



MONTAGUE AUXILIARY POLICE

Hoping for a reunion
/ Page 9



WENDELL HELPS ITS OWN

Benefit Breakfast a big hit
/ Page 8

LAKE PLEASANT MILLERS FALLS MONTAGUE CENTER MONTAGUE CITY TURNERS FALLS GILL ERVING WENDELL

Year 3
No. 18

50¢

The Montague Reporter

REPORTER@MONTAGUEMA.NET

THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES

FEBRUARY 17, 2005

G-M Students Offer Aid for Tsunami Relief

BY NICOLE KAPISE

In response to the devastation left by the December 26th Indian Ocean tsunami, students in the Gill-Montague Regional School District have worked hard to make their own contribution to the relief effort.

A penny drive at Sheffield school raised an accumulated \$1000 from classroom and staff donations. Laurel Rollins proposed the idea to her fourth grade class based on the success of former fundraisers, and the school community was happy to contribute. Third grade teacher

Sue Hastings even made donating into a game, with students quizzing her on the amount of change in her purse each day.

Sue Guy-Greene's fifth grade class held a classroom read-a-thon one afternoon, and was able to contribute \$320 to the penny drive. Students read for fifteen-minute intervals with dedication. "Every time I rang the bell (to start reading)," Guy-Greene said, "you could hear a pin drop; they were so quiet." One student was so

see TSUNAMI pg. 11



Fundraisers at Great Falls Middle School (l-r) Chris McMahon, Tim Carlisle, MacKae Freeland, Evan Pleasant, Kristi Vorse and Jaryd Buzgell

Chief Receives Approval to Fill Fourth Sergeant's Post

BY DAVID DETMOLD

MONTAGUE - Chief of police Ray Zukowski asked the selectboard to call for a Civil Service list of eligible candidates who have passed the sergeant's exam, so he can bring forward a recommendation to fill the department's fourth sergeant's post, left vacant since acting sergeant Jen Harlow left to take a job at a police department in Newport, Vermont. At the February 14th meeting, Zukowski told the board, "The results are in from the October, 2004 sergeant's exam," taken by Harlow and officer Charles Dodge. "I'm here to see if the board would ask for a list to fill that fourth sergeant's position."

If the board agreed, Zukowski said, "We would be able to have a sergeant on each shift. Within a year," he told them, "we will have four officers with less than a year's experience," on the active duty list. "So we'll be a young department. Having a sergeant on supervising each shift is

essential."

Board chair Pat Allen asked Zukowski if he had come up with a figure for what it would cost the department in extra salary if a fourth sergeant was hired to fill shifts currently being supervised by "officers in charge."

Zukowski told the board the extra pay for a fourth sergeant would amount to roughly \$12,000 a year for the department. "It would be worth it; it would result in a lot less liability for the town," he said.

Allen said the proposition sounded reasonable, and board member Allen Ross concurred. "It sounds like a good idea to balance experience with the younger members of the force, on every shift," he said. The board voted unanimously to call for a list of eligible candidates to fill the fourth sergeant's post.

In other selectboard news, Auctioneer Doug Bilodeau of Douglas Auctioneers in South Deerfield, reported on the

see CHIEF pg. 7

Greening of Montague Committee Proposed

BY LAENA SANTOS

MONTAGUE - Since 1999, the Kostanski Funeral Home has made a donation towards the planting trees in the town of Montague, in memory of each person who passes on and whose family utilizes their services. The donations, which now total over \$5,000, were made through the Massachusetts Releaf Program, part of the state Department of Conservation and Recreation.

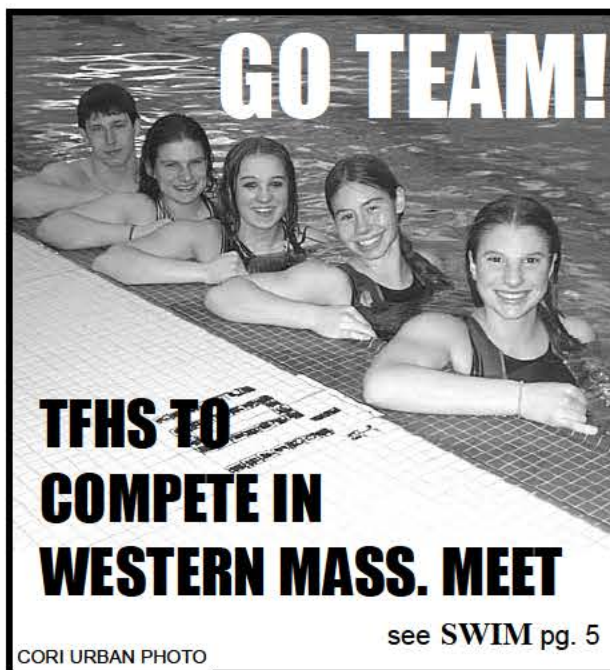
But, during the last four years that the funds were donated, not a tree has been planted, said Karen Larabee, who owns Kostanski Funeral Home parlors in Turners Falls and Greenfield with her brothers Mike and Bill Kostanski. Larabee voiced her concerns in a Feb. 1st letter to the selectboard, stating that she has contacted families notifying them that contributions have been made in their loved ones' names toward the tree program, and she wants to see the funds utilized in the manner in which they were intended.

"We get beautiful thank you notes from people afterwards, just to think that this has been done for them. Who doesn't love a tree? I have a concern because we get these beautiful notes and the money hasn't been used," said Larabee, who suggested in her letter forming a committee similar to that of neighboring Greenfield called the "Greening of Greenfield Committee," which works with the town to plant trees, including through the Massachusetts Releaf Program.

"I think forming a committee would be a great idea for Montague. I have seen how great it works in Greenfield and I'd love to see Montague do the same thing. . . . If someone could get a committee together, they could do the legwork and work with the town," Larabee said.

Larabee's sentiments, discussed by town administrator Frank Abbondanzio in his report at the Monday, February 7th, selectboard meeting,

see GREEN pg. 13



CORI URBAN PHOTO

see SWIM pg. 5

School Committee Stands Firm on \$1.562 Million '06 Budget

BY IVAN USSACH

ERVING - The Erving school committee came out of a lengthy budget meeting with town officials Monday night with no intention of altering their FY '06 request for Erving Elementary School (EES). Their EES budget request will now go before the voters at annual town meeting.

The finance committee had called the meeting to attempt to reconcile the school committee's \$1.704 million EES bud-

get request for '06 with the finance committee and selectboard's recommended budget - a three percent increase over this year's \$1.562 million. The difference is about \$95,000.

After conducting routine business, the selectboard went downstairs at 7:30 p.m. to join finance and school committee members. Several school officials were also present, including Linda Driscoll, superintendent of the Erving School Union 28, Charles Paulin,

her business assistant (with his portable computer fired up), and AnnDee Sousa, EES principal. Finance committee chair Erik Semb opened up the meeting by welcoming everyone, then stated the committee and selectboard are "ready to accept three percent; tell us why you need more."

Robert Brown, school board chair responded immediately. "Three percent is impossible. We've got a rapidly increasing enrollment. We've added a

first grade class this year, and will need to add a second grade class next year. We've got 179 kids enrolled now, and will have 187 kids next year."

Superintendent Driscoll continued, "We've also got the personnel increases that go along with enrollment increases; central office and staff needs also increase as enrollment does. Without that \$95,000, we couldn't hire that new second grade

see BUDGET pg. 7

PET OF THE WEEK

She's a peach

**Leona**

Leona is a two-year-old medium-length hair cat in need of a good home. She is a beautiful girl with an orange coat who is quickly warming up to being quite affectionate and cuddly. She's OK with dogs and likes playing with toy mice (maybe even real ones if you've got some!). To learn more about adopting Leona, please contact the Dakin Animal Shelter in Leverett at 548-9898 or via email at info@dakinshelter.org.

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**CISA's
Cabin Fever
Farm Tour**Offering Glimpses
of Spring

Saturday March 5th,
9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.
[Snow date March 6]

It may be snowy and icy or wet and muddy outside but that doesn't mean your local farmers are hanging around waiting for spring! Get out of the house and onto some farms March 5th to see what Local Hero farmers are doing during the "off season."

This free self-guided tour will give you a chance to taste, see and smell spring long before the snow melts away. Find out what's growing and being harvested right now and how Local Hero farmers are preparing for the upcoming season.

"This is a unique opportunity for people to get behind the scenes at local farms at a time of year when most of us are stuck inside dreaming of spring," says CISA (Community in Support of Local Agriculture) campaign director Mark Lattanzi. "Visit a maple sugarhouse and taste fresh local syrup. Peek inside a barn and see just-born kid goats or newly hatched emus. Take a horse-drawn sleigh ride through an organic dairy farm and sample their cheese. Watch logs turned into lumber at a local sawmill. Stroll through a warm and colorful greenhouse full of blooming flowers and the scent of spring and summer."

The Cabin Fever Farm Tour is on Saturday, March 5 from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. There are

11 farms on the tour from Warwick to Heath, Gill to Ludlow. Eleven vendors are attending the Marketplace at the Guiding Star Grange in Greenfield, which features tasty eats and treats, quality locally made specialty foods, garden products and cooking demonstrations. The Marketplace will be open from 12:00-4:00 p.m.

The snow date is Sunday, March 6th. There are no deadlines and all activities are free of charge. Download the map and schedule of the Cabin Fever Farm Tour:

http://www.buylocalfood.com/CISA_Cabin-Fever_SR.pdf

For more information or to have a map sent to you call 413-665-7100.

SENIOR CENTER ACTIVITIES Feb. 21st - Feb. 25th

MONTAGUE Senior Center, 62 Fifth St., Turners Falls, is open Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. for activities and congregate meals. Advanced registration at many of our activities is necessary. We need to know how many people will be joining so we can be prepared. A suggested donation of \$1 per exercise class is appreciated. Lunch reservations need to be called in by 11:30 a.m. the day before. Call Bunny Caldwell at 863-9357 weekdays between 9:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. (Leave message on machine at other times.) Transportation to the center can be provided. Trip coordinator is Jean Chase. Make trip reservations by calling 772-6356. Payment and menu choice is due three weeks prior to trip. All Hawthorne trips leave from the parking lot on First Street across from the Police Station.

Monday, 21st
9:45 a.m. Aerobics
11:00 a.m. PACE Aerobics
Tuesday, 22nd
9:30 a.m. Tai Chi
Wednesday, 23rd

10:15 a.m. Aerobics
12:45 p.m. Bingo
Thursday, 24th
1:00 p.m. Pitch
10:00 a.m. Triad fishing derby at Barton Cove, preregister by 2/18
Friday, 25th
9:45 a.m. Aerobics
10:00 a.m. Coffee & Conversation
11:00 a.m. PACE Aerobics

Painting for Seniors will start Tuesday, March 1st from 1 to 3:30 p.m. and continue every Tuesday through April 5th. Preregistration is necessary. Gill and Montague residents \$10, others \$15. Call center mornings to register.

The Elder Fire Safety Project has been rescheduled to March 10th at 11 a.m. Kitchen safety and escape planning are among the topics covered, free smoke alarms and emergency lights will be distributed. Installation can be arranged as needed. Advance sign-up recommended.

Make appointments now for **FREE TAX ASSISTANCE!** Feb. 24th and March 8th, 15th, 22nd. Call center for an appointment.

FACES & PLACES

Susie Maddern, from the Gill general store wonders if any of our readers can identify the group gathered in this vintage tableau at the Sheffield School auditorium. Does anyone know when the photo was taken? Suzie will have the photo on hand at the Gill Store if anyone wants to take a closer look.

DRAFT COUNSELING SESSION

At the Wendell town hall on President's Day, Monday, February 21st, from 2 to 4 p.m. There will be several speakers, a question and answer session, and literature from Traprock Peace Center about alternative ways to deal with the draft. This event will be open to the public and it is free of charge.

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WRITERS WANTED

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ERVING Senior Center, 18 Pleasant St., Ervingside (Old Center School, 1st Floor), is open Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. for activities and congregate meals. For information and reservations call Polly Kiely, Senior Center director at (413) 423-3308. Lunch daily at 11:30 a.m. with reservations a day in advance by 11:00 a.m. Transportation can be provided for meals, Thursday shopping, or medical necessity by calling Dana Moore at (978) 544-3898.

Monday, 21st
Closed for President's Day
Tuesday, 22nd
9:00 Aerobics
12:30 p.m. Oil Painting
Wednesday, 23rd
12 Noon Bingo
Thursday, 24th
9:00 a.m. Aerobics

WENDELL Senior Center, located in the town offices on Wendell Depot Rd. Call Kathy Swaim at (978) 544-2020 for info, schedule of events or to coordinate transportation.

SJC School Funding Decision Surprises Officials

BY JEFF SINGLETON

MONTAGUE - Officials from the Gill-Montague regional school district reacted with surprise and dismay to Tuesday's decision by the state Supreme Judicial Court (SJC) in the long-awaited school funding case, known as Hancock v. Driscoll. The SJC, Massachusetts' highest court, declined to order the state to increase education aid to poorer, primarily urban districts. "It's terribly disappointing," said Gill-Montague superintendent Sue Gee, "I think this problem of inequitable education funding will continue."

Gill-Montague was one of nineteen plaintiffs who argued the state had failed to fulfill its obligations mandated by a 1993 court decision, McDuffy v. Secretary of Education. In this case, the court had found that disparities in local education funding violated the constitu-

tional rights of students in poorer districts. The state legislature, which had nearly completed an educational reform package on its own, quickly passed the Educational Reform Act of 1993. This law drastically revised the state local aid formula, significantly increased funding for local districts, and mandated standardized testing to measure student progress.

The plaintiffs in the recent case pointed to continued disparities in spending and facilities to argue that the core constitutional violation remained. The court rejected this argument, focusing on the big increases in state education spending and the decline in disparities between districts. "No one, including the defendants, disputes that serious inadequacies remain," wrote Chief Justice Margaret H. Marshall for the majority. "But the Commonwealth is moving sys-

tematically to redress those deficiencies..."

After a period of expansion and optimism in the early years of Ed Reform, the Gill-Montague district, like many in the state, has experienced significant cuts in core programs, increased class sizes and wage freezes for teachers. Increases in "fixed costs" have consistently exceeded local tax revenues. More affluent cities and towns, able to draw on higher property tax revenues, seem to have avoided the financial crunch. To make matters worse, poorer districts appear to have lost students - and state funds - to more affluent communities under school choice policies.

Local officials often point to these developments as proof the state has failed in its obligation to provide equal education. This view seemed to be supported by a state Superior Court ruling in

favor of the Hancock plaintiffs last spring.

State officials, including liberal Democrats in the legislature, were skeptical of the argument that progress in Ed Reform had been minimal. They pointed out that state education spending had increased by over \$2 billion since the 1993 lawsuit, with the bulk of aid going to poorer districts. They also noted that Chapter 70 school aid had generally been level-funded, while state programs had been drastically cut, during the recent fiscal crisis. The court majority in the Hancock case appeared to share this view. Marshall, for example, noted that state aid to the lead districts in the lawsuit had nearly doubled since 1993.

State Senator Stanley Rosenberg reacted favorably to the SJC decision. Like Gee, he seemed surprised at the outcome. "People here are shocked

that someone actually said the legislature did a good job on something." Rosenberg emphasized the big increases in state education aid and building assistance, as well as advances in early childhood education, during the last decade of Ed Reform.

But Rosenberg also suggested that spending would have to increase significantly if the state share of education funding, now at approximately 46%, were to equal the national average of 50%. "That's huge, it's hundreds of millions of dollars," he noted. He also agreed with Gee that the legislature needed to revisit the formula for local aid. "People in the building are pleased with the pat on the back," noted Rosenberg. "But this is not a job yet done."

Equitable Funding for the Arts in Gill-Montague Schools Debated

BY DAVID DETMOLD

On February 8th, the Gill-Montague school committee endorsed the Equity in Funding of the Massachusetts Frameworks Policy, as recommended by Superintendent Sue Gee. But the vote did not come without controversy, and it passed by a 5 to 3 margin, with both the chair of the school committee, Joyce Phillips, and the chair of the budget sub-committee, Mary Kociela, voting against the policy.

During the preparation of last year's school budget, members of the public including Art Gilmore, a former music teacher at the Turners Falls High School, criticized the Gill-Montague schools for disproportionately favoring athletics over art and music in budgetary decisions. According to GMRSD business manager Lynn Bassett, "We pretty much eliminated art and music in the schools in Fiscal '04; and we were able to bring back some of it in '05." Bassett said there used to be 2 fulltime art teachers in the High School/Middle School three years ago, which was cut to a .17 position in '04, and brought back to a .34 position last year. That teacher, at less than half time, can only provide "two blocks of art per semester" for the upper grades, Bassett said.

In the elementary grades, the full time art teacher was let go during '04, and has not been replaced. Now, the elementary schools are relying on grant funding and parent fundraising efforts to provide some artists in residence support in the lower grades.

The two full-time music teachers were eliminated from the elementary schools in '04, but one fulltime choral music position was restored this year, Bassett said. "That teacher can only spend one day here and one day there," during the week at the dis-

trict's four elementary schools. Although chorus and band are still thriving at the High School/Middle School under the direction of Paul (Mr. C.) Ciechowski, a fulltime music teacher for the upper grades was also let go in '04, Bassett said.

Athletics and physical education was also cut back during the '04 budget crunch, though less severely. Physical education in the elementary schools was reduced to 30 minutes a week, Bassett said, and funding for Middle School athletic supplies eliminated. But team sports are supported by a variety of funding sources outside the operating budget, including booster club fundraising, gate fees, and user fees, Bassett said.

The discussion over the relative budgetary support given to athletics and art and music spilled over into the debate on the Equity in Funding policy. The policy states, in part, "the Gill-Montague Regional School District shall make budget decisions that prioritize equitable funding for and among the curriculum frameworks," in accordance with Massachusetts law and federal mandates and the mission of the GMRSD. It further states, "Where significant inequities are identified, the School Committee shall work to rectify them in a timely manner." The policy identifies the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks as: Arts, English Language Arts, Foreign Languages, Comprehensive Health, Mathematics, History and Social Sciences, Science and Technology/Engineering.

School committee member Tony Guglielmi expressed surprise that the policy was provoking controversy. "There seems to be some mystique surrounding this document. But state law mandates are much stronger on this same issue."

Kociela said, "I absolutely agree we need more art and music in the schools. I have two kids who have grown immensely in their academic career through exposure to the arts. I don't feel this policy addresses the problem, and as chair of the budget sub-committee, I don't feel this policy is going to correct the problem."

Phillips and Valeria Smith voted with Kociela to oppose adopting the Equity in Funding policy; committee members Mike Langknecht, Ted Castro-Santos, Sally Shaw, Tony Guglielmi, and Rich Colton supported it.

Smith objected to the deletion of the words "strive to" from the phrase "In order to achieve this mission, the GMRSD School Committee shall... make budget decisions that prioritize equitable funding for and among curriculum frameworks. But Shaw, whose policy subcommittee deleted those words after the entire committee had approved them on second reading, defended the policy's stronger phrasing.

"This is a guiding principal," she said. It's apparent we don't have complete consensus. I'm not willing to revoke it because it's too important. I would like to see a fine arts program elevated to a level of core curriculum in the schools, at the level at which we incorporate math or science."

Shaw continued, "We are moving forward in response to concerns expressed last year at our budget hearings. We did the analysis (comparing funding for athletics, physical education, music and art) and found we were not spending adequately on the arts. We need to respond to our community that we care deeply about that. If we don't expose our children to the arts in a meaningful way, they will never know the joy and strength the arts can provide them."

Gee presented preliminary figures showing the GMRSD will

request an art budget for the schools for the coming fiscal year totaling \$172,281; while requests for physical education and athletics will total \$196,039 and \$152,909, respectively. The revolving fund (gate fees and user fees) will defray \$25,000 of the athletics budget, Gee said. If

these figures hold good through annual town meeting, the GMRSD will spend \$496,319 on art, music, drama, athletics, and physical education at the following percentages: Arts: 34.7%, Physical Education 39.4%, and Athletics (not counting revolving fund reimbursement) 25.8%.

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For a Fair and Open Process in Choosing a Cable Access Provider

Montague's Cable Advisory Committee has been hard at work for months, carrying out the recent charge from the selectboard to develop objective criteria for choosing a provider for the town's cable access television. For three years, that role has been filled by Greenfield Community Television. For eleven years before that, Montague Community Television provided local access for Montague.

If news from the Cable Advisory Committee holds true, that committee will soon be forwarding a Request for Proposals (RFP) to the selectboard to allow both organizations - and any other potential cable access providers - to make a bid for the local assignment. An RFP would provide a fair, open, and objective forum for the town to assess the strengths and weaknesses of potential cable access providers. We support this process; it is a reasonable one that should lead to vastly

improved community television for the town of Montague, and for cable television viewers in Gill and Erving.

A fair and open process would go far toward dissipating the ill will lingering from the 2 to 1 decision of a previous selectboard to ignore the overwhelming vote of Montague Town Meeting in 2001 to keep Montague's cable access under local control. That special town meeting was the first in living memory to be called by the citizens of Montague themselves, resulting from a petition drive of MCTV supporters that gathered more than 1000 signatures of Montague residents favoring local control. In handing the cable access assignment, and the more than \$70,000 in annual cable user fees that goes with it, to Greenfield's cable access provider, that board may have felt they were choosing a more technically proficient, better managed outfit, but they were overriding the will of their own citizens in doing so.

Community access depends on community volunteers. To run a successful station here, GCTV will need the creative talents and energy of the very people who were overruled by their elected representatives in 2001. Revisiting the decision,



and employing an objective process to determine the technical capability, the fiduciary responsibility, and the community building potential of various providers, would help to heal the divisions still lingering from 2001.

In the few years since, a wide group of Montague residents, helped by others in Gill, Erving and Wendell, have worked together on a largely volunteer basis to show that we are entirely capable of producing our own media in the villages. The result is the paper you hold in your hands: the *Montague Reporter*, a project of Montague Community Cable, MCTV's

parent company. We feel the relative success of this venture is proof of the desire of local residents to build the capacity of their own community, control their own resources, tell their own stories, and help shape the view of what our community is and can be. There is something to be said for community pride. It cannot be denied.

A fair and open process to determine which organization could do a better job managing one of our basic resources - our community television station - would do more than build broad support for the outcome. It would provide an appropriate forum for those who believe

strongly that Montague has the right and the ability to oversee production of our own local video, to marshal and train our own volunteers, to go after grants to augment our own resources, and to devote our energies to our own community as well as to the region. Denying that forum has led to frustration, and has resulted in an underutilization of the resource cable users are paying for.

For these reasons, we hope the selectboard will support an RFP process for choosing Montague's cable television access provider. And we offer this page to any who may wish to advance a contrary argument.

American Dead in Iraq as of 2/16/05

US FORCES Casualties in Iraq as of this date
1,450
Wounded in Action 10,871
MARINE CORPS LEAGUE

Correction:

Last week's front page article about Montague's proposed combined sewer overflow upgrades stated "31 times a year heavy rains cause sewers carrying stormwater to spill over and join with sewers carrying human waste...." Correctly stated, the sentence should have read: "31 times a year heavy rains cause sewers carrying human waste to spill over and join with stormwater sewers."

Dragon Dance at Gill Elementary

Happy Chinese New Year! from the kindergarteners of the Gill Elementary School. As you may have heard we are very excited about our study of the customs and traditions in China. We have read Chinese folk and fairy tales, observed artwork, amps and writing from that country, but best of all is our giant dragon!



(l-r) Jacob Wallines-Duda, Chloe Castro-Santos, Nicholas Morin with teacher Amy Herzog leading the Gill Elementary School students in a Dragon Dance

Thanks to Chloe's mom for making the papier mache head with us. We have teamed up with the fourth grade to create a dragon dance, a Chinese tradition that brings luck and good fortune to the New Year. We have made a grand appearance at All-School Sing and now we would like for you to see the show.

Please join us on Friday, February 18th at 10:45 a.m. in the all purpose room. We will do our dragon dance one final time. This is the day before vacation and a half day of school, so you can opt to take your child home with you after

their special performance. Hope to see you then!
-the Gill Kindergarten Class

Chinese New Year began on February 9th this year. This is the Year of the Rooster, year 4702 on the Chinese calendar.

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GUEST EDITORIAL

Grappling with the Health Care Crisis

BY JEFF SINGLETON

There is a myth that the fiscal crisis in Montague was simply the result of the recent recession. Since the recession is over, the fiscal crisis is over and the town can now restore programs, wages, benefits and personnel to the levels prevailing in the 1990s.

This view is historically inaccurate. The budget problems faced by local governments in Massachusetts emerged in the late 1990s. In Montague, we experienced a major fiscal crisis in the year 2000. This reflected a core structural budget gap between revenues and expenditures that emerged in the previous decade and continues to this day.

There are a number of factors that contributed to the structural budget gap, but perhaps the most important is the explosion in health care costs. Our health care expenditures have increased by between ten and fifteen percent annually in recent years. In good times, this eats up nearly one one-third of Montague's local property tax growth. In bad times - when

state aid is cut or level-funded - the impact on the local budget is even greater. This means that the total wage and benefit increases we give our employees - though they are probably not adequate - still eat up well over half of our revenue growth. That does not leave much left over for anything else.

The explosion in health care costs may have an even worse impact at the state and federal level, and our town is, of course, highly dependent on revenue from these sources. Like Montague, the state of Massachusetts must deal with the impact of health care inflation on wages and benefits. Medicaid, a program primarily targeted to low-income people and people in nursing homes, has experienced rather draconian cuts at the state level in the last few years, but Medicaid expenditures continue to grow at a rate that cuts massively into funding for all other purposes, including local aid.

Health care inflation is also having an enormous impact on

the federal budget. Washington must finance benefits for federal employees, Medicaid and in addition Medicare, the federal health program for the elderly. The current budget deficit, once again spinning out of control, is not only caused by Bush's tax cuts - it is also a health care deficit.

As with the state, the federal health care crisis directly affects Montague. President Bush's deficit reduction budget plan calls for a massive cut in federal reimbursements to states for health care. Even if passed in a more moderate form, this plan will exacerbate the state-level crisis and affect local aid. Furthermore, the huge federal budget deficit means we cannot now even discuss the possibility that Washington might pay its fair share of the federal Special Education mandate, another key component of the structural budget gap here in Montague.

Right now, the political parties are essentially AWOL on the issue. Republicans act as if "tort reform" - a proposal to cap the

monetary value of settlements in malpractice cases - will solve the problem. We should seriously consider tort reform, but there is no evidence that it will significantly reduce the health care costs. It is also a politically divisive proposal targeting lawyers, a key interest group perceived to be associated with Democrats.

Democrats, for their part, appear to believe the problem of spiraling health costs will be solved by purchasing prescription drugs from Canada. Like tort reform, this is a proposal that should be taken seriously, but it avoids the core issues, and it also seems designed to score political points. Democrats are correctly attacking Bush's second term Social Security obsession by pointing out the health care crisis is in fact much worse. But where is their strategy for dealing with it? Having been politically burned on health care in the early 1990s - remember the "Clinton Plan"? - they are gun shy.

Here on the local level, public officials tend to throw up their

hands and say the problem can only be solved nationally. This is a huge mistake. Historically, pressure from the local level can percolate up to produce national reforms. We should urge Steve Kulik, Stan Rosenberg and John Olver to go beyond the debates over tort reform and prescription drugs. The national political parties will not act unless elected officials like them demand action forcefully.

At the local level we need to at least start talking about the issue and search for creative solutions. Because the problem is so big, because the solutions are mainly national, and because health care is a subject for collective bargaining, we have essentially taken it off the table. This is not good leadership. We need to more aggressively investigate real options for bringing the cost of health care under control. These options of course will have to be negotiated with employee unions. But this fact should not be used as a reason to avoid public discussion of the issue.



SWIM

continued from pg 1

Six members of the Turners Falls High School Swim Team will compete in the Western Massachusetts Swim Championships Saturday at Tantasqua Regional High School in Fiskdale.

Pictured are (left to right) Coach Karen Greene, sophomore Jenna Lapachinsk, freshman Melony Lucas, junior Anna Perry, freshman Ali Urban

and sophomore Sunny Lucas. Not pictured is freshman Jen Jason. Anna Perry qualified to swim in the girls' 100-yard breaststroke, and Sunny Lucas qualified to swim in the boys' 100-yard breaststroke. Perry and the other girls will make up relay teams for the girls' 200-yard medley relay, the girls' 200-yard freestyle relay and the girls' 400-yard freestyle relay. The team is coached by Karen Greene. Nancy Yankowski is the assistant coach. Photo: Cori Urban

NMH Music Department Presents Outreach Concert

NORTHFIELD, Mass- On Sunday, February 20, the Northfield Mount Hermon Symphony Orchestra, Concert Band, and World Music Combo will present the school's annual Franklin County Outreach Concert. The show will focus primarily on the area's senior citizens, and a donation will be taken for Meals on Wheels of Franklin County. Selections to be heard include Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto in e minor, featuring NMH Concerto Competition winner Maho Sakai '05; Mendelssohn's Hebrides Overture, and Aaron Copland's Fanfare for the Common Man. The concert will take place in Memorial Hall on the school's Gill campus, and begin at 3 p.m. All are welcome, and attendance is free. For more information, please call (413) 498-3281.



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OPEN SWIM SCHEDULE Turners Falls High School Pool March 7 - June 17

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Mondays	7:00pm - 8:00pm	Mondays	6:00pm - 7:00pm
Wednesdays	6:00pm - 7:00pm	Wednesdays	7:00pm - 8:00pm
Thursdays	5:00pm - 6:00pm	Thursdays	6:00pm - 7:00pm

OPEN SWIM FEES: Daily Fees:

Residents:	*Youth/Senior Citizen - \$1.25	Adults (18+) - \$2.50
Non Residents:	*Youth/Senior Citizen - \$2.50	Adults (18+) - \$3.50

Season Membership: (Adjusted to modified season rate)

Residents:	*Youth/Senior Citizen - \$16.00	Adults (18+) - \$32.00
Non Residents:	*Youth/Senior Citizen - \$32.00	Adults (18+) - \$45.00

SCHEDULE IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE. *Youths under 12 must be accompanied by a parent/guardian.
 Sessions may be cancelled due to swim meets and other special events.
 If school is cancelled due to inclement weather, there will be no open swim.

Tracking Event at Skyfields Arboretum

Saturday, February 26th from 9 a.m. to noon. Paul Wanta, local tracker, will lead the third annual Wildlife Tracking Hike at Skyfields Arboretum in Athol, MA. This hike will consist of tracking wild animals in the conserved fields and forests surrounding Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust's headquarters. We will travel through hemlock and deciduous forests to discover what wildlife is active on the land during these winter months. In prior years deer, coyote, fox, fisher, weasel and mice tracks were spotted. This is the mating season so that many animal tracks may be observed in pairs. We will discover some of the mystery of their lives by what they have left behind.

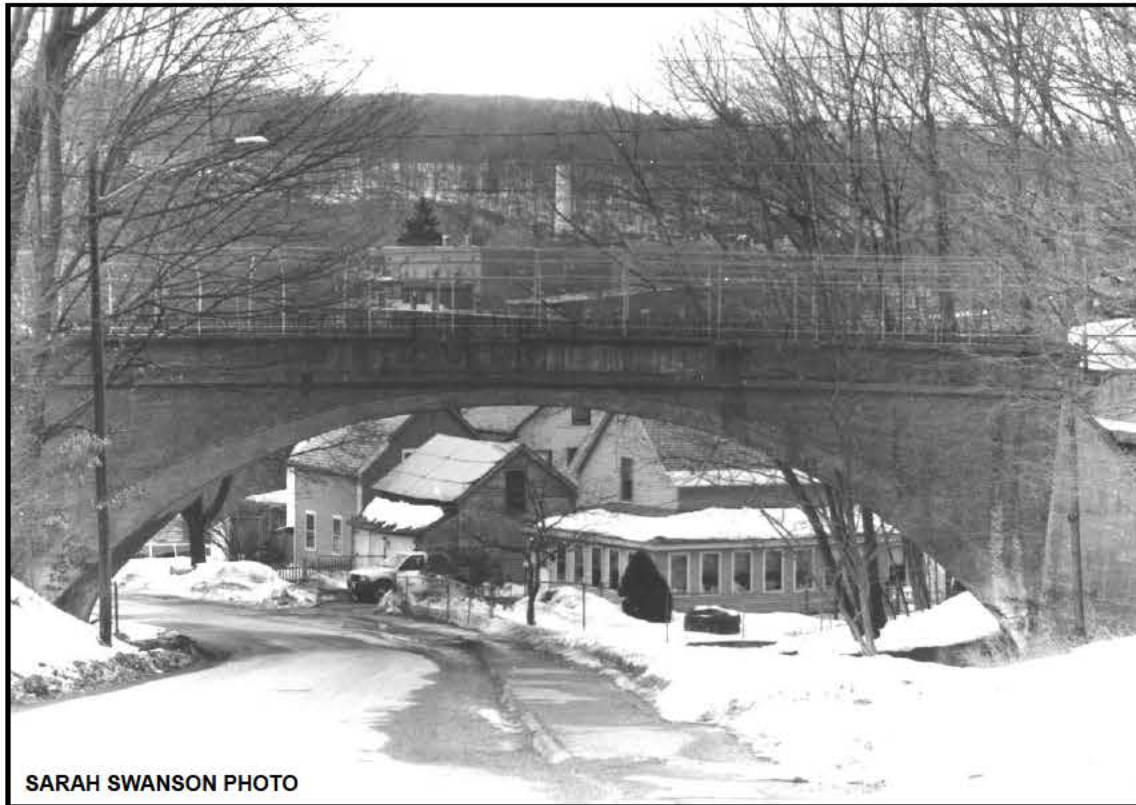
This tracking program is suitable for adults, as well as adults with children. Wear waterproof footwear and warm, layered clothing. Snowshoes are welcome if needed. Hiking will be light to moderate. Workshop is limited to 20 participants. Please call (978) 248-2043 or email landtrust@mount-grace.org to reserve a space.

DESIGN HEARING FOR PROSPECT STREET BRIDGE

BY JOHN HANOLD
TURNERS FALLS -

On Tuesday, February 15th, in the selectboard meeting room, representatives of MassHighway presented preliminary plans for replacement of the Prospect Street bridge, which has been closed since 1999. The room was filled to capacity with area residents, UMass students, and town officials. The MassHighway planners had clearly walked the area to become familiar with the surroundings, and several of those attending were pleased by their willingness to answer residents' questions and consider their ideas.

The old bridge, dating from 1920, features a barrel arch and ironwork on the railings. Over the years, deterioration of the deck and erosion of the banks made it unsafe, and in the opinion of the engineers the sightlines for auto traffic under the bridge on Spring Street made duplication of the arch design unwise. A complete earth-fill under the bridge had been judged too expensive, to the relief of those present. The new bridge will be wide enough and strong enough to bear two semi trailer-trucks meeting on the bridge, which clearly satisfies Tom Bergeron, head of the DPW. Drainage around the bridge will be preserved or improved during construction, to



SARAH SWANSON PHOTO

The Prospect Street Bridge, over Spring Street

avoid future erosion and pooling on neighborhood properties

Though the presented design is based on standard 4' concrete

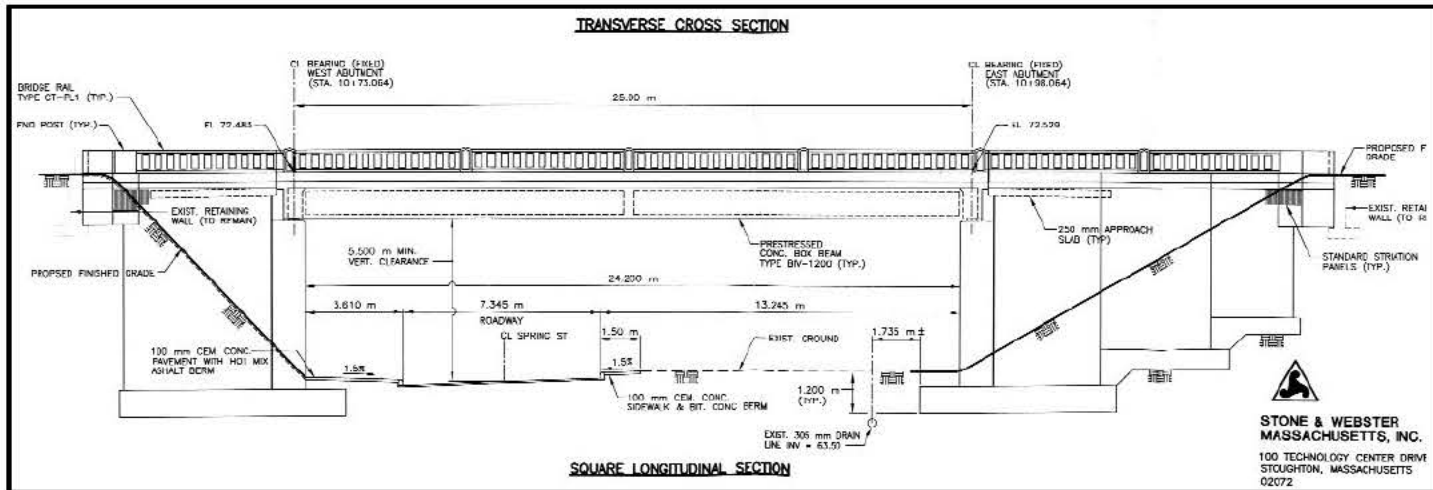
railings, the engineers are open to coloring the poured concrete to

fit the neighborhood's Victorian character, and can incorporate any desired ironwork and lamp-posts if funded by other sources. A six-foot wide sidewalk will be part of the design, as will a utility bay the length of the deck. Any changes resulting from the hearing can be incorporated into the final design, targeted for late in 2005.

As part of the piers-and-deck design, the wing-walls on the north side of the bridge will be slightly repositioned, and those on the south side altered largely in place; Montague has the ability to secure any necessary rights-of-way, as well as any supplemental funding (e.g., from enhancement grants) for lighting and ornamental features. Federal and state highway funds will share the estimated \$1.25 million cost in 80/20 proportions. Spring Street will be closed periodically during the estimated 24 months of demolition and construction, and the project plan includes signage to re-direct traffic during

those times. The start date is tentatively set for 2007, but is dependent on inclusion of the project on the Franklin County Regional Government's Transportation Improvement Program list.

See also the Prospect - Central Street neighborhood meeting article, pg. 10



MassHighway's Plans for the Prospect Street Bridge redesign, side view

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CHIEF
continued from pg 1

Deerfield, reported on the results of an auction of a town-owned residential building on Madison Avenue, held on Wednesday, February 9th. Twenty-three registered buyers turned out to bid on the property, a single-family home which had fallen into tax title and been taken by the town.

During the course of the town's preliminary renovations to the property, a plumber had accidentally set the kitchen on fire while welding pipes. An insurance settlement had enabled the town to repair the fire damage, and the decision was then made to auction the property. On the 9th, Jonathan Lowe was the high bidder, at \$61,950, of which the town will receive \$59,000, Bilodeau said.

Ross said the high turnout for the sale provided fresh evi-

dence that "a lot of real estate in Montague is rising in value." Bilodeau said at a normal house auction he would expect to see five to seven registered buyers. Town administrator Frank Abbondanzio said the town would probably be calling on Douglas Auctioneers in the near future to auction off a number of parcels of town-owned land, some "postage stamp size" landlocked lots, of interest mainly to immediate abutters, but also some larger, buildable lots.

CSO Update

Abbondanzio offered a discouraging picture of the town's near-term chances to receive federal help to pay for the upcoming EPA mandated combined sewer overflow (CSO) abatement work (estimated to cost \$2.2 million) and waste water pollution control facility upgrades (estimat-

ed at \$3.5 million). Due to recent cuts proposed by the Bush administration to the Health and Human Services budget, which has been tapped in the past to aid towns with CSO abatements, Representative John Olver's office was negative about the town's chances of obtaining much help from federal grants for the work. "We'd ask for \$3.1 million, but I doubt if there's that much money available for the whole state," Abbondanzio said. The town administrator said he would be exploring other possibilities to help the town afford the needed repairs to the sewer lines and treatment plant, but recommended the board consider phasing in the work over a period of time, rather than all in one budget year.

Dry Hill Cemetery

Abbondanzio said he had spoken with the engineer from


SVE Associates hired by Jim Senn to survey improvements that would be needed to improve access to the Dry Hill Cemetery via East Chestnut Hill Road and Dry Hill Cross Road, a three mile route to the town-owned cemetery, which historically had been accessible from Montague Road by a quarter mile stretch of Dry Hill Road. That shorter route has been blocked and fenced off by Senn in a standoff with the town that has stretched over many years. Abbondanzio said he hoped to have Senn back before the board by the end of February to discuss his proposal for improving access on the roundabout route.

Strathmore Committee

The board appointed the following members to a committee to advise the town on the process of conducting feasibility studies on the parking,

access, structural and maintenance issues and market feasibility work related to the town's bid to purchase the Strathmore Mill. The board appointed 11 members to the committee:

Frank Abbondanzio, Robin Sherman, David Jensen, Jeff Singleton, Bob Fritz, Rich Kuklewicz, Chris Sawyer-Laucanno, Michael Brown, Steve Ellis, Mark Girard, and Bruce Hunter. Board member Patricia Pruitt commented, "It sounds like a stellar list."

Abbondanzio announced town planner Robin Sherman had been successful in securing a grant from the Franklin Region Council of Governments to study the interior of the sprawling mill complex for the presence of hazardous materials such as asbestos or lead paint. An earlier FRCOG study had determined the site itself was clean of hazardous wastes. 

BUDGET
continued from pg 1

that new second grade teacher and we'd have to make other staff cuts, in paraprofessionals; we'd also have to cut summer school and field trip activities. On top of all that, we lost a federal grant for \$17,000 because of a reclassification of rural demographics that took Erving out of that grant pool."

In a discussion over class size, several school officials stressed the critical importance of having a lower class size for second grade in particular, where, they said, "children learn to read." Finance committee member Stanley Gradowski pressed school officials over state-mandated class-size limits, but the school officials said there is nothing mandated. Third, fourth and fifth graders need less personalized attention than do younger kids, the school officials said, but for

first and second graders, 18 to 20 kids is considered a maximum for teaching effectiveness. There will be 26 second graders next year, according to Brown and Driscoll.

Driscoll also reminded those present of the pressure the school is under to make progress and meet learning standards dictated by the state.

Town officials made it clear they continue to be "100 percent supportive" of education, but stressed the fiscal realities the town must deal with. "The town only has so much money to work with," said selectboard chair Andy Tessier. "We can't support such large increases year after year." The EES budget rose six percent each of the last two years. "The \$142,000 increase you're asking for will eat up funds for all the other departments in town," added selectboard member Bert Dubay.

Tessier continued, "We can

only raise taxes so much; that's the law. And we don't want to end up like every other town in the Commonwealth, with no money in the stabilization fund. The school roof will need to be fixed in a few years, and who's going to pay for it if there's nothing left because we keep spending more than is coming in?"

Gradowski underlined how much the town supports the schools on top of the actual school budget. "The town spends \$600,000 for the health insurance of school employees," he told the school officials. Some town officials were annoyed to learn during the meeting that the town pays the benefits for a school employee whose salary is covered by a grant. "For many years," Tessier said, "we've had a policy of encouraging departments not to incur costs to the town for additional benefits."

"We're not telling you where to make cuts," Gradowski said, "but you've got to find things to cut if you're going to ask for certain things. You have to figure out how to get the job done with a three percent increase."


"The face of the school will change," Brown responded. "Then it must change," Gradowski replied. "I disagree," said Brown. "We can't squander the school. Adding staff - that's the status quo, there's no increase in services with that."

At that point the selectboard returned upstairs to continue its own meeting, leaving the committees to hash things out. According to Semb, the school committee is going to prepare a warrant for town meeting for the full amount the school has requested. "The money is not available," he said. "We're trying to hold the line." Now it will be up to the townspeople

to vote and decide.

In other business, the selectboard decided, after lengthy consideration, to increase the health insurance co-pay premiums for town employees from 12 to 14 percent, and for retirees from 20 to 21 percent. "Rates are going up and up," said Tessier, "and the number of retirees is increasing. We need to do a little bit for the town." The increases still leave Erving paying more than most towns in the Commonwealth. Board members had first recused themselves from discussing the matter due to potential conflict of interest, before Tessier invoked the Rule of Necessity to allow discussion to begin.

The board noted the town's Free Cash account has been certified. There is presently \$720,049 in the account.

The board will not meet on February 21st, due to the President's Day holiday. 

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NOTES FROM THE WENDELL SELECTBOARD

Wendell Considers Asking for an Expansion of Vermont Yankee's Evacuation Zone

BY DOUG TURNER

WENDELL - Wendell hazardous waste coordinator Nina Keller wants to put the spotlight on a subject most of us would probably rather not think about: evacuation plans in the case of an accident or radiological incident at the Vermont Yankee Nuclear Facility (Entergy) in Vernon, Vermont.

Keller wants the 10-mile evacuation zone increased, and she began by enlisting the assistance of the Wendell selectboard, requesting that they petition area legislators to address changes to the plan through the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC).

At the board's February 9th meeting, she also called for a realistic, "not piecemeal," test of the 10-mile zone.

Vermont Yankee owner Entergy is requesting a 20% increase in power and a 20-year extension of the reactor's life span.

The reactor is currently scheduled to be retired in 2012.

A decision on Entergy's request was put off in November when a panel of three judges assigned by the US Nuclear Regulatory Commission's Atomic Safety Licensing Board issued an order granting a hearing to the New England Coalition and the state of

Vermont.

In arriving at its ruling, the panel accepted for adjudication two of five contentions raised by the state of Vermont and two of seven issues raised by the New England Coalition.

Keller presented a request for all public and or private agencies, organizations, and departments "to petition and actively pursue responsible changes in behavior, public information and communication from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission and the owners of Vermont Yankee Nuclear Facility (Entergy), from the Federal Emergency Management Association (FEMA) and Massachusetts Emergency Management Association (MEMA) so that current evacuation plans in the case of an accident or mishap at the nuclear plant be tested, not as piecemeal, but concurrently."

A test of the evacuation of Brattleboro schools' children last year went poorly when school buses required to transport children were detoured along the required routes.

Greenfield Community College, Turners Falls High School, and the Orange Armory are designated receiver facilities in the 10-mile evacuation scenario.

Keller said that a recent NRC engineering inspection of only 47 areas out of the hundreds of systems at the facility showed up eight significant areas needing attention.

"What about the other areas that did not get inspected?" she asked.

"What will happen when the plant is running with a 20% increase in power?"

Highlights from a prepared statement delivered by Keller called,

"Emergency Preparedness - A Realistic Pro-Active Approach", called for:

- inclusion and protection of communities surrounding Vermont Yankee, for more than the required EPZ (emergency planning zone) of 10 miles radius to at least a 25 mile radius,

- that more than the one free tab of KI (potassium iodide) per person for daily radiation thyroid protection be made available to the public in the extended zone,

- assurance that receiver facilities such as Greenfield Community College, Turners Falls High School, and the Orange Armory, have several people on staff and also back-up staff who are responsible for evacuation scenarios,

- staff to be familiar with the complexities and problems of

evacuation scenarios, communicate honestly with the public, describe their present capabilities for decontamination, and assess which circumstances are beyond their control,

- improved coordination between state and local police, fire, any and all emergency related groups, with bi-annual meetings for updates, and fine tuning of the plan.

An increased 25-mile evacuation zone would include Orange and Athol, reach to the campus of the University of Massachusetts in Amherst, and extend far into the protected watershed

of the Quabbin Reservoir.

In other news:

Though he "made several inquiries, and nobody has said what was done was incorrect," board of health chairman Donald Richardson acknowledged that a public hearing on recent changes voted to the town's septic regulations would probably go far to dispel the controversy which has been stirred up.

Richardson said that for six months the board of health has been at a standstill, one member refuses to honor the vote, and that he would not be against revisiting the issue at the next meeting of the board of health, Monday February 14th.

Planning board member Diedre Cabral had written to the selectboard, critical of the zoning changes, which reduced septic requirements from more stringent figures to Title V figures.

Cabral told the selectboard on February 9th that she was not against the changes specifically, but said she did not think that it was possible to "lessen restrictions without having a public hearing."

"I feel that it might make the town vulnerable to suit sometime in the future, especially if people are unaware."

Selectboard member Christine Heard suggested a hearing would at least "help to publicize" the changes.

Cabral's position would seem to be supported by Chapter 111, Section 31 of Massachusetts General Laws, which states, "No regulation or amendment thereto which relates to the minimum requirements for subsurface disposal of sanitary sewage as provided by the state environmental code shall be adopted until such time as the board of health shall hold a public hearing thereon."

The selectboard approved the appointment of Harry Williston to the board of health, to fill the remainder of the term vacated by Kanin Graton.

Cabral submitted her resignation from the Community Development Committee, to be effective immediately.

Brian Merrick and Michael Mayo of the state's Department of Telecommunications and

Energy met with the board to discuss the prospect of cable television coming to town.

When Merrick asked for the closest cable access to the town, Wendell Depot resident Gary Amiro lamented, "I can see it from my house."

Amiro originally called the agency to inquire of the possibility of Time-Warner extending its service line from Orange into Wendell Depot.

Merrick explained he had misunderstood and assumed that Wendell had a commitment from Time-Warner to provide service. He and his colleague had driven out from Boston in order to advise the town on entering into an agreement with Time-Warner.

He indicated that Time-Warner or ComCast would be the likely available providers, but said it was unlikely Time-Warner would be ready to extend from Orange because of current legal issues it was immeshed with in Athol and Orange.

Selectboard member Ted Lewis said the town had previously been told there were not enough customers to interest a cable provider.

Merrick suggested the town join with other communities such as New Salem or Shutesbury to make the contract more "attractive".

"A petition signed by residents willing to pay for cable could get them interested."

Mayo told the board that there are 40 towns that do not have cable in Massachusetts; 39 of them are west of Worcester.

A draft counselling forum organized by Molly Kaynor will be held at the town hall from 2 - 4 p.m. on Monday, February 21st, (Presidents Day). The forum will instruct potential draftees on "ways to be patriotic without going to war."

Co-sponsored by the Traprock Peace Center, there will be a number of guest speakers.

Kaynor said the forum will feature draft counselors and veterans who will talk about how to obtain conscientious objector status and alternatives to fighting in a war.

The next Wendell selectboard meeting will be Wednesday, February 23rd at 7 p.m.



Sally Wilder is presented with the proceeds from the benefit pancake breakfast by Wendell Women's Club president, Bethany Maselli.

Women's Club Helps Sally Wilder

WENDELL - The Wendell Women's Club held a wonderfully successful pancake breakfast on Saturday, February 12th, at the Wendell town hall, to raise money for resident Sally Wilder, who recently lost her Davis Turn Road home to a fire

on January 19th. Local and surrounding townspeople rallied in support of Sally's situation and raised \$1,000 to help her get back on her feet. Sally, her granddaughter and her two children escaped without injury on a frigid cold night with literally the clothes on

their backs. Unfortunately, her home and possessions were a complete loss.

Many local fire departments responded to assist the Wendell fire department in putting out the fire. They had to deal with freezing cold temperatures and slippery conditions.

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Auxiliary Police Reunion

The Montague Auxiliary Police are shown in a 1950s photo. The organization of volunteers assisted regular officers with traffic and crowd control at public events. The auxiliaries were also linked to "civil defense" efforts in the early Cold War era. Former member William Klaus and his wife Anna would like to contact former members for a possible reunion. Call 367-2428.

Andrew Lloyd Webber's

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Women's Writing Group Forming

Starting in April, a new eight-week Women's Creative Writing Group will run on Tuesday evenings from 5:30 - 7:30 p.m. at the Turners Falls Women's Resource Center, 148 L Street. The instructor, Carol Finneran, is certified in the Amherst Writers and Artists Method and is in her third year of running the Writer's Group at the center. The Women's Center offers a safe and supportive environment. Participants in the group write in response to exercises that are designed to encourage creative expression and increase confidence. Writers of all skill levels are encouraged to take part in this program. Openings for women from the five villages of Montague are still available. For more information about this and other upcoming programs, please call Christine at 863-4805. This program is free and free childcare is provided.

This poem (right) was written by a participant in the fall Writer's Group at the Turners Falls Women's Resource Center.

ROOTS

I am from a clothesline strung from the bedroom window to the pole out back, clothes hung neatly side by side, always blowing in a Monday breeze.

I am from lemon-meringue pie cooling on the back hall cupboard, so good after Saturday night franks and beans, pass the ketchup please.

I am from starry summer nights spent hanging out the window trying to see into the future of me.

I am from cheap linoleum to lie on with my color book and crayons, so much nicer than the plain wooden floorboards of my grandmother's day, hard to scrub, hard to wax, full of boot mud in the cracks.

I am from a God who hovered somewhere up above the alter at St. Joseph's church every Sunday, me in the side pew, hot, tired and count-the-red-hats bored, while the French priest sang "Domino Sugar on a Teaspoon," my version of his incomprehensible Latin.

I am from a time when stealing from your neighbor's pear tree wasn't really a crime;

From the days when kids walked to school (four miles a day) grateful for the diversions along the way (pollywogs in the spring, snowballs, icicles to chew on in winter).

I am the cup of coffee and the spiraling cigarette smoke which eases the tiredness of my mother's day.

I am from a small, warm place I didn't know would change.

Kay Fern

Poetic Announcement

The Montague Reporter will begin featuring a monthly poetry page in April, to coincide with National Poetry Month. The poetry page editors - Chris Janke and Chris Sawyer-Laucanno - warmly welcome our readers to submit poems, (with the name of the poet and title of the poem at the top of each page) for consideration to:

reporter-poems@montaguema.net, or to Poems, Montague Reporter, 24 3rd Street. Turners Falls, MA 01376. The editors reserve the right of final selection for publication.

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New Salem Prepviews Tech School Budget Request for '06

BY DOUG TURNER

NEW SALEM - The selectboard has scheduled a special town meeting to be held Monday, March 14th at 7 p.m. A ballot election will likely follow on Monday, March 28th.

Department heads are encouraged to submit "housekeeping" articles, for inclusion on the warrant for the special town meeting. The warrant must be posted publicly two weeks prior to the meeting.

There are three articles currently slated for the warrant.

Residents will be asked to allow the town treasurer to borrow \$225,000, at 4.5% to be repaid over a period of 20 years for the purpose of financing the shortfall on the expansion of the town library. The loan will be contingent upon a proposition 2 1/2 debt exclusion override vote to be conducted March 28th.

A second article will ask that the town appropriate additional funding for the board of assessors' budget. The money is needed to supplement the assessor's budget due to the hiring of an assessor's

clerk earlier this year.

The fee for services contract signed with the Franklin Regional Council of Governments, for the town's accounting through June 30th, 2005, may require additional funding. In addition there could be a need for money to pay for departmental software and equipment.

A Franklin County Technical School (FCTS) budget update for 2006 states that the school's administration received \$8,350,785 in departmental requests for the coming year. An administrative team tried to pare down these requests to an "operationally efficient level so that the district could maintain the same services as provided in the 2004-05 school year."

Staff salaries totaling \$104,000 were moved from the operating budget to grant funds, though the annual allocation from federal grants for special education and title one services continues to decline, putting more burden on the general operating budget.

Requests for \$154,000 in shop equipment were denied.

For years the federal Perkins Grant has helped fund thousands of dollars in equipment requests annually. President Bush's proposed federal budget for 2006 eliminates funding for the Perkins program.

The FCTS administration is relying on the legislature to restore funding to this important career and technical education program. If funding is not restored, future operational budgets will bear the cost of large equipment requests.

In addition, \$113,100 in technology hardware and \$23,500 in software requests had to be denied. The school's inventory of computers is aging rapidly and many are reaching the end of their useful life.

Other county schools with approved renovation projects have been able to purchase new hardware through capital bonding; FCTS has not had that luxury.

Textbook requests totaling \$36,500 were denied. Only \$9,000 can be funded in the budget. Like the computers, the school's textbook inventory con-

tinues to age. Some are more than 10 years old.

Requests for \$28,400 in instructional furniture replacement were denied.

The budget does not restore cuts that occurred in 2004, and a number of positions including guidance counselor, music teacher, librarian, physical education teacher, and night custodian have been left out.

Two special education teachers were moved to a self-supporting program.

The school's administration has recommended a budget of \$7,830,300 to the finance subcommittee of the school district.

According to administrators, the 8.5% increase is necessary to maintain the district's mission of providing a high quality vocational technical education.

Several factors were recognized as the driving force behind the increase:

- health insurance for employees is projected to increase by 18%

- health insurance for retirees is projected to increase by \$86,000

- employee retirement costs are projected to go up by \$101,500

- electricity costs are estimated to rise by \$45,000

- oil and heating costs are projected to rise substantially

- a school lunch subsidy must be restored at \$35,000

- transportation costs are projected to rise \$32,500

- a teacher's contract for 2005 and 2006 must be settled.

The preview says that employee benefits, fixed costs such as electricity, heat, and salaries comprise 90% of the total budget and consequently the administration can only affect 10% of the budget with its recommendations.

Residents are reminded they can meet individually with members of the town's selectboard, during selectmen's office hours, held once a month. The selectboard will hold office hours from 6 - 8 p.m. on February 21st in the Stowell Building. The next meeting of the entire selectboard will take place on February 28th at 7 p.m.

Center - Prospect Neighborhood Monthly Meeting

BY PAM AND JOHN HANOLD

TURNERS FALLS - Seventeen neighborhood people met at the Central Street School last Friday night (February 11th) to discuss the Prospect Street bridge and traffic and pedestrian patterns in the neighborhood.

The neighbors agreed to send as many people as possible to attend the 25% design review meeting on February 15th to see MassHighway's proposal for the bridge replacement, to make sure community concerns are addressed. The bridge should have some design detail consistent with the historic architecture of our downtown and neighborhood

area, such as metal work and traditional lamppost lights.

There needs to be a good sidewalk for all the pedestrian traffic. Plantings and the possibility of murals were considered for making the bridge more attractive in both the short and long run. The fire risk raised by the difficulty of getting firetrucks onto Prospect was discussed. It was agreed to ask the department to consider reinstating the original 2006 deadline for completion of the bridge because of the fire danger.

The neighbors also discussed the recent removal of several barriers between Central Street and Unity Street to provide easier

access for garbage, recycling, and emergency vehicles. Residents weighed the trade-offs of the convenience of reopened access to Unity Street with the awkwardness of accommodating the two-way traffic on a single merging lane at the intersection, and concerns for the safety of neighborhood children.

Central Street had been closed to through traffic for five years, since the Prospect Street bridge was closed in 1999 due to cracking in the barrel vault. A one-lane alley was sectioned off from Unity Street with Jersey barricades to allow residents of the eastern end of Prospect to exit the neighbor-

hood via Central Street. Central is a narrow street with small yards; the street is used for playing and constricted by many parked cars.

The neighbors agreed to ask officials to install signs restricting the more dangerous turns at the Central - Unity intersection. While the barriers are open and the bridge is still closed, the neighborhood group will monitor how the changed traffic patterns affect the neighborhood before recommending long-term solutions. The group knows that both its families and other townspeople walk through the neighborhood, to enjoy the views from Prospect Street. School buses pick up and

discharge children at the Unity Street - Central Street intersection. Residents want to make certain the safety of pedestrians and school children will be ensured as the barriers change and the bridge work proceeds. The group feels it is important that the neighborhood is actively involved in the decisions that affect the safety and quality of pedestrian as well as vehicular traffic in Turners.

The next meeting of the Central - Prospect Street neighborhood group will be on Friday, March 11th, at 7 p.m. Call Jay diPucchio at 863-8656 for info on the meeting location.

ASK LOUISE

Get help from the *Montague Reporter's* new advice columnist. Pet problems, love troubles, interior decorating disasters, all handled with confidentiality and aplomb.

Email your questions to: reporter_louise@montaguema.net, or write to Ask Louise c/o Montague Reporter, 24 Third Street, Turners Falls, MA 01376



Dear Louise,

I'm interested in obtaining farmland in the greater Montague area on which to found a CSA vegetable, garlic and herb business. I have long loved the area for its diversity of residents, its

beautiful scenery, the BookMill, its cottage industries and its proximity to Northampton, Brattleboro and Boston. I have been an organic farmer for three years but have no savings with which to purchase land. Any ideas you could pass along would be greatly appreciated. Thank you very much.

- Farmer with a Cause
Lacking Land

Dear Lacking:

I suggest visiting the CSA web page of the Alternative Farming

Systems Information Center (www.nal.usda.gov/afsic/csa). There you'll find dozens of helpful links, including ones for obtaining grants.

Good luck!

Dear Louise,

I love eating Chinese food but need to lose 25 pounds. Which menu items at the China Gourmet in Greenfield are lowest in fat and carbohydrates? I have heard these two items could be responsible for my weight gain.

- Wanting a Winning Weight

Dear Winning:

The folks at China Gourmet suggest that you consider their stir-fried and steamed menu items, which tend to be lower in fat and calories. If you're concerned about carbohydrates, you might try skipping the rice. (Incidentally, low-carb dieters may wish to read *The Truth About Low-carb Foods* in the June 2004 issue of *Consumer Reports* magazine.)

Regardless of the type of diet you choose to follow, one simple truth remains: you must eat fewer

calories than you burn in order to lose weight.

For some scientifically sound advice about nutrition, exercise, health, and weight loss, I recommend that you check out the Healthierus.gov Web site (The site offers a wealth of information, including the government's new 2005 *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*.)

And don't forget to check with your doctor before you begin any weight-loss regimen!



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MONEY MANUAL

Credit Card Companies Raising Rates to 25% Without Notice -- Outrageous!

BY FRANCES RAHAIM
MONTAGUE CITY - Did you know that nearly all credit card applications contain a clause called 'Universal Default?' What exactly is universal default, and how can it affect you?

Well, you can bet it is not to your benefit, and that it profits the credit card companies to the extent that they're willing to lobby against its abolition.

In its simplest terms, the universal default clause says that you agree to allow the creditor, without further authorization, to pull a copy of your credit report whenever they see fit, should you be approved for their card. It also, and perhaps even more importantly states that should they find ANY derogatory credit such as a late payment to ANY creditor, they can then not only

charge you a fee, but may also raise your interest rates. One company in Delaware charges a \$39 fee and raises your rate to 25%.

Ouch, that smarts! Especially if you don't notice it on your statement. Many of these cards offer an extremely attractive introductory rate, or even a 'fixed rate' in order to appeal to consumers. However, should a 30-day late show up on your credit report - zing!

Since a large number of credit reports, (some say as high as 85%) contain errors, the information the credit card company is viewing may not even be correct.

Trying to get them to reverse their decision is not as easy as you might imagine. Although they may require that you correct



the error on your credit report in order for them to lower their rate, the clause says they don't have to lower your rate again.

All it takes is one 30-day late to cause several of your accounts irreparable harm.

Senator Chris Dodd (D) of Connecticut has introduced a bill asking for better disclosure of universal default, but credit card companies argue they need the

clause as a way of protecting their companies from late payments.

Since 1980, credit card fees have risen from 2.6 billion to 21.5 billion dollars, and it appears there is no end in sight.

What is perhaps most disappointing is that many people are trying to move to lower rate cards in order to pay their debt down. Then, without any notice, the once low rate on their card can be raised to above 20% in many cases, and a fee may be assessed as well.

When asked about the bill, Senator Dodd had this to say. "I've never been able to get a bill passed of any major significance because [the credit card companies] are so big and so influential."

The American Bankers

Association, in a statement to NBC News, says banks need universal default, arguing, "Outlawing this risk management tool would have the effect of either restricting credit or raising the cost of credit for everyone, and we would oppose it."

South Dakota has no cap on interest rates and fees, and offers an attractive home for credit card companies.

While cities like Sioux Falls are warming up to the credit card industry, many say consumers are getting burned.

For answers to all your life insurance, annuities and hard asset account questions, call Dr. Rahaim at 413-773-3330. email: dr@moneymanual.com http://www.moneymanual.com

TSUNAMI

continued from pg 1

determined to participate his mother even postponed his dentist appointment. Students in Janet Diani's sixth grade class suggested a bake sale, which resulted in another \$185 added to the tsunami relief fund.

Amy Bernard's fifth grade student Daisy Whitcomb Skelton held her own read-a-thon, and collected \$200, forty dollars of which she contributed to the Hillcrest School supplies fundraiser and the rest to Sheffield's disaster relief fundraiser.

The Hillcrest School community took part in a project sponsored by the Leverett Peace Pagoda. To assist students in the Galle province of Sri Lanka, principal Christine Jutres asked adults for help to sew book bags, and collected donations of pencils, notebooks, erasers, and stickers.

"We were looking for something more meaningful to our



Relief efforts continue all over Indonesia
 photo www.sarvodaya.org

students' age groups (than collecting money)," said Jutres. "This was more hands on."

The children all wrote letters and tucked them into the 24 bags they assembled. They also enclosed return envelopes in the hopes of starting a correspondence with far off friends.

Jutres first learned about the Galle school relief project from an article in the Hampshire Gazette. "It was a short time frame, but very successful. With all the schools that participated,

there were about 400 book bags made," she said.

The student council at Turners Falls High School planned a coin drive, and set jars in the cafeteria with signs asking for spare change. Quotes were pulled from newspapers

and added to morning announcements, along with reminders about the fundraiser. "It was great," student council advisor Cheryl Howard said. "You'd look in the jars and see fives and tens. Students and staff gave very generously." A total of \$360 was collected and donated to the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) for their Peace Keeping Network.

Heather Batchelor, advisor for the Great Falls Middle School student council, also pro-

posed a fundraiser, and for a month now Great Falls Middle School has been working toward its goal of raising \$1000 for tsunami relief. Currently, a total of \$702 has been collected at the middle school through coin drives, a raffle, and Valentine card sales. Students have been bringing in change they have collected from their family, and set out cans for change at local businesses as well. "Instead of getting an extra treat at lunch, students are giving me change to put in the coin cans," Batchelor said.

The proposed goal of \$1000 would fund the cost of one government-built house in Sri Lanka. "They are small, one-room houses, with a basic outdoor kitchen," Batchelor said. "But people (in the areas affected by the tsunami) have been left with nothing, and this will help." The Great Falls Middle School fundraiser will conclude Friday, February 18th.

Fifth grade teacher Mark Silverman from Gill Elementary School coordinated a fundrais-

ing project as well, and the ongoing coin drive has been a wonderful success. "Buckley HealthCare Center donated a jar of pennies, which kind of kick-started it," Silverman said. "I'm impressed with how people around the area have contributed; people have donated tens and twenties, not just spare change."

There is no set conclusion date to the Gill Elementary School fundraiser. "When the jars fill up, we'll have to think about setting a limit."

The giant wave that killed over 160,000 people around the Indian Ocean left millions homeless and without the basic necessities of life. The unmet needs are still great, and students in the Gill-Montague schools have stepped up to the plate admirably, coordinating their efforts with local organizations, and working on their own to help make this world a better place.



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HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MONTAGUE POLICE LOG

Domestic Disturbance

Thursday 2-10

12:30 p.m. [redacted] was arrested on a straight warrant.

10:35 p.m. Report of a domestic disturbance at a Central Street address. Found to be verbal only. One party left.

Friday 2-11

8:58 a.m. After a motor vehicle stop, [redacted] was arrested and charged with operating a motor vehicle after revocation of license.

8:27 p.m. Report of a suspicious person at a Farren Avenue address. [redacted] was arrested on a straight warrant.

10:04 p.m. Report of a fight on Avenue A. Officer told there was no fight, everything was fine.

11:23 p.m. State police reported receiving a call from a cellular phone about a fight on Avenue A. Over on arrival.

Saturday 2-12

1:34 a.m. Report of an assault at a 2nd

Street address. Found to be a mutual fight. One party left, the other was advised of court options.

11:21 a.m. Report of an assault at a Woodland Drive address. Found to be a domestic disturbance. [redacted] was arrested and charged with domestic assault and battery.

4:27 p.m. Report of a domestic disturbance at a Dell Street residence. Found to be verbal only. One party left for the night.

Sunday 2-13

2:07 p.m. Caller requested officer at an X Street residence. Female juvenile arrested and charged with domestic assault and battery.

5:02 p.m. Report of domestic disturbance at an Avenue A address. Found to be verbal only.

9:54 p.m. Report of a domestic disturbance at a 2nd Street residence. [redacted] was arrested on a default warrant and also charged with domestic assault and bat-

tery and assault and battery with a dangerous weapon.

Monday 2-14

7:58 a.m. [redacted] was arrested at TFHS and charged with possession of a controlled substance in a school zone and possession of a Class D drug.

5:19 p.m. Report of a gas drive-off at Cumberland Farms. Found to be an error. Subject forgot to pay and returned to do so.

Tuesday 2-15

3:24 p.m. Officer flagged down by school bus driver reported juveniles fighting on bus. Officer spoke with students and parents.

4:03 p.m. After a motor vehicle stop on Millers Falls Road, [redacted] was arrested on a default warrant and charged with possession of a Class D drug.

Wednesday 2-16

12:59 a.m. Report of someone pounding on a door at a Dell Street residence. Gone on arrival.

A Winter Get-Away

BY JOE PARZYCH

GILL - A woman we will identify as Jane Doe, a former resident of Gill, recently got an invitation to go on a trip to Maine, on short notice. The person issuing the invitation was leaving immediately, and was coming to pick up Jane, very shortly.

"I only had time for a quick shower," she said. "I didn't have time to call and tell anyone. I left my apartment in a shambles - dishes in the sink, wet towels on the bathroom floor, and the living room in disarray. I only had enough time to throw a few clothes and a bathing suit into a suitcase, and away we went."

The problem arose when her daughter phoned and couldn't get ahold of her. The daughter called siblings, and Jane's grandchildren. Relatives hadn't heard or seen anything of her.

People hadn't seen her in church, which was very unusual. Others reported that Jane hadn't been answering their phone calls, either. A concerned group gathered at her house. The apartment door was locked and Jane's car was in the driveway. It looked bad. By now, they were thinking in terms of finding a body, and called the police. But the police were reluctant to break down the door, since Jane had not been missing for 24 hours.

Fearing she was lying unconscious, or worse, the daughter persuaded the landlord to unlock the door. A small army of people paraded through the obviously ransacked apartment, fearing abductors had made off with her. Then someone recalled Jane saying she was frustrated about something, and that she was ready to slit her

throat. The assembled mob searched closets and under the bed and found nothing but rumpled clothes, leaving them to wonder if she had gone off somewhere to hide, to take her life.

Meanwhile, Jane and her friend were in Maine, living it up at a luxury hotel, swimming in an indoor pool, and lounging in a hot tub overlooking the ocean. When I got in touch with her, Jane was laughing so hard she could hardly talk to tell me about it. In the meantime, she said she got another invitation, this time to go to Florida with much of the expenses paid by her host. Jane has her bathing suit and camera all packed, and she's ready to go. But this time, she's going to tidy up her apartment and notify people about her plans before she leaves.



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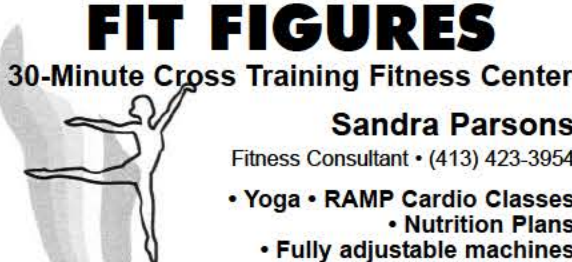


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GREEN

continued from pg 1

prompted Millers Falls resident Jeanne Golrick to suggest spreading out the planting of the memorial trees throughout Montague's five villages rather than in one location, as had been previously considered. The selectboard must approve the spending of town funds, including the \$5,000 allocated to the Releaf Program.

Selectboard member Pat Pruitt said she thought Golrick's idea had merit. This prompted selectboard chair Pat Allen to publicly raise the idea of forming a "greening" committee here in Montague.

"I know people have talked about this in the past, and I know that our money for planting trees is very minimal," said Allen. "I think it would be great if people came forward to get

involved on the committee."

Local residents may wish to help organize the committee, figure out what the best areas are for planting trees or suggest places that should be considered, she said.

"I could see a list getting fairly long," said Allen, adding that anyone interested should contact the selectboard office. "This program, if encouraged, could clearly go on for many more years."

Last year, the town considered planting the memorial trees in the 2nd street alley, behind the Shea Theater, and were looking for sources of funding with which to hire a designer to implement the planting, said Abbondanzio.

"We tried to get the biggest bang for our buck. We were looking for sources of funding to plant up the 2nd Street alley. It's such a confined area to do

that we would have had to master plan everyone's backyards," he said, because the yards are private property. "There wasn't enough space to do it in public space, and we would have had to hire a designer to do the plan."

Plus, he said, the point of the program is to memorialize community residents who have passed on, and he feels a more visible public site would be better suited to the project.

With this in mind, last fall Abbondanzio asked the Great Falls Discovery Center (GFDC)'s then-director Dave Ziomek if he would be interested in having the Center host the memorial trees. The GFDC had originally done a landscaping plan for the site that was more ambitious than they could afford, said Abbondanzio, who envisioned the trees not only fulfilling their purpose of

memorializing the community's loved ones in a very visible, park-like environment but also aesthetically enhancing the landscape of Turners Falls for residents and visitors alike as they cross the bridge into town.

Ziomek was interested in the plan, said Abbondanzio, and thought the trees could be planted with volunteer labor by the Friends of the Great Falls Discovery Center (the terms of the Releaf program prohibit spending money on labor to plant the trees). Another advantage of using the Discovery Center, Abbondanzio said, is that the GFDC site plan included a soil analysis and decisions on which varieties of indigenous trees would be suitable for the available landscaping space. However, the idea of planting trees there was put on hold when Ziomek left to take a job in Amherst last November.

Allen said that the GFDC site, as well as Peskeomskut Park (which the town hopes to re-landscape with \$320,000 in block grant funds this year), areas in Lake Pleasant, and Millers Falls could all benefit from newly planted trees.

"That could also allow folks to specify where they'd like their memorial trees to go," she said. "It makes sense to have a committee that could work on this. The committee in Greenfield has been successful and I suspect (a similar committee in Montague) would work closely with our own highway department and our tree warden.

"Anything we can do to keep green space in our environment helps our environment. It is good for our ecology and for our air quality to have a maximum of natural elements to give us some oxygen," Allen said. "It's not just good for the atmosphere, but it also softens the neighborhoods. It has a sound deadening quality. It gives you a peaceful, good feeling to have trees around. It gives you shade. . . . I think stone memorials and benches are excellent, but having trees, especially if they're native to this area, would definitely enhance the environment."

Nowadays there is \$7,000 allocated in the highway department's budget for the town's annual tree work. Montague's tree warden, Mark Stevens, is both a full-time employee of the highway

department and the town's elected tree warden.

Tom Bergeron, superintendent of the Department of Public Works, said he works closely with Stevens to determine "what trees need to be worked on, serviced, trimmed, pruned, cut and replanted.

"When we take a call, he gets the message. He'll go and inspect the tree," said Bergeron.

Depending on how much is leftover in the budget after emergency tree work is completed (trees or large branches falling because of storms, for instance), new trees can be planted. If a tree falls near to or onto electrical wires, Bergeron must call Western Massachusetts Electric to deal with the emergency. If they cannot come, he must hire an outside tree crew, which he said costs about \$800 a day.

Last year the highway department planted between five and ten trees of various varieties, purchased from Stewart's Nursery on Millers Falls Road, as the town does not have a nursery of its own, Bergeron said. The highway department maintains the trees by watering them daily in dry spells or as needed during rainier weeks, but if homeowners who live near to the young trees offer to water them, Bergeron said he appreciates the help. Often the new trees replace ones that had to be taken down for one reason or another. Homeowners appreciate the planting of a new tree in front of their homes, he said.

"We'll take down old dead (trees) and grind the stumps. Mark (Stevens) keeps a list and with whatever extra money we have we'll plant new trees. We can't take a tree down and put up a new one right away because of the cost and because we take down so many more than we put up," Bergeron said. So far, there is presently \$3,000 left in the "tree work" budget. If winter storms drop more "wet, heavy snow" on Montague, Bergeron said he doesn't know how much will be left after emergency tree work is completed.

Anyone interested in helping to form a "Greening of Montague Committee" should contact the selectboard office at 863-3204.

HOME COOKING

Sandy Miner, from Ervingside, suggests we offer a column for people to share favorite family recipes. We think that's a good idea, and welcome any of our readers to send in recipes they might like to share. To get us started, here is one of Sandy's own favorites.

SANDY MINER'S

HEALTHY VEGGIE SOUP

Makes about 6 quarts of soup

I usually make a large pot of soup each week during the fall and winter. It makes for great healthy lunches, and there's always plenty to share no matter how many of the family show up at mealtime.

The Healthy Veggie soup is one I make very often for my family. The veggies listed are only a guideline, as you can omit or add any vegetables depending on your taste, or on what you can find at the grocers.

This soup gets better each time you reheat it. It makes a hearty meal when a side of bread is added.

Soak overnight

- ½ bag of dried Beans for Soup (there are a wide variety of beans to choose from)

Rinse beans under cold water

Place in large pot (at least 6 quarts for this version)

Add

- 5 cans Swanson Chicken Broth (14 ounces each) 100% Fat Free 33% less sodium

Bring to boil and then turn down to simmer for about two hours to soften beans

Add

- 1 pound of carrots (shredded or sliced thin)

- 1 box frozen corn

- couple handfuls of fresh sliced string beans

- 2 onions sliced

- small zucchini (sliced)

- small summer squash (sliced)

- 1 can (28 ounces) Del Monte Diced Tomatoes seasoned with garlic and onions

- 1 bag of fresh baby spinach or regular spinach (chopped)

Bring to a boil (at this point you could transfer soup to slow cooker) and then turn down to simmer for about two hours.

I don't add any salt, as this is a "healthy version".

You may also make a smaller amount of soup, but it does improve in flavor every time you reheat, and it's a great soup to share. Enjoy with a slice of fresh bread or a few crackers!



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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

CALENDAR



JACK COUGHUN ILLUSTRATION

FRI, SAT AND SUN FEB. 18TH, 19TH AND 20TH
Turners Falls High School and Great Falls Middle School present Andrew Lloyd Webber's **JOSEPH and the AMAZING TECHNICOLOR DREAM-COAT**
Directed by Nick Waynelovich at the Turners Falls High School Auditorium, Turnpike Road, Turners Falls. Friday and Saturday shows at 8 p.m., Sunday show a 2 p.m. matinee. Tickets \$8 adults; over 65 and under 18: \$7. For reservations or info call (413) 863-9341. Sunday is the last chance to buy raffle tickets at the school play-concession table for the Spring Cape Cod Getaway fundraiser to benefit the TFHS marching band. Tickets only \$20, the **winner will be drawn at the play! It could be you!**

SATURDAY, FEB. 19TH
Chris Smither with special guest Nick Plakias at Coffee and Soul. Performance at All Souls Unitarian-Universalist Church, 399 Main St., Greenfield. 7:30 p.m. (413) 773-5018.

Third Saturday Contra Dance with *Blue Sky* at the Guiding Star Grange Hall, 401 Chapman Street, Greenfield. 8:00 to 11:30 p.m. (413) 774-2830.

MONDAY, FEB. 21ST
For all ages in the Concord Museum on Presidents Day: A specially-designed presidential museum hunt, birthday cake in honor of George and Abe and a children's take-home activity! Montague resident Tim Van Egmond presents *History Comes Alive in Stories and Songs* at 10 a.m. as part of the Warm Words Storytelling Festival that runs Feb. 19th through Presidents Day. \$15 Adult/Child (age 3-12) Pair; Additional Child or Adult \$7; by reservation. Call the Concord Museum at (978) 369-9763 for a complete listing of all Warm Words storytellers or to make reservations. All Warm Words fees include same-day Museum admission.

WEDNESDAY, FEB. 23RD
Family Full Moon Snowshoe Bring the whole family to learn how to navigate like nocturnal creatures, pretend to be predators sneaking up on prey and answer riddles about what animal families are up to in the winter woods. Held at Northfield Mountain Recreation Area located on Route 63 in Northfield. 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. For ages 6 and older. Pre-registration required 800-859-2960.

FRIDAY, FEB. 25TH
A Bouquet of Music Concert Series - Stoneleigh Burnham Octet with Cindy Meese, director. Concerts take place in Franklin Medical Center's main lobby. 164 High Street, Greenfield. Noon to 1:00 p.m. (413) 773-2573.

Fourth Friday Contra Dance with *David Kaynor & Greenfield Dance Band* at the Guiding Star Grange Hall, 401 Chapman St., Greenfield. 8:00 p.m. - midnight. (413) 367-9380

FRIDAY AND SATURDAY FEB. 25TH & 26TH
The Shea Young Stage Company presents an adaptation of J.M. Barrie's **PETER PAN**
Directed by Trevor Davis. The Friday show is at 8 p.m.; the Saturday show is a 2 p.m. matinee. Admission is \$5. For reservations or more info call (413) 863-2281. The Shea Theater, 71 Avenue A, Turners Falls.

SATURDAY, FEB. 26TH
Wendell Full Moon Coffeehouse presents the **Reggae Allstars**. Local reggae musicians perform, to benefit Friends of Wissatinnewag. For more info visit www.wendell-fullmoon.org. *FYI, Mark Erelli's performance, which was cancelled due to a good old New England Nor'easter has been rescheduled for June 25th, again to benefit the Wendell Open Space Committee*

Television and film star Frank Runyeon will bring his acclaimed performance of the Gospel of Mark to St. Mary's Church, 90 Seventh St., Turners Falls. One night only, 7 p.m. His performance of the Gospel of Mark is set in the catacombs of Rome by candlelight and is entitled **AFRAID!** Its text is the Gospel of Mark, translated into contemporary American speech. It is a play that is appropriate for the whole family. Tickets, \$10 adults; \$5 students. For more info call (413) 863-2585.

The Gathering Place at First Parish of Northfield, Unitarian offers card and board games, mah-jong lessons, open mike for musicians and writers, coffee & light fare on the last Saturday of every month from 7 to 10 p.m. 72 Main Street, for more info call 498-5957.

Hilltown Folk presents Ferron, 7:30 p.m. at Memorial Hall, Shelburne Falls. With 12 albums under her belt, including a 4-star rating from Rolling Stone Magazine, Ferron releas-



Saturday, FEB. 26TH
7:30 p.m. at Memorial Hall, Shelburne Falls.

es her new CD, *Songs From A Goatpath*, recorded with the same musicians as on her infamous *Testimony*. Ferron fans will be out in droves for this show; but there's still room for the uninitiated. Ferron is a remarkable singing poet, truth-teller and humorist. Your heart and spirit will not go untouched. Tickets \$17 advance/\$20 door.

SUNDAY, FEB. 27TH
Got Kids? Family Dance at the Montague Grange: child-friendly contradancing at 4:00 p.m. - dance caller Diane Sanabria. The Montague Grange continues this wonderful family series, now in its fourth year. The series goes through April and features family-style contra dancing, paced for little feet (no age restriction) or adult beginners, in a beautiful, restored historic building, across from the Town Commons in picturesque Montague Center. Each dance is on the last Sunday of the month, from 4:00 to 5:30 p.m., priced a sliding \$5-\$10, and includes a light snack.

ONGOING EVENTS
Now through February 26th
The Fiber Art Center in Amherst is delighted to announce its first exhibit of works created by its students. Selected Fiber Art Center Student Works runs through February 26th. It includes works from both adults (juried) and children (unjuried) based on ideas and techniques learned in classes taught at the FAC. For more information contact the FAC at (413) 256-1818 or go to www.fiberartcenter.com.

Now through February 26th
On display at Gallery 267: Erin Green - "Simplify" and Randy Gobeil - "Waiting in Vain..." Green's paintings are a geometric exploration of the human form using layers of deep, vibrant color. Gobeil's work questions how much (or how little) we remember about people in everyday situations. On display at Gallery 267 located at 267 Main Street in Greenfield. Hours: Thursday & Saturday 10:00 to 6:00 p.m., and Friday noon to 8:00 p.m. 413-774-6323.

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Now through April 1st
Photography exhibit at PureLight Gallery in Turners Falls. Robert Farber's

Photographs on display, opening reception and book signing Mon., Feb. 7th from 5 to 7 p.m. at PureLight Gallery of Fine Art, 37 Third St., Turners Falls, MA 01376. For more info or directions call (508) 885-6048, visit www.purelightgallery.com, or email jan@purelight-gallery.com. Gallery Hours: Fri. 4 - 6 p.m., Saturday 10 a.m. - 12 p.m. or by appointment.

Sunday at 7 All films free donations accepted

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Feb. 20th
WINGS OF DESIRE 1987
Wim Wender's film presents a Berlin haunted by angels, full of astonishing images and beautiful language. Nick Cave & Peter Falk to boot. German/subtitled. Introduced by David L.
Projected upstairs with refreshments by the Lady Killigrew Cafe
www.montaguebookmill.com, (413) 367-9206

Showtime 7:30 p.m.

Friday/Saturday Feb. 18th & 19th
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Directed by Jacques Perrin
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at 105 Main St., Northfield in the Green Trees Gallery.
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1. SIDEWAYS	R
DAILY 600 900	
MATINEE SAT,SUN,&WED 12:00 3:00	
2. BECAUSE OF WINN-DIXIE	PG in DTS sound
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MATINEE SAT,SUN,&WED 12:00 3:00	
3. PHANTOM OF THE OPERA	PG13 in DTS sound
DAILY 900	
3. POOH'S HEFFALUMP MOVIE	G
DAILY 600	
MATINEE SAT,SUN,&WED 12:00 2:00 4:00	
4. ARE WE THERE YET	PG
DAILY 615 915	
MATINEE SAT,SUN,&WED 12:15 3:15	
5. BOOGEYMAN	PG13
DAILY 615 915	
MATINEE SAT,SUN,&WED 12:15 3:15	
6. CONSTANTINE	R
DAILY 630 930	
MATINEE SAT,SUN,&WED 12:30 3:30	
7. HITCH	PG13 in DTS sound
DAILY 630 930	
MATINEE SAT,SUN,&WED 12:30 3:30	

Mabel Zobel By Sandra Facto

Shaving, heck no! You may as well plant grass and call me a Chio Pet!

OFF THE BEATEN TRACK

Want to play a guessing game?

BY FLORE -

NEW YORK CITY - Who has an impressive 16-foot high frame? What on earth could be running through the southern end of a city park over 23 miles of walking paths? Who would dare such a thing? I mean of course, aside from the regular old timer joggers, the plain peaceful walkers, "les amoureux" affectionately holding hands! Happy children, having fun, pirouetting away, right underneath the steel structures. As if grown-ups finally understood their games! Could you simply imagine a whole float, whose sails wave at passersby? Who are those spirit lifters holding the pulse of the city, sweeping away its winter blues?

Wonder no longer, these are "The Gates" specially created to welcome spring, installed right in pulsating New York City!

Meandering their ways through Central Park, they are the visionary work of Christo and his wife Marie-Jeanne. Though it took some 26 hard years to convince the New York City Parks Department for the



What uses 2/3 of the weight of steel in the Eiffel Tower to make a two week saffron statement?

project to come finally alive, it is certainly one of the biggest installations in the city's memo-

ry.

Discover how these 7500 gates have the steel support of an entire weight of 5290 tons. (Two thirds, by the way, of what was used for the construction of Paris's Eiffel Tower!) The material strung for their "visual golden saffron river" banners amounts to a million square feet.

Underline your planning book: this unusual installation will only last until February 26th. Run on anything mobile, to get you there!

Suggestions? Catch either a train, hitchhike, drive, share expenses on renting a twin engine plane from Turners Falls Airport to get you there faster. But above all, whatever the mode of transport, don't miss this once in a century festive happening!

Aside from wrapping "The REICHSTAG" in Berlin, Germany and "LE PONT NEUF" in Paris, France, Christo and Marie-Jeanne are also responsible for planting a floating island near the coast of Florida.

The Long Arm of Love



PARZYCH PHOTO

Suzie Maddern admires a quilt made by Louis Parzych. His wife, Mabel, had been making the quilt to give to her sister, Edna Parzych, but passed away before she finished. Louis was not a quilter, but he found the pieces and sewed them together. Barbara McComb, owner of Long Arm Quilting of Gill, helped him along with instructions on how to sew, and later, sewed it together on the Long Arm quilting machine. Barbara's husband Robert

McComb is a police officer, but Barbara's business has nothing to do with the long arm of the law. Long arm simply refers to the ability of the quilting machine to sew the front, filler, and back into a quilt, once the surface pieces have been stitched together. Barbara sewed the quilt with a pattern of hearts.

Louis worked hard and long on this labor of love, and presented it to Edna on her birthday, as her sister had intended.

Images that Redefine our World



It's half past February and 23 miles of saffron colored fabric waves over the footpaths of Central Park in New York. It will be there for 16 days. It's an event. To the purpose-oriented, it is perhaps hard to understand, for it exists because someone wanted it, saw beauty in its production, and was willing to pay for it. The *Sunday Republican's* front page picture, a panoramic view taken from a rooftop, is a memorable scene. It's in context: the river, the people, the city. The facts of production take the effort to read on.

"The Gates - Central Park, New York 1979 - 2005, envisioned by the innovative artist Christo Claude in 1979, and completed in collaboration with his wife, Jeanne, after she had convinced authorities of its value. (They were born on the same day, in Europe, in 1935.) The Charles C. Lewis Company of Springfield, MA produced the 15,000 steel plates that form the base of the frames, painted "raccoon fur" to match the color of the paths. Seventy-five hundred 16-foot high frames wave the "sunrise orange" fabric over more miles of path than one knew existed in the park. Indeed an event. And indeed a happy day when civil art for art's sake can dominate the news.

On the same page, the raising of Old Glory atop Mt. Suribachi, on Iwo Jima in 1945, recalls years of hell, of MacArthur's island hopping in the Pacific with limited troops who lived by the gun and slept under jeeps. And the event should remind governments that they exist to keep the world worth living in by peaceful means.

-from an anonymous reader in Montague Center

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HAYRIDE & BONFIRE in MONTAGUE CENTER
Saturday, February 19th, 4:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.

Mark your calendars! Let's pick up where we left off from this year's Winter Carnival! We won't let a little snow take our annual tradition away.

HAYRIDES - Departing from the NEW Montague Center Firehouse on Old Sunderland Road every 25 minutes. Coffee, cocoa, mulled cider and hot dogs will be provided courtesy of the Montague Center Firemen's Association. Hayride Fee: \$2/adult & \$1/child per trip

BONFIRE - Montague Center Park, warm yourself after a hayride or skating, chat with friends and enjoy a fun winter evening outside. Courtesy of the Montague Center Fire Department.

ICE SKATING - The Pond @ Montague Center School, Bring Your Own Skates. Activity status dependent upon ice conditions.

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