentures.

There are difficulties with removable dentures and fixed bridges. Dentures can slip and make annoying clicking sounds. They may also lead to bone loss where there are teeth missing. Fixed bridges often have a negative effect on adjacent healthy teeth. Bridges and dentures usually need to be replaced every seven to fifteen years.

Dental implants are not perfect. They can fail if the implant doesn't fuse to the jaw bone. Implants may break or become infected. Crowns can loosen. Smoking puts implants at risk.

More and more seniors are choosing dental implants to replace lost teeth. If you can have routine dental treatment, you can generally have an

implant. You're never too old to receive a dental implant.

The implant procedure reminds me of carpentry instructions.

First, a small "pilot" hole is drilled into the jaw. This hole is slowly widened to give the implant screw room. After the screw is in the jaw, a protective cover is placed on top to permit healing and for the titanium to anchor. This anchoring is called "osseointegration."

After several months, the protective cover is removed and a temporary crown is placed on top of the dental implant. The gum grows and shapes itself around the temporary crown. Later, the temporary crown is replaced with a permanent one.

There are narrower "mini-implants" available for small

teeth and incisors. These smaller implants, which are about half the width of traditional implants, are less costly.

Seniors today are more likely to keep their teeth than they were a decade ago. However, studies indicate that older people have the highest rates of periodontal (gum) disease and need to do more to maintain good oral health. Some facts:

- About 25 percent of people age 65 and older have lost all of their teeth.

- Periodontal disease and tooth decay are the leading causes of tooth loss in older adults.

- At least half of non-institutionalized people over age 55 have periodontal disease.

- Receding gum tissue affects the majority of older people.

If you have a question, please write to fred@healthygeez.com.

CHARTER from pg 10

voters and town meetings — three hundred years of tradition — from the decision and cost of charter schools and vested it with a state board of education," Dunphy said.

Segal, of the Citizens for Public Schools, claims, "Charter students represent less than 2.7% of public school enrollment but are receiving more than 7% of total state education aid," in Massachusetts.

Dunphy said Chapter 70 allocation for elementary and secondary education in Massachusetts for FY '11 is \$3,850,884,455; charter tuition and facilities aid is 303,385,896, a bit more than 7% of the Chapter 70 figure.

But J.C. Considine, spokesperson for the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education said the 7% state aid figure for charter schools should be understood as an accounting shortcut only.

"School districts get a combination of state and local dollars," Considine pointed out. "For charter schools, sending districts pay the tuition. As an accounting time saver, the state takes the money owed a charter school off of the sending district's Chapter 70. So it looks like the whole amount of tuition is out of state aid."

But Considine insisted, "The charter tuition is a combination of state and local dollars."

Dunphy countered that state law provides for charter school tuition to come directly from Chapter 70; no local dollars are involved. Dunphy said the law was written specifically to take charter school tuition out of a sending district's state aid before the money ever reaches the town or district.

"Charter schools get their money first, off the top of a district's state aid, regardless of what financial constraints the district may be facing," Dunphy said. "Financial priority was one of the central tenets of Steve Wilson's funding approach. The idea was to specifically avoid relying on local dollars, so districts would have no say in paying charter costs."

Asked to provide the DESE's own best estimate of the percentage of state aid now flowing

to charter schools, Considine did not reply at press time.

However it adds up, Dunphy said the move toward charter schools has, "solidified the notion that it is an individual's choice rather than a societal choice about how education funds are allocated. 'What's good for me is my decision, and it doesn't need to go back to town meeting.'"

Gill-Montague school committee members Jeff Singleton, who attended the meeting in Amherst last week, proved to be a burr in the side of charter school opponents. "You've lost the argument," Singleton told the crowd.

Singleton said claims that charter schools cater only to the elite fly in the face of waiting lists for urban parents in Boston, Springfield and Holyoke to get their children into charter schools. And he pointed to disparities in educational outcomes in mainstream schools between districts with high percentages of low income students and districts with more affluent student demographics, even in the era of education reform.

"Compare Montague to Leverett," Singleton protested. "It's huge."

But Dunphy maintained, "In Boston, the public schools enroll more and more special education and low income students," compared to Boston charter schools, "with fewer and fewer resources to educate them."

Dunphy said charter schools do not enroll special needs students at a percentage comparable to the sending districts, and transportation can prove a barrier for students from low income households to attend some charters. Districts are mandated to provide transportation only for students attending charter schools within the borders of their town.

Dunphy pointed to the case of the Four Rivers Charter School in Greenfield. He said Four Rivers enrolled no English Language Learning students, compared to the Greenfield school district's enrollment of 11% ELL students. He said 62% of Greenfield students are eligible for free or reduced lunch,

while only 22% of Four Rivers Charter students are eligible.

"That's dramatic when it comes to learning," said Dunphy. "English Language Learners' educational outcomes are undermined by the challenges they bring to school with them."

Even so, Dunphy said, the first national survey of charter schools, a June 2009 study by Stanford University that looked at educational outcomes for 70% of charter school students in 17 states, found that 17% of charter schools provide superior education opportunities for their students, while "37% of charter schools deliver learning results that are significantly worse than their students would have realized had they remained in traditional public schools," and the remaining (nearly half of) charter schools show no difference in educational outcomes from mainstream schools.

Dunphy said in Massachusetts at least five charter schools have failed and closed since their start-up, including the North Star Academy in Springfield, which had its charter revoked in 2001 for poor student performance and declining enrollment. Dunphy said North Star had been found to be inflating the numbers of students enrolled to boost revenues.

According to figures Dunphy provided from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, the five failed charter schools operated for an average of five years at a total cost to taxpayers of \$36.8 million.

Dunphy said charter schools in Holyoke and Springfield operated by the for-profit Sabis International Schools Network take a 12% administrative fee over and above teacher and staff salaries. He said the 1500 student Sabis International Charter School in Springfield enjoys an additional clause in their charter that allows the corporation to take an "additional administrative fee," consisting of leftover net income at the end of the school year. Dunphy said the school's annual financial statements showed additional administrative fees ranged from just over half a million dollars to \$1.3 million between 2003-

2006.

An attempt to get updated numbers for the "additional administrative fee" taken by Sabis International Charter School in recent years from the DOR was unsuccessful at press time. But the DOR's Tony Rufo stated Sabis' regular management fee for running the school has now been capped at \$1,993,000.

"I'm in favor of charter schools," Singleton told the meeting last Monday. "But I'm against the funding mechanism. By draining money from the regular public schools, it has increased opposition to charter schools. If the state imposes a policy, the state ought to pay for it."

Singleton said he thought the current reimbursement formula for charter school tuition would be vulnerable to a concerted lobbying campaign. Singleton said that formula, where the percentage for reimbursement drops to 25% for multiple years, does not provide enough money for sending districts to cover their fixed costs when students depart to charters.

But Dunphy's boss, Steve Kulik, said he did not foresee any effort on Beacon Hill to revisit the funding mechanism for charter schools in the near future, since the legislature just revised the reimbursement schedule in January of this year.

Kulik said the legislature would likely hold the line for

now, and see how the latest funding formula for charter schools worked out.

"Many charter school advocates think there should be no reimbursement at all for school districts that lose students to charter schools," Kulik noted. "That has been unacceptable to the legislature because we see the significant impact that comes to a district just simply losing one, two or ten students. That doesn't mean that district can cut its budget by that amount and still be viable."

Kulik added, "I'd like to see more alignment between the cost of school choice students (school choice students bring about \$5,000 in state aid with them when they leave a district) and the cost of a charter student. I realize there will always be a factor for building maintenance [for charter schools], and some accommodations need to be made. But I get really shocked by what's happening in Pelham. It just doesn't seem fair to me."

Kulik said he planned to introduce a bill in the next session to allow small districts like Pelham to average the cost of educating their students K-12, rather than just K-6, to determine the amount of charter school sending tuition.

But Kulik said he anticipated fierce opposition to any such reforms around the edges of charter school funding.

**HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE ERVING POLICE LOG****Accident, Distress, Assistance****Tuesday, 12/14**

7:20 p.m. Assisted Gill police with motor vehicle rollover accident on Mountain Road.

8:12 p.m. Report of suspicious male on the French King Bridge. Checked area. Unable to locate.

Thursday, 12/16

10:08 p.m. Assisted Montague police with single car motor vehicle crash. Subject arrested by Montague police.

Friday, 12/17

1:15 p.m. Criminal application issued to [redacted]

[redacted] for failure to obtain inspection sticker, and operating a vehicle after suspension.

Saturday, 12/18

12:00 p.m. Report of kids riding four wheelers without helmets on Strachen Street. Checked area, gone upon arrival.

1:19 p.m. Report of disturbance at Hanson Court. Found to be verbal only.

7:35 p.m. Report of tree down blocking lane on Route 2. Checked area. Nothing found.

8:20 p.m. Criminal application issued to [redacted]

[redacted] for failing to dim headlights and unlicensed operation of a motor vehicle.

11:40 p.m. Assisted Gill police with report of possible subjects inside a home on Riverside. Checked same and spoke with owner. All set.

Sunday, 12/19

11:22 a.m. Assisted Northfield police with open door at South Mountain Road, Northfield.

1:58 p.m. Report of subject in distress on Forest Street. Assisted same.



GO GREEN FAMILY

Episode 38: Stuff Challenge – The Results

BY JEANNE WEINTRAUB-MASON

MONTAGUE CENTER – Host Sam Lively ran his fingers through his hair, and leaned back in his chair as he waited for the video clip of the garbage audit to wrap up. It had been his idea to open the show with footage of Connor Bartlett groaning and holding his nose while David from Montague Clean and Green sifted through the Bartlett family's garbage. Then Sam turned to the camera and smiled as he introduced the judges for the Go Green Family Stuff Challenge.

"Our judges today are David Dewald, a volunteer from

Montague Clean and Green, and Sarah Campbell of the Sustainable Products Association. David — I almost didn't recognize you without your mask and gloves! Welcome to the show. Let's talk first about the purchasing choices our families have made — how green are they, Sarah?

"Well, I liked the Tinkers' exchange of hand-crafted gifts — the hats and scarves Ruby sewed using recycled fabric, and jewelry boxes Billy made with wood scraps. But I would have liked to see this family choose LED Christmas lights rather than five sets of incandescent outdoor lights. It also would have been better if they'd used soy-based candles and rechargeable batteries for their holiday window lights,

instead of paraffin candles, which are made from petroleum residues, and two dozen disposable batteries.

"Unfortunately, the Robbins-Levine family acquired quite a few children's toys and clothes, some manufactured from plastics containing PVC, which is now known to be toxic. They did not purchase these items — they were gifts, but we had to include them under the GGF rules.

"The Bartlett family took a very thoughtful approach to their purchase of furniture for their converted apartment. They selected a manufacturer that uses only sustainably harvested wood and recyclable materials. Even their choice of rugs showed attention to detail — the dining room rug is con-

structed from recycled plastic bottles, and the living room rug is made from bamboo."

"David—how did our families fare in managing and reducing their waste stream? Was there a lot of Christmas packaging to contend with?" host Sam Lively inquired.

"Actually, no," replied David, "very little of the packaging waste we found in the audit was related to holiday gifts. The largest source of non-recyclable waste was from packaging for gifts for the Robbins-Levines' baby's birthday party: polystyrene foam and padding, bows and ribbons and wrapping tape. Overall, I'd have to say the Bartlett family did a terrific job of recycling and minimizing their household waste, and they went to some lengths to properly dispose of used computer equipment, which contains toxic waste."

"Thanks, David," said Sam,

before turning to the camera. "So, we have a decision. Congratulations to the Bartlett family! You are the winners of the Go Green Family Stuff Challenge. Your prize is a \$2000 donation to the organization of your choice. Do you know what organization you'd like to designate as the recipient?"

"Yes, Sam," answered Gerry. "We'd like 350.org to receive this money. We want to support their efforts to pressure world leaders to pass climate policies based on sound science and strong enough to get us back to 350." "Could you explain for our viewers? Why 350?" Sam asked.

"Three hundred fifty parts per million is the level scientists have identified as the safe upper limit for CO2 in our atmosphere," answered Gerry.

Continued next issue...

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THURSDAY, DECEMBER 23rd
Deja Brew, Wendell: *Nexus*, Harmonic Eclectic Rock, 8 to 10 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Uncle Hal*, honky-tonk, 7:30 p.m. Free.

Mocha Maya's Coffee House & Espresso Bar, Shelburne Falls: *It's a Wonderful Life*, movie showing, 7:30 p.m. Free. info@mochamayas.com.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 24th
Route 63 Roadhouse, Millers Falls: *Summer in December - Margarita night for Christmas Eve*, 6 p.m.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 26th
The Arts Block Café, Greenfield: *DeAngelo Nieves*, 12 to 3 p.m.

MONDAY, DECEMBER 27th
Deja Brew, Wendell: *All Small Caps Extravaganza, A Night of Spoken Word*, 7 to 10 p.m.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 29th
The Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Heather Maloney*, 8 to 11 p.m.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 30th
Deja Brew, Wendell: *Larry Kopp*,

Country & City Blues Guitar and Vocals, 8 to 10 p.m.

NOW THROUGH DECEMBER 31st
Oxbow Gallery, 275 Pleasant Street, Northampton: *The Fruit of Our Labors - A work in progress by Tim De Christopher*.

Route 63 Roadhouse, Millers Falls: Mass Mobile Entertainment with DJ Kyle, 8 p.m.

EVERY MONDAY IN JANUARY
Thrive Project, Turners Falls: *Weekly Knitting & Crafting Group*: It's a great time of year to learn a new skill, especially one that can help you create beautiful, functional woolen wear that will keep you warm and save money! Learn from experienced knitters and crafters, help assist others, or bring your own project to work on or share, at 37 Third Street. 7 to 9 p.m.

JANUARY 1st THROUGH FEBRUARY 26th
Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *Fine Fishing Artwork by James Roszel* in the Great Hall. Open Fridays and Saturdays 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 6th
Deja Brew, Wendell: *The Relics, Oldies Rock* from the 50's & 60's, 8 to 10 p.m.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 7th
The Recover Project, Greenfield: a community open to all concerned with drug and alcohol addiction, is hosting an *Open Mic* night. 8:00 to 11:00 p.m. at 68 Federal St. All ages are welcome and this is a drug and alcohol free event. Cold drinks and merchandise will be for sale. (413) 774-5489.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Simon White & Co.*, reggae, 9 to 11 p.m.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 8th
Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *Second Saturday Children's Series*. This month: investigate local fish species. Learn about the amazing diversity of fish species in Massachusetts, and learn how to identify those species by coloring and decorating a fish mobile. 10:30 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Montague Grange: *Southern Square Dance*, Jennifer Steckler of Brookfield, Vermont will call the figures, with music by The New

Barnyard Serenaders, 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. *Deja Brew, Wendell: Ottomatic Slim, Chicago Blues*, 9 to 11 p.m.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 14TH

Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *Coffeehouse featuring Rosebush*, 7 to 9 p.m.

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3. YOGI BEAR IN 3D PG DAILY 12:00 2:00 4:00 7:00 9:00
4. TRON LEGACY PG DAILY 12:15 3:15 6:45 9:15
5. NARNIA: THE VOYAGE OF THE DAWN TRADER PG DAILY 12:15 3:15 6:45
5. THE TOURIST PG13 DAILY 9:15
6. LITTLE FOCKERS PG13 DTS DAILY 12:00 3:00 6:30 9:00
7. TRUE GRIT PG13 DTS 12:00 3:00 6:30 9:00



Latino Son Project Band and many other performers at various locations throughout Orange on December 31st. Visit starrystarrynightorange.blogspot.com for schedule, artist information and locations

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 31st
Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Rendezvous Empire Speakeasy New Year's*. Fancy price fixe menu for dinner, *Rusty Belle* at 10:30 p.m. Free after midnight. Open until 2 a.m.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *New Year's Eve Party, John Sheldon Band*, 10 p.m. to 1 a.m.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *New Year's Eve Comedy at The Shea*, Jennifer Myzskowski hosts three of Boston's best comedians: *Lamont Price, Mike Whitman, and Erik Tynan*. Beer & wine will be served in the lobby before the show & during intermission. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. Showtime 8 p.m. www.shea-comedy.com.

Route 63 Roadhouse, Millers Falls: *New Year's Eve Celebration* with the band, *Turn It Loose*, 8 p.m.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 1st
Deja Brew, Wendell: *Barrett Anderson, Renegade Blues*, 9 to 11p.m.

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New Year's Eve Comedy Show at the Shea Theater, 71 Avenue A, Turners Falls
Friday, December 31st
Jennifer Myzskowski hosts three top young comedians from Boston: 2-time Boston Comedy Festival finalist Lamont Price, Boston Comedy Festival finalist Mike Whitman and the very funny Erik Tynan
Doors open at 6:30 p.m., 8:00 p.m. show. Beer and wine will be served in the lobby before the show and at intermission. Tickets are \$20, advance (recommended) tickets available at World Eye Bookshop, 156 Main Street, Greenfield, or www.SheaComedy.com or at the door until sold out. Contact the Shea Theater box office at (413) 863-2281.

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DECEMBER from pg 4

there is the expertly woven nest of a thrush, another basket neat with birchbark filaments done by the summertime black and white warbler, collected this late fall when the leaves came down. We live in this house for many reasons, and Christmas here is one of them.

Some of these mornings of the twelfth month, rather than drinking coffee outdoors at seven and providing a topic of conversation for the gossiping squirrels, I draw the rocking chair up to the kitchen table where the lamp's yellow rays create a circle of light for reading and writing. The birds' calls are muffled outside the storm windows, and they shift for themselves at breakfast.

These days there are stirrings upstairs in the south bedroom where the boy, on his annual December visit, gets up, and drawn by the odor of fresh coffee in the kitchen, comes thudding down the stairs. Years ago, that would set the dogs to leaping and greeting their pack brother, home for the holidays. No more snow-dogs here anymore, the last one falling into deep final sleep a few Decembers ago. Just the same, the calendar of years turns back and we're a full family again for the month at least.

A walk in the woods, maybe a session with the chain saw, and it's time for another Christmas ritual in town. Down to the Shady Glen for lunch we go. Outside the wind whips off the river and down the Avenue. The Glen's windows are steamed from the inside and frosted from

the outside, but the regulars are there. There's Bob V, a classmate from the old grammar school on Crocker Avenue. We chat briefly about his father who was, among other things, a stock car racer up

the Glen know what they want and where they want to sit to eat it.

Fortified with a BLT and a second cup of coffee, I head out onto the barren Avenue, next stop

old house on the corner of Second and L. New houses are there now. Habitat For Humanity-built two neat and modern homes that have replaced the old beehive house

site directions. A couple of cheery words about the weather and the Patriots and he's off up the street, with the same determined and light athletic steps I always remember. I can still picture him on the basketball court leading the High School Faculty team against the Varsity squad, more than 50 years ago. Same loping style and a deadly, arching set shot. Didn't it reach the rafters in the gym and drop with a snap through the basket, nothing but net! That's a great image in my mind, as the spry gentleman moves away up the street into the wind.

Last stop at the end of the Avenue is the post office. I go in every chance I get, a time capsule of familiar mailboxes on the wall, the smell of floor polish. Who's at the window today taking care of Christmas cards and packages, maybe Dean, Tom, Ben, Joanne or all four? With courtesy and a smile, they keep the mail moving on the busiest day of the year. Off go my Christmas cards to Ireland, France, and Montague Center.

So if you're in the right frame of mind, December can be a magical month of sorts. Day by day, you open a window or a door and you find people and places behind each one, each day a familiar surprise, made special by the season. For sure, December's an advent calendar of the mind, if you do it right.



at the speedway next to the Rhythm Inn. Then there's Philip, the best walker in town. We go back to kindergarten days at the old school in the South End, same class all those years ago. There's Rich Brunelle too in his usual spot. Reminds me of the old neighborhood on the corner of Second and L, just one street away. The Lady of the Shady Glen, Ying Ying, greets all comers, and keeps a watchful eye on customers and the team of waitresses alike. They in turn keep the coffee flowing and the daily specials moving. The regulars at

being the 2nd Street Bakery for cookies. Inside the sunny shop wafts the old-fashioned scent of baking bread and pastries. It's good to be on the sunny side of the street; can't beat the southern exposure. Add to that the broad warm smile of proprietors Christa and Laura behind the counter, and you can forget the cold December outside. Ginger snaps and coffee to go, and back out in the cold we are just the same.

It's good to walk from here to there in Our Town. Sometimes I swing by my grandparents' the

that used to stand on the corner. I may shoot a glance in through the window of the old Williams Garage, where my father toiled for more than forty years, after he came back from the war.

If you're on foot on the Avenue, you never know who you're going to meet. Nary a soul on this windy, sere day, except for George Bush. My retired history teacher and I cross paths from time to time. Today we're both moving fast in oppo-

SCHOOL from page 7

Erving, Swift River, Shutesbury and Leverett, are "way outperforming the state average in MCAS scores," Hajir said, and providing students with art and technical training as well.

Jeff Singleton, a member of the Gill-Montague school committee, asked the caucus in writing to protest the *Globe's* use of the \$12 million figure for possible savings by regionalizing all of Franklin County into one super region. He said this figure was unsupported by the NESDEC study itself.

Singleton said that figure appeared in the study's appendix as an example of how much Franklin County could save if

per pupil costs were brought down to the state average in every category, including the main drivers like health care benefits, employee pensions, and special education costs.

But, Singleton pointed out, the body of the study provided no evidence that these costs could in fact be brought down by forming one large district for county schools. The study only found possible savings on the order of \$2.8 million from super-regionalization, out of the overall budget for Franklin County public schools of \$130 million, an economy on the order of 2%.

Singleton said that finding "put a damper" on the whole premise of the *Globe's* editorial,

and the push for regionalization.

By meeting's end, the caucus had decided to mount a public relations campaign focusing on western Massachusetts media, to network with other school committee members, town officials and state legislators, to talk up the strengths of the local schools and the collaborative efforts they are already engaged in to save money and improve public education in Franklin County.

Proujansky summed up the school committee caucus's message this way: "If you can show us where we're going to save money and get a better education for our kids, we'll take it."

Otherwise, keep pushing paper.



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