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The Montague Reporter

YEAR 9 - NO. 24

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THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES

MARCH 17, 2011

Shifting the Burden of Environmental Monitoring

An Obscure Regulatory Change Moves Responsibility for Monitoring Solid Waste Sites from the DEP to Local Boards of Health



Arthur Cohen, Gill's solid waste representative, is working to overturn last year's regulatory change.

GILL - Arthur Cohen is on a mission.

The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), after undergoing years of budget cuts and personnel losses, introduced a budget amendment in the state legislature last year to shift the responsibility for site review and permitting of solid waste handling facilities under 50 tons a day from the DEP to local boards of health. This change would apply to

town landfills and transfer stations, and commercial composting facilities, construction and debris dumps, incinerators, or landfills handling less than 50 tons a day - a category that includes every town transfer station in the county.

Cohen, who has served as the town of Gill's representative to the Franklin County Solid Waste Management District for 22 years, "since before there was a District - I helped set it up," finds this shifting of responsibility for environmental oversight of solid waste sites from the professional staff of the DEP to the volunteer boards of health that typify Franklin County "an out-

rage," and he does not intend to let it go unchallenged.

"They slid this into a budget amendment without public review, comment or notice," Cohen told the Gill selectboard on Monday. "It stinks! I personally would like to organize a letter writing campaign to DEP so [commissioner] Ken Kimmell knows the light of day is shining on him."

The Gill selectboard agreed to join Cohen's campaign by sending a formal letter of protest to DEP Commissioner Ken Kimmell at his #1 Winter Street, Boston, MA 02108 address. And Gill is not the only Franklin County town to take such action.

Earlier this month, the town of Leverett wrote to the Auditor of the Commonwealth, challenging the regulatory shift on the grounds that it will amount to an unfunded mandate, since small towns, without professional staff, will have to hire outside consultants to assist them with the site reviews, permitting, and oversight previously managed by the DEP's engineers, geologists, and air and water see **SHIFTING** pg 8

Solar Power House



DETMOLD PHOTO

Tina Clarke's house in Montague City pays her electric bills from solar photovoltaics, and provides enough surplus electricity to power another house she owns in Amherst.

BY DAVID DETMOLD MONTAGUE CITY - Tucked away on a back street in Montague City is a power house of alternative energy, the winner of the utility sponsored Massachusetts Zero Energy House challenge in 2009.

At first glance, it's a one story wood frame house of modest dimensions, surrounded last week by the crusted snow of an extremely tough winter, with a north facing exterior that gives little clue it might contain some of the key elements our society will need if we decide to move

beyond the impact of a century-and-a-half spree of fossil fuel burning, and the aftermath of the worst nuclear disaster since Chernobyl.

But move around to the south side, and you will see from the array of photovoltaic panels on the roof and the wall mounted thermal air panel by the door that this little house, owned and occupied by Western Mass Transition Town coordinator Tina Clarke, is a Green Energy dynamo, producing all the power she needs to run her home - and then some.

New Englanders have been skeptical that solar power can work in their cold climate, especially after a winter like this, but Clarke now has two years of data and experience living in her home, and she believes she can confidently put those fears to rest.

Solar power not only works in New England, but it can turn the average homeowner into a power company, and save back its initial investment in as little as four years - in Clarke's case - while reducing any home's carbon footprint at see **SOLAR** page 12

Character Acting Lends Air of Distinction to Come As You Are



DETMOLD PHOTO

The cast of Come As You Are takes an enthusiastic curtain call. (Front row left to right): Zach Demars, Ahlyson-Rose Kilanski, Hayley Black, Brooke Martineau, Ken Keo, Zack Boisvert, Jolina Blier, Jesse Langknecht

BY DAVID DETMOLD GILL-MONTAGUE - Great characters do not necessarily a great play make. But in *Come As You Are* they came awful close.

Turners Falls High and the Great Falls Middle School teamed up with Piti Theater's artistic director Jonathan Mirin, of Shelburne Falls, and his choreographer-partner Godelieve Richard to produce this musical comedy.

Mirin's choice to direct

an original play, written by Boston-based authors Sebastian Stuart and Stephen McCauley, and premiering for the first time in Western Massachusetts on the Turners Falls High School stage, ruffled some feathers among parents who felt the tradition of reviving tired and true Broadway musicals each year was a sacrosanct rite of passage for students that should not be altered. So when the curtain went

up and the lights went down on Saturday night, the auditorium went silent with an anticipation bordering on dread.

What sort of play had this upstart director dared to cast our children in?

Well, I am happy to report - a good play indeed - made even better by the ability of 36 student actors to put their all into bringing some sharply drawn characters to fully realized life.

Come As You Are is a

tale of serial mistaken identities at a down-at-the-heels Catskill resort in the years immediately following the Second World War. Daniel O'Banion (Zach Boisvert), gone missing from the battlefield for the last three years, returns in disguise to see whether his wife, Beatrice (Brook Martineau), the hotel proprietress with a heart of gold, has taken the advice he gave her when he went

see **ACTING** pg 12

State Climate and Energy Policy Hits Biomass Bump



PHOTO COURTESY OF WWW.MASS.GOV

David Cash, from the Massachusetts office of Energy and Environmental Affairs spoke in Greenfield on Monday

BY JONATHAN von RANSON GREENFIELD - David

Cash, a youthful state official of personal vigor and charm, came to Greenfield Monday to present the details of the state of Massachusetts' new, "nationally groundbreaking" Clean Energy and Climate Plan. The plan projects a 25% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) below 1990 levels

by 2020 - in part through energy-related initiatives already under way.

Several audience members, opponents of a 47 megawatt biomass plant proposed for Greenfield, told Cash the state's backing for biomass electric generation was "poisoning" an otherwise acceptable plan.

Cash, in his presentation, frequently compared see **BIOMASS** pg 14

PET OF THE WEEK Still Waiting 4 U!



Emily

My name is Emily and I'm a three-year-old female domestic short hair cat in need of a good home. If you're a true cat person, you know what I mean when I say I have Cattitude. I am loving and love to be loved. I have opinions and will let you know them. I am a truly awesome love-muffin with people I love. I'll get in your lap and purrrrrrr while you scratch my head, and then I'll have had enough. This is a Cattitude special advanced skill. Not all cats are this sophisticated. I require an equally sophisticated human, a human who speaks my language. I believe we will recognize one another when we meet. I will be your only animal. To find out more about adopting me, please contact the Dakin Pioneer Valley Humane Society at (413) 548-9898 or via email at info@dpvhs.org.

Great Falls Middle School Students of the Week

Grade 6
Michelle Vassar

Grade 7
Nadia Hasan
Chelsea Perras

Grade 8
Natalie Torres

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The Montague Reporter

Published weekly on Thursday, (Every other week in July and August. Wednesday paper fourth week of November. No paper last week of December.)

PHONE (413) 863-8666
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Postmaster: Send address changes to
The Montague Reporter
58 4th Street
Turners Falls, MA 01376

Advertising and copy deadline is Tuesday at NOON.

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Local Subscription Rates:
\$20 for 1/2 Year

LEVERETT LIBRARY NEWS A Cure For Cabin Fever

John and Susan Stoffolano will present a slide show featuring the colors and scenery of Bangkok, south India, the Seychelles, South Africa,

Morocco, and Sicily at the Leverett Library on Sunday, March 27th at 3:00 p.m. The event is sponsored by the Rattlesnake Gutter Trust.

CARNEGIE LIBRARY NEWS

Homeschool Program, Moose Program for Families

BY LINDA HICKMAN
TURNERS FALLS - The Homeschool Program at the Library on Wednesday, March 16th, 1:15 to 2:30 p.m. is called Dogs Dogs Dogs.

Moose for Kids will be held at the Carnegie Library on Saturday, March 26th, at 10:30 a.m. Children of all ages and their families are invited to join

Children's Librarian Linda Hickman for a fun informative program on moose. The program will include photographs of moose Linda Hickman took on a recent trip to Alaska. This is part of a monthly Saturday morning series for families about exciting animals.

For more information, call the Carnegie Library, 863-3214.

Valley Time Trade Gains Momentum

TURNERS FALLS - Greenfield and Montague area residents are taking advantage of the Valley Time Trade as a way to promote community building and skill sharing without money. Timebanking is an internationally used tool, where every person's offering is valued equally and time is used as currency. The Brick House Community Resource Center in Turners Falls has become the "hub" of the Greenfield/Montague local chapter. People are gathering at this centralized location to con-

nect with neighbors and participate in this supplement to the cash economy.

Come join us at the Greenfield and Montague Timebank Local potlucks! The third Sunday of every month from 6:00 to 9:00 p.m. at The Brick House Community Resource Center, 24 Third Street in Turners Falls. Enjoy food, a free workshop from the Time Trade and new member orientation.

For more information please call (413) 863-9559 or visit valleytimetrade.org.

Psychic Fair

The National Spiritual Alliance is sponsoring a Psychic Fair on Saturday, March 26th from 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at Thompson Temple, across from

the Post Office in Lake Pleasant. For more information and directions, visit the TNSA internet website thenationalspiritualallianceinc.org.

Sewer and Excise Bills Due

BY PATTI DION
MONTAGUE - The second half of the Fiscal 2011 sewer use bills were mailed on February 14th, and are due by Thursday, March 17th, 2011. The first commitment of excise for 2011 were also mailed in February, and were due by March 13th, 2011.

Montague residents are able to pay sewer use or excise bills online. To pay a bill online, have your bill(s) and checkbook in hand, and then go to www.montague.net, click on departments,

treasurer/collector, online bill payments, then complete each screen to process your payment. It's convenient, fast and secure.

To obtain a receipted bill, enclose a self-addressed stamped envelope and both copies of the bill with your payment. Any new owner not in receipt of a sewer bill, should contact the tax collector's office at 863-3200, ext. #202. The office is open Monday, Tuesday and Thursday from 8:30 to 5:30 p.m. and on Wednesdays from 8:30 to 6:30 p.m.

SENIOR CENTER ACTIVITIES - March 21st - 25th

GILL-MONTAGUE Senior Center, 62 Fifth Street, Turners Falls, is open Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Congregate meals are served Tuesday through Thursday at noon. Meal reservations must be made one day in advance by 11:00 a.m. The meal site manager is Kerry Togneri. Council on Aging Director is Roberta Potter. All fitness classes are supported by a grant from the Executive Office of Elder Affairs. Voluntary donations are accepted. For more information, to make meal reservations, or to sign up for programs call (413) 863-9357. Messages can be left on our machine when the center is not open. Wednesday afternoon Bingo has been cancelled until further notice. Join us for a talk on personal safety with Lieutenant Sue Corey, Thursday, March 24th at 10:15 a.m.

Monday, March 21st
10:00 a.m. Senior Aerobics
10:45 a.m. Chair Exercise

12 noon Pot Luck & Bingo
No Knitting Circle
Tuesday, March 22nd
10:30 a.m. Yoga
1:00 p.m. Painting Class
Wednesday, March 23rd
10:00 a.m. Aerobics
10:30 a.m. Monthly health screenings
1:00 p.m. Quilters
Thursday, March 24th
9:00 a.m. Tai Chi
10:15 a.m. Lt. Susan Corey
1:00 p.m. Pitch
Friday, March 25th
10:00 a.m. Aerobics
10:45 a.m. Chair Exercise
1:00 p.m. Writing Group

ERVING Senior Center, 18 Pleasant St., Erving (Old Center School, 1st Floor), is open Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. for activities and congregating meals. For information and reservations, call Polly Kiely, Senior Center Director, at (413) 423-3308. Mealsite Manager is Jim Saracino. Lunch is daily at 11:30



The Gill Selectboard, (l-r) John Ward, Randy Crochier, Ann Banash, with Ray Purington, look over a new map of Gill's conservation lands, displayed by agricultural commission chair Steve Damon. The map is on view at town hall.

Historic Bridge Facts

PROVIDED BY ED GREGORY, OF GREENFIELD - from documents relating to the original construction of the Gill-Montague Bridge in 1937-38.

- Over the course of 16 months, 6,857,362 pounds of structural steel and 1,061,649 pounds of reinforcing steel and 8,980 cubic yards of concrete were delivered to Turners Falls. These components were engineered and assembled to construct the bridge we see today. In 1938, the Gill-Montague bridge was the longest bridge in the state of Massachusetts.
- Excluding the approaches, the total length of the bridge is 1695 feet. The roadbed is thirty feet wide, the sidewalk is five and one-half feet wide. The total weight is 30,000 tons. The heaviest steel members shipped to Turners by the Phoenix Steel Company are the 19-ton trusses set at the spring line at piers three and four.

More bridge facts next week!

WENDELL LIBRARY NEWS

Food Coordinator Hours
Saturday, March 19th, 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., Wendell Free Library, "Office Hours" with Local Food Coordinator Liz Carter. This week, I'll have information about tool shares, tool lending libraries, and garden cooperatives; and am looking for feedback on building public farm and garden infrastructure in Wendell. Contact Liz Carter at liz.k.carter@gmail.com or (360)797-4034 with ideas, or for more info.

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JESSICA LARSON ILLUSTRATION

Local Briefs

COMPILED BY DON CLEGG – Greenfield’s weekly peace vigil will join events across the country observing the eighth anniversary of the war in Iraq. The vigil will be held on Saturday, March 19th, from 11 a.m. to noon on the Greenfield town common at the corner of Main and Federal Streets. All are invited.

Baha’i of Wendell warmly invites all to share their spirit in a gathering where all traditions and faiths are welcomed. Bring your beliefs, spiritual writings, music, poetry, and come together in prayer, music, and silent meditation to assist both ourselves and this troubled planet as we gather strength to honor a healing vision of a world at peace.

This spiritual event will be held at the home of Shay and Charles Cooper, 71 Kentfield Road, Wendell Depot on Sunday, March 20th, beginning at 5:30 p.m., potluck at 7:00 p.m. If you wish, bring a potluck item, and call 978-544-2190.

Saturday, March 26th, is **trivia** night at the Montague Elks, Turners Falls, from 7:00 p.m. til midnight, featuring a \$100 prize to the winning team. Bring your own team of 6-8 people or join a team when you arrive. This is a 21 and older event. Bring your own munchies. Call Tammy at 1-413-824-2799 for more info.

“The Friends of Gill” are sponsoring an “all you can eat” pancake breakfast on March 26th from 8:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. at the Gill Congregational Church across from the common. There will be pancakes, local maple syrup, sausages, orange juice, tea and coffee.

Ken Sprankle, USFWS Connecticut River Coordinator, will review the history of the modern Atlantic **salmon restoration program** in the Connecticut River basin. The program will be held at the Great Falls Discovery Center, 2 Avenue A, Turners Falls on Friday, March 25th, from 7:00 p.m. till 8:30 p.m. Sprankle will also talk about the status and trends for salmon, as well as other migratory fishes (for example American shad and river herring) of management interest.

The **“All Cooped Up”** Concert will be held on Saturday, March 19th starting at 7:00 p.m. and features many of the COOP concert performers: Small Change, Russ Thomas, Joe Graveline, Molly Scott w/Friends, Austin and Elliot, Roland LaPierre, Julia Burrough, Kathy Chapman & Joe Pod, Mike Pattavina, Pat & Tex LaMountain, Haiku Handshake, Michael Orlen, Barry Higgins, Jennie McAvoy, and Dan Hales and the Frost Heaves. The performance is at St. James Church, 11 Church Street, Greenfield.

A **Polish Easter Bazaar** will be held at Our Lady of Czestochowa Church, 87 K Street, Turners Falls, just up the hill from Food City on Saturday, April 16th, 9:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m. Polish crafts and home-made foods, raffles and more! Fun for the whole family. To rent a table at this annual event, or for more information, contact Shirley Webb at 773-7202.

Send items for local briefs to: reporter-local@montague-ma.net.

Changes to Precinct Boundaries and Town Meeting Representation Discussed

BY DAVID DETMOLD
MONTAGUE – Seven people turned up to participate in a public hearing, called on short notice last week to discuss the possible reduction of the number of precincts and polling places and elected town meeting members in the town of Montague.

Town clerk Deb Bourbeau told attendees the state requires cities and towns to examine their precinct boundaries in light of new census data every ten years, and make adjustments to keep the precinct roughly equal (within 5%) in total population. She said John Barr, the reprinting coordinator at the Massachusetts Secretary of State’s office, had asked her, “Why do you have six precincts?” when Montague, with a population of approximately 8500, is only required to have three. A precinct may not have more than 4000 people in it, according to state law.

Bourbeau presented a map drawn by the state to show an approximate redistricting of Montague’s precinct lines to create three precincts of more or less equal population.

Selectboard member Chris Boutwell said he could remember when Montague used to have three precincts – up until the time Montague voted to move from open town meeting to representative town meeting in 1964. The town meeting act approved by the voters in that year called for Montague to have no less than five precincts and no more than ten.

“Having six precincts is costly to the town,” said Bourbeau, who calculated it would save the town about \$1600 a year to cut the number of precincts down by half. Other savings might accrue by reducing the number of

polling places the highway department has to assist the town in setting up for each election. Bourbeau said the highway department details four employees and two trucks to help her distribute election materials to six precincts in the days prior to town and state elections.

She said the town of Montague may someday be forced by the state to abandon its time honored practice of counting paper ballots from a hand cranked ballot box in favor of some mandated electronic voting machine, and reducing the number of polling stations would be a proactive move to cut down on the expense the town may someday face in purchasing such machines.

The main cost cutting argument Bourbeau made in favor of reducing the number of polling places centered on the cost of poll workers salaries, and, not incidentally, the growing difficulty of finding enough poll workers to staff six precincts. Especially in town elections, when voter turnout can hover in the 10% to 20% range, Bourbeau said the day can turn out to be a very long one for poll workers.

Reaction to the proposal among the seven people in attendance was general favorable, though a number of proposals

were tossed out for adjusting the precinct lines slightly to keep the village of Millers Falls united with more of its highland suburbs and to keep the post office side of Lake Pleasant united with the fire station side of Lake Pleasant. As it stands now, the proposed precinct boundaries would join the post office side of Lake Pleasant with the village center of Millers Falls in voting at the Montague Center fire station, while the highlands of Millers Falls and the fire station side of Lake Pleasant would travel to Hillcrest School to vote with most of the rest of the Hill district of Turners Falls.

Montague City and Turners Falls would vote in the Montague town hall. Bourbeau said the town hall was now completely handicapped accessible to state standards, with plenty of nearby parking, unlike the Gill-Montague senior center, where the polling place for downtown Turners is now located.

Bourbeau noted the proposed precinct boundaries, prepared by the Secretary of State’s office, were subject to change – and to local input – and the census numbers they were based on are still preliminary.

John Hanold, finance committee chair, (a town meeting member see **BOUNDARIES** pg 11

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE ERVING POLICE LOG

Suspicious Activity, Hit and Run

Tuesday, 3/8
6:05 a.m. Motor vehicle crash on Route 2 at Maple Avenue. No injury. Report taken.
10:48 a.m. Assisted Erving fire department at North Street residence. Water in the basement.
12:20 p.m. Assisted with motor vehicle lock-out at French King Bridge.

Wednesday, 3/9
7:18 a.m. Disabled motor vehicle reported on Route 2, west bound. Subject refused assistance and was advised he has to remove the vehicle.
8:30 a.m. Suspicious activity

All Set.
9:50 a.m. Hit and run reported on West High Street. Currently under investigation.
Friday, 3/11
1:45 p.m. Report of flooded basement at High Street Residence. Erving fire department responded.

Sunday, 3/13
12:35 a.m. Assisted Montague police with search for male subject from Millers Falls. Subject located and transported by ambulance.
10 p.m. Unattended burn on Mountain Road. Advised to put same out.
Monday, 3/14
Assistance at Church Street residence with property removal.

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Layout & Design
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"The Voice of the Villages"
Founded by
Arthur Evans Harry Brandt David Detmold
August, 2002

Photography
Claudia Wells
Joe Parzych

Distribution Manager
Don Clegg

Technical Administrator
Michael Muller

From Japan to Vermont Yankee

The Time for Citizen Action is Now

BY RANDY KEHLER

COLRAIN - The worsening nuclear disaster in Japan is on all of our minds. And when we think about the thousands of affected Japanese people and workers, it's also deep in our hearts. That's why three area citizen groups that for years have been opposing nuclear power and warning of the potential dangers associated with the Vermont Yankee (VY) reactor in particular - Citizens Awareness Network, Safe & Green Campaign, and New England Coalition on Nuclear Pollution - are inviting people in our tri-state area to join a peaceful, solemn Solidarity Vigil for our Japanese "sister reactor communities" at the gates of Vermont Yankee in Vernon, VT this Sunday, March 20th, at 1:00 p.m.

How does the unfolding nuclear nightmare in Japan relate to Louisiana-based Entergy Corporation's Vermont Yankee reactor, and whether or not it will be shut down and decommissioned on schedule when its original 40-year license expires on March 21st, 2012?

First, we know Vermont Yankee has experienced one accident, breakdown, leak, or management lapse after another for years. Remember the fire in the transformer building? The cooling tower collapse? The highly radioactive spent fuel rods that got dropped when a crane malfunctioned? The massive leak of radioactive tritium just last year? Entergy officials' "misleading" statements to Vermont officials about the source of that leak? And the continuing findings of tritium in monitoring wells near the Connecticut River - to name just a few of the many such incidents.

Second, we know that Entergy, like most other giant corporations, makes no bones about their highest priority - maximizing profit for their shareholders - which has led to cost-cutting and delayed maintenance at the expense of public and environmental health and safety. This means that even if VY is forced

to close by March 21st, 2012, when its original 40-year operating license expires, this last year of its operation could be the most dangerous of all, given its increasing age and the lack of incentive Entergy will have to maintain adequate testing, monitoring, repairs, and replacement of already worn-out components.

Third, we know the Vermont Senate voted overwhelmingly, 26 to 4, in February of 2010 to deny Entergy's bid to keep VY operating for another 20 years. (As a result of legislation passed in 2006, both the Vermont Senate and House have to approve the plant's continued operation beyond March of 2012.)

Though Entergy has mounted an expensive, all-out public relations and lobbying campaign to persuade the Vermont legislature to reverse last year's Senate vote, there is every indication - especially in the wake of Japan's nuclear disaster - that the legislature has absolutely no intention of doing that. And we know that newly-elected Vermont governor Peter Shumlin is equally opposed to letting VY continue operating.

Fourth, we know one reason why the Japan nuclear disaster weighs heavily on the minds of Vermont officials - and on ours, too - is that the 39-year-old Vermont Yankee reactor is of the same age and design as a number of the failed reactors in Japan. All are "Mark 1 Boiling Water Reactors" made by General Electric.

And as Vermont's U.S. Senator Bernie Sanders recently reported, "The containment design of this type of plant has been long criticized by federal nuclear safety officials." Sanders referred to reports dating back to 1986, when a senior safety official at the federal Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) cited studies concluding that there was a 90 percent probability of containment failure in the event of an accident at Mark I reactors.

Fifth, we know the NRC last

see JAPAN pg 5



From Libya to Wisconsin, with Love

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Budget from the Bottom Up

Thank you for the nice juxtaposition of articles about school budget meetings in the *Montague Reporter* two weeks ago (IX #22). It helped me to clarify why I felt so uncomfortable after attending Tuesday's Leverett school committee budget hearing.

Leverett was working from a top down model. In December, the administration created a "wish" budget - mostly a level services budget - including some necessary adjustments up, like more money budgeted for fuel. The meeting's goal was to bring this budget down closer to a level funded (zero increase) budget.

Fortunately, for this coming fiscal year, there were ways the committee could bridge the gap

between a level service and a level funded budget with very little change to the school. Medicaid money reimbursed to the town and allocated to the school committee, a "found" cache at the town hall of money for early education, and a past surplus of school choice money were all used to make up most of the difference. The principal had also spent time figuring cuts of \$21,000 from the \$1.69 million level services "wish" budget, and, at the school committee's direction, still came in more than \$15,500 above a zero increase budget.

At Mahar, on the other hand, the budget was created using a bottom up model. From what I see BUDGET pg 5

A Liberal Mouthpiece

I would appreciate your paper being more 'newsy' and less political in the future. Please don't turn the *Montague Reporter* into a liberal mouthpiece.

- David Sikora
Middlebury, CT

New Subscriber Thanks

The reason for me to obtain a subscription to your newspaper is due to your fantastic editorials. Thanks!

- Marguerite Sgado
Millers Falls

Local Government is a Shared Responsibility

I will not be running for reelection as a planning board member in 2011. This will close out ten years. My sincere hope is that community members will come forward.

The single most important quality - by far - in a board

member is to care about and be respectful of the present and future of our town and the people and businesses in it. All the other stuff can be learned or looked up when necessary.

I believe in local government and for that to be alive it is a

shared thing. I am still around and have offered to help the board members with research or other projects if asked to do so. Thank you for such a good opportunity to do my part.

- Deirdre Cabral
Wendell

Differences are Part of the Democratic Process

Last week's coverage of the Gill-Montague school committee ("A Policy of General Disagreement") in the *Reporter* promoted the myth (encouraged by the recent state evaluation of the district) that the school committee is so divided it "can't get anything done." The evidence the *Reporter* relied on seems to be taken from a somewhat inconclusive debate we had over whether to form a policy subcommittee. Yes the debate over the policy

committee was perhaps too long and contentious, but the reality is most committees have issues like this. When I was on the Montague finance committee we spent endless hours debating stipends (annual payments) for serving on the boards of health, assessors and selectboard. These stipends were miniscule in the context of the overall Montague budget, but they pushed a lot of buttons because finance committee members serve with no pay. And what exactly is it the school committee has not gotten done due to its internal divisions? There was not one specific example in the state report (or at last week's meeting beyond the failure to establish a potentially

superfluous subcommittee). There certainly are important disagreements on the school committee with regard to its organization, goals and the overall vision that should guide the district. But this is, after all, an elected committee of nine members in a country where there are sharp disagreements over the future of public education. We also happen to be a democracy.

Of course the committee should also put aside differences and get things done. For all our flaws, we have done that. Critics might specify whatever it is they would like to have us do more of. We can put it on the agenda.

Otherwise these complaints create the impression of a desire to stifle debate and create a school committee party line.

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

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Montague Hazard Mitigation Plan to be Updated

The Montague Hazard Mitigation local planning committee is currently updating the plan for Montague, in partnership with the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG) planning department.

The purpose of the plan is to identify natural and other haz-

ards that may impact the community, such as floods, winter storms, and hazardous substance spills. The committee will conduct a risk assessment of possible hazards that may require mitigation; assess current town hazard mitigation policies, programs, and regulations; and

identify action steps to prevent damage to property and loss of life.

The Montague hazard mitigation local planning committee will meet twice with FRCOG staff during this process, and other times as needed, to compile updated information for the plan.

The first meeting is scheduled for March 29th, at 11 a.m. in the Montague public safety complex community meeting room, 180 Turnpike Road, in Turners Falls. The draft plan is expected to be ready for public review in May of 2011, and will be made available on the town website, the town hall and at all three town libraries.

Montague residents are encouraged to share their experience with prior hazard events and suggestions for mitigation projects to minimize future loss of life or damage to property. To find out more information and how to become involved, contact Walter Ramsey, Montague town planner, at (413) 863-3200 x 207 or planner@montague-ma.gov.

JAPAN from page 4

week approved Entergy's application for a 20-year license extension for VY. According to a statement by NRC Chairman Gregory Jaczko, Entergy has met "all of our requirements and standards."

This decision was no surprise. Of the 60 applications for license extensions the NRC has reviewed, it has approved all 60.

In 2007, the NRC's own Office of Inspector General (OIG) released a scathing report exposing the NRC's review process for license extension applications as faulty in the extreme, with many of the applicants' claims and omissions going completely unexamined.

This is one reason why Senator Sanders refers to the NRC as a "wholly owned subsidiary of the nuclear industry."

Sixth, we know that in order to keep VY operating, Entergy also needs a "Certificate of Public Good" (CPG) from the state of Vermont. In fact, Jaczko said as much when he announced the NRC's approval of VY's license extension. Without a CPG from Vermont, Entergy will be in clear violation of Vermont law if VY is still operating on March 22nd, 2012.

Seventh, we know that Entergy CEO, J. Wayne Leonard, has clearly and publicly implied that if Entergy does not get a CPG from Vermont, they are prepared to sue the state of Vermont in federal court and challenge the state's authority to prevent VY from operating. Their argument will be that only the federal government, via the NRC, has the authority to do that - i.e., the "federal pre-emption" argument.

Will that argument prevail? It's hard to say. But given that in 2002 when they bought VY, Entergy signed a "memorandum of understanding" stating they would not challenge Vermont's authority if the state decided against allowing the reactor to operate beyond March of 2012, Entergy may be on weak legal

grounds.

Also, the NRC has, in the past, specifically acknowledged that while the federal government has sole jurisdiction over nuclear safety issues, the states do have the right to regulate nuclear power facilities on economic and "reliability" grounds - which were the basis for the Vermont Senate's objections in their overwhelming vote opposing relicensing in February 2010.

Of concern, however, is the possibility a federal court might grant a request from Entergy for an injunction to prevent Vermont from closing VY while a court case is being litigated, which, as we know, could take years. Fortunately, courts are not immune to public outcry - and a public outcry there would be if or when Entergy decides to ignore Vermont law and the will of its elected officials."

Eighth, we know there is a lot that we don't know and, as the Japan situation makes clear, that no one knows - particularly regarding the possibilities of an unexpected, unplanned for, catastrophic accident. Don't let anyone say such an accident can't happen at VY. It can. VY may not be sitting on an active fault line (though it does sit on an inactive one, known as the Eastern Border Fault, which runs north and south along the Connecticut River), but there could be any number of external or internal, natural or manmade events that could, like Japan's earthquake and tsunami, knock out the electrical supply or otherwise disable the essential flow of cooling water required in order to prevent a meltdown of the reactor's core or a fire in its crowded seventh story fuel pool.

One such possibility, given the increasingly extreme weather conditions brought on by climate change and global warming, is a sudden rising of the Connecticut River that causes water to overflow the riverbank where VY's highly radioactive spent fuel rods

are beginning to be transferred from the unprotected fuel pool and stored in concrete casks. Another possibility is sabotage or a terrorist attack on the exposed fuel pool, or on the reactor itself. Human error, an embrittled pipe cracking under the ongoing stress of extreme heat and pressure in a plant operating at 120% of its original design capacity, the failure of a critical component, something as simple as a stuck valve (as we saw at Three Mile Island) can lead to a cascading series of events that could put the reactor's poorly designed pressure suppression torus and emergency core cooling system to the ultimate test.

Ninth, and perhaps most important of all, there is now, more than ever, a clear need for citizen vigilance and citizen action. For too long, like people around the world, we have allowed governments and big corporations that hold sway over governments to experiment with technologies that are simply "too dangerous to fail." We now know, if we didn't know it before, that we must no longer allow ourselves and our precious, beautiful planet to be the guinea pigs of this kind of experimentation.

In short, it's time for a nonviolent citizen uprising in which we demand that our power come from safe, renewable sources coupled with measures that conserve energy and use it efficiently - making clear that we as individuals are willing to do our part to make that happen.

That sort of uprising is well underway in Vermont and the tri-state area surrounding Vermont Yankee, and now it is bound to grow stronger. As Vermont becomes the first state and we the first "reactor community" in the United States to shut down a nuclear power plant over the objections of its corporate owners and the NRC, we can be a beacon of hope and inspiration for the rest of the country and the world.

BUDGET from 4

read, two years ago every item on the school budget was looked into by the school committee, by the administration, and by teachers. I am sure there was much creativity involved in the process.

I keep waiting to see our school committee choose to go the second route - to look at each specific line on the budget. I keep waiting to hear that the teachers (who I believe are what makes a school a school) have weighed in on the budget to let the committee know what they feel could be adjusted without their teaching abilities being hurt.

It appeared to me that every comment made at the budget hearing about actually lowering certain budget items was discounted by the administration and thus, unfortunately, by the

committee. But what would the teachers say?

Even if the economy turns around, I believe there is going to come a point where the school committee and the administration are going to have to change their method of creating a school budget each year. I see very little creativity now, except in finding ways to postpone the inevitable. As committee chair Farshid Hajir said, the school budget as it stands is not sustainable.

With all the great qualities I see sitting at the table, both in the committee and the administration, I look forward to seeing what a new method of creating a budget could bring to our school, hopefully in time for next year's school budget meetings.

- Tanya Cushman Leverett

JAPAN SOLIDARITY VIGIL at VERMONT YANKEE SUNDAY, MARCH 20, 1:00 PM

In public expression of solidarity with thousands of Japanese workers and residents affected by the still worsening nuclear disaster in Japan's Fukushima Prefecture, there will be a solemn, peaceful vigil in front of the Vermont Yankee nuclear plant on Governor Hunt Road in Vernon, Vermont, this Sunday, March 20, at 1:00 pm. Vigil organizers have suggested attendees wear black, bring a sign or banner in keeping with the purpose of the vigil, and park in the Vernon Elementary School parking lot across from the plant.

All are welcome.

The vigil is sponsored by the Safe & Green Campaign, Citizens Awareness Network, and the New England Coalition.

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NOTES FROM THE ERVING SELECTBOARD

Employee Raises and Health Benefits on the Table

BY KATIE NOLAN - The Erving selectboard and finance committee met jointly on Monday and discussed the FY'12 cost of living adjustment for town employees and the town's share of employee health insurance costs. The board agreed to make a decision on these matters on March 28th.

Selectboard chair Andrew Goodwin introduced the health insurance discussion before the finance committee arrived, noting the town pays 86% of employee health insurance costs and asking the other selectboard members, "Are we trying to reduce benefits to a target number? Do we feel 86% is wrong?"

He added, "It's not a bad thing to be an employer of choice."

Once the joint meeting

started, finance committee chair Stanley Gradowski said the finance committee had voted to ask departments to adhere to level funding for all FY'12 budgets, including COLAs. He told the joint meeting the finance committee was not only planning for this year, but for the future.

"The next five years are going to be difficult," he cautioned.

Goodwin said the selectboard had asked departments for level funding in FY'12, without considering COLAs.

Goodwin said he had thought the COLA for employees should be "in the neighborhood of 2%".

He added, "There's a reality, the cost of living is going up. My feeling is we need to carefully balance being fair to our employees," with town finances. Goodwin calculated a 2% COLA would cost the town approximately \$20,000, and would help the town retain good employees.

Finance committee member Winifred Stone-Rubinaccio replied it was important to consider fiscal responsibility as well, and that the finance committee would need to know what other towns are offering for COLAs for comparison.

Noting he lives on a fixed income and "taxes go up every year," Gradowski said, "We have to draw the line somewhere. Next year is going to be worse."

Goodwin said, "If we

decrease health benefits, we're taking back from employees."

Treasurer Margaret Sullivan informed the joint meeting that Erving paid 90% of employee health insurance costs in 2004, reducing the percentage to 88% in 2005, and reduced the town's share of employee health benefits to the current level of 86% in 2007.

Sullivan observed the rate the town pays for health insurance will stay relatively flat this year, and therefore, she said, "It's the best year to decrease," the town's share of employee health benefits. She recommended decreasing the town's share to 85% and presented calculations showing a savings of \$8,348 for the town, with this decrease.

Gradowski said even if the town reduced the percentage of benefits it pays to 84%, "We're still higher than anyone else."

Gradowski said, "We are very fortunate in this town. Our taxes are extremely low compared with other towns." He added he would like to see the town paying 75% of employee health insurance costs - "more in line with other towns and the state."

Stone-Rubinaccio told the selectboard the finance committee would need "a bit more time" to consider the issue of COLAs and health benefits.

see ERVING pg 10

NOTES FROM THE WENDELL SELECTBOARD

U-28 Retiree Benefit Dispute Aired

BY JOSH HEINEMANN On March 2nd, Wendell school committee members Dick Baldwin and Kevin Skorupa reported to the Wendell selectboard on an ongoing dispute regarding Union 28 retirement benefits.

There are five towns (and four school committees - Erving, Swift River, Leverett and Shutesbury) in school Union 28. Each of those five towns pays benefits to their own employees at different rates. The Union 28 agreement stipulates that the rate paid to retirees from Union 28 is determined by the town with the highest student enrolment, which at present is Erving, although the lead town may soon switch to Leverett as enrolment percentages change.

Erving pays 86% of health benefits for active employees, and 79% for retiree plans. Erving allows for a retiree to choose family coverage, which a recent retiree from the U-28 business office did. The resulting monthly bill startled town accountants in Shutesbury and Leverett, because it was based on a rate much higher than those towns provide for their own employees and retirees, and led to protest from the accountants and selectboards of those two towns, followed by the withholding of monthly payments for the retiree's family health plan bills.

The Swift River school district, as the union's fis-

cal agent, has been left holding the bag and paying the monthly bills for the entire union, awaiting resolution of the issue with the other towns.

In January, a joint meeting of the selectboards and business managers of all the Union towns and school districts took place in Shutesbury, and agreement was reached to pursue special legislation in Boston to allow U-28 to equalize health benefits at the rates paid by each town to their own employees.

In recent weeks, Shutesbury and Leverett have decided to resume paying their bills, though under protest of the current arrangement.

Union-28 accountant Kate Woodward said the town of Leverett currently owes \$1286 for back due bills, but did not provide the back due amount that has accumulated for Shutesbury.

Skorupa reserved the town hall for the evening of April 2nd for an international circle dance. The event will feature a band, a caller, and instructions. No experience is necessary, and since the dances are circle dances, it is not necessary to come with a partner.

Selectboard member Jeffrey Pooser pointed out that earlier the same day the town hall will host back rubs in a fund raiser for Good Neighbors, so attendees can get relaxed and comfortable before attend-

ing the dance.

Paul Daniello, a project manager for the Mount Grace Land Trust, discussed a proposed conservation restriction on a piece of land Mount Grace owns in northwest Wendell known as Hidden Valley. The Metacomet Monadnock trail runs through Hidden Valley, and Mount Grace would like the Wendell conservation commission to hold and monitor a conservation restriction (CR) on that acreage. The conservation commission supports the plan.

Mount Grace would reimburse the town for any legal expenses incurred enforcing the conservation restriction, Daniello said. The CR would allow timber harvesting, which will help Mount Grace cover expenses.

Selectboard member Dan Keller suggested a joint meeting with the conservation commission, Mount Grace and the selectboard might be helpful in ironing out the details.

Town administrative coordinator Nancy Aldrich said an arrangement to buy electricity through the Hampshire Council of Governments that has resulted in regular savings for town buildings over the last few years will now also be offered to aggregated residents of participating towns, including Wendell.

The plan, which does

see WENDELL pg 10

MONTAGUE AGRICULTURAL FORUM

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Walter Ramsey, Montague Town Planner

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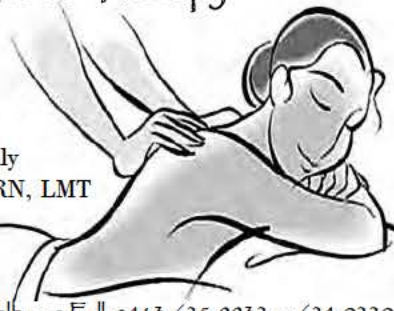
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NOTES FROM THE LEVERETT SELECTBOARD

Library and Highway Department Budgets Presented

BY DAVID DETMOLD – Recommendations by the town’s personnel board, supported by the selectboard, to back a raise from \$12.82 an hour to \$15 an hour for the 13-hour-a-week library assistant, and to provide 1½% cost of living adjustments for all town employees will lead to an increase of about \$2,000 above last year’s \$79,000 budget for the Leverett Library.

Library director Linda Wentworth said circulation has increased at the library, from 42,671 books, audiotapes, DVDs and other materials in 2009 to 44,852 items in 2010, but the Leverett Library still maintains a budget less than half the size of many Massachusetts towns with similar or larger population that circulate fewer materials. One way Leverett manages to do this is by relying heavily on volunteer support for shelving books, staffing the circulation desk, covering new books, maintaining the library’s website, and assisting with programs.

Wentworth told the selectboard on Tuesday, March 8th, “The volunteer force has a waiting list. We’d flounder without them.” Later, Wentworth said 40 volunteers regularly provide between 40 and 60 hours a week of labor to help the library flourish.

Chris Condit, chair of the library board, said the trustees had exhausted the remainder of the library building funds last year –

about \$40,000 – retrofitting the building’s geothermal heating system from an open to a closed loop system. During heavy rains or spring runoffs, the open loop system would get fouled with particulate matter from the well, hampering the system’s operating ability.

“Four out of five units are now working beautifully,” said Condit. “The fifth (which feeds the foyer) is most likely a different problem,” that building maintenance supervisor John Kuczek is working with Paul Voiland of Deerfield Valley HVAC to rectify.

Finance committee chair Don Gibavic repeated his comment from last year that if the library had installed a standard oil or gas fired boiler, they would not have been experiencing such expensive maintenance problems.

Wentworth said protests last year to restore funding for the Western Mass Regional Library System had failed to save the regional office, which had shared materials and resources for small town libraries on this side of the state. As of July 1st, 2011, the state employees who deliver interlibrary materials to all local libraries that are members of the CWMARS system – three times a week in Leverett’s case – will be replaced with drivers from a private contractor. Wentworth said she is hoping service will not diminish. She lamented the

loss of the professional development workshops and grant funded programs tailored to the needs of small libraries that the WMRLS had focused on. The bookmobiles that provide regular supplemental materials to the libraries’ permanent collections are also a thing of the past.

Highway department supervisor Will Stratford said, aside from employee COLAs, he intends to level fund his budget from last year, with one other exception. “I was afraid to level fund gas and diesel,” Stratford told the selectboard. He penciled in a question mark for that line item, but said it would likely grow by at least \$2,750 from last year’s \$22,250.

Selectboard chair Rich Brazeau noted that Governor Patrick was attempting to get a multi-million dollar Chapter 90 bond approved to assist cities and towns with highway and bridge projects.

Any added infusion of Chapter 90 funds would be welcomed, Stratford said, as, “We have a section of North Leverett Road from North Leverett Center to Moores Corner that needs to be repaired,” along with a section of Montague Road from town hall to the Leverett Elementary School, and culverts and catch basins on Shutesbury Road that need to be replaced. He added that bridge abutments on Dudleyville and Teewaddle Hill Road need work this

see LEVERETT pg 11

NOTES FROM THE MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD

Montague in the Running for Solar Incentives

BY JANEL NOCKLEBY On Monday night, members of the selectboard signed a letter of support for an application to the Solarize Mass Program, offered by the Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources.

Green Community towns such as Montague are eligible to apply to “implement a community-wide solar photovoltaics (PV) program,” according to a memo from town planner Walter Ramsey. The memo continues: “Up to four Green Communities will be selected via lottery to receive assistance to market the installation of solar PV panels on residential and small commercial buildings. If awarded, the Mass Clean Energy Center will market the program locally and issue an RFP for the selection of at least two solar installation companies (one offering a direct ownership model and one offering a leasing model to customers) to focus their efforts on aggregated purchasing of equipment in the community.”

If Montague is picked to participate, “The result will be substantial incentives available to install PV systems on Montague homes and businesses,” Ramsey said.

The Department of Energy Resources’ pilot program is an effort to “achieve a larger goal to have 10,000 homes and small businesses statewide powered by solar energy.”

Also energy related, town administrator Frank Abbondanzio reported the performance contract with Siemens Building Technologies to achieve energy savings in town buildings is progressing. Perhaps there will be a new boiler for town hall by August.

Wanted: Farmers! Fans of farmers! Fans of food! Biz savvy folks! You! The town of Montague needs more active members in two committees. Town planner Walter Ramsey is hoping an upcoming forum will lead to the restart of the Montague agricultural commission. Local agricultural issues will be on the agenda on Thursday, March 24th at 7 p.m. in town hall, featuring Margaret Christy, director of special projects at Communities Involved in Sustaining Agriculture (CISA), and Pete Westover, from the Massachusetts Department of Agriculture Resources.

Selectboard chair Pat Allen said an agricultural commission would promote “local farm related

goods and services and help resolve farm related problems and conflicts and also protecting farmland and natural resources.” She added, “It’s more than just farmers who might be interested in the commission.”

Meanwhile, the Montague Economic Development and Industrial Corporation needs more board members. The EDIC has been instrumental in past town planning adventures involving the industrial park, and is currently investigating how the former Cumberland Farms building at Second and Avenue A should be used to further the revitalization of Turners Falls. Allen summed up the role of the EDIC as “a quasi-governmental organization for the purpose of implementing local economic development projects.” Please send letters of interest to Ramsey at town hall, 1 Avenue A.

Want to join town meeting? Nomination papers are due by 5 p.m. on March 24th for all precincts.

Countdown To Closure

And a Green, Nuclear Free Future
Monday, March 21st, 7:00 p.m.
Centre Congregational Church,
193 Main Street, Brattleboro.

March 21st is exactly one year before the scheduled shutdown of the Vermont Yankee nuclear power plant. This event will feature speakers Dr. Arjun Makhijani and James Moore. Music provided by the Green River String Band. All are welcome. Suggested donation of five dollars. No one will be turned away.

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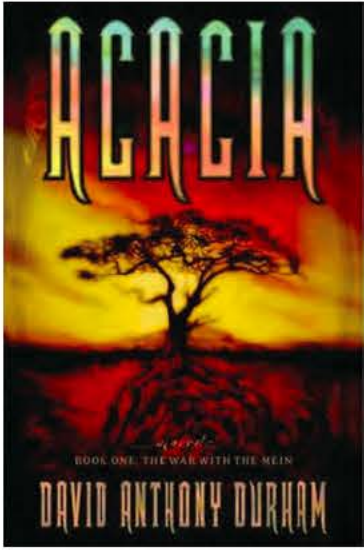


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Acacia Author at Leverett Library

BY KATE FITZGERALD – “Acacia is the book I wanted to write before I die,” said Shutesbury novelist David Anthony Durham at a talk at the Leverett Library on March 2nd. Although Durham has previously been recognized as a writer of historical fiction, he credits the fantasy genre with fostering his love of reading. “I read fantasy as a kid and

an adolescent,” Durham remembered. “Fantasy taught me to read, and to love reading. It was very much a gateway for me, and I think it is for an awful lot of people, including a lot of literary writers who seem to forget that.” *Acacia* delves into a world of Durham’s own creation, though it pulls in thematic elements one might compare to current world events. It tells a story of the toppling and reinvention of an ancient, oppressive empire, riddled with corruption. For Durham, whose first two novels are so rooted in history, the inclusion of complex, substantive themes, including military occupations and drug abuse, was no coincidence. “I wanted to tap into some of the enthusiasm for imagined worlds, but to do it on a large

scale, and with some real world complications and politics.” Durham’s first novel, *Gabriel’s Story*, published by Doubleday in 2001, is set in the 1870s and follows the relocation of an African American family from the east coast to rural Kansas. The title character, a disgruntled teen, runs away from his family and sets out on his own on the American Frontier. *Gabriel’s Story* was a New York Times Notable Book of the year in 2001. *Walk Through Darkness*, published a year later, follows a runaway slave, and the man hired to track him, on a harrowing journey from Maryland to Pennsylvania. Comparisons have been drawn between Durham’s first two novels, and Durham himself describes them as being “in the same vein.” In 2006 however, Durham’s writing took an unsuspected turn. With the publication of

Pride of Carthage, Durham abandoned the 19th century American backcountry for Ancient Rome. In this recounting of the second Punic War, Durham gives personality and soul to the historical figure Hannibal. Durham, who has long been fascinated by the tale of Hannibal, came up with the idea for *Pride of Carthage* when he was an undergrad at the University of Maryland. “I thought it would be great to read a good novel about Hannibal,” he said. “And I still felt there wasn’t one written.” The release of *Pride of Carthage* also marked the beginning of foreign success for Durham’s writing. The contract for *Pride of Carthage* was sold overseas one month after it was sold in the states, though the book had not yet been written. “It was a little disconcerting,” Durham admitted. “They knew that they liked my writing from my first couple of books, but they didn’t find the African American subject matter to be

large enough to take on.” However, Durham’s successful jump from the American frontier to the war-ridden landscape of ancient Rome afforded him the freedom he needed to break into the fantasy genre. “After *Pride of Carthage*, my editor said, “You can do whatever you want now.” I had written myself out of any box. Since book one of the *Acacia* trilogy was published in 2007, Durham’s fantasy writing has been enthusiastically received by critics and readers. The first book has been translated into seven languages, and was a winner of the John W. Campbell Award for Best New Writer of Science Fiction and Fantasy. It was also one of Kirkus Reviews Ten Best Works of Fiction in 2007. He followed that with *Other Lands* in 2009. The *Acacia* trilogy is set to conclude this fall, with the release of the third and final novel: *The Sacred Band*. Pick up Durham’s work at a library or book seller near you.

SHIFTING from pg 1 quality professionals. Franklin County Solid Waste Management District director Jan Ameen called the regulatory change, “rather confusing and unbelievable.” Ameen confirmed, “Last year, changes were made in statutory language eliminating DEP’s role in evaluating environmental data for trash, construction and debris processing, organic composting and solid waste handling facilities including incinerators.” She explained, “The local boards of health have always been in charge of permitting, but the DEP has had to write a report after evaluating suitability requirements for each site. My concern has been, as soon as a town starts hiring an engineering firm or environmental consultants you’re looking at \$150 an hour minimum, and towns will very quickly exceed the amount that is set

by regulation,” for technical fees towns can charge to proponents. Ameen calculated that fee – to be adjusted for inflation – at about \$7500. “My understanding is towns cannot exceed that amount,” she said. Ameen noted the same regulatory change took away the DEP’s oversight role for 50-ton-a-day or less solid waste sites once they are up and running, and gave that responsibility to local boards of health as well. “On one level,” said Ameen, “it’s totally ridiculous to have a town permitting and enforcing regulations on itself. Towns will start letting things slide because there’s nobody watching anymore. There’s a chance for things to backslide environmentally.” Ameen said smaller towns that do not have a full time health agent would probably also feel compelled to hire an outside environmental consultant to

oversee their transfer stations on such DEP mandated criteria as reasonable quantity and type of materials handled, fire suppression, sanitation, and the like. “The other part of the change is if a trash hauling company comes in and wants to put in a new transfer station, less than 50 tons a day, then the entire conditions compliance enforcement falls on the towns themselves,” Ameen added. “The DEP is no longer in control and the MEPA process may not apply.” Cohen raised the specter of the Diemand & Bennett construction and debris dump that operated from 1988 - 99 in Wendell. Though permitted by the local board of health, it operated under the oversight of the DEP, and yet eventually began sliding toward the Millers River, requiring a remediation effort that exceeded a million dollars in cost. The operator declared bankruptcy,

and DEP eventually picked up the tab for stabilizing the site. The change in oversight from the DEP to town boards of health would shield the state from liability if such a sequence of events were to occur in the future, Cohen warned. He’s not the only one worried about that possibility. “I am very concerned about liability issues that could arise for towns from the problems that could arise in the future,” as a result of the regulatory change, said representative Steve Kulik, (D-Worthington) on Wednesday. Kulik intends to meet with DEP commissioner Kimmell next week to raise the issue, and is working with legislative colleagues to rescind the change in regulation and “put this back with the DEP where it belongs.” Kulik said the amendment was introduced on the Senate side, and he had not been aware

of it when the budget passed last year. “It was one of those minor technical changes which has turned out not to be minor or technical. It has much bigger ramifications.” Kulik added, “Now that this is more widely known, this is simply not justifiable, especially for smaller communities that lack the expertise and the financial ability to do this. The legislature should put this back in the domain and responsibility of the DEP.” Gill town administrative assistant Ray Purington raised another point. “This could lock us into curbside pickup forever, because we can’t afford to hire the pros to handle site assessment,” on a transfer station or composting facility. “What do we have state government for, if not to handle issues that are too big for us?” demanded Cohen.

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Irish Sketchbook

A Trip to the Cottage



River Laune, Killorglin, County Kerry

BY DAVID BRULE

KILLORGLIN - Well, maise, and isn't it the truth, when these days in the middle of March roll around, that we all sprout a bit of the Green, think wistfully back on our grandmothers ("Ah, you Yanks all have an Irish grandmother," a Dubliner once most sarcastically said to me), and don't we conjure up at least a thatch-roofed cottage somewhere back in our DNA?

Not being one to turn green once a year, I determined back in '82 or '83 to make use of a scrap of paper up in the drawer of this old house. That scrap was an address, and it was on a letter addressed to my - you guessed it - Irish grandmother, from her own Aunt Hannah back in Kerry.

It arrived here at this house in the 30s, pleading for clothes and cast-off garments, mittens for the men of the family out fishing on Dingle Bay. The return address said simply: Heffernan, Douglas-Killorglin, County Kerry.

Now, our family here had no clothes to spare the Irish cousins, it was during the Depression you know, but the letter was put away and made its way up to the

drawer where I could find it 50 years later.

So by '82, I set off to Ireland, determined to find the house and the relatives from whence the letter came.

The town in the address turned out to be lovely. Down the road from Killarney, you come upon Killorglin, looking a bit like Millers Falls actually, with its bridge at the foot of the hill leading up to the center of town.

But unlike Millers, Killorglin has managed to thrive, with more pubs than you can shake a stick at, a modern post office, and restaurants a-plenty.

Of course the Celtic Tiger was good to it, but I have to tell you that now these days the Tiger has gone bust, with Ireland coming apart at the seams once again, renewing the cycle of poverty and immigration.

But Killorglin does have its place as the starting point for the touristy Ring of Kerry, and the madness of the Puck Fair in August, so I'm thinking the people there will not have to resort to living in holes in the ground and fearing the English landlords as in the past 500 years.

That first visit of mine - long

ago now - was an emotional event indeed. Once I found the family farm, it took a bit of convincing for Mary, a big woman in her 70s, to let me in the door. She had married into the clan, but after I told her the connections with old Aunt Hannah and my own grandmother's uncles, Tim and Dan, she finally accepted to welcome me as genuine.

She was the one herself who had taken care of old Dan after his return from America via Millers Falls, with both Tim and Hannah following him over to the States and back. That was the beginning of yearly trips to the homestead for me, and strong ties to the remaining family there of Mary, her sons Pat and Jamie.

The cottage itself from which the ancestors had set out was on the edge of the farm, abandoned by then for a newer stucco house with modern conveniences. Nevertheless, entering the old place for the first time, moving about the empty kitchen and seeing the hearth and fireplace, I was sent spiraling back one hundred and fifty years.

That was then, back in the 80s. This past summer, that is in 2010, I found myself out on the far end of the Dingle Peninsula. It was to be a stormy day, with the Blasket Islands fading in and out of the fog, and Mount Eagle behind us with its wreath of mist rolling and swirling about 500 yards up its sides, so there was no seeing the top of it. The roiling sea was a dark gray-green and blue, with white gannets plunging knife-like, javelins into the water, going after mackerel and sprats coming in on the rising tide. So with the t'undery showers and storms promised all day, it was clearly a day for a drive over to the old cottage.

I headed down the twisty road from Slea Head, through Dunquin, and down to Dingle Town. Then along the bay road through towns with lovely names like Anascaul, Lispoole, Inch, Castlemaine to Killorglin, nes-

tled under the towering peaks of Macgillicuddy's Reeks. I have to tell ye at this point, that it's not often you are the one to write the last paragraphs on two centuries of a family's story of struggle and immigration, but I had a feeling that this day I would have to witness that. I was pretty sure what was waiting for me at the cottage.

The Heffernan clan had come into Kerry from County Tipperary back in the early 1800s, and settled in a farming district called the Dubhghlais (transformed into Douglas by the English), probably named for its black clay-like earth. By 1890, great-grandfather James was ready to join the flood of others leaving for a better life in America. But before leaving, he and his sister Julia married into another fishing and farming family from the village, the Teahans.

James and his new wife Brigid Teahan Heffernan set off from the cottage in 1894, and made their way from New Haven to Hartford, where Brigid died, quite young still. Their daughter Hannah, my grandmother, was sent off to Millers Falls where the other Teahans had settled. Not an unusual story of immigration.

The only new twist is the one that put me back there, standing in front of the old cottage this day, four generations after the American story began, and who

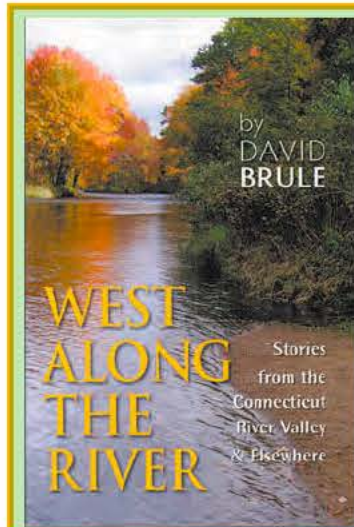
knows how many generations of the clan before that.

Well I have to tell ye that the cottage I got to know twenty years ago is now a shambles, walls still standing but barely a stone on a stone as the saying goes. The slate has slid from the roof, and the rain comes in on the kitchen and the adjoining room where past generations had lived.

The last two of the family, Jamie and Pat, bachelor farmer brothers, had grown up here before moving into the new stucco house years ago with their mother, leaving the old homestead as a barn for the hay and the calves. And now the brothers are gone too, the last of the clan and the name in these parts.

But the cottage still stands for all that, and the rest of us have put down roots in America four generations back already. The family was transplanted into new soil and there are many of us now all over the country, even though the home from which we came is abandoned and empty.

Ah, but the roses there are a grand symbol of all this. In spite of all the brambles and thorn bushes growing up to block even the front door of the old place, there's a fine rose bush planted long ago, and it'll not be denied its place in the rare sun. It's now growing high to the edge of the roof, and the swallows living in the ruins of the eaves don't mind a bit. *Dia anseo isteach!*



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YOUTH PROGRAMS

- TEE BALL** Children ages 4 - 6 Child MUST be at least 4 yrs of age before the start date of the program Proof of age will be required at time of registration
When: April 23 - June 4; Saturday Mornings
Fees: Early Bird Registration Fee: Montague Residents= \$25, Non-residents= \$30 (Last Day of Early Bird Rates; Fri, April 1)
Regular Fee: Montague Residents = \$30, Non-residents = \$35
Registrations after Friday, April 1
- ROOKIE LEAGUE BASEBALL** Grades 1 & 2 (1st Graders must have played at least one season of Tee-Ball to be eligible to play)
When: April 23 - June 4; Saturday mornings
Fees: Montague Residents = \$35, Non-residents = \$40 (Fees include hat, shirt & pants)
- ROOKIE LEAGUE SOFTBALL** Grades K - 2 We recommend Kindergarten players start with Tee Ball before playing Rookie Ball
When: April 23 - June 4; Saturday mornings
Fees: Montague Residents = \$35, Non-residents = \$40 (Fees include hat, shirt & pants)!
- SENIOR LEAGUE SOFTBALL** Girls Ages 8 - 12 yrs (Proof of age required)
Who: 8 yr olds must have turned 8 before June 30, 2010
12 yr olds must not turn 13 before June 30, 2011
When: Early April to mid-June
Fees: Montague Residents = \$55, Non residents = \$60 (Fees include hat, shirt & pants)
Registration Deadline: Friday, April 9
- AMERICAN RED CROSS BABYSITTING COURSE** Youths ages 11 - 15
When: Wednesday, June 15 & Thursday, June 16; 5:30 pm - 8:00 pm
Fees: Montague Resident = \$40, Non-resident = \$45
Registration Deadlines: Friday, June 10
- SWIMMING LESSONS** Session II
When: Saturday mornings: April 2 - May 14
Fees: Montague Residents = \$40.00 Non Residents = \$45.00
Contact MPRD to receive Pre-requisites for Each Swimming Level
Registration Deadline: Friday, March 25

FAMILY PROGRAMS

- 
- Peter Cottontail's EGGstravaganza**
Saturday, April 23 • 1:00 pm
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Children ages 4 to 12
Face painting, egg coloring, a bake sale, pictures with Peter Cottontail, and our 6th Annual Egg Hunt with approximately 5,000 candy and toy-filled eggs
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- BIKE RODEO**
Saturday, May 14
1:00pm - 3:00 pm
- ADULT PROGRAMS**
- ADULT Co-ED "B" Softball League**
ASA sanctioned.
Who: Adults; Ages 18 & Up
Fees: \$490.00 per team (Softballs = \$40/doz)
- This is an umpired league
Registration Deadline: Friday, April 15

from ERVING pg 6


The selectboard asked the finance committee to return with recommendations at the March 28th selectboard meeting, when the selectboard would make a decision on where to set the COLA, and the town's share for employee health insurance.

Board member Eugene Klepadlo, who receives wages

from the town as a firefighter, recused himself from the COLA discussion, but participated in the insurance benefits discussion.

The selectboard and finance committee also questioned tree warden William Lemieux about his expense budget request. Lemieux explained he hires a tree company to cut and trim trees, and over the six or seven years he has been tree warden

the cost of a tree cutting crew has increased from approximately \$400 per day to approximately \$1000 per day. He said he could use double the FY'10 and FY'11 expense budgets of \$6,000, but the requested sum of \$8,500 would be a step in the right direction for FY'12.

The selectboard and finance committee agreed to go with that higher number. 

from WENDELL pg 6

not guarantee savings from the standard utility pricing scheme (based on an average of the spot market price), would take effect only after approval at a town meeting. Wholesale electricity delivery would remain as is, through National Grid. If the program is approved, every resident would be included in the aggregate plan, unless they deliberately chose to opt out.

Town and Swift River School custodian Larry Ramsdell told Aldrich that clean up after a recent town hall event was shoddy, with chairs scattered around the room. Selectboard

members tried to recall what group had left the hall in that condition. One of the chair racks was buried in snow between the town hall and the police station.


The selectboard called an executive session to discuss the discipline of, or hear complaints against a public official or employee.

They resumed meeting in open session with three members of the finance committee, chair Michael Idoine, Jim Slavos, and Doug Tanner.

The finance committee is working on paying off the town's building loan early to save interest and the cost of the annual

audit required by the United State Department of Agriculture. But the money to pay off that loan at the last annual town will revert to free cash when the fiscal year ends June 30th. It may be rolled over, put into a designated stabilization fund, or invested in a CD with a rate almost equal to the USDA interest.

Town treasurer Carolyn Manley does not want to pay off the loan unless she can pay it completely.

The finance committee has yet to determine a recommendation for an affordable cost of living allowance for employees. 

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE WENDELL POLICE LOG

- Ice Hazards, Unwanted Visitors**
- Thursday, 2/24**
12:06 a.m. Domestic dispute at a Lockes Village Road residence.
Friday, 2/25
2:24 a.m. Report of two car accident on Wickett Pond Road. Accident was on Montague Road in Millers Falls and involved only one vehicle. No personal injury. Montague police handled.
2:30 p.m. Report of one car accident on Depot Road. No personal injury. Towed from snow bank.
Saturday, 2/26
2:45 p.m. One car accident on New Salem Road. No personal injury. Towed.
- Monday, 3/7**
2:10 p.m. Road boss reported a section of Wickett Pond Road closed due to culvert washout.
Wednesday, 3/9
5:43 a.m. Responded to house alarm on Jennison Road. All OK.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE GILL POLICE LOG

- Road Washout, Missing Property**
- Monday, 3/7**
6:15 a.m. Assisted with traffic control on Route 2 at Chappell Drive for washed out roadway.
7:10 a.m. Tractor trailer unit stuck at intersection of Route 2 and Main Road attempting to turn onto the Gill-Montague Bridge.
- Tuesday, 3/8**
12:00 p.m. Elderly subject on Boyle Road missing personal property from his home.
Wednesday, 3/9
2:33 p.m. Suspicious motor vehicle parked on side of roadway on Pisgah Mountain Road.
Thursday, 3/10
8:30 p.m. 911 call on Main Road. Disturbance quelled on arrival.
Friday, 3/11
11:35 p.m. Loose animals in roadway on North Cross Road. Secured same.
12:10 p.m. Suspicious motor vehicle on Grist Mill Road.
Saturday, 3/12
3:30 p.m. Animal complaint from business on Main Road. Animal secured.

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PERSONAL INJURY, WILLS & ESTATES, WORKER'S COMP

from LEVERETT pg 7 season.

Startford said a 2000 1 ton truck needs replacing next year at a likely cost of \$60,000, with sander, while the 1998 single axle dump truck with 100,000 "hard miles" on the odometer would be on the schedule for replacement the year following, at a probably cost of \$120,000.

He said the installation of a lift at the highway department had allowed his crew to more easily and safely maintain the smaller vehicles and police cruisers this year.

Startford said level funding the tree warden account for another year, "just wouldn't cut it," with the number of trees needed removal by town roads, and the rising cost of contracting for that service. The selectboard agreed to up the line for the tree warden's budget by \$6,000, to \$18,000, to give the town the ability to pay for six more days of tree work.

Before moving on to other town business, selectboard member Peter d'Errico asked board chair Rich Brazeau (Julie Shively was absent), "Do you want a budget hearing on the region?" He was referring to the regional school budget, which features a 3.5% increase in the Leverett assessment this year.

"The last time we met, we said we felt OK with it," responded finance committee chair Don Gibavic.

"The town is feeling pinched by 3.6% increases in the budget," said d'Errico. "The world is different than it's been in the last 10 years."

Brazeau said, "Their budget is up about 1%. Because of the way our [student] population is, [Leverett's assessment increased relative to] Pelham and Shutesbury's. One percent, I think, is modest."

Without a hint of irony, finance committee member Nancy Grossman said, "Health insurance is killing everyone."

D'Errico concluded this back and forth on the school budget by saying, "I'll let it go, if I'm in the minority. We're being told by our own school system - 'Why are we insisting on level funding?' We've asked town departments for level funding. I think it's a fair point."

The region has in fact voted a budget number of \$28,212,931, according to Leverett school committee chair Farshid Hajir, a reduction of \$37,519 (or 0.1%) from last year. This lower number will bring down Leverett's FY'12 assessment slightly, but will still result in a 3.5% increase over last year's assessment.

In other news, the selectboard gave town administrative assistant Marjie McGinnis the go-ahead to explore the cost of installing "on our dime" central air conditioning at town hall, to replace window air conditioners, as part of ongoing work with the town's energy services contractor, Siemens Building Technology, to install a new efficient heating system in the building.

The state's Green Repair program's requirement to include an architect and project manager for the elementary school roof and window repair and replacement project has increased the total cost of that project by roughly \$100,000. The total price tag will now run to about \$532,000, with a bit more than 51% of the cost reimbursed by the state.

A special town meeting to vote on one article - whether to approve the spending for the window and roof project - will be held on Tuesday, March 22nd, at 7 p.m. at the elementary school, with a walk-through of the building at 6:00 p.m. to look over the project area. A quorum of 75 voters is needed; and a two-thirds majority required to approve the spending. If the article passes, a debt exclusion vote will follow on Saturday, March 26th, from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. in the town hall to fund the measure.



from BOUNDARIES pg 3 ber from downtown Turners - presently Precinct 5) said if Montague City and downtown Turners were put together in one precinct, that precinct "will still have the lowest turnout."

Voting percentages for Precinct 5 and 6 (downtown Turners and Montague City) tend to lag behind the rest of town, and the percentage of registered voters in renter-heavy downtown Turners is always the lowest in town.

Referring to the proposed reduction in the number of precincts, Jeanne Golrick (Precinct 2) asked, "Does the state require us to do this?"

"No," replied Bourbeau, who said the selectboard must first approve the plan, then town meeting must also endorse it, and then the legislature will have to pass a special act to formalize the change. She added, "The General Court will probably want to see a townwide ballot vote," before passing the necessary special legislation.

Still, Bourbeau said, those steps, followed in sequence, would allow the town to have the reduced number of precincts "in place by the last day of 2011," in time for a new election of a totally new slate of elected town meeting members

in 2012.

"Along with the precinct change," said Bourbeau, "since our town meeting reps are involved, we also have another consideration. Are we going to keep 126 [precinct representatives] or shrink it down? The last couple of years we have had trouble getting a quorum," at some special town meetings, the town clerk noted. Montague has kept the quorum for town meetings at 64 - half the elected members - for the duration of the nearly five decades it has used a representative town meeting form of government, although Precinct 1's John Reynolds pointed out a quorum was not required by state law, and some towns do not require a quorum for town meeting either.

Boutwell said, "We usually have about 70 - 80 show up tops," out of the 126 elected members. Bourbeau said there are generally about 20 inveterate no shows, many of whom get re-elected every three years without opposition. She said she would consult with counsel to craft wording to stipulate that chronic no-shows would be dropped from the town meeting rolls after a certain period of time, or deprived of their incumbent status after three years, in the proposed legisla-

tion.

Mentioning other areas for cost savings, Bourbeau said, "If we cut town meeting membership in half, we don't have to feed everybody. We don't have to mail to everybody."

She noted that printing separate ballots for six precincts (each with their own list of town meeting candidates) is an added cost to town elections that would also be reduced if the number of precincts dropped.

Pam Hanold (like her husband, a representative for Precinct 5) said, "I think three precincts is a great idea. I'd rather see us go to something like 90 [town meeting reps] rather than cut it in half. I think there's a real value in having broad democratic participation." She said each of the three precincts could elect 10 members a year, and the town should "consider revisiting it in three or five years" to see how the new system was working.

Bourbeau said there were presently two seats open in Precinct 1, two in Precinct 2, seven in Precinct 3, two in Precinct 4, three in Precinct 5, and seven in Precinct 6, although the deadline for town meeting candidates to turn in ten voter signatures from their

see BOUNDARIES pg 16

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MONTAGUE POLICE LOG

Neighbor, Domestic, General Disturbance

Thursday, 3/10
6:40 p.m. Neighbor disturbance on Unity Street. Peace restored.
Friday, 3/11
10:52 a.m. Default warrant arrest of [redacted]
2:41 p.m. Arrest of [redacted] and [redacted] for domestic assault and battery.
11:30 p.m. Drug, narcotics violation on Grand Avenue. Investigated.

Saturday, 3/12
2:21 a.m. Suspicious auto on Second Street. Investigated.
9:40 a.m. Domestic disturbance on Avenue A. Services rendered.
12:01 p.m. Arrest of [redacted] for aggravated assault and battery.
9:49 p.m. Motor vehicle theft at Third Street Laundromat. Report taken.
10:24 p.m. General disturbance at the Rendezvous on Third Street. Protective cus-

today.
10:39 p.m. Domestic disturbance on G Street. Investigated.
Monday, 3/14
5:51 a.m. Report of assault on L Street. Protective custody.
10:43 a.m. Suspicious other at Shea Theater on Avenue A. Services rendered.
6:09 p.m. Trespassing on Bernardo Drive. Services rendered.
Tuesday, 3/15
1:35 a.m. Suspicious person at Basically Bicycles on Third Street. Investigated.
10:55 a.m. Fight on Second Street. Services rendered.

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ACTING from page 1

away to war – that if he did not come back she should forget about him and find somebody new.

The audience knows right away that she's been true, and the playwrights leave no room for doubt that the couple will reunite by play's end. The only question is how much fun we'll have getting them back into each other's arms again.

A lot.

The hotel is going broke, and the only thing that can save it is a favorable review – not from a flashmob on Facebook – but from some ink-stained wretch scribbling for the *Mushlin Guide*. Knowing the *Mushlin* reviewer always shows up in disguise, the hotel staff agrees to help Beatrice by putting on their finest faux French airs and doing their darnedest to impress each and every guest who arrives with that *je ne sais quoi* that spells distinction. In this, they fail utterly.

The cooks – played by Kayleigh Turn and Alicia Hathaway – make mincemeat of the *soupe de poisson* in a frenzy of paste puffery. The string quartet – Mackenzie Emery, Jasmine Richotte, Ali McKenna, and Jessica Gaines – stomps about in cowboy boots and mangles the moonlight sonata. The Irish maids – the excellent Sarah Crowell and Fallyn Adams – can't keep the brogue out of their bonhomie. And the over-achieving athletic director – Sam Letcher – more frenetic than French, simply cannot take a *laissez-faire* approach to the lazy guests.

All of this takes on a high speed, slapstick air of hilarity as those guests start arriving – the quarrelsome artist twins – Angel Renaud and Maggie Sroka – the depressed parents with their analytic children – Jesse Langknecht, Rachael Dillenback, Hayley Black and Zach Demars – the Texas rancher and his showgirl floozy – Ken Keo and Heather McKenna – the grumpy grandpa and his put-upon granddaughter – Corban Mailloux and Lauren Grimard – and start tossing rapid fire repartee back and forth with the hotel staff.

Wonderful star turns are provided by Jolina Blier – the oft married dowager trying to find

a husband for her literary niece, Natasha Vaughn, and Jesse Langknecht, playing an inspired second role as the speech-impaired Mr. Grumble Rumble.

Distracted by Langknecht's Boston accent, Blier winds up marrying him, after a droll scene in the beach cabana sparks passion in the unlikely couple, and Vaughn (who has quite a set of pipes, by the way) finds a love match in the hotel's winsome athletic instructor, in a *tour de force* performance by Letcher.

Vaughn is not the only young star who wowed us with her singing ability. Lauren Grimard emerged from her put-upon role pushing gramps around the stage in a wheelchair with a stunning rendition of "Easy for You to Say," making us wish we had heard more from her.

And let's not forget the young imps, Alyson-Rose Kilanski and Nevan Shattuck, who play the O'Banions' high spirited children. They are wonderful, and have the knack of speaking (and shrieking) in unison that really makes you believe they are siblings who have grown up in each other's company.

At the center of all this activity is Martineau, the cool-in-a-crisis matron of the Average Hotel, who tries to keep her head amid the frivolity and wildly proliferating subplots. All the time she is yearning for her husband, Boisvert, who, as we have said in years past, is so good on stage he makes everyone around him look even better than they already are. Soon, too soon, the sundered couple is reunited, and the comic hijinks come to an end. But not before the audience had fallen entirely for the players – and the play – harder than any of the finely delineated characters on stage had fallen for their mates.

Bravo to Mirin and his talented cast and crew for making something wonderful come to life out of whole cloth, rather than recycling the same old musicals we've seen too many times before. And for bringing home the realization that there is simply no need for anyone, anywhere, to put on airs.

In a town like Turners, we love you just the way you are.

**SOLAR** from page 1

the same time.

"In 2009, I generated 2.4 times more energy than I needed," said Clarke, interviewed before leaving for a New England Solar Energy Association conference in Boston last week.

"I haven't done the numbers completely from 2010, but I was a little more extravagant." Still, even with some longer hot showers and a couple of days running what passes for an air conditioner at her house in the heat of last summer, Clarke said she generated more than double the amount of energy she used to heat and light her home in 2010.

"I enjoy not wasting things. I enjoy being efficient with time and resources. My mother grew up on a farm. You just don't waste stuff."

Clarke explained her "all electric" 1152-square-foot house uses no fossil fuels and burns no wood.

"We have four types of renewable energy being generated," she noted, ticking off the specific applications of photovoltaic energy, solar hot water, passive solar design with thermal mass, and a thermal air panel.

Due to the excellent rebates that were available when Clarke built her home (state and federal rebates available for installing solar energy are changing constantly), builder Bick Corsa said the financial payback for Clarke could come as quickly as three to four years from the day she first moved in.

"Add up all the upgrades we put in: the double interior walls, the insulation, the foam beneath the concrete slab, the solar hot water and the photovoltaics, and subtract the cost of a conventional heating system in a code built house, and you come up with an added cost of about \$12,500," said Corsa. He included in this calculation the favorable rebates that were available to Clarke, building in Montague in 2008, which reimbursed her nearly \$31,600 of the total cost of the \$40,000 5-kilowatt photovoltaic panels she installed on her roof.

Clarke said rebates are not as favorable now.

Corsa also noted that a typical family of three would use more energy than a single, energy-thrifty person like Clarke uses living alone. But Corsa said even with average energy use, and

with today's rebates, a family building a new home to the same standards could expect to save back the cost of the extra renewable energy investments within ten years. These savings would accrue while at the same time producing surplus non-fossil fueled energy for the grid and cutting down almost entirely on home greenhouse gas emissions.

Besides the solar photovoltaic arrays on her metal roof, Clarke also depends on two solar hot water panels to provide hot water, with a small electric back-up heater to boost the temperature as need be.

A thermal air panel sits on the side of the house next to front door and blows hot air into the house. It plugs into a wall socket, and in the winter the sun is at a perfect angle to heat up that panel. "Once it gets to be 80 degrees in the box, it starts blowing hot air into the house. When it's colder outside, there's less cloud cover, and on clear, cold days it just pumps hot air in right when you want it."

In addition to these features, Clarke points out, "The house uses a passive solar heating style of architecture, with three major elements: triple-paned south facing windows, super-insulated walls and ceiling, and a thermal mass in the form of a concrete slab floor to hold the heat gained from the sun."

Corsa said passive solar design for New England had matured since the early experiments in the 1970s – when builders often lined the south sides of structures with floor-to-ceiling glass, causing homes to overheat in the day, and cool down too quickly at night due to heat loss through poorly designed windows. The windows on Clarke's south side are no different in outward appearance from typical windows. They come from Canada.

"The Canadians have figured out you want different types of windows on the different sides of your house," explained Clarke. "On the north, east, and west sides, I have triple-paned windows with argon gas between each of the layers, and they have an invisible metal glazing that helps prevent heat loss. On the south side, they are still triple-paned, but they have a different structure and chemistry. They harvest the heat."

American companies are catching up on window design now, Clarke said.

The double interior walls of the house are packed with 12 inches of blown-in cellulose (ground-up newspaper), and the attic is even more heavily insulated with about 36 inches of cellulose.

Corsa said the six-inch layer of foam he used beneath the concrete slab is extruded polystyrene – a compromise, but one he is willing to make despite the embedded fossil fuel energy that type of foam represents – because of its excellent insulating value between the earth and the concrete.

Clarke said there is no danger of off-gassing from the foam, sealed beneath the concrete, or indeed from almost any other product in her super-insulated home. No pesticide laden pressure-treated building materials, formaldehyde pressboard or polyvinylchloride wall or counter top coverings were used in her home's construction – although PVC plumbing pipes are present.

Her house is shaded on the east and west sides with deciduous trees. When the angle of the sun is higher, on the hot days of summer, Clarke said, "My house was 65 – 72 degrees during the heat wave. I ran the air conditioner two half days when my mom came to visit." She said, "I wanted to make sure it worked."

Her air conditioner is actually a super-efficient air source heat pump. It plugs in, and takes energy out of the air, and using a refrigerant creates hot or cold air as needed. "It only cost \$2,000. For every BTU that goes in, it gets 2.4 BTUs of energy out," said Clarke. "It's fantastic. They keep making them much more efficient. We're going to see more and more of these in the next few years. You can run the whole thing off of a wind turbine or off solar panels."

A wind turbine is one item Clarke did not choose to install at her new home. "I'm making enough electricity for two houses already." She is in the process of filling out the paperwork to have the utility company transfer the credit for that excess power to pay for the utility bill of a rental house she owns in Amherst.

Clarke said people do not have to build a new building to take

see SOLAR pg 14

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JESSICA LARKIN ILLUSTRATION

BY FRED CICETTI

LEONIA, NJ - Q. Are glucosamine and chondroitin good for arthritis?

Arthritis is inflammation of the joints. Osteoarthritis is the most prevalent form of the condition. An estimated 27 million adults in the United States live with osteoarthritis.

You get osteoarthritis when cartilage — the cushioning tissue within the joints — wears down. The disease affects both men and women. By age 65, more than 50 percent of us have osteoarthritis in at least one joint.

Osteoarthritis can affect any joint, but it usually strikes those that support weight. Common signs include joint pain, swelling, and tenderness.

Treatments for osteoarthritis

include exercise, joint care, dieting, medicines and surgery. For pain relief, doctors usually start with acetaminophen, the medicine in Tylenol, because the side effects are minimal. If acetaminophen does not relieve pain, then non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) such as ibuprofen (Advil) and naproxen (Aleve) may be used.

Many people say glucosamine and chondroitin can relieve the symptoms of osteoarthritis. In the United States, glucosamine and chondroitin are sold as dietary supplements, which are regulated as foods rather than drugs. The annual sales of the supplements around the world are about \$2 billion.

Glucosamine and chondroitin are two molecules in joint cartilage. Treatment with these supplements is based on the theory that consuming them may speed the formation of new cartilage. There is no proof that glucosamine and chondroitin help

form new cartilage.

However, there are studies indicating that the supplements relieve pain better than placebos. The pain reduction found in these studies was similar to results obtained by NSAIDs. However, NSAIDs have side effects including gastrointestinal bleeding. Glucosamine and chondroitin have few side effects.

While there are indications that glucosamine and chondroitin have pain-relieving qualities, the supplements have yet to pass a test that would qualify them to be a primary treatment for osteoarthritis. More research is needed, but recent studies are worth noting.

In one study, the combination of glucosamine and chondroitin did not provide significant relief from osteoarthritis pain among all participants. A total of 1,583 people with an average age of 59 participated in the study.

However, for a subset of participants with moderate-to-severe

pain, glucosamine combined with chondroitin provided statistically significant pain relief compared with placebo. About 79 percent had a 20 percent or greater reduction in pain compared to about 54 percent for placebo. Researchers said these findings need to be confirmed in further studies because of the small size of this subgroup.

This research was funded by the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Researchers led by rheumatologist Daniel Clegg, M.D., of the University of Utah, School of Medicine, conducted the four-year study known as the Glucosamine/chondroitin Arthritis Intervention Trial at 16 sites across the United States.

The GAIT study included an additional inquiry to investigate whether these supplements could diminish structural damage from osteoarthritis of the knee. At the end of the ancillary study, the team had gathered data on 581 knees. After assessing the data,

the researchers concluded that glucosamine and chondroitin appeared to do no better than a placebo in slowing loss of cartilage in osteoarthritis of the knee.

Another important study was done by Dr. Peter Juni of the University of Bern in Switzerland, and Dr. Andrew Sherman at the University of Miami.

For this study, the investigators analyzed the results of 10 randomized clinical trials involving more than 3,800 patients with knee or hip osteoarthritis. They found no clinically relevant effect of chondroitin, glucosamine or both taken together on joint pain.

"We need to look more closely at these over-the-counter medications that claim to be panaceas and may not be giving us our money's worth," Sherman said.

Should you try the supplements? Not without consulting your personal physician.

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



JOSEPH A. PARZYCH PHOTO

Marilyn Zelwith foreground works on a watercolor, David Sund, standing, instructs Barbara Moseley and Carl Romboletti

Art at the GM Senior Center

BY JOSEPH A. PARZYCH - David Sund began another art class at the Gill-Montague senior center in Turners Falls on Tuesday, March 15th. Sund welcomes anyone interested in exploring, or continuing to hone their skills at painting or drawing. It is not necessary to be a Turners Falls or Montague resident.

Participants who painted under Sund's direction in the past returned enthusiastically to continue their passion. Those with experience encouraged beginners.

Sund began by introducing beginning painters to the color wheel and

the fundamentals of mixing colors. To those interested in drawing, Sund offered tips on developing methods of sketching, line drawing, shading, sources of art supplies and instruction books.

He even offered tips on illustrating a cooking recipe, for a future cookbook, to show a cook wearing an Easter kielbasa bonnet while jumping rope with a super-size kielbasa. Sund did not request a copy of the recipe.

The cost for the six weeks session is \$10 for Gill and Montague residents and \$15 for others. There is a

weekly one dollar fee for paper, paint retarder, the use of brushes and miscellaneous related items. The sessions run from 1 to 3 p.m. on Tuesdays.

All too soon the first session was over and it was time to pack up. Sund encouraged participants to practice as much as they can to develop their skills. He welcomes new people to join the classes. The senior center number is 413-863-9357.



JOE PARZYCH ILLUSTRATION

Cook in kielbasa Easter bonnet jumps rope with super-size kielbasa.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE LEVERETT POLICE LOG

Identity Theft, Ice Hazards

Monday, 2/7

5:35 p.m. Motor vehicle stop on Long Plain Road. Issued criminal summons to [redacted] for driving a car with revoked insurance. Vehicle towed.

Wednesday, 2/9

5:05 p.m. Assisted with a motor vehicle accident on Leverett Road in Shutesbury. Thursday, 2/24

7:45 p.m. North Leverett Road resident reported someone used her credit. Identity fraud investigation. Report taken, bank notified.

Friday, 2/25

2:45 p.m. Report of a car damaged by a falling tree at a Cave Hill Road residence.

Sunday, 2/27

10:57 a.m. Report of a disabled motor vehicle on Long Plain

Road. Vehicle towed by Rau's. Monday, 2/28

7:45 a.m. Accident on Shutesbury Road. Car vs. town sander. [redacted]

[redacted] collided with a sander driven by [redacted] of the Leverett Highway Department. Road extremely icy, no citations issued. Both vehicles left under their own power. No injuries.

8:00 a.m. Two car accident on Shutesbury Road. [redacted]

[redacted] rear ended a van driven by [redacted] while attempting to stop at the above accident scene. Road icy, no citations issued.

8:00 a.m. One car accident on Shutesbury Road. [redacted] skidded off the road into an embankment while attempting to stop at the above accident scene. No injuries. Road extremely icy, no citations issued.

7:50 a.m. [redacted] approached the above

accident scene and reported being involved in a collision east of the accident scene with a large SUV type vehicle. SUV left the scene without exchanging any information. No injuries, road icy. Under investigation.

2:35 p.m. Motor vehicle stop on Shutesbury Road. Officer issued a criminal citation to [redacted] for operating after revocation of vehicle registration.

[redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

GMEF Awards \$3,535 for 2011 Spring Grants

BY JOYCE PHILLIPS

GILL-MONTAGUE - The Gill-Montague Education Fund (GMEF) board has awarded 11 out of 15 possible grants for spring 2011. The projects funded must enrich and support district goals and curricula, demonstrate a strong connection to improved student learning, specify clear goals, and include an implementation plan and an evaluation process.

"It is always very challenging to make our final decisions," said Sandy Miner, president of the GMEF.

The spring round of grants include:

- a choreographer for the TFHS/GFMS musical, supporting 45

students for their spring play.

- projects for students at grades 7 and 8 using clay, glaze, pottery wheels, and kiln.

- a community service trip to Kentucky - with transportation for ten high school students. Students will have the opportunity to compare and contrast their community with the community in Kentucky.

- an Exhausting science project. The grant provides equipment for 26 TFHS students to study carbon dioxide emissions from cars, providing an understanding of human impact on the global carbon cycle.

- Eyes on Owls. Gill Elementary

students will learn about owl characteristics, their habitat, and their food.

- investigating renewable and non-renewable energy sources, with Montague Elementary 5th graders and a guest instructor from the Hampshire Education Collaborative. Students will look at simple generators, solar collectors, wind mills, and water wheels, to increase awareness of the effect of their carbon footprint.

- a Pioneer Valley Symphony Orchestra concert. All 77 fourth grade students from Montague and Gill will hear, first hand, the instruments that make up an orchestra, after completing the symphony curriculum.

- "They Love them to Pieces" This grant will allow the TFHS librarian to

replace many favorite books. In constant circulation, the books show wear and tear over time.

- a Montague Elementary 3rd grade trip to Old Sturbridge Village. The social studies curriculum will come to life for 60 students visiting a replica of an early Colonial village.

- a TFHS Mural Project. Two current events classes and a painting class will team up to allow 32 high school students to paint murals in the cafeteria, incorporating art from different styles and regions of the world.

- a program for Children as Environmentalists, to allow Montague Elementary students from preschool to grade 5 to "study junk." The art curriculum will be tied with the annual

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GO GREEN FAMILY

Episode 49:

The Community Challenge - The Results, Part 2

BY JEANNE WEINTRAUB-MASON

MONTAGUE CENTER – “Next, let’s hear from Jane Robbins-Levine, who is working with not one, but two different organizations. Why don’t you explain how you ended up involved with Green Teams and Green Pioneers, Jane?”

“I am convinced the future of the earth is in the hands of our children,” Jane began, “and that it is absolutely critical that we give them the tools and skills to be creative problem solvers, to

ask the right questions and conduct research to find answers to slow down climate change. So I joined Green Northampton to help educate children in elementary schools in Northampton. Then, I discovered all the things Ruby was doing, and decided we really needed to join forces. Ruby—would you like to talk about Green Pioneers?”

Ruby Tinker, who wasn’t a panelist, rose from her seat in the audience. “I decided to start this organization, ‘Green Pioneers,’ for kids who want to learn how to do things themselves—to build windmills and plant an organic

garden and make bike paths, things like that. And then all these people wanted to help, like my brother Alex and Jayden Bartlett and the other members of this organization called Rising Tides. They encouraged me and my friends to do a presentation for the Gill-Montague school committee, and Jayden’s dad helped put up a website. Then Jane Robbins-Levine got teachers to teach us what we want to learn and money from a foundation to pay them,” Ruby said.

“Yes, I arranged for a wind energy engineer from UMass, and a representative of PV

Squared, a company that installs photovoltaic panels, to do some workshops with the Green Pioneers. I’ve been able to get some funding for this program, and am working now with some educators on a year-long curriculum that can be introduced in public schools,” Jane explained.

“I’m guessing you surprised a few people with your ideas and determination, Ruby. What are your plans going forward?” Scott asked.

“We’re going to meet with some people at the Massachusetts State Department of Education to talk about having classes and projects for sustainability in all elementary schools. And next week I’ve been invited to go on Oprah to talk about Green Pioneers,” Ruby added,

with barely contained excitement.

“Very exciting, Ruby. And thank you for mentioning Rising Tides,” Scott said. “Whether we agree with this organization’s tactics or not, Jayden and Alex’s participation in the protests organized by Rising Tides represents another strategy for working together for a greener world.”

◆◆◆

Later, when the ballots were counted, Scott announced the winner of the Community Challenge:

“Our audience has chosen Jane Robbins-Levine and Ruby Tinker. Congratulations to Jane and Ruby!”

Next issue... The Go Green Family winners!

Continued next issue...

BIOMASS from pg 1

Massachusetts’ policies with those of other states, prompting requests for the Patrick administration to focus less on what its neighbors were up to and more on the distressed planet.

“When it’s necessary today to take giant steps for our survival, we hear proposals for increments,” said one unidentified speaker.

Cash was greeted by news of an effort by a coalition of statewide and regional groups, including Massachusetts Forest

Watch, ARISE for Social Justice, Concerned Citizens of Franklin County, Stop Toxic Incineration in Springfield, Massachusetts Environmental Energy Alliance, Concerned Citizens of Russell, Biofuelwatch, and the Biomass Accountability Project pushing for a three-year moratorium on biomass electricity projects in the state. The coalition is calling for the state to continue a moratorium on issuing renewable energy credits or air quality permits for biomass plants, and to issue a statement that biomass burning is a threat to public health.

Cash, undersecretary for policy in the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA), was a skillful and humorous presenter. He pantomimed broadly to depict a missing slide and, at a challenging moment, broke off “to get a drink” (of water). He described a set of initiatives that in most places in the USA would be universally hailed as ambitious – state-sponsored measures aimed at “lowering energy costs, increasing energy independence, growing clean energy jobs and reducing emissions.” He outlined measures for more energy efficient buildings, electricity supply and transport and said these policies would reduce the state’s output of global warming gases by around 20% and also save money.

In financial terms, “A \$2 billion investment,” he said, “will yield a \$6 billion savings.”

Cash spoke of 6,000 to 12,000 anticipated new jobs in clean energy, plus 36,000 “induced”

jobs, predicted price parity between grid and photovoltaic electricity “in around five years,” and touted four gigawatts of proposed new wind electricity generation, which he said would “equal all the coal-fired plants in Massachusetts.”

The 2008 Global Warming Solutions Act was passed to curtail the state’s output of gases that are destabilizing the climate, so questioners homed in on a seeming paradox. The administration openly supports several biomass projects and includes biomass in its green energy options eligible for subsidy, yet the 2010 Department of Energy Resources commissioned Manomet Study concluded the four biomass plants the state is considering licensing would emit more, not less, global warming gases than even coal plants, hitherto considered the worst technology in terms of climate effects.

The subsidies and support for biomass appeared to some to contradict the state’s own scientific conclusions and policies.

Cash responded that Massachusetts is alone among the 50 states and the federal Environmental Protection Agency in acknowledging that biomass is “not carbon neutral” and cited the process of review that is underway. He did not explain how the Patrick administration justifies its current favorable position on biomass.

Several rose to criticize Cash’s agency for failing to require an environmental impact report (EIR) for either the proposed Greenfield or Springfield

wood burning facilities. Cash said the emissions levels projected for the plants fall below federal guidelines and do not trigger a Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act review. A second request was recently filed for an EIR for the Springfield project, based on that city being an “Environmental Justice” community, disadvantaged in all four categories considered.

Geoff Brown, a nurse from South Deerfield, said, “The plant closest to licensing is located in the poorest of the communities that were targeted for biomass.”

He said Springfield, where Palmer Renewable Energy would build, “is also the community with the largest minority population.”

The correlation, he said, between asthma and the sorts of pollutants the Springfield plant will emit is clear. He said he and other “working people... are spending their time resisting the proposed Greenfield biomass plant.” Essentially, he said, the Manomet Study is being ignored and the subsidies offered, “so more kids in Springfield can get more asthma.

Brown asked Cash for advice on how to head off this apparent injustice. “What can we do to achieve some effect?” Cash’s answer was to participate in the public hearing on April 5th in Springfield.

Claire Chang of Gill said the first 20% of greenhouse gas reductions are “ice cream – getting to 80% is the real challenge.”

Cash, a former Amherst 8th grade chemistry teacher, repeat-

edly praised the “excellent points” speakers were making, but despite his personable manner did not reveal his personal position. He was careful not to sound anti-business. He blew the horn for Massachusetts for creating the Green Communities program, which now has 55 towns and cities trying to live up to that designation.



SOLAR from pg 12

advantage of some of the efficiencies she has incorporated in her Montague City power house. “We know we’re going to see energy costs go through the roof. If you’re going to be in your house for a while, one of the smartest investments you can make is to really insulate it well and get a comprehensive plan for upgrading it so you can be less dependent on fossil fuel energy.”

WMECo credits Clarke between five and six cents per kilowatt hour for the excess energy she produces, as compared to the 18 cents per kilowatt hour residential utility customers pay to WMECo. New regulations allow Clarke to extend that credit to any other WMECo customer. Clarke said the beneficiary could pay the individual power producer back in cash, although the utility company itself will not pay cash for the excess power produced.

In any case, the numbers do add up. Corsa said, “In all of 2009, Clarke used 1959 kilowatt hours for her own needs, and produced 4,892 kilowatt hours from the photovoltaic panels. She’s sending 60% back to the grid.”



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Thrive Project, Turners Falls: *Thrive Show featuring Ginevra Fitzgerald Bucklin-Lane, Anna Burnham, Brittany Bruce, Michele Christle, Hannah Brooks Mott, Brooke Brown Saracino.* A monthly show of readings, music, and performances, 4 p.m. Free.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Steve Crow, Peter Kim & Joe Fitzpatrick,* acoustic trio - warped Americana, 8 to 10 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Rebel Base, The Colonels,* Free.

MONDAY, MARCH 21st
Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Bingo,* 8 p.m. Free.

THURSDAY, MARCH 24th
Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *And the Kids and the Pirates, Zombie Nurse,* 9 p.m. Free.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Greg Klyma,* country, folk, Americana, storyteller, 8-10 p.m.

Between the Uprights, Turners Falls: *Dan, Kip and Shultzzy from Curly Fingers DuPree* host an acoustic open mic, 8:30 - 11:30 p.m.

FRIDAY, MARCH 25th
Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *Connecticut River Atlantic Salmon Restoration Program and Fish Population Status Update,* Ken Sprinkle, US Fish and Wildlife Service Connecticut River Coordinator will review the history of the modern Atlantic salmon restoration program in the Connecticut River basin, 7 - 8:30 p.m. Free.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Span of Sunshine, The Ambiguities,* Free, 9:30 p.m.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Barrett Anderson,* renegade blues, 9 - 11 p.m.

Mocha Maya's, Shelburne: *Rupert Wates,* acoustic jazz, 8 p.m.

SATURDAY, MARCH 26th
Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Kristen Ford, Golden Elk,* 9:30 p.m.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Ottomatic Slim,* Chicago style blues band, 9 - 11 p.m.

Arts Block Café and The Pushkin, Greenfield: *Upper Valley Music Festival,* nineteen bands playing a wide variety of styles from rock to jazz, funk to Irish music, 12 p.m. to 1 a.m.

Mocha Maya's, Shelburne: *Greg Koons,* indie rock, 8 p.m.

North Hadley Congregational Church: *Profound Sound Voice Studio,* 4 p.m.

Memorial Hall, Shelburne Falls: *Piti Theatre Company* presents *Syrup: One Sweet Performing Arts Festival.* Afternoon for families starts at 2 p.m. Followed at 7 p.m. by singer/songwriter *Lui Collins,* and world renowned puppeteer *Eric Bass* from Sandglass Theater, Noho singer/songwriter *Carrie Ferguson,* cellist *Wayne Smith,* humorous songs from *Jonathan Mirin,* actor *Court Dorsey.*



Ginevra Fitzgerald Bucklin-Lane is one of the featured performers for the Thrive Show on Sunday March 20th at 4 p.m. at the Thrive Project in Turners Falls, 37 3rd St.

SUNDAY, MARCH 27th
Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *TNT Karaoke,* 8 p.m. Free.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Eric Love,* singing all of your favorites from the 60's and 70's, 8:30 - 10:30 p.m.

MONDAY, MARCH 28th
Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Open mic,* hosted by Dada Dino, 8 p.m., sign up at 7:30 p.m. Free.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *All Small Caps, A Night of Spoken Word,* special poetry night menu available, bring a friend and your appetite, 7-10 p.m.

TUESDAY, MARCH 29th
Thrive Project, Turners Falls: *Music Exchange!* Bring your instrument and play, practice, teach, learn, share. Led by Steve "Coolio" Koziol and a host of other experienced valley musicians, 7 - 9 p.m. Free.

THURSDAY, MARCH 31st
Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Housetop,* swing.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Larry Kopp, Country & City Blues Guitar and Vocals,* 8 - 10 p.m.

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THROUGH SUNDAY, APRIL 3rd
Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *Told and Retold: Art Exhibit by the Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association/Memorial Hall Museum.* Art created by Northfield Elementary School students.

THROUGH SUNDAY MARCH 27th
Barnes Gallery, Leverett: *Peace Talk: Art is the Children's Voice, Exhibit of Iraqi Children's art.* Reception on Sundy, March 6th 4 to 6 p.m.

THURSDAY, MARCH 17th
Deja Brew, Wendell: *St. Patty's Day, Bombogenesis,* bluegrass, new acoustic with some good old Irish drinking tunes thrown in, 8 to 10 p.m.

Between the Uprights, Turners Falls: *Curly Fingers DuPree's annual Saint Patty's Day bash,* 7 - 11 p.m.

Burrito Rojo, Turners Falls: *Shag,* 7 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Paddy's Ramble,* Celtic, roots, rock, 8 p.m. Free.

Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *Keeping the Oceans*

Shipsape, a talk on marine conservation biology, 7-9 p.m. Free.

FRIDAY, MARCH 18th and 25th SATURDAY, MARCH 19th and 26th
Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Country Players present London Suite,* 8 p.m.

FRIDAY, MARCH 18th
Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Lenny's Lounge,* 7 p.m. Free.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Josh Levangie & The Mud, Blood & Beer Band,* singing all your Johnny Cash favorites, 9 to 11 p.m.

Mocha Maya's, Shelburne Falls: *Salvatore Baglio and Bird Mancini,* experimental indie pop rock, 8 p.m.

Route 63 Roadhouse, Millers Falls: *Velocity,* 9:30 p.m.

Arts Block Café, Greenfield: *Leah Randazzo Quartet,* 9 p.m.

SATURDAY, MARCH 19th
Barton Cove, Gill: *Join Northfield Mountain naturalist Kim Noyes* 1 to 3 p.m. for this two mile leisurely hike. Participants aged 10 and older will observe the first flower of spring, search for nesting eagles and explore the rich geologic, natural and cultural history of Barton Cove. Pre-registration is required for this free program by calling 800-859-2960.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Rockit Queer,* the dance party, 9:30 p.m.

Burrito Rojo, Turners Falls: *Shockazoba,* 8 p.m.

Route 63 Roadhouse, Millers Falls: *Rock 201,* 9:30 p.m.

Wendell Full Moon Coffee House, Old Wendell Town Hall: *Primate Fiasco,* Richard Lent, Fingerstyle solo guitar, and Joe Laur, original songs and guitar, 7:30 p.m.

Leverett Town Hall: *Sue Kranz and Ben Tousley* will bring their uplifting voices and sweet harmonies to the Echo Lake Coffeeshouse, 7:30 p.m.

Mocha Maya's, Shelburne Falls: *TJay,* pop rock/jazz/funk, 8 p.m.

Montague Grange: *Gender role free contra,* caller Paul Wilde, music by Jeff Kaufman on mandolin and piano, Alice Kaufman on fiddle, Rick Kaufman on double bass, 7 - 9 p.m.

SUNDAY, MARCH 20th

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MARY AZARIAN WOODBLOCK

BY LESLIE BROWN

MONTAGUE CITY - Joyful signs of spring appear: the return of the red-winged blackbirds, the sighting of the first robin, early pussy willows in the swamp and the tiny green tips of daffodils amid the dirty snow.

The volume of bird song has strengthened. The titmouse and the Carolina wren call for a mate. The skunks are scenting the early morning air. Ah, spring!

In the sunroom the seedlings of the cold crops thrive, whatever the March weather, as long as it includes the sun. The small lettuces, beets and kale are a good

THE GARDENER'S COMPANION

Not Long to Wait!

inch and a half tall, with two sets of true leaves. The roots are long and thin and competing for space in the two-inch cells. They need to be repotted.

For this first transplanting I have bought potting soil, a denser medium than the seed starting mix. It will surround the seedlings and

structure better root and stem development. Potting soil will also be more nutrient rich for these seedlings, which no longer feed off their seeds.

Although these baby plants look weak, they can be grasped gently, pulled from the soil and pressed firmly into their new home. They'll start in three-inch pots, one seedling per pot.

After transplanting, they will be watered from the bottom only with a very mild mixture of liquid fertilizer. My favorite is an emulsion of liquid seaweed. I'll begin with a very mild mix of a capful to a quart of water.

Depending upon the readiness of the garden soil, these small plants will undergo one more transplanting to a five-inch pot, so that I can place a small lettuce into the ground for harvesting in April.

Suddenly, that doesn't seem so long to wait.

At the end of the month it will be time to start the sensitive crops like tomato, pepper and squash with the hope of planting in the garden at the end of May. If these plants are large, with the hint of blossom, we can look forward to eating a beautiful, sun ripened tomato in August.

It's a short season, this tomato harvest, featuring one of my most favorite of the summer vegetables.

Sadly, to my mind there is no way to preserve this pungent flavor, at once sweet and acidic. The winter offerings in the store look pretty, but even the greenhouse ripened varieties are bland and juiceless by comparison. The best, I think, are the sun-dried tomatoes. Just a handful of

these hold more than enough concentrated flavor to embellish soups, stews and stir-fry.

The heavy blanket of snow in the yard is peeling back visibly. Every evening I can look out and see something new reappearing in the yard: the stone cat at the head of the garden, the edges of the raised beds, the whiskey barrel planters, the bare ground at the base of shrubs.

There is much work to be done. March is a great month for pruning fruit trees before the blooming begins, for cutting back the broken branches and reshaping your favorite shrubs. Once the snow has fully disappeared, it will be time to rake the lawn free of twigs and human trash blown in over the windy early winter season.

Sad to say, the menace of the voles has also reappeared. Fat

tunnels of mud decorate the front yard and will develop into ankle busters for the careless in random places. I have tried with little success the treated granules that are supposed to be a repellent.

The best strategy seems to be the 18-inch battery operated poles, which make annoying vibrations deep in the voles' lair. It will be some time before these can be installed, and then the vigilant gardener will need to move them about the yard.

The first year we tried these mole and vole busters, we actually succeeded in chasing the pests off the property and into the neighbor's yard!

Good for the garden (if not for neighborly relations).

Happy early spring gardening!

from **BOUNDARIES** pg 11 precincts to secure a spot on the ballot is not until March 28th.

"How would the percentage of people attending town meeting increase by decreasing the total number of town meeting members?" asked Pam Hanold.

"We'd get rid of the dead weight that is not participating," said Bourbeau.

"Do we need to have representative town meeting?" asked Peter Golrick, like his wife a representative of Precinct 2.

Selectboard chair Pat Allen answered. "I thought that would be a good start to a charter commission," she said, suggesting the town separate the question of open versus elected town meeting from the immediate proposal to reduce the number of precincts and town meeting reps. "There are all kinds of things going on or not going on in town, and it's time to take a look at the structure of the town."

Reynolds said, "When I hear

the words charter commission I think of Greenfield and I want to run the other way. This is the time. We don't need a ten year study of town meeting." He continued, "We know we're not getting good turnouts voting. We know we're not getting good turnout at town meeting. It raises the issue - to study the government of our town - but I don't think we need a charter commission."

Boutwell said, "I really haven't thought about a charter commission or open town meeting."

Selectboard member Mark Fairbrother said, "Right now, tonight, I'm opposed to both of them."

Sandy Jensen, the only citizen who showed up to the hearing who was not an elected town meeting member or town official, said in a follow up phone call that he supported the proposed changes.

"I'm not really happy with the way the town of Montague

is working," said Jensen, who applauded the hard work of the finance committee and selectboard, but said he felt the school board argued too much and are not "solving the problem of spending money at the school."

He said saving \$1600 a year by reducing the number of precincts may not sound like a lot of money, but it will add up.

Jensen added, "I have a little problem with the Montague voting turnout." He said he always calls his neighbors on Green Pond Road to encourage them to go to the polls on voting day, but in the final analysis, "The people who are going to vote are going to vote." It will not make any difference to those people whether their polling place is nearby or across town, Jensen said.

Bourbeau said she would create a space on the town's website (www.montague.net) for residents to weigh in on the proposed changes to the town's electoral system.



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