

The Montague Reporter

YEAR 17 – NO. 2

also serving Irving, Gill, Everett and Wendell

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EDITOR@MONTAGUEREPORTER.ORG

THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES

OCTOBER 25, 2018

MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD

Southworth's Parting Gift: Sewer Rates Spew Skyward

By MIKE JACKSON

"We artificially suppressed our rates for a long time," Montague town administrator Steve Ellis explained to irate attendees during the sewer rate hearing at Monday night's selectboard meeting. As expected,

the selectboard, acting as sewer commissioners, voted unanimously to raise the main categories of sewer use rates by 71% over last year. Metered sewer customers will see their bills jump from \$8.28 to \$14.15 per 1,000 gallons on their next two bills.

Together with the selectboard

and Bob McDonald, superintendent of the town's water pollution control facility, Ellis discussed the various elements of what he called "a bit of a perfect storm" which had led to such a drastic hike.

"It's something we inherited," said McDonald, hired in late 2016. McDonald cited a cost projection his predecessor Bob Trombley had made before retiring, which he said had anticipated a 50% hike for FY'19. The borrowing on past several capital projects, including rebuilding pump stations and cleaning out a siphon that runs under the power canal, has now come due, coinciding with a loss of revenue from the shuttered Southworth Paper Company and from the termination by the state of the so-called "Montague process."

"We just kind of put it off," selectboard chair Rich Kuklewicz explained, "and we took the money

see **SEWER** page A7



JACKSON PHOTO

A combination of several factors led to this year's sudden spike in sewer rates.

SCENE REPORT

Wendell Still Stashing Away Acorns

By ANNA GYORGY

From garden creation to woodland protection, Wendell residents are active in their town center and beyond.

Some have been in the news lately opposing the Brook Road logging project, which targets 88 acres of oak trees, among others (*Montague Reporter*, October 18, 2018: "DCR Commissioner Urged to Put Oaks In 'Reserve'"). And on Sunday afternoon, October 21, many came to the Wendell Free Library to hear about oaks with edible acorns, and their use and protection in other lands.

The library's Herrick Room was full as Hendrik Brand, a visiting 33-year-old Dutch botanist and permaculture activist, discussed the history and possibilities of low-tannin acorns from the Holm oak tree as human food. These oaks are still found in great numbers in the provinces of Extremadura in west central Spain and the adjoining Alentejo in Portugal.

Brand showed an entertaining and educational 10-minute video on the subject (it can be viewed on vimeo.com; search for "Save the Sweet



GYORGY PHOTO

The permaculture garden exemplifies the town's traditions of agriculture and activism.

Acorn"), and continued with a presentation that he planned to give this Wednesday at the Ninth International Conference on Oak Trees at the University of California, Davis.

Interested discussion followed, concluding with the tasting of a non-alcoholic acorn wine from Spain.

Brand's talk completed a day that a friend termed an "harmonic convergence" around agriculture and

community action in the town. It started out that morning at 10 a.m. at the Wendell Food Forest Permaculture Garden.

Planting for the Future

It was cold and crisp at the Permaculture Garden, as a hearty group of warmly-clad gardeners undertook a final fall planting of perennial

see **ACORNS** page A7

The Week in Turners Falls Sports



DAVID HOITT PHOTO

Jaden Whiting cradles a meteoric pass from quarterback Kyle Dodge early in the first quarter of the crosstown contest between Turners Falls and Franklin Tech. The Thunder roared to a 35-12 victory over the Eagles.

By MATT ROBINSON

GILL-MONTAGUE – This week in Turners Falls High School sports, the volleyball team and football team made strides toward conference titles.

The Lady Volleyballers, who improved to 13-4 this week, are a half game ahead of the Mahar Senators in the Northern Conference. This Friday they travel to Orange to fight the Senators for the NC crown.

The football team is also a half game up in their conference, and will also take on their second-place contenders on Friday when they host the Easthampton Eagles.

Meanwhile, the injury-laden field hockey team improved to 11-5-1 this week, and as they finish up their regular season, they wait for their playoff seeding. But the big news for the field hockey team is that Ms. Cassidy Wozniak reached the century mark.

Field Hockey TFHS 4 – Holyoke 0
TFHS 4 – Mahar 4 TFHS 4 – Palmer 0

The Turners Falls field hockey team played two home games before traveling to Palmer, and finished the week 2-0-1. Last Wednesday, October 17, Powertown survived a second-half scare to preserve a tie against the Mahar Senators. Blue came into Wednesday's game with several

see **SPORTS** page A4

TAKING TO THE STREETS



GRACE ALEXANDREA PHOTO

The Great Falls Festival brought throngs once again to Avenue A last Saturday. See page B2 for more festival photos by Grace Alexandra!

INTERVIEWS

Students Help With Food Drive – and Hunger March

By IZZY VACHULA-CURTIS

TURNERS FALLS – Hi! My first article for the *Montague Reporter* a year ago was about the Gill-Montague District Food Drive, which benefited Montague Catholic Social Ministries. This week, instead of interviewing an author, I will be talking about this year's Food Drive, as well as Monte's March.

Hillcrest, Sheffield, Great Falls Middle School, and Turners Falls High School are all participating in the Food Drive, which will start November 19 and end December 14. After the food is collected, Lesley Cogswell and students will pick it up and bring it to the Montague Catholic Social Ministries food pantry.

The food they are most interested in getting are canned products and snacks. Gift cards to grocery stores such as Food City are helpful, too. This is a great way to help out MCSM because it will most

likely fill their pantry till the spring, which is incredible!

My school, Great Falls Middle School, and the Turners Falls High School are also participating in Monte's March this November. Monte's March is a 43-mile walk to help raise money for the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts. We will be walking part of the march – in costume! – to help support this cause.

I interviewed four people about the March. I hope you enjoy them!

The first two were one of my friends from Great Falls Middle School, Isabel Garcia, who is doing the march with me, and Kiley Palmquist from Turners Falls High School, who is also participating in the march:

Izzy V-C: What made you decide to do the march?

Isabel Garcia: It was inspiring, and I want to show people that I care.

see **FOOD** page A8



PHOTO COURTESY OF IZZY V-C

Our correspondent, at left, with Great Falls Middle School teacher Jennifer Luciano, who has helped organize student participation in Monte's March.

The Montague Reporter

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Exodus/Numbers

Between 200 and 300 people leave Honduras each day, and it is little wonder. The prospects for employment and safety have been increasingly grim since the 2009 military coup, supported behind the scenes by the US government. Protests are violently repressed. As in neighboring El Salvador, vast swaths of territory are effectively controlled by criminal gangs. They absorb the unemployed young; the corpses of those who resist recruitment are dumped in sacks along the roadside.

And, crucially, the agricultural sector is in crisis. The organization Germanwatch, which compiles a "Global Climate Risk Index," estimates that Honduras, with one-tenth of a percent of the planet's population, was the single territory most affected by extreme weather events between 1997 and 2016.

One by one, the country's crops are collapsing under changing conditions: rust fungus overtook the country's coffee crop five years ago, and a million acres of forest have been devastated by the spread of the southern pine beetle.

And everyone is affected by the water shortages.

An International Panel on Climate Change report released earlier this month studied the likelihood that the planet will heat up by an average of 1.5° C (2.7° F), and the likely impacts it will have.

"The number of hot days is projected to increase in most land regions, with highest increases in the tropics," the report reminded us.

"Countries in the tropics and Southern Hemisphere subtropics are projected to experience the largest impacts on economic growth due to climate change," it added, as if we didn't all know that.

"You know what a *globalist* is, right?" the president of the United States asked his supporters on Monday. "A globalist is a person who wants the *globe* to do well, frankly, not caring about our country so much.... You know what I am? I'm a nationalist. Okay? I'm a nationalist. *Nationalist*. Nothing wrong. Use that word. Use that word."

As if we didn't know. The routes to safety are themselves corridors of danger. The gangs prey on migrants, whether out of opportunism or plain malice; if there is a flow of bodies, they would prefer to profit from them. Anyone who can't afford to pay a premium to a smuggler who can escort them thanks to payments he in turn makes, is vulnerable.

Migrant advocates in Central

American countries have begun encouraging Hondurans and Salvadorans setting off through Guatemala into Mexico to band together. In the past weeks a particularly large "caravan" caught the attention of US politicians eager to remind voters that the other 95% of the world is a shithole full of invading rapists.

Our president Tweeted that "unknown Middle Easterners" were using the Honduran exodus as a Trojan Horse, and threatened to cut off aid to Honduras. The Honduran president, a nationalist former media and hotel mogul himself, deployed police to try to trap his citizens within their borders. The Honduran ambassador to the US alleged that the migration was secretly funded by Jewish billionaire George Soros.

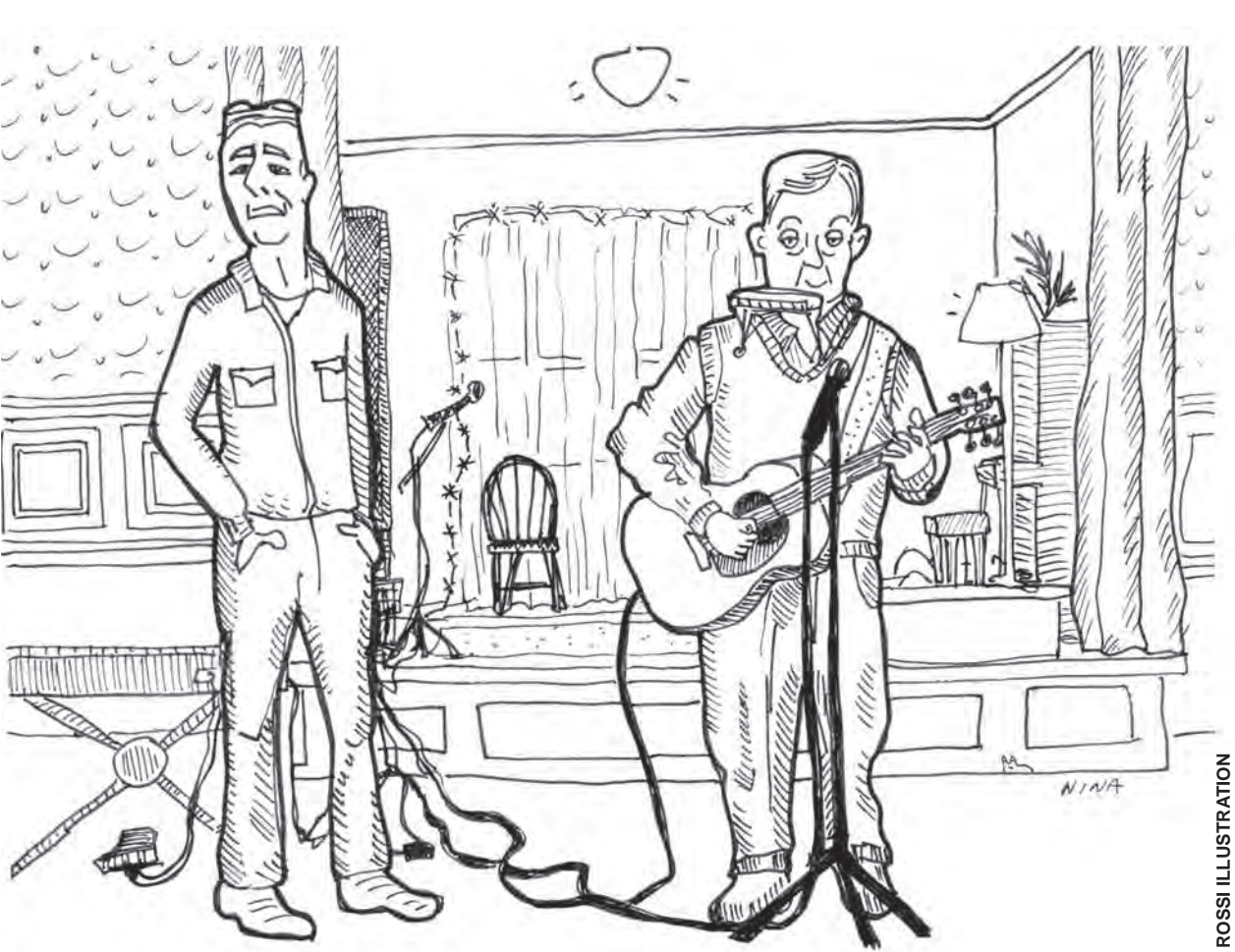
And in our own congressional district, Republican challenger Tracy Lovvorn is calling for the FBI to investigate Rep. Jim McGovern as another one of its secret organizers, because he had been to Honduras.

As recently as the 1990s, it was possible to discuss a future in which all the world's poor countries would simply catch up: all the regional kinks would be worked out, and the orderly operation of a global market would deliver universal security. That future vanished without much discussion. These days, those lucky enough to be born in the planet's garrison states no longer justify global inequity by arguing that their prosperity will eventually fund remaining development.

The reemergence of openly racist and nationalist political factions in the United States and Europe is not a *result* of the early arrival of the first few thousand refugees. Rather, it is a process of mental *preparation* for the work of containing a billion or more souls on a collapsing land base, to die on a mass scale.

Ultra-right groups in Europe have their own boats in the Mediterranean now, maneuvering to physically block the NGO rescue ships that try to save capsized African refugees from drowning. Vigilantes and Border Patrol agents are routinely puncturing and draining water jugs set out by No More Deaths and other humanitarian groups in Arizona's Sonoran desert.

The cruelty in these acts is not simply the mistaken consequence of too much political zeal; it is their essence. The real goal is not to stop a fellow human on their journey. It is to make sure that *we ourselves* are prepared to stop them – to make sure that the part of *ourselves* that is too human will never be allowed to cross into this new nation.



Host Ben Letcher readies the audience for "Tom from North Amberst" at the Montague Common Hall Open Mic on October 13.

NINA ROSSI ILLUSTRATION

Letters to the Editors

In Trusting Nature's Hand

At the meeting on October 15 between the Wendell selectboard and the commissioner of the state Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), Leo Roy, it became clear that the decision to cut down the large red oaks in a logging contract for Wendell State Forest is driven largely by the advice of the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife, the state agency that serves the interests of sportsmen.

Fisheries and Wildlife likes the 1/3-acre "openings" (clearcuts) that DCR has planned throughout the stand because they serve "species diversity" – which sounds good, but means mainly the animals we most admire (and hunt), not life-sustaining species as a "forest whole." The cutting also provides fiber – forest products.

Given the climate crisis, a wiser driver of policy for state-owned woodlands would be the global climate issue, recently returned to sharp focus by the latest report of the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). It says we're getting almost nowhere in curtailing gases that are making Earth heat up at a rate that alarms climate scientists, and should alarm everyone – even if they have a sports-hunting, bird-watching, or job dog in the fight.

It's said that "no man can serve two masters." The big oaks are reaching their optimum carbon storage potential. It's just a few oaks, but state forest policy in service to the Massachusetts forest-products or recreational economy can't be in optimum service to the living planet in its broad, essential ecological

work, including the climate.

I think what keeps the DCR – and us – from listening to the central facts of science must be a misunderstanding of the ecology of spirit. I believe our hope for salvaging our dignity, our best selves, is largely in trusting nature's hand, in surrendering significant human claim and control over the life of the wild places – oceans, inland water bodies – and woodlands.

It's an act of desperately needed relinquishment, a humbling move that I believe can reunite our increasingly fractured souls and restore our sense of responsibility to those who follow us, making us wealthy in a way we've forgotten.

Jonathan von Ranson
Wendell

Concerns About Outmoded Concepts

Last week's *Montague Reporter* story, "DCR Commissioner Urged To Put Oaks In 'Reserve'" by Jeff Singleton, while fairly accurate concerning the Wendell selectboard meeting with DCR commissioner Leo Roy, failed to note my testimony with regard to the climate crisis implications of destroying a 110-year-old stand of oak trees in Wendell.

As one who lives close to the forest in question, and as a lifelong environmental activist, I felt obliged to read into the selectboard meeting's minutes a brief excerpt from a recent news story titled "Scientists say halting deforestation 'just as urgent' as reducing emissions."

The story referenced a public statement by a group of 40 scientists, spanning five countries, concerning the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's findings. My contribution to the discussion went beyond the UN Panel's findings mentioned by Jonathan von Ranson, and focused directly on these scientists' concerns about outmoded concepts in so-called forest management.

In addition to reading the excerpt, I also pointed out that I was surprised to hear Leo Roy say "We are environmentalists, too," given his agency's dismal record with regard to climate chaos.

The term "climate" never even appeared in DCR literature or cutting plans until fairly recently, perhaps partly because I brought it to their attention a few years ago. I further stated at the meeting I was of the opinion that DCR was not up to date on the latest in climate science.

Readers who wish to see the full news story, which may not be published in the selectboard's minutes, can find it at www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/oct/04/climate-change-deforestation-global-warming-report.

Don Ogden
North Leverett

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LOCAL BRIEFS

Compiled by REPORTER STAFF

Hosting the biggest holiday feast of the year can be very intimidating. Will the turkey be dry? What about the stuffing? How do you get the golden brown skin? For how long do you cook the bird, and at what temperature?

Tessa, a turkey expert from Wendell’s Diemand Farm, will discuss all these questions and more from 10 to 11 a.m. this Saturday, October 27 at the Greenfield Savings Bank branch in Turners Falls. Drop by to sample some of Diemand’s **delicious homemade soup**, while getting the **perfect turkey-roasting tips** from Tessa.

Soup and advice come courtesy of Diemand Farm, and coffee and some sweet treats will be provided by the bank at this free event.

Calling all trick-or-treaters! Downtown Turners Falls businesses and organizations will invite costumed youngsters into their workplaces with sweet rewards from 3 to 5 p.m. next Wednesday, October 31, Halloween.

Participating locations will start at the Town Hall, and continue all down the Avenue to Cumberland Farms! Look for a bright Halloween-themed hanging displayed in

a storefront window or door as the welcome sign.

At 5 p.m., make your way to the Food City parking lot for this year’s **Rag Shag Parade**. Join in the fun – you could win a prize! Adults are encouraged to dress up and accompany their youngsters. Acting Montague police chief Chris Williams and his staff will have a watchful eye on the downtown for safety reasons.

At 5:30, the parade will proceed down Avenue A to the Discovery Center parking lot, where judges will award prizes in a number of categories. This event is sponsored by the Montague Business Association.

Twenty juried crafters will be featured at the **Hollyberry Fair** on Saturday, November 3, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., at the Trinitarian Congregational Church in Northfield.

The fair will offer an all-day brunch menu featuring doughnuts, quiche, soups, hot dogs, and more, and the extensive church baked goods table will include Thanksgiving pies, fancy coffee rings, and baked beans.

There will be Christmas tables, a candy table, and two raffles. The church table features collectible dolls, handmade hats, scarves, and mittens, and stocking stuffers. The

first 50 shoppers will receive a coupon for free coffee. For more information, call Jeanne at (413) 498-2205 or Chris at (413) 834-2469.

Nancy Ardry, a traditional native healer and storyteller with recognized Algonquin, Lakota, and Ojibwe ties and Lessert Moore, a member of the Oglala Lakota Sioux with decades of healing work and activism, will present on “**Wisdom from the Indigenous Elders**” next Saturday, November 3, from 10:15 a.m. to noon at the First Congregational Church in Greenfield.

The speakers will share their knowledge and experiences in helping communities heal and learn to protect Mother Earth. The event, parking, and refreshments are free and open to all, and the space is wheelchair accessible. To register for free childcare, contact *email@racialjusticerising.org*. The event is sponsored by Racial Justice Rising.

The Western Mass Recovery Learning Community (RLC) will be offering **free kickboxing classes** with Estelle Bonaceto at the Brick House Community Center, beginning November 6 and continuing every Tuesday, 12:30 to 1:45 p.m.

This ongoing class will include trauma-sensitive kickboxing instruction for all bodies and abilities. Estelle focuses on creating a safe, supportive environment where participants go at their own pace. The aim is toward building resilience and a sense of personal power.

Classes are free and open to the public, and equipment will be provided. The Brick House is located at 24 Third Street in Turners Falls.

The RLC will also host a **free screening of “The Departure”** on Wednesday, November 7, from 5:30 to 8 p.m., at the Great Falls Discovery Center in Turners Falls. The film is about Ittetsu Nemoto, a former punk turned Buddhist priest in Japan, who has made a career out of helping suicidal people find reasons to live.

This work has increasingly come at the cost of Nemoto’s own family and health, as he refuses to draw lines between his patients and himself. “The Departure” captures him at a crossroads, when his growing self-destructive tendencies lead him to confront the same question his patients ask him: what makes life worth living?

Join the RLC for the film and a community conversation that explores how we can come together to offer meaningful support for people struggling, while also still taking care of ourselves!

RiverCulture is compiling a **Holiday Calendar** of cultural events happening in all of Montague’s villages between November 15 and December 31. The calendar will be posted on the RiverCulture website, in social media, and inserted in the *Montague Reporter*.

To list your exhibition, craft fair, holiday concert, musical performance, theater performance or gift drive, please submit the following details to *riverculture@montague-ma.gov* by Wednesday, November 7: event name, location, address, time, price, description, and media links. Call Suzanne at 863-3200 x 126 with any questions.

Send your local briefs to *editor@montaguereporter.org*.



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Great Falls Middle School Students of the Week

Week ending Oct. 12:

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Grade 7
Carly Whitney

Grade 8
Kitana Rodriguez

Related Arts
DJ Hathaway



More Letters to the Editors

Believe It.

This should be clear and easy to understand.

Politicians are the only people in the world who create problems and then campaign against them. If the Democrats and the Republicans are against deficits, why do we have deficits? If all the politicians are against social inequities, why do we have social inequities?

We don’t propose a federal budget; the president does. We don’t have the Constitutional authority to vote on appropriations; the House of Representatives does. We don’t write the tax code, and set fiscal policy; Congress does. We don’t control monetary policy; the Federal Reserve Bank does.

One hundred senators, 435 congressmen, one president, and nine Supreme Court justices equate to 545 people out of 327.7 million who are directly, legally, morally and individually responsible for the domestic and overall problems that plague this country.

Those 545 people spend much of their energy convincing you that what they did is not their fault. They cooperate in this con regardless of party. What separates a politician from a normal person is an excessive amount of gall.

The Constitution, the supreme law of the land, gives sole responsibility to the House of Representatives for originating and ap-

proving appropriations, taxes, and other legislative directives. In the current national political arena, this awesome power is sometimes knowingly mocked.

Can you think of a single domestic or overall problem that is not directly traceable to those 545 people? The truth is that if 545 people exercise the power of the federal government, then it follows that what exists is what they want to exist. If the tax code is unfair, and the budget and national debt is in the red, it’s because they want it that way. If the military is in Afghanistan and other places around the globe, it’s because they want them there.

Politicians don’t receive social security. They’re on an elite retirement plan not available to the general population... they want it that way.

No government problem is inexcusable. Don’t let them scam you into the belief that there exists disembodied mystical forces like “the economy,” “inflation,” or “politics” that prevent them from doing what they take an oath to do. Those 545 people alone are responsible. They should be held accountable by the voting populace who truly are their bosses.

See you at the polls. It’s up to the voters to manage their employees.

Ed Gregory
Greenfield

FAFSA Day Offers Free Help Applying for College Financial Aid

TURNERS FALLS – Planning on going to college in 2018-2019? Then don’t miss FAFSA Day Massachusetts – a free event where students and families can get help filing the FAFSA, which is a federally required form for all students seeking financial aid.

At FAFSA Day Massachusetts, financial aid experts will provide families with one-to-one assistance

in completing the FAFSA form. The services are free and available to anyone entering college for the 2018-2019 academic year; low-income, first generation students are especially encouraged to attend.

The closest FAFSA Day site is at Turners Falls High School next Sunday, November 4, at 1 p.m. Visit www.FAFSAday.org to register and learn more!

So Why Baker?

Why did we elect Charlie Baker governor in our Democratic state, and should we re-elect him?

We elected Charlie for his reputation as a tough manager – yet under his watch we have an ugly salary and overtime scandal in the state police. Yet Charlie, the great manager, stays with his appointed chief to preside over the scandal-ridden department. Where is the great manager?

Well, we said it would be good to have a Republican under Trump. Really? When Trump announced that he would allow drilling for oil off our East Coast shores (including Mass.), Rick Scott, the Republican governor of Florida, screamed and Trump said “no Florida.” But having a Republican governor yielded no such reprieve for Massachusetts. So what is the advantage of having a Republican governor?

I get jealous listening to gover-

nors of California, New York, and other states declare loudly their opposition to Trump’s immigration, climate policy, etc. Where’s Charlie?

Now, we have Baker backing Geoff Diehl for Senate over Elizabeth Warren. It is his desire to have a Massachusetts senator who will vote against everything we believe – restricting guns; climate restrictions; humane immigration reform; and especially now, cuts to Obamacare, Medicare, Medicaid, and food stamps, for openers.

That is not who I want for our senator from Massachusetts, but it is what Charlie Baker wants.

Don’t take it for granted that Charlie Baker will win. Vote for Jay Gonzalez, and tell everyone you know to do the same.

Tom Wolff
Leverett

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SPORTS from page A1

girls on the sidelines in various soft casts and slings. Despite these injuries, Powertown was able to shoot out to a 4-1 lead midway through the second half. The surprising Senators, however, came back to tie the Lady Thunder 4-4.

Blue built their lead with amazing teamwork as seven different Powertown stickers scored points. Cassidhe Wozniak scored two goals, giving her 97 career goals. Paige Sulda and Kate Boulanger scored the other two. None of those girls did it alone, as Cecilya Wood, Lindsay Davenport, Jade Tyler, and Brynn Tela contributed with assists. In goal, Haleigh Greene made 11 saves.

Then on October 18, the Blue Ladies hosted the Holyoke Purple Knights. Powertown played wonderful defense in this game, intercepting the ball and fighting for it throughout. This aggressive play kept the ball in the Purple end for most of the game.

Tyler scored two goals for Blue, Sulda got a goal and gave two assists, while Wozniak got an assist and scored her 98th career goal. Greene had a shutout, kicking away all 8 shots that came her way.

On Tuesday, the team traveled to Palmer to play the Panthers.

There is no game break in field hockey when a player reaches a milestone. In basketball, when someone reaches 1,000 points, time is called and pictures are taken. But when Wozniak scored her second goal of the evening for her 100th career goal, the game just went on.

Ms. Wozniak added another within the half, and in the second, she scored her fourth goal of the game, giving Powertown a 4-0 victory. Amber Taylor helped out with an assist, and Greene had another shutout in goal.

The team finishes up their regular season this Thursday when they go to Hatfield to play Smith Academy.

Volleyball

TFHS 3 – Mohawk 1
TFHS 3 – Greenfield 0
Wear Black!

The Turners volleyball team went 2-0 this week, giving them a 13-4 record.

They went to Shelburne Falls on Wednesday, October 17 and beat the Mohawk Warriors 3-1. Powertown won the first match handily 25-15 but the Warriors came back with a vengeance in the second, topping Blue by an identical score.

In the third match, the teams were nose to nose until the final point, when Turners squeaked by 25-23. In the fourth, Turners never even let Mohawk get close, as they won 25-8.

In this game, Hailey Bogusz led the team in aces and assists, while Taylor Murphy had the most kills.

Then, last Friday, Turners hosted the Green Wave of Greenfield. Although Green came into the game with a losing record, they didn't just lie back and give up. They gave several long volleys as they desperately tried to keep pace, but Blue had too many weapons and bested the Wave, 25-11, 12, 14.

The Blue Thunder celebrates Senior Day this Wednesday when they host Pioneer. After that, they travel to Orange to play for the NC Belt.

Football

TFHS 35 – Franklin Tech 12

On Friday, October 19, Turners beat the visiting Franklin Tech Eagles in an Intercounty North Battle 35-12. The win gives Powertown a 6-1 record (5-0 in the ICN), while Tech is now 2-5 on the season (1-4 in the ICN).

Turners got the ball first, and began their first possession at their own 32. They instituted a 7-play drive, including several runs by Wyatt Keith and a catch by Jaden Whiting, and took the lead at 8:09 of the first quarter. Tech's Bailey Young blocked Tyler Lavin's kick,



DAVID HOITT PHOTO

Eagles running back Ian McClure applies a stiff arm as the Thunder's Liam Driscoll moves in for the tackle.

keeping Turners' lead to 6-0.

Tech got the ball on their own 35 and grinded all the way to Turners' 28, but a motion penalty gave Tech a fourth-and-9 and they were unable to convert, giving the Blue Thunder the ball on downs. Turners got a little breathing room before being forced to punt, and then Tech again gave up the ball on downs.

On their third possession, Turners got the ball on the Franks' 46, and drove the 46 yards into the end zone as Keith scored his second TD of the night. With the score 12-0, Coach Chris Lapointe decided to go for the 2-PAT. Kyle Dodge completed a pass to Andy Craver to increase the lead to 14-0 at 8:38 of the second period.

Turners got the ball deep in Tech's territory later in the same quarter, but their drive stalled on the Eagles' 16, forcing a fourth down. Then on fourth and 7, Dodge found Craver. Craver caught the ball, did a stutter step, and charged into the end zone to open Turners' lead to 20-0. Lavin kicked the PAT, expanding it to 21-0 with 2:22 left in the half.

In the third quarter, John Fritz

picked off Owen Bashaw, setting up Turners' next score. Keith twisted into the end zone once again at 6:41 of the third, to give Turners a four-touchdown lead.

Tech answered five minutes later, when Bashaw connected with Kayani Rodriguez for Tech's first touchdown. There was a penalty on the 2-point attempt and the Eagles got a do-over from the 1-yard line, but the Blue D denied the attempt and the score was 28-6 with 1:21 left in the quarter.

Turners added one more score, and Tech answered. Keith scored with 6:37 left on the clock, and then Ian McClure found daylight from the Tech 23, sprinting past everyone to give the Birds their second TD of the night. The 2-PAT was again denied, and the final score would stay at 35-12.

The Franks travel to Orange to take on Mahar on Friday, while Turners hosts Easthampton for the ICN title.

If Turners wins, they have the belt outright, but if Easthampton does, they earn a share of



Attention Montague, Wendell, and Gill Voters

The town clerks of these three towns have asked us to print this information, which we are providing in a combined format as a public courtesy. Residents of Leverett, Erving, and other communities can check in with their own town clerks for local information.

Early Voting:

For the second time in Massachusetts history, early voting for the November 6 State Election is now available for all registered voters to cast their ballot before Election Day. The official early voting time period is from Monday, October 22 through Friday, November 2.

In Montague, early voting will take place at the Montague Town Hall, 1 Avenue A, Turners Falls in the office of the town clerk. Early voting is held during normal business hours. For public convenience, Montague has decided to add weekend hours on Saturday, October 27 from 8 a.m. to noon. Hours to vote early in Montague are:

- Thursday, October 25: 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.
- Friday, October 26: Town hall closed
- Saturday, October 27: 8 a.m. to noon
- Monday, October 29: 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.
- Tuesday, October 30: 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

Absentee Ballots:

Absentee ballots are now available at the town clerk's offices for the November 6 State Election. The deadline to apply for an absentee ballot is noon on Monday, November 5.

To vote absentee, you must be out of town on the day of the election, have a religious belief that prohibits

you from being at the polls, or have a physical disability that prevents you from going to the polls. All absentee ballots must be returned to the town clerk's office by the close of the polls on November 6. To download an absentee ballot application, go to: www.sec.state.ma.us/ele/

In Montague, the polls will be open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. on November 6. Town hall hours are Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays from

- Wednesday, October 31: 8:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m.
- Thursday, November 1: 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.
- Friday, November 2: Town hall closed

In Wendell, early voting in person is also available during the town clerk's regularly scheduled office hours. These hours include Monday, Friday, and Saturday mornings from 9 a.m. to noon, and Wednesday evenings from 6 to 9 p.m. Anyone who cannot get to the Town Clerk's Office during these office hours may call and arrange a more convenient time between Oct. 22 and Nov. 2.

Voters who choose to vote early by mail must first submit an application. Applications are available at the town clerk's office, or online at www.sec.state.ma.us/ele/elepdf/2018-Early-Ballot-Application.pdf. Voters who choose to vote in person do not need to fill out an application, but their name and address must be listed on the current Wendell voter list.

In Gill, the official early voting site is the Gill

Town Hall at 325 Main Road. The site will be open for early voting Mondays through Thursdays, October 22 through November 1. On Tuesdays through Thursdays, the hours will be 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. On Mondays, October 22 and October 29, the early voting hours will be extended from 1 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. Also, there will be the addition of Saturday hours this year, from 9 a.m. to noon on October 27.

These hours will be posted on the bulletin board outside Town Hall, as well as on gillmass.org. Please call the town clerk at 863-8103 if you have any questions:

- Thursday, October 25: 1 to 4 p.m.
- Friday, October 26: Town hall closed.
- Saturday, October 27: 9 a.m. to noon
- Monday, October 29: 1 to 6:30 p.m.
- Tuesday, October 30: 1 to 4 p.m.
- Wednesday, October 31: 1 to 4 p.m.
- Thursday, November 1: 1 to 4 p.m.
- Friday, November 2: Town hall closed.

they will be removed from their envelopes and tallied by an Election Official. Call the town clerk for more information at (978) 544-3395 x2.

In Gill, absentee ballots for the November 6 State Election are now available in the town clerk's office. If you have any questions about the election or your registration, please contact the clerk's office at 413-863-8103.

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NOTES FROM THE WENDELL SELECTBOARD

Community Solar Project Hits a Snag At Power Substation

By JOSH HEINEMANN

In response to vocal opposition to a planned logging operation near Wickett Pond in the Wendell state forest, the Wendell selectboard invited DCR commissioner Leo Roy and director of forest stewardship Peter Church to attend their October 17 meeting. Both came.

The board anticipated a large turnout of citizens, and so changed the meeting location from the selectboard office to the town hall to accommodate them. That was a good decision. At least 50 citizens came to the town hall for this part of the meeting, which Dan Keller, as chair, clarified was not a public hearing, but rather part of a regular selectboard meeting, which is, as always, open to the public.

The DCR presence was scheduled for a half hour, with Don Stone and Zachary Swan scheduled for 7:30, but citizen participation, questions, comments, and answers delayed the remainder of selectboard business until 8 p.m. (Jeff Singleton covered the state forest discussion for the October 18 *Montague Reporter*.)

The noise of people putting chairs away and talking as they left the hall made it hard to hear for the first few minutes of the continued meeting.

Community Solar

For two years, Stone has been working with Northeast Solar to create a small, 2-kilowatt, community solar farm for residents whose homes are not appropriate for solar panels. Those people can join the coop, pay for panels at the community project, and get the same benefits as if the panels were on their own property.

State law limited the size of the project, and wetland concerns limited it further. The proposed project is relatively small, and takes advantage of a three-phase electric line that goes from Wendell Depot to Locke Hill. Stone and Northeast Solar have gone all the way through the permitting process, and are ready to start construction.

The community solar project, a similar-sized solar farm at 107 Wendell Depot Road, and a proposed 11-acre project on Locke Hill Road would all take advantage of an upgrade to the Wendell Depot electric substation that was made to accommodate a heat-to-electricity-generation project at the Erving Paper mill.

At last week's meeting, Stone said that a large, 5- to 10-megawatt solar farm proposal has pushed aside the Wendell projects and put itself first in line to use all of the substation's excess capacity. This project has not gone through any permitting process, and exists only as a "place holder," but because of its size it has shunted aside the community solar proposal.

In order to proceed, the com-

munity solar project would now have to pay for another upgrade to the substation, at a cost of several million dollars, making it financially unviable.

Stone asked board members to sign a letter to state representative Susannah Whipps asking for intervention that would allow the project to happen. Board members agreed, and will send a similar letter to National Grid.

Energy chair Nan Riebschlaeger added that the project would keep money circulating in town, and not send it away into the void.

Assessors Anna Seeger and Luke Doody and finance committee members Robin Heubel and Al McIntire met the selectboard to discuss taxes on solar installations in general. The community solar and Wendell Depot Road projects had already made fixed PILOT (payment in lieu of taxes) arrangements before the state created guidelines, but there is no arrangement for the Lockes Village Road proposal. Massachusetts has caught up and is now recommending a \$7,500 per megawatt PILOT payment, with a 2% annual escalation.

With no arrangement in place with the town, a solar farm can be taxed as personal property, and the cost of solar panels is still high enough to make that too expensive. The fin com will continue looking for an appropriate tax arrangement.

Other Business

The owner of a dog for whom a dog hearing was scheduled did not pick up a certified letter sent to her, and did not attend the scheduled hearing. Animal control officer Maggie Houghton did attend.

The hearing was continued to the next scheduled meeting, October 31, and it is hoped that police chief Ed Chase will deliver the owner the letter in person.

Houghton, whose department has no budget of its own, submitted a \$110 bill for rabies testing of a cat with human exposure.

Rural Commonwealth co-director Beth Bandi sent Wendell a letter for the selectboard to sign asking for an increase in PILOT and other payments which the state pays at less than the agreed amounts, or fair and reasonable amounts. The selectboard signed and forwarded the letter.

When Dennis Hudson tried to remove the black stains from the floor of the town hall, he realized they went too deep for him to eliminate them. He believes they came from rusty water dripping from the legs of chairs returned wet after a rental.

"Maybe we should go out of the [rental] business," board member Christine Heard said. Chairs have been rented for 20 cents apiece per day.

Good Neighbors donated \$500 for their normal use of the town hall, and another \$500 for the kitchen.

NOTES FROM THE GILL-MONTAGUE SCHOOL COMMITTEE

MCAS, MASC, Mascot...

By MIKE JACKSON

GILL-MONTAGUE – Tuesday night's regional school committee meeting covered a range of topics, ranging from a closer look at standardized test results to confusion over how members are to reimburse travel expenses.

Hillcrest Elementary principal Sarah Burstein has outlined her concerns over her school's use as a Montague voting location each election day. One-third of the town, Precincts 3 and 4, vote at Hillcrest, and Burstein listed a range of problems ranging from loss of space, additional staffing, dangerous parking, and inappropriate restrooms to security issues and "a climate of anxiety" for students and staff.

The committee agreed to support her, and pursue another arrangement with the town in the future. "This has been going on since they built the school," said Gill member Bill Tomb. "I think the town needs to rectify the situation, and stop impinging on the school district."

Turners Falls High School teacher Jessica Vachula-Curtis announced that she and fellow teacher Jen Luciano are organizing student participation in one leg of Monte's March, a fundraiser for the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts.

About 45 middle and high school students have signed up to walk an 8-mile stretch of the March from Amherst to Sunderland on Tuesday, November 20.

"We'll be wearing some blue Turners Falls hats, and you can stop us if you see us," Vachula-Curtis said. Information about donation is available on the schools' Facebook pages. Superintendent Michael Sullivan said he planned to march in the district's contingent as well.

Montague member Heather Katsoulis reported that she had met with Sullivan, high school principal Annie Leonard, athletic director Adam Graves, and four high school students to narrow a set of proposed logos for the school's new nickname, the "Turners Falls Thunder," down to six.

The students plan to informally poll their peers, and the group will meet again on Monday to further narrow down the set and determine a plan to have the student body vote on finalists.

"I think they really want to get it done so they can start using it," Katsoulis said.

Standardized Testing

Christine Limoges, director of elementary teaching and learning, and Sullivan gave a presentation analyzing district students' recent performance on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) test.

Students are measured, in each grade and each subject, by their cohort's own "growth percentage" over the previous year, and by their performance relative to statewide averages.

Under a new formula, these two factors are combined with absenteeism and, at the secondary level, graduation rates to create new accountability ratings for the schools and districts.

This has resulted in Sheffield Elementary being judged to be "meeting targets," with Gill and Great Falls Middle School "partially meeting targets," due to low math scores in Gill's case and growth declines in every subject at the middle school.

If fewer than 95% of students in any designated "subgroup" take the MCAS, a school is judged in need of "focused/targeted support." Three of the 29 "high needs" students at Turners Falls High School did not take the test last year, triggering this ranking.

"There's a story, we understand, with each of those students," Sullivan said. "In fact, one of them was an out-of-district placement, and we didn't have the ability to test the student, but we're still responsible for them."

Districtwide, a similar happenstance – 2 of the 20 Latino students in the fifth, eighth, and tenth grades not taking the science test – resulted in Gill-Montague as a whole being judged in need of "focused/targeted support."

"Can we hope that we're laying the foundation at Sheffield?" asked Cassie Damkoehler of Montague. "I'm wondering if we can hope that in the coming years we'll see that growth at the middle school and high school level."

"It's really important that we are teaching the standards," Limoges agreed.

Therefore Be It Resolved

Four of the committee's nine members plan to attend the annual conference of the Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC) from November 7 to 10 in Hyannis. Katsoulis is the committee's official representative, delegated to vote during the association's annual meeting during the conference.

This year, MASC is considering nine resolutions, or statements of its position, and on Tuesday night the Gill-Montague committee reviewed them and determined how Katsoulis would be instructed to vote.

These included that MASC "rejects the notion of providing firearms to any educators"; calls for a working group to support small and rural districts; opposes combining the federal Departments of Education and Labor; wants state law to change so that regional transit authorities can bid on school bus routes; feels any private school or homeschool entity that receives public funding should be held to the same standards as public schools; supports "evidence-based" rather than "abstinence-only" sex ed; supports legislation to protect LGBTQ students; wants public schools to get revenue from sports gambling if it is legalized; and supports laws requiring that families of special ed students be able to access all assessments before forming individual education plans (IEPs).

All nine resolutions were approved by unanimous, 8-0, votes. (Montague member April Reipold was not present.)

The school committee spent some time in a procedural quandary concerning reimbursement of members' travel expenses to Hyannis. The way district policy is written, the committee must approve members' travel as eligible for reimbursement before it occurs. Tuesday's meeting was the last scheduled before the conference, which caused two problems: the vote had not been placed on the agenda prior to the meeting; and members may not vote in favor of their own reimbursement, but only four other members were present, not enough to carry a motion in any case.

Montague's Jen Lively suggested holding four separate votes, as a way of skirting the latter issue. Mike Langknecht said that in his reading, the vote need only be taken before the reimbursement occurs, not the travel, given that the funds were already available in the budget.

Katsoulis disagreed, but suggested the policy needed to be rewritten, as it seemed to contradict state regulation. The scope of the discussion widened as Jane Oakes pointed out that the committee never voted to authorize its members to actually attend MASC conferences, but probably should do so.

In the end, the relieved committee unanimously approved its four members to travel, but not yet to be reimbursed for doing so.

Other Business

A new subcommittee specializing in district finances was formed. Langknecht, Oakes, and Timmie Smith were appointed as members.

Smith signaled reluctance to join, eventually acquiescing under Oakes' chipper pressure but refusing a nomination as chair. "The chair, unfortunately, takes the minutes," she explained.

"If it were between that and not having [the subcommittee], I'm happy to take on an administrative chunk of that," said Langknecht, who had also first proposed the idea.

By a unanimous vote the committee authorized business manager Joanne Blier to work with her counterparts around the county to prepare bid specifications for a 5-year transportation contract. The goal this time is to devise a "true joint bid," in which individual districts will not be offered their own prices and cannot opt out.

Sullivan reported back from a meeting of the regional "Rural Schools" group, which learned how the state was disbursing a new \$1.5 million pot of "Rural Schools Aid." As it turns out, Gill-Montague is home to nearly 25 students per square mile (though not all enroll in the district), and the aid will only go to districts with under 21.

Consultants hired to study possible collaborations or mergers among the Gill-Montague, Pioneer Regional and Franklin Technical districts have been focusing on supporting Pioneer in its fiscal crisis. They have prepared a report on the districts' separate projected futures, and are beginning to discuss models of collaboration.

The committee voted, unanimously, to publicly oppose a new request by the Pioneer Valley Chinese Immersion Charter School to double its permitted enrollment, and to sign a letter to the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education stating as much. The letter argues that raising the charter school's cap would hurt Gill-Montague, and "further contribute to the segregation of students in our region along socio-economic lines."

It also voted, unanimously, to shift the Turners Falls High School graduation date back from Thursday, June 6 to its original date of Friday, June 7.

"The students did a good job of letting all the adults around them know how this would impact them," Lively said of the previous move.

"We can admit we need to change some things," Oakes said.

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

- William Carlos Williams

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October Poetry Page

In this month’s Poetry Page we are delighted to print poems by four internationally-known poets who read their work at the Pioneer Valley Poetry Festival at Amherst College on October 19 and 20.

Sleep

you can sleep in the sun when you love
only the enlightened sleep over the sea
anyone who loves can swim in the sun

we fell on the plumes and the berries fragrances
so grand and lilac-filled we rose
and the bowers tossed us all the way into the sun

who can sleep over the sea no one only those
who have shed
only they sleep

over the full berating somber most delicate sea

– Ruth Lepson
Cambridge, MA

From: (Be)labored Posterities

I am a revolutionary so that my son can be a farmer and his son can be a poet.

We are revolutionaries so that our sons can be revolutionary farmers and their sons can be revolutionary poets.

I am one engaged in a revolution so that my human male offspring can be a person who cultivates land or crops or raises animals (as livestock or fish) and his human male offspring can be one who writes poetry.

She is a pure contralto and he is a carpenter and he is a pilot and he is a mate and he is a duck-shooter and they are deacons and she is a spinning-girl and he is a farmer and he is a lunatic.

I am a Rough-In Plumber and she is a Dental Assistant II so that our children can be Operations Managers.

You are a Full-Time Porter so that their son can be an Assistant Payroll Manager and his children can be Licensed Attorneys.

She is a Merchandise Analyst so that her daughter can be an Admissions Recruiter and her daughter can be a Senior Real Estate Accountant.

I was a Hair Dresser Assistant so that he could be a Compliance Specialist and she could be an Employee Relations Program Manager.

She is a waitress so her daughter can be a waitress (and perhaps a medical assistant) and her daughter can, perhaps, do something else.

She is a cashier (at Hardee’s®) but her teenage daughters (whom a journalist calls “Ana” and “Esmeralda”) need to work in the tobacco fields, and next summer her son will be old enough to work there too.

We are capitalists so that our children can be capitalists and their children can be capitalists.

– Michael Leong
Albany

From: The Book of Forgiving For Patricia

The Wind flying into the forgiveness of trees
We, who are everything we breathe —
Going down to the earth
In a bow
of hallelujahs
thank you for the words spoken
& unspoken
thank you for the wind
on our back
thank you
for the praise
of the song

– John High
Brooklyn, NY

Starting the Day with a Poem

& by “start” I mean before noon
I’ve been up since 5
& by “day” I mean it’s raining
& dogs are barking
& I can’t wake up & can’t back to sleep
& I missed 10 o’clock class & am on track to miss 12:30
& by “poem” I mean it reveals something above human nature
or how language drives us like rock
or how to step carefully on this one path
or why I’m loved
or not
& by “headache”* I mean I don’t know if it will help to take a Claritin
*sneeze
& by “the cat” I mean can’t he stop with the toe nibbling
& by “music” I mean Johnny Cash, the Louvin Brothers, & the Golden Gate Jubilee Quartet
& by “see ya later” I mean see ya later

– Elinor Nauen
New York

Contributors’ Notes:

Ruth Lepson has been poet-in-residence at New England Conservatory for over 20 years. She has collaborated with musicians here, and her latest book of poems, *ask anyone*, comes with settings of some of the poems. This book won the Phillip Whalen Award from Chax Press. Her other books of poetry are *Dreaming in Color*, *I Went Looking for You*, and *Morphology*.

Poet, translator, and Zen monk John High has received grants from the National Endowment for the Arts (fiction and translation), the Witter Bynner Foundation, and Arts International. He is the author of ten books of poetry and the chief editor for *Crossing Centuries – The New Generation in Russian Poetry*. He has taught creative writing and literature in Moscow,

Istanbul, Hangzhou, and San Francisco, and currently directs the MFA Creative Writing Program at LIU in Brooklyn.

Elinor Nauen’s books include *My Marriage A to Z: A Big-City Romance*, *So Late into the Night*, *CARS & Other Poems*, *American Guys* and, as editor, *Ladies*, *Start Your Engines: Women*

Writers on Cars & the Road and *Diamonds Are a Girl’s Best Friend: Women Writers on Baseball*.

Michael Leong’s books include *Cutting Time with a Knife*, *Who Unfolded My Origami Brain?*, and *Words on Edge*. He is Assistant Professor of English at the University at Albany, SUNY.

CHRISTOPHER CARMODY PHOTO

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SEWER from page A1

that was coming in, and instead of banking that money, we used that money, for various reasons. Some of that was a pressure from industry, who had an agreement with the town to not hold retained earnings in the [sewer] enterprise fund.”

Kuklewicz said that Southworth, which closed abruptly in August 2017, and other now-defunct companies had long set a “limit” as to how much of its sewer revenues Montague should retain for a rainy day. “I certainly remember the representation from the paper mill sitting here at many meetings,” he said. “I don’t know if it was a contract or written agreement.”

Selectboard member Chris Boutwell said that the late former town administrator Frank Abbondanzio had told him “there was an agreement with the paper companies that we couldn’t hold more than ‘X’ amount of dollars.”

Despite lobbying to keep rates down, Southworth’s former principals left a significant unpaid sewer bill when the facility closed.

“Frank told me that one of the things that was a real bear was that, any time the town tried to raise sewer rates, that company would come in and threaten to shut down,” Ellis told the *Reporter*.

“It really is an irony that the year everything fell apart, in terms of the sewer rates, happened to be the year after they were gone.”

Accident of Biology

The officials also defended the state-ordered discontinuation of the “Montague process,” a non-conventional retrofit of the plant developed by now-retired operators, which had for some time allowed the town to take additional sludge, and revenue, from other jurisdictions.

Kuklewicz said that Dr. Chul Park, a civil engineer and wastewater expert at UMass-Amherst brought in to study the system, had told him that

in his opinion, the Montague process “should not have ever worked.”

Suggesting that the process’s success was “an accident of biology,” Ellis added it had required the plant to handle several times the amount of sludge it had been designed for, which put it at higher risk of overflowing and dumping sludge into the Connecticut River during rainstorms.

McDonald said that in his first year of work, “every rain event we had was like a nightmare for me.”

“When you’re taking in inorganics but you’re not wasting it, eventually those rocks and sands are going to fill a pipe, or fill a tank,” he explained. “And they did – and so they had to stop it, and spend a lot of money to clean it out.”

The process was originally halted for necessary maintenance of the plant, and never successfully restarted. After several instances in 2016 in which the plant’s effluent quality did not meet its permit standard, the state Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) ordered the town to return to conventional treatment, and run a controlled pilot of the alternative process.

During McDonald’s tenure as supervisor, though, the department was unable to replicate the process, and now it is both paying significantly more to dispose of waste solids and earning significantly less by processing trucked-in sludge.

The town has been unable to reduce the staffing levels at the plant, he added, as those are also mandated by the state.

Behind the 8-Ball

A number of members of the public criticized the rate increase.

“I’m looking at my bill, and I’m probably going to pay \$500 more a year, approximately,” Arlene Jigarjian claimed. “This is going to devastate some of our senior citizens.... This is a significant increase for folks who have not planned it.” She

asked if the town had a program to help defray the cost for low-income seniors; the town does not.

Ellis said that the only place the department might find relief in the future was the general town budget, but that historically, town meeting “held pretty fast on the split” in responsibility between the sewer district and the town as a whole.

“All of the other little districts in town – the Turners Falls Fire, the Montague Center Fire, the water district – all seem to be going up,” said Mark Williams. “The elderly, who are trying to age in place, are being put behind the 8-ball real bad.”

Williams called for a “long-range plan” to help the public plan ahead for increased fees and taxes.

“It seems like people don’t necessarily read the print media,” Ellis said, “and they certainly don’t listen to most sewer rate hearings....”

“I thought that news would travel like wildfire when the Reporter put an article in about it, and I didn’t get any calls. And I was concerned, frankly, that I didn’t get calls.”

The selectboard voted unanimously, and “very reluctantly,” to increase most rate categories by about 71%: for metered users in Montague, from \$8.28 to \$14.15 per 1,000 gallons; for industrial users and the town of Gill, from \$7.66 to \$13.09; and for those opting paying a flat fee for a year, from \$458.50 to \$782.

Though the 14% interest rate on late payments is set by the state, Ellis said treasurer Eileen Seymour has asked if the town may reduce it. “No one wants to make things worse than they already are,” he said.

Other Business

The selectboard met with members of the public works facility building committee, who has reviewed three final candidates for an owner’s project manager for the construction of a new highway garage on Sandy Lane. Ellis was authorized to negotiate a contract

LEGAL NOTICE of PUBLIC MEETING
Leverett Conservation Commission

The Leverett Conservation Commission, in accordance with the Wetlands Protection Act (MGL c.131 §40), will hold a public meeting on November 5, 2018 at a meeting beginning at 7:15 p.m. at the Leverett Town Hall (9 Montague Road, Leverett, MA) to review a Request for Determination of Applicability submitted by Emerald City Rentals LLC for replacement of a septic system at 63 Teawaddle Hill Rd. The application is on file and is available for public inspection in the Conservation Commission Office on Mondays, 2:30 to 5:30 p.m. or by appointment at (413) 548-1022 ext. 3. This notice is also available at masspublicnotices.org.

with the town’s top choice, Construction Monitoring Services, Inc. of Marlborough.

Ellis pointed out that the price of steel is “in flux,” and interest rates are rising. “It may be advantageous to the town to borrow a portion of the money sooner,” he said. Under current estimates, the project may cost the average Montague homeowner about \$152 per year.

The selectboard met with Kate Martineau and Anne Harding of the Montague Cultural Council, who carried with them a binder full of this year’s applications for small cultural grants. The board voted unanimously to authorize the group to disburse \$5,200 received from the state cultural council to the winning applicants. This will be supplemented with funds raised by RiverCulture.

The board also unanimously approved a proposed Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) agreement between the town and the Franklin County Regional Housing and Re-development Authority (FCRHRA), which recently moved into a facility on Millers Falls Road previously occupied by the Hallmark School of Photography.

As a nonprofit, the FCRHRA is

exempt from taxes, and the property had previously garnered about \$18,000 per year for the public coffers. Under the proposed agreement, the agency would pay the town \$10,000 next year, and 2% more each year after that.

The town received two bids to weatherize the Colle building on Avenue A, which it rents to the educational organization Responsive Classroom. The board approved the lower bid, from Kurtz, Inc., for \$20,810.

Montague has nine months left to use a \$20,000 state grant to revise its human resources policy handbook. The selectboard authorized Kuklewicz to sign a service agreement with the Collins Center for Public Management, based at UMass-Boston, to carry out the work.

Ellis relayed an update about the so-called Green Bridge over the Turners Falls power canal, which has developed an inappropriate and sometimes damaging bulge.

MassDOT has told the town that the new deck might be fabricated in a few weeks, after which the bridge will be closed for its replacement, probably for another few weeks.



ACORNS from page A1

herbs, flowers, and golden raspberries. Located next to the community garden at the town office in Wendell Center, the perennial food garden project has quite a history.

Laurie DiDonato, co-chair of the town energy committee and recently-elected selectboard member, told how it began as an offshoot of the energy committee and part of Wendell Sustainable’s food project. Wendell Sustainable was a community effort founded in response to the economic crisis of 2008. Its food project had the goal of increasing local food production, and in its early years, there were two funded food coordinators.

A number of projects came out of this effort, one being the Permaculture Garden, in 2011. Since then the Garden has developed with the help of various workshops and grants, including one from the Second Street Bakery in 2016 and the Common Good payment card for community power in 2017.

The new coordinator of the project, Shawn Jarrett, was busy making and showing others how to weave “twig terracing frames.” The gardeners took thin, pliable lengths of tree and shrub branches and wove them into a form of wattle edging for beds in the garden.

Jarrett explained that the project should be a teaching garden, showing ways of growing food crops intensively, and featuring a variety of food producing plants. The project

depends on donations of plants, stones for edging, and, of course, labor. She said she hopes that local schools can benefit and learn from the great variety of plants and growing techniques that will be shown in the food forest garden.

Trees for Shade, Not Fuel

Several hours after the permaculture gardeners called it a morning, another intrepid group began a long-planned tree planting effort to provide shade for the Wendell Library in the summer.

Led by librarian Rosie Heidkamp and town tree warden Corine Baker, the group planted three disease-resistant American elms, one hackberry, one red maple, one serviceberry, and one black gum. This great variety will offer not only shade, but also an interesting diversity in tree form, color, and texture.

Thus on one day, there were three activities in the center of this small rural town that reflected planning and efforts over years, the results of thought, care, and work for the community and planet. It will be interesting to see how these trees, bushes, and plants grow, multiply, and hopefully in many cases nourish the community and those beyond in years to come.

As for our visiting expert on acorns as a human food source, we look forward to hearing from him again in the future. His work certainly relates to local sources of food that can be available in a time

of increasing insecurity in climate and future food supplies.

That all happened on one day, but Wendell residents’ interest in saving forests and working for climate justice continues, with two upcoming film screenings.

“The Lost Forests of New England,” reveals what New England’s woodlands looked like prior to 1600, what the small old-growth remnants look like today, and what special values they hold.

The film will screen at 7 p.m. on October 26 at the Wendell Free Library, followed by a question-and-answer period with filmmaker Ray Asselin and old-growth forest expert Bob Leverett.

The following Friday, November 2, at 7 p.m., “BURNED: Are Trees the New Coal?” will also be screened at the Wendell Library. Vermonters Alan Dater and Lisa Merton have generously donated a copy of their documentary film to the Library.

Featuring interviews with activists, experts, and citizens from the US, EU, and UK, “BURNED” tells the little-known story of the accelerating destruction of forests for fuel, and probes the policy loopholes, huge subsidies, and “greenwashing” of the burgeoning biomass power industry.

Both film events are free, and all are invited. The Wendell Free Library, located at 7 Wendell Depot Road, is an accessible building.



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FOOD from page A1

Kiley Palmquist: Well, I am a part of Project 351, and for the last service they wanted us to do a food drive at our local food bank.

So I thought this was a perfect opportunity to donate to a local food bank, and participate with my friends in a cause.

IVC: Why do you think that this march is important to do instead of just raising money?

IG: Because it gets people involved, and shows that we really care.

KP: I feel like it is showing people what we are doing by doing the march. Doing and showing something is better than just raising money, where no sees the hard work. It will also be really fun!

IVC: Why do you think Mr. Monte Belmonte chose to donate the profits of the walk to the food bank?

IG: Because people have been needing the food lately, and it is such a big cause that everybody should care about.

KP: He wanted to be an advocate for hunger. This march brings awareness of hunger to the people of our region.

Thank you Isabel and Kiley!

My next interviews were with two teachers who are organizing our school's participation: Ms. Jennifer Luciano, the middle school social studies teacher, and Ms. Jessica Vachula-Curtis, a high school special ed and English teacher (and my mom!).

IVC: Why do you feel that it is important that our school participates in this?

Ms. Vachula-Curtis: I just really like to do things that connect our high school students with other people in our community, like when we did the Buzz-Off fundraiser two years ago with Sheffield Elementary. It brings people together when we're working for a good cause like this!

Ms. Luciano: I think that we are in a school where there are a lot of low-income families, and that food insecurity is a big issue, and by participating, it helps us realize that we're not alone.

IVC: Why is this something students should participate in?

JVC: Hunger is an issue that affects so many people, and the Food Bank is an amazing organization that I used to volunteer for when I was in high school! My grandmother and I used to work at the Food Bank once a week, sorting food.

JL: I think students that come from food-insecure households don't realize there are others who struggle, so this helps them see that we can fight hunger together. I also think there are students who need the resources that we are raising funds for.

IVC: What are you planning on doing, besides the March, to help out the Food Bank?

JVC: I have a group of students who are volunteering at the mobile food bank, in downtown Turners Falls at the senior center on Fifth Street, on the third Wednesday of

every month. From 1:30 to 2:30, volunteers hand out food to anyone who needs it. This past Wednesday, it was primarily vegetables, including large bags of potatoes, onions, carrots, butternut squash, and cabbage.

It's really important for my students to see the good work that the Food Bank does in our community. Last year the High School participation in the food drive wasn't as successful as it was at the Middle School and Elementary School. I found that high school students aren't as motivated to just bring in food, but really want to take more of an active, hands-on role.

JL: I'd like to keep working on this issue as a school, which might include a weekend backpack program.

Thank you so much to everyone who was willing to be interviewed.

I also want to give a humongous thank you to FRTA, who will be donating a bus to transport the students, and giving them backpacks to wear, and water bottles. My aunt Tina Cote is the FRTA administrator, so thank you to her for providing us with gear and transportation. "I'm extremely proud of the students helping out the community," she told me, "and this was our way of helping them do that!"

One great way you can help out the Food Bank is by participating in the March. Another is meeting the group at one of the locations we stop at, and donating.

Thank you again, and Happy Fall!



Saturday, November 3
9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

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HALEY ANDERSON PHOTO

Haley Anderson caught this double rainbow over the Discovery Center.

Carving Out Community!

By CINDI OLDHAM

TURNERS FALLS – Last Friday, October 19, was the third annual Pumpkin Carving Party in the cafeteria at Sheffield school. The event was free to kids and their families. Patterson Farm in Sunderland donated a staggering 358 pumpkins to be carved. After they were all carved out, the pumpkins were transported to Avenue A and included in the Great Falls Fest.

Friday afternoon, before the kids and their families arrived for the event, the community came together – including parents, grandparents, teachers, members of the Turners Falls HS field hockey team, TFHS student council members, and Sheffield staff – to prep the pumpkins for the kids.

This included opening up the tops, which Tom Valle, the dad of a 6th grader, made quick work of with a power tool, and cleaning out the seeds and pulp.

When the party started at 6 p.m., the pumpkins and tools were all ready, enabling the partygoers to get right to the fun part. Light refreshments were served, including donuts from Adam’s Donuts in Greenfield, and popcorn. There was also free face painting, and a photo booth for guests to have fun with.

The whole event was funded and organized by Friends of Sheffield,



OLDHAM PHOTO

Rylee holds up his carved pumpkin while his brother Brennan puts the finishing touches on his, during the Friends of Sheffield’s Pumpkin Carving Party.

a group of parents, grandparents, teachers, and community members who volunteer to provide support for the school. While not an official PTO, they fulfill the same functions.

The amount of time people donate to the Friends varies: there are some parents who can help out a couple hours each year, while others spend an average of one or two hours each month, attending monthly meetings and helping to plan events and fundraisers.

“The biggest event that Friends organizes and funds each year is Field Day in June,” said Meghan Hastings, the Friends’ chairperson.

Field Day is held at Camp Kewanee in Greenfield, rather than in the field behind the school where it used to take place. “There, the kids are able to swim and play games with lots of room to run,” Hastings said. “One of the great things about having Field Day there is that kids who have never been to camp get to have the authentic summer camp experience.”

She went on to explain that each year on Field Day, every student gets a color-coded t-shirt, depending on which grade they are in. Self-portraits that have been drawn

see **CARVING** page B2

Sailing to Montreal part 2: north and south again

In this tripartite saga, Wackernagel tells the intriguing tale of a possibly too-long sailing cruise on the inland waters of the United States and Canada. We left these sailors on the border of Canada at the end of the first installment.

By PETE WACKERNAGEL

ALBURGH, VT – We awoke inside the ship’s V-berth, the bedroom under the bow. The strange ridges of its tan roof were like the inside of a whale’s stomach, and you could reach up and touch them from the expansive V-shaped bed. Sleeping on a yacht, for me, is like a drug – I always awake with a full-bodied sense of wonder and a desire to sing. I have a full-body mesmerization from the way the sailboat sits lightly on the water, rolling like a ball in a cup.

First thing that morning, as would become our ritual, we swam. It was the responsibility of the first person to wake to leap from the roof of the cabin and shout a wordless battlecry. This verbal challenge and exhortation was meant both to rouse the others, and to be a kind of ship’s slogan that announced to the day – and any nearby creatures – that we were ready.

A rainstorm had blown over in the night. While we breakfasted on potatoes, eggs, and toast cooked on the swinging gas stove, we

watched another one gathering on the western horizon. I pulled the heavy chain of the anchor hand over hand, fast, leaning back against its weight. Although on the small side, it must have weighed 40 pounds. Ship-shape again, the *Muirgen* sailed for the nearby town of Rouses Point, a border town on the New York shore.

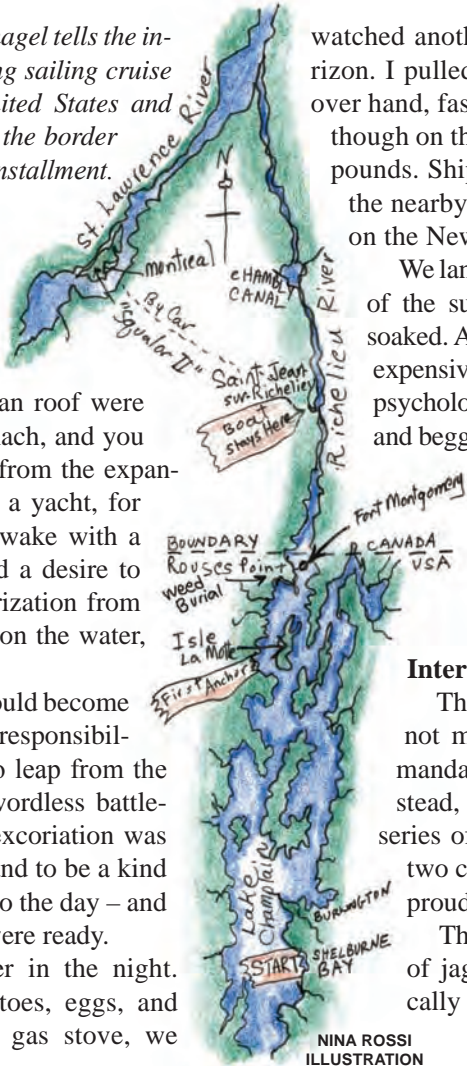
We landed at Gaine’s Marina amidst the throes of the summer squall, and headed into town, soaked. At the liquor store, we bought a bottle of expensive tequila after the cashier used reverse psychology on us. We went into the coffee shop and begged them to grind our coffee: no one had brought a grinder.

Finally, dodging Border Patrol officers who seemed to suddenly appear on nearby corners, we buried our weed under a rock in the park.

International Waters

The Lake Champlain water crossing is not marked by large signs, toll booths, or mandatory inspections of documents. Instead, the international zone is marked by a series of infrastructure projects from the past two centuries: some ruined and silent, some proud and new.

The ship sailed through a gap in a line of jagged wooden pilings that stuck vertically out of the lake, like the ruined, sunken



NINA ROSSI ILLUSTRATION

see **SAILING** page B4



By LESLIE BROWN

MONTAGUE CITY – As we’ve been told, all good things must come to an end.

We are cherishing the last of the roses and the final blooms on the mandevilla vine. The bright leaves of autumn are falling; the ash tree, last to open, dropped its leaves days ago. We’ve had our first frost, somewhat mitigated by the river fog, but still touching the tops of the mums. The garden is nearly put to bed for the season.

Comes the season of pumpkins, scarecrows in the park and soon, Halloween, featuring ghosts, skeletons, and witches, not to mention favorite characters from children’s stories and movies. Many costumes reflect threatening characters, and even the ghosts shout “Boo!”

This holiday began as All Hallows’ Eve, a religious holy day for the remembrance of the dead. According to Wikipedia, many Halloween traditions come from ancient Celtic festivals, most importantly the Gaelic festival Samhain. This was the most important of the four quarter days in the calendar and marked the end of the harvest and the beginning of winter, the darker half of the year.

During this period of darkness, the boundary between the present world and the otherworld was believed to break down, allowing the spirits of the dead to reenter the world. This belief that the souls of the dead return to the world is found in many cultures. These returning souls require appeasement so that they will not cause harm. Thus, the prevalence of festivals for the dead was often marked by candles and offerings of food. This practice continues in many cultures and in others, it evolved into the tradition of tricks and treats.

As far back as the 16th century, Britain and Ireland made a tradition of costuming or “guising,” with children in particular going door-to-door and asking for food or money. Guising, or dressing as a spirit ghost or goblin, made the wearer safe from any real demons by being recognized as one of their own.

Fear of returning spirits of the dead, and ultimately of our own inevitable death, led to belief in vampires who drank blood and witches who cast evil spells. The Black Death or the Plague killed some estimated 50 million people in the 14th century, and was naturally a great source for fears of

THE GARDENER’S COMPANION Chasing Our Fears

death and disease. Some victims were buried with bricks in their mouths to prevent the re-entrance of their deadly spirits. Witch hunts and the dread of black magic derive from similar ignorance.

Is there a neighborhood without a bogeyman that lives in a dark house at one end of the street? No wonder children dream of monsters under the bed or ghosts in the closet.

This is not a favorite holiday for us. As children, my sister and I dressed as little princesses or such and walked the homes of families on our block, collecting as much candy as possible only to hand the bulk of our treasures to our parents, who would let us select a small amount each day in lieu of dessert. We remember one remarkable Halloween when we trudged around carrying pillow cases, no less, and were allowed to consume the contents as we pleased.

As we remember, this reverse psychology worked quite well. After an initial binge or so, the bag lost our interest and the candy eventually grew stale before it was finished.

Many decades later, binging on scary movies and horror films is as much the norm as compulsive candy consumption. For some, there is a real appeal in scaring oneself with stories of blood and gore and the presence of evil, when there is so much evil and many events to scare us in the everyday world of our century. Perhaps it’s about watching something incredibly frightening, while at the same time you enjoy the scare, because deep down you know it’s not real.

Our hypertension can’t take the strain. Nightmares that wake us are horribly real, and involve being chased by a weapon-bearing figure as we are forced (even as an acrophobic) to climb endlessly higher and higher with no escape in sight, waking with racing pulse. These rare dreams leave one exhausted and unable to sleep again until thoroughly awake and conscious that this was all a fiction. Who needs a horror film?

Fear of the unknown sits at the seat of many of our prejudices. Education and experience are good cures. Guising, or playing at being someone or something else, can be fun for a special holiday or occasion. Invite the little trick-or-treaters in and give them candy, if you will. Then pack up the paraphernalia for another year.

Real life is scary enough, and it needs our focused attention.

Pet of the Week

Hey there, are you looking for an exercise Buddy (pun intended)? Then I'm the boy for you! I am your typical beagle, with lots of beagle energy, and I'm looking for a family who can help me burn off all that energy each day.

I am house trained and know my basic commands. I have done well living with cats and kids, but

I haven't lived with another dog, so if you already have a canine companion I'd like to have a meet and greet with them first. Did I mention that I like to go for walks?

If you think I'd make a great addition to your life, come down and meet me! Contact the Dakin Pioneer Valley Humane Society at (413) 548-9898 or info@dpvhs.org.



COURTESY DAKIN HUMANE SOCIETY

“BUDDY”

Senior Center Activities OCTOBER 29 to NOVEMBER 2

GILL and MONTAGUE

The Gill Montague Senior Center, 62 Fifth Street, Turners Falls, is open Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Congregate meals are served Tuesday through Thursday at noon. Meal reservations must be made one day in advance by 11 a.m. All fitness classes are supported by a grant from the Executive Office of Elder Affairs. Voluntary donations are accepted.

Council on Aging Director is Roberta Potter. Kitchen Manager is Jeff Suprenant. For more information, to make meal reservations, or to sign up for programs, call 863-9357. Messages can be left on machine when the center is not open.

M, W, F: 10:10 a.m. Aerobics;
10:50 a.m. Chair Exercise
T, W, Th: 12 p.m. Lunch
Monday 10/29
1 p.m. Knitting Circle
Tuesday 10/30
10:15 a.m. Chair Yoga
Wednesday 10/31
9 a.m. Veterans' Outreach
9 to 11 a.m. Blood Pressure Clinic
12:30 p.m. Bingo
Thursday 11/1
9 a.m. NO Tai Chi
10:15 a.m. NO Chair Yoga
10:30 a.m. to noon Brown Bag
1 p.m. Cards & Games & Pitch
4 p.m. Mat Yoga
Friday 11/2
12 noon Pizza Party
1 p.m. Writing Group

LEVERETT

For information, contact the Leverett COA at (413) 548-1022, ext. 5, or coa@leverett.ma.us.

Wednesday 10 a.m.: Flexibility & Balance Chair Yoga at the Town Hall. Drop-in \$6 (first class free).

Friday 12 p.m.: Senior Lunch. Call (413) 367-2694 by Wednesday for a reservation.

WENDELL

Wendell Senior Center is at 2 Lockes Village Road. Call Nancy Spittle, (978) 544-6760, for hours and upcoming programs. Call the Center for a ride.

ERVING

Erving Senior Center, 1 Care Drive, Erving, is open Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. for activities and congregate meals. Lunch is at 11:30 a.m., with reservations required 2 days in advance. Call (413) 423-3649 for meal information and reservations.

For information, call Paula Betters, Senior Center Director, at (413) 423-3649. Transportation can be provided for meals, shopping, or medical necessity.

Call to confirm activities, schedule a ride, or find out about the next blood pressure clinic.

Monday 10/29
8:45 a.m. Healthy Bones & Balance
10 a.m. Step & Sculpt (New!)
11:30 a.m. Congregate Lunch
12:30 p.m. Downton Abbey
Tuesday 10/30
8:45 a.m. Chair Aerobics
10 a.m. Stretching & Balance
Halloween Costume Luncheon
Wednesday 10/31
8:45 a.m. Line Dancing
10 a.m. Chair Yoga
11:30 a.m. Congregate Lunch
12:15 p.m. Bingo & Snacks
Thursday 11/1
8:15 a.m. Foot Clinic
8:45 a.m. Aerobics
10 a.m. Healthy Bones
11:30 a.m. Congregate Lunch
12:30 p.m. Holiday Crafters
Friday 11/2
9 a.m. Quilting Workshop
9:15 a.m. Flex & Stretch
9:30 a.m. Fun Bowling
10:30 a.m. M3 Exercise
12 p.m. Soup & Sandwich

FACES & PLACES



Great Falls Festival sights, clockwise from top: Carved and decorated pumpkins line the middle of Avenue A; Snow, the Living Statue, volunteers her time to the festival; dancers from Karen's Dance Studio perform their version of Wizard of Oz; Zebadiab Santos throws darts at a booth, hoping to score a prize. Photos and captions by Grace Alexandra.



CARVING from page B1

by the students in black and white are printed on each of the shirts. On the day of the event, the whole school, plus the first-graders from Hillcrest, poses for a color-coded rainbow group portrait. To pull all of this off requires money and people power!

“Future events planned for next spring is a parents' night out, ‘90s bingo, and another family event that is still in its early planning stages,” said Hastings.

The Friends are always looking for new volunteers. All are welcome to participate, including community members who don't have children that attend the school, and you can help as little or as much as you are able or inclined to.

Every bit helps!



OLDHAM PHOTO

Holly Myers, a member of the Turners Falls High School field hockey team, works to prepare pumpkins for the carving party.

Friends of Sheffield volunteers have the opportunity to participate in a variety of jobs, including helping out at events like the pumpkin carving party, movie night, staff appreciation day, and field day. They may also help with fundraising or driving kids to events.

If you would like to donate monetarily, you can drop off your donations at the office, or send a check made out to “Friends of Sheffield” to: Sheffield Elementary School, 43 Crocker Avenue, Turners Falls, MA 01376.

Another big help that's always appreciated is donations of snacks for Field Day and other events throughout the year.

If you're interested in volunteering or donating, have ideas on other ways that you can help out, or just have general questions; you can contact the school at (413) 863-9326, contact the Friends on their Facebook page (www.facebook.com/FOSheffield), or email them at friendsofsheffield@gmail.com.

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MONTAGUE COMMUNITY TELEVISION NEWS

This Week on MCTV

By ABIGAIL TATARIAN

This week at Montague Community TV, we’d like to give you a tip on how to stay informed on local politics from a computer or smartphone.

Gill and Montague selectboard meetings can be found on our Latest Videos page at montaguetv.org/p/76/Latest-Videos. To make it easier to navigate these videos, you can visit the town websites to view meeting agendas and minutes. Gill selectboard agendas can

be viewed at gillmass.org/f/31/Selectboard-Meetings, and Montague selectboard agendas can be viewed at montague-ma.gov/f/25/Board-of-Selectmen-Meetings.

Something going on you’d like others to see? If you get in touch, we can show you how easy it is to use a camera and capture the moment.

Contact us at (413) 863-9200, infomontaguetv@gmail.com, or stop by 34 Second Street between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., Mondays through Fridays. We’re excited to work with you!

EVENT REVIEW

“Unexplained” at Hawks & Reed

By MELISSA WLOSTOSKI

GREENFIELD – I have done reviews for events at the Shea Theater, and I have also been to concerts around Greenfield. My latest is one you could say happened because Halloween is coming up.

It was at Hawks and Reed Performing Arts Center, and it was called Unexplained! Spooky Concert and Story Swap. The idea was that storytellers from the Pioneer Valley would tell true and spooky stories for you to hear, followed by a chance for people in the audience to tell stories of their own.

First up for storytellers was David Bulley, with “BigFoot’s Foot.” The whole story turned out to be an encounter that he appeared to have with Bigfoot, during a canoe trip he took at 15. His Bigfoot proof was a huge footprint that was found in the morning at their campsite, along with all of their food being gone.

I found that to be a humorous story, and an unexplainable story of some kind. Not a bad one to hear someone tell.

Each time a storyteller would finish, a violinist would play a note or two. Next, Kerrita Mayfield spoke of encounters she seems to have had with her late father. This was called “My Dad and I Still Talk.” If her father was really talking to her – more or less – then this would be a nice little story that shows us a sign that our loved ones will have our backs, no matter what.

“Embodying the Poet,” by Julie Rosier, seemed to be a story of her somehow channeling Emily Dickinson when she was playing her in a play. All of the stories by these individuals were true, so this one being true is actually cool. It’s really a ghost story. One relative seems to agree with her that she was probably really channeling Emily Dickinson.

After that was “Learning to See” by Janice Sorensen, about an encounter that connected to a kind of crisis of faith she had. Her faith seems to have been restored by a ghost she had in her house, whose existence was proven when she found someone else who had seen it. This was an interesting ghost story.

Corwin Ericson’s story “Is It Edible?” involved some mushrooms, and the question of whether they were edible. This story was very humorous. He mentioned what he found when he and a friend were looking for some rare mushrooms. He spoke about an occurrence of gunfire that appeared to happen when they were searching.

Anna Bowen’s “Bowen Pet Deaths” was about her moving into a house where a crazy cat lady had lived, and the house having a curse attached to it, which appeared to come true. It sounded like a self-fulfilling prophecy to me!

“The Ouija Board,” by Andrea CK, was about what happened when she was a kid with an Ouija board which summoned a spirit named Seth, who gave her a warning that her sister was in danger. This was a cool ghost story I really liked.

“Things You Can’t Unsee” by Susanne Schmidt was about a Halloween she had as a kid. That year, she decided to go trick-or-treating to the one house that you should, like, never go to. She appeared to have an encounter with a creepy old lady, but instead it was just an encounter with a lady who made her mask better looking. This story had a nice twist to it.

I think the audience probably enjoyed this event as much as the storytellers. Of all the stories, I liked “The Ouija Board” the best, followed by the Poet one and the Bigfoot one.

Good storytelling all around!

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MONTAGUE POLICE LOG

Rampaging Raccoons; Donation Theft; Sliced Brakes; Bullet Holes; Smashed Windshield; Brass Knuckles

Monday, 10/15

9:21 a.m. Report of subjects camped out in Peske Park. Caller observed subjects with shopping carts, various belongings strewn on the ground, and what appears to be a makeshift mattress. Parties packed up and moved along. 12:05 p.m. Caller from L Street requesting assistance freeing a raccoon from a trash can. Services rendered by ACO.

6:27 p.m. TFFD responding to box alarm in apartment building on Avenue A; advising that a dryer vent had come detached from the wall on the third floor and was blowing lint into the second floor. TFFD reattached vent, reset alarm, and advised building owner.

7:44 p.m. Caller advising that a new red bicycle is leaning on the rocks at Great Falls Discovery Center. Caller states it has been here for at least 30 minutes, and he does not want it to be stolen. Red “Mountaineer” multi-speed bicycle located leaning against a stone wall behind Discovery Center. Walked bicycle to Town Hall; left inside lower rear entrance for temporary storage due to no access to the front garage bike storage. Bicycle will be transferred in the morning to proper storage. 10:32 p.m. TFFD took a call direct from Main Street; caller advising that she heard a loud crack like a tree was falling. She could not see anything when she went outside to investigate; however, she did advise that she could smell a strong diesel fuel odor, and the pumping station across the street sounded louder than normal. Officer will swing through this area while responding to another call. MCFD dispatched via Shelburne Control. Water department responding. MCFD advising that the smell is sewage, not diesel, and that the outside pump is running; concerned that the inside pump is malfunctioning.

Tuesday, 10/16

2:38 a.m. 911 call reporting transformer fire and lines down in alley behind Third Street; access off L Street behind FL Roberts. Patrol units and TFFD advised and *en route*. Officer advises tree down in alley, wires down, small fire on pole and transformer. TFFD checking [redacted] smoke and smell in basement. TFFD on scene and waiting for Eversource. MPD units clear. 8:41 a.m. Caller reports that her laundry detergent was stolen from the Millers Falls Laundry Company between 5 and 9 p.m. yesterday. Report taken. Wednesday, 10/17

6:43 a.m. Caller reports that he observed a party pry open the door to the Creemee; has not seen party come back out. MSP on scene with officers. Male party taken into custody. Franklin Housing Authority notified about damage to the door of the building. Business owner reporting that three donation jugs of money were stolen. [Arrest information redacted.] 3:46 p.m. [Redacted] requesting assistance from police with the removal of a [redacted]. Services rendered. 7:16 p.m. Caller from L Street states that someone came up to the door of her home and pounded on it very hard, then ran off. No description. Unable to locate.

Thursday, 10/18

7:05 a.m. School resource officer requesting that the DPW remove a skunk in the road. DPW advised. 3:23 p.m. Caller states that there is a tractor trailer unit trying to back up instead of crossing the General Pierce Bridge. No truck on scene upon officer’s arrival. 7:18 p.m. Caller would like an officer to come out and look at his vehicle. He believes someone may have sliced one of his brake lines, possibly today when his brother borrowed his vehicle to go to work. Report taken.

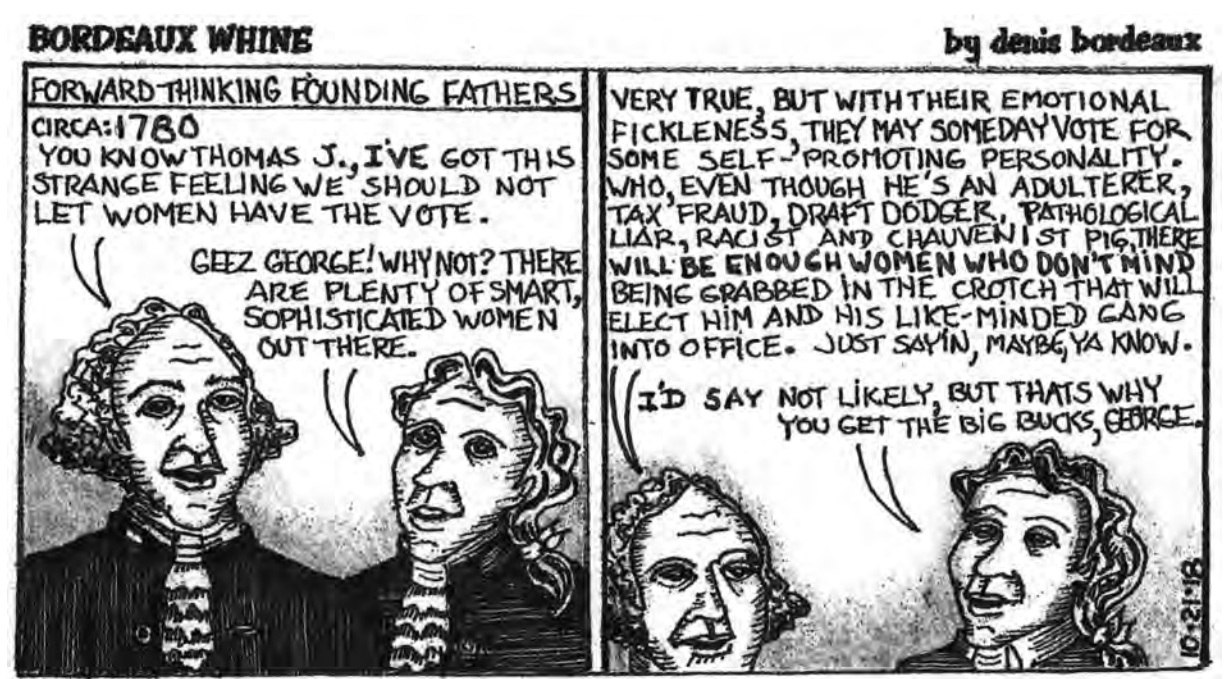
Friday, 10/19

12 p.m. Caller from Newton Street believes that she has found a bullet hole in one of her windows. Caller called back to say that another hole was found in the garage door. Believed to have happened about a month ago. Report taken. 1:12 p.m. Caller states that there is a dead skunk in the road on Millers Falls Road. Message left for ACO. Skunk picked up by ACO. 5:33 p.m. Officer conducting motor vehicle stop at J and Fourth streets. Officer requesting another unit to this location due to “rowdy behavior.” Citation issued. 7:47 p.m. Caller from Old Sunderland Road requesting help evacuating two raccoons from her daughter’s chicken coop. Caller states that the two raccoons are not being aggressive, but are trying to get close to the chickens. Caller instructed to remain at a safe distance. Officer advised and *en route*, requesting environmental police respond or offer advice at this time. EPO dispatcher advising that no environmental officer is on at this time in our area, nor would they dispatch for a raccoon complaint; advise calling a pest control agency. Officer left message for local pest control agency. Officer clear; temporary solution has been found. Officer assisted caller in removing all 20 chickens from the coop and relocating them. 7:53 p.m. Caller from Montague City Road reporting a sedan dumping garbage next to the road earlier today. Officer found litter with a party’s name on it. Saturday, 10/20

9:58 a.m. Caller requesting that police respond to her home. She feels like she is going to attack her roommates, who she is trying to evict. Peace restored. 11:54 a.m. Vehicle parked on Avenue A after street was closed down. Attempted to locate owner. Rau’s contacted for tow. Owners have been notified. 12:43 p.m. Officer out on Eleventh Street with a male party standing in the road. Male party just watching traffic. 2:33 p.m. Friendly black Lab walking around on Ripley Road. No tags. 3 p.m. State police received 911 call from a male party on Fourth Street reporting he was just assaulted and the assailant ran off on foot. Responding officer advises that male could not describe the assailant, declined medical attention, and is extremely intoxicated. Units clear. 8:35 p.m. Officer received call direct that a windshield has been smashed behind the bandshell at Peske Park. Investigated. 8:43 p.m. Officer out with man who is lying on the ground on J Street; assisted male back to his room. 9:51 p.m. Hit and run accident in Third Street alley. Report taken. 10:25 p.m. Officer advising of an altercation at the Five Eyed Fox; provided involved parties’ names and stated that this was just verbal. 11:43 p.m. Male 911 caller from Greenfield Road reporting that he was hit in the face by a female wearing “brass knuckles” and is now bleeding from face and lips. Attempted to transfer call to MedCare, but male was no longer on the line. TFFD and MCFD dispatched and advised to stage short. Multiple attempts to contact caller were unsuccessful. Units have spoken to “gate keeper” at the door, the owner of the house and the female named by the caller as being involved. None of the parties knew where the male was; female denies that the incident occurred at all; states that after a verbal disagreement, the male was told to leave, and upon leaving stated that he was calling the police. Unfounded; unable to locate caller; all units clear.

Sunday, 10/21

1:23 a.m. Male 911 caller from Greenfield Road reporting fight that just occurred at the party there. Male was hit in head or face, fell backwards, and struck head on ground, losing consciousness. During call, caller advised that male regained consciousness and was walked inside. Officers, MedCare, and MCFD *en route*. MedCare transporting. Patrol units remaining in area as people leave.



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SAILING from page B1

stockade wall of a frontier Atlantis. It had once been a train bridge, but now it formed a toothy barrier that spanned the lake from the New York to the Vermont coast.

We passed the overgrown, 19th-century Fort Montgomery, reconstructed at its present location after being accidentally built on the Canadian side of the border. It had been built to protect the country against invasion by the British from Canada. It is currently for sale for \$2.5 million.

As we left the last bay of the lake and entered the river channel, I watched the thick green foliage of the shore slowly move past us – there was no visibility into this frontier wood.

Then, like a sudden vision that flashes just once, I saw it: the *cut line*. The border was actually a break in the tangled green mass of this forest. It was a laser-straight line of nothingness, a silence cut through nature’s noise. The *Muirgen*, having safely crossed this axial void, was now in Canada.

The International Boundary Commission, headed by one American and one Canadian commissioner, is tasked with mapping and making visible the international border. Since its creation in 1908, the Commission has made the Cartesian abstraction of the border materialize with tools like stone monuments and massive vegetation clearing. They have defined the border as a series of straight lines that intersect at tiny obelisks, or boundary monuments, of which there are 5,528.

Along these straight lines, through forest, prairie, city, and mountain, the commission maintains a 20’ clear vista: a 20’ ribbon of open space that runs for 5,525 miles, the longest border shared by any two countries. Around 3,000 of these miles are through forestlands, and in these areas, clear cutting is required to make the border visible.

A Change In Plans

We traveled for the rest of the day up the Richelieu River until we reached the town of St. Jean-sur-Richelieu. It was here that we received strange and unwelcome news. “You cannot pass the canal,” said the friendly, yet unyielding, parks department woman who had shut the drawbridge to block our entry into the canal. Our mast was 6’ too tall to fit under the bridge.

After a short congress we made a decision. We would not take the mast down, but proceed to Montreal across the land. Serge’s friend Shayla came and picked us up. While it would have been a long two days of sailing to reach the city, it was only a 45-minute car ride.

Shayla was a punk from Saskatoon who’d been living in Montreal for a decade. I’d met her five or six years ago when she was living in a house called “Squalor.” A few years back she’d played in a great band called The Facials. Now she

was editing podcasts for a living, and going back to school.

Serge and Shayla had some romantic history from a long time ago. While staying at her apartment, which they could in seriousness name “Squalor II,” she decided to reschedule her laser eye surgery. She would sail back to Vermont with us aboard the *Muirgen*.

Between Stations

A day later, a little after 8 p.m., we sailed into Barcomb’s Marina at Rouses Point. The giant sign, visible in the glowing light of sunset from the middle of the lake, said “U.S. Customs.”

Our guidebook, published in the 1990s, explained that the crew must stay on board the ship while the captain goes to the marina to phone customs officials. This plan seemed dubious, but Serge headed for the marina’s bar, Latitude 45, to enquire anyway. No one in the bar was aware that that their establishment was a customs station.

A white Homeland Security trailer, a plastic dock, and a few small motorboats were the only ornaments on the manmade rip-rap peninsula that jutted far into the night-shrouded lake, like a black ice pick.

Homeland Security had opened this improved border crossing ten years ago as a part of intensifying security on the northern border. Yet, no one was home. It was dark, and we were waiting for the Border Patrol to come and find us.

Were we criminals? Were we being hunted? Why was no one there? Did they know about our trove of marijuana? Was the border real, or was it just a fabrication, a figment of our imaginations? Were we still hiding in a game of hide-and-seek that had ended long ago?

The culture of the border in this region has changed much over time. For most of the 20th century, it was extremely relaxed. Little border towns in New York, Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine often had uncontrolled roads that crossed the border. Convenient and sensible transportation routes had developed organically, as towns across the border were often their closest neighbor.

During Prohibition, Line Houses – houses built on the international border – served alcohol to Americans who came from near and far. Vermont was the second state to sign a Prohibition bill, in 1853. A history of uncontrolled border crossings ended in the 1970s, as these little roads were barricaded for security purposes in anticipation of the 1976 Montreal Olympics.

We untied and fled from their plastic dock, back north, to the real interzone: that mile of lake and river that separated the two customs stations. We anchored in the autonomous zone. We would pass the night in the seaweed under the ghostly, grim guns of Fort Montgomery.

The Depth Finder

I glassed the dock as we ap-

LOOKING BACK 10 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

Here’s the way it was October 23, 2008: News from the Montague Reporter’s archive.

Town, Schools, State Meet on G-M Budget

By the end of a four-hour joint session between town, school, and state officials on Friday at Montague town hall, the general outline of a deal to settle at least the current year’s budget impasse between the towns of Gill and Montague and their public school system was in the works.

The trouble was, all sides had come to the table with their own ideas for the best settlement, and, after two failed budgets – and with the clock ticking toward a state takeover of the school district on December 1 – it wasn’t immediately clear whether any compromise plan would work.

There is an approximate \$633,000 budget gap between what the towns of Montague and Gill had appropriated at town meetings and the Gill Montague Regional School District’s \$16.8 million budget for the present fiscal year.

First, GMRSD superintendent Ken Roche pitched a plan to have both the district and the town of Montague kick in more money from reserves to fund a 4% budget increase for the district. Under his plan, the schools could commit \$322,500 of free cash to reduce town assessments.

Montague selectboard member Patricia Pruitt recommended spending \$390,000 in town reserves over the next two years to bridge the funding gaps.

Finance committee member Jeff Singleton, a vocal opponent of Roche’s plan, weighed in with his own: hewing to a small increase for town assessments, to mirror the state’s Chapter 70 increase for the district. “This still requires \$120,000 in reserve spending from the town,” he said. “If the schools decide on a higher assessment amount for this year, then they need to decline next year by the same amount. This thing is going to blow up in our faces next year if you do what Ken [Roche] is proposing.”

Among other plans explored, state senator Stan Rosenberg (D-Amherst) advocated for joining the Greenfield and GMRSD school districts. He offered to find \$25,000 in state funds to back a study on expedited school regionalization between Greenfield, Montague, and Gill, if all the relevant civic offices send a letter requesting his office to pursue that approach.

Montague town administrator Frank Abbondanzio suggested that the bottom-line figure of the school budget had to come down, and that Gill should be shielded from the impact of the budget increase.

The meeting concluded with a commitment from the school committee for further budget reduction,

and for the local boards to meet again in coming weeks.

In Memoriam: Daniel Bacigalupo

Wendell Road Boss Dan Bacigalupo passed away on Thursday, October 16. Calling hours were Monday evening. He was laid out wearing a blue flannel shirt over a Wendell high way department polo shirt, wearing a Wendell highway department baseball hat. A suit would have been all wrong.

Dan was often standing at the road grader steering wheel, making a pass along a dirt road or a snow covered road, intent on his work, with just enough time for a quick wave “Hello.” Sometimes he walked behind the grader, tossing the large stones it had lifted into the woods. He was rarely seen idle.

Dan moved to town with his family in 1966, and began working for the highway department as a part-time snowplow driver soon afterwards. He became highway superintendent after Ron Grogan resigned in the 1980s, and in 1994 he was named Wendell Citizen of the Year.

In following years the selectboard often heard citizen suggestions that he be named Citizen of the Year again.

He worked many hours that he did not get paid for, and took on many jobs that were not required of him.

proached. A young-looking border patrol officer popped out of the customs trailer, walked smartly down the stairs, and out onto the dock to greet us. I tossed him the line.

“So, who’s Canadian?” asked the officer. He asked by yelling. After this initial query, he went on, at volume, to ask and answer his own questions. “Did you buy the decal? No, you didn’t. Did you know about the decal? Did you know that crossing the border without it is a \$5,000 fine? You had no idea, you’ve never done this before.”

Following this strange interrogation, a child, wearing an adult-sized Border Patrol windbreaker, performed a safety inspection on the *Muirgen*. We did not have a life ring, a distress flag, or a flare gun, but we managed to pass. In *Chapman Piloting and Seamanship*, it states that distress can be signaled by building a fire in a bucket.

As we motored back into Lake Champlain from the river, a blissful calm pervaded. We had all become comfortable on board, and had begun to do our own things. Emma was in the cabin, reading her book, *The Demolished Man*. Shayla was at the helm, focusing on navigating around a buoy marking the Point au Fer Reef that I’d glassed a few minutes before.

Serge was testing the radio – we



Shayla and Serge relax on the bow of the *Muirgen*.

could never figure out if it was broken or not – “Radio check, radio check, can anyone even hear me?” I was watching the HawkEye depth finder, which was consistently reading 5s, 6s, and 7s.

That was when I felt a bump.

It wasn’t that alarming until I remembered that, on a boat, you should never feel a bump. Then the metal screamed. The several tons of lead making up the boat’s shoal keel screeched and yawned as it dragged, grinding, over the rock of

the lake bottom.

This, I knew, must be the sound of the Sirens’ happy scream after they’d succeeded in luring a ship to their rocks.

Peter Wackernagel is an aspiring cultural critic and a perspiring travel writer who hopes to someday be a self-made, genuine hoaxer. Pick up this paper next week to find out the fate of the *Muirgen!*



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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

EXHIBITS:

Brattleboro Museum & Art Center, Brattleboro, VT: Five new exhibits include a six-decade survey of the work of abstract artist *Emily Mason*, photographs by *Michael Poster* of people in recovery from addiction, and artwork by *Orly Cogan*, *Robert Perkins*, and *Elizabeth Turk*. Through February 10.

DVAA Center for the Arts, Northfield: *STEAM-Y Art and Science*. Group show of art inspired by and incorporating the sciences including vintage quack objects, demos. Workshop on November 3 with *Kathy Johnson* on Embroidered Rusty Fabric. Through November 11.

Geissler Gallery, Stoneleigh Burnham School, Bernardston: *What is Just?* Paintings by *Alice Thomas*. Through November 9.

Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *Migration*. Third annual Migrations festival and history of the Massachusetts state parks. Through October.

Greenfield Gallery, Greenfield: *Nukkua/To Sleep*, ink transfers by *Anja Schütz*. Through November 5. Artist reception October 26, 6 p.m.

Herrick Gallery, Wendell Free Library: *Bob Ellis: A Retrospective*. Through October.

Nina's Nook, Turners Falls: *Face Forward*, self-portraits by *Julianne Jones*. Through November 17.

Salmon Falls Gallery, Shelburne Falls: *One Size Fits All*. Banners and altered cabinet cards by Amy Johnquest. November 2 through December 31. Meet the artist: Saturday, December 1, 3 p.m. Also on view, Amanda Quinby's *Leaves to Landscapes*, abstracts in precious metal leaf. Reception November 10, 3 p.m.

Shelburne Arts Coop, Shelburne Falls: *Paper Mosaic*. *Jen Hale* has mounted small paper cuts on magnetic panels and will display them across a wall on magnetic boards as a long mosaic. Some areas will be designed to be interactive. Through October.

Smith College Greenhouse: *Annual Chrysanthemum Show*. November 3 through 18.

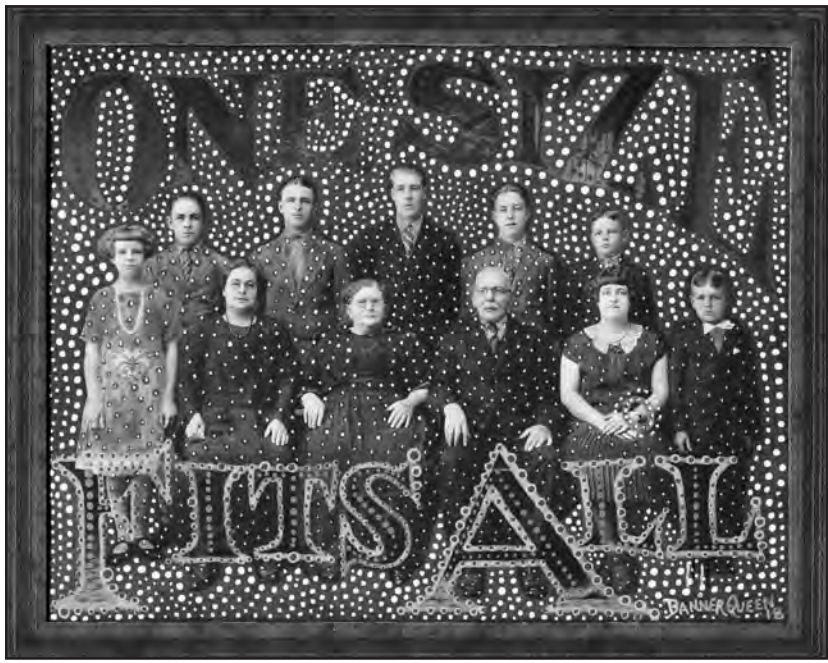
EVENTS:

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 25

Millers Falls Library: *Music and Movement*. For children and caregivers, with Tom Carroll and Laurie Davidson. 10 a.m.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Pioneer Valley Public Hearing on Women's Issues*. Mass Commission on the Status of Women wants to know about the issues that affect women, children, family, and community. Free and open to the public. Info: mcsww@state.ma.us. 4:30 p.m.

Brattleboro Museum & Art Center: *Robert Perkins Artist Talk*. Perkins talks about his art that "invites the viewer to explore the human desire for transcendence." His installation "Every Day" offers participatory elements and provides space for contemplation. 7 p.m.



One Size Fits All is the title for a show of banners and altered cabinet cards by Amy Johnquest at the Salmon Falls Gallery in Shelburne. Using found objects, vintage photos, and textiles as her base, Johnquest (a.k.a. "the BannerQueen") alters and paints over these materials, creating transcendent and sometimes carnivalesque atmospheres. The exhibit runs from November 2 through December 31. Meet the artist: Saturday, December 1, 3 p.m.

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *The Meditations*. Roots rock reggae, led by Ansel Cridland. \$. 8 p.m.

Hubie's Tavern, Turners Falls: *Karaoke Night*. 8 p.m.

Root Cellar: *Deep Red, Pop. 1280, Longings, Dirt Devil, DJ Gussy Boy*. \$. 8 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Heath Lewis*. 8 p.m.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 26

Pushkin Gallery, Greenfield: *Escape the Room: Stranger Things Edition*. Part scavenger hunt, part haunted house; an immersive team experience of puzzles and riddles. Benefits PVRs music department. \$. 4 p.m.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *Hallowed Sounds*. NuAncestral music from Colombia, Morocco, USA. Featuring *Kombilesa Mi*, *Innov Gwana*, *Incus*, and *DJ Journey Weaver*. \$. 7 p.m.

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Mile Twelve* and *Mamma's Marmalade*. \$. 8 p.m.

Root Cellar, Greenfield: *Steve*

Houschildt, *Michael Vallera*, and *Bastian Void*. \$. 8 p.m.

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Hero and the Horror*, *Tides*, *Live Well*, and *Etiquette*. \$. 9 p.m.

Hubie's Tavern, Turners Falls: *Acoustic Country*. 9 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Bluegrass and Beyond*. 9:30 p.m.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 27

West County Cider, 208 Peckville Road, Shelburne: *Patsy Clone* (a Patsy Cline tribute band featuring members of *Sister Jawbone*, *Fleetwood Whack* and the *Ephemeral Stringband*), with *Les Taiouts*, Cajun-style dance band. With cider tasting. \$. 1 p.m.

Great Falls Discovery Center: *Third Annual Migrations Festi-*

couraged. Musical duo. 9 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Immortal Jellyfish Halloween Show*. 9:30 p.m.

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 28

McCusker's Market, Shelburne Falls: *Celtic Sessions*. Musicians, all levels welcome. 10:30 a.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Literary Rendezvous Open Mic*. Featuring Stewart and Stewart, hosted by Candace Curran, offered by Straw Dog Literary Guild. Sign up by 3:15. 3 p.m.

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *I Draw Slow*, featuring *Rosemary Caine* and *Friends*. Dublin-based roots band. \$. 7 p.m.

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Pastotape Vol.1 Album Release Party*, featuring *Austin Fair*, *Chizz Capo*, and *Don Gadi*. \$. 8:30 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *TNT Karaoke*. 9 p.m.

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 30

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Pickwick Commons Plus*. With support from *False Accusations*, *Crafter*, and *Hollow Betrayal*. Heavy metal, hardcore, punk. \$. 7 p.m.

Wright Hall, Smith College: *Danez Smith Poetry Reading*. Award-winning author of "Don't Call Us Dead," dealing with black, queer, and HIV-positive identities. 7:30 p.m.

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Comedy in the Wheelhouse* with host *Jeff Ross*. 8 p.m.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 31

Carnegie Library, Turners Falls: *Story Time*. Stories, projects, snacks for young children and their caregivers. 10:15 a.m.

Leverett Library: *Tales and Tunes Story Hour*. Ages 0 to 5 and caregivers. 10:30 a.m.

Montague Common Hall, Montague Center: *Meditation Series*. With the venerable Than Pamutto. Open to all. 7 p.m.

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 1

Millers Falls Library: *Music and Movement*. For children and caregivers, with Tom Carroll and Laurie Davidson. 10 a.m.

Hubie's Tavern, Turners Falls: *Open Mic Night*. 7 p.m.

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Pat & Tex LaMountain, A Beautiful Future*. A Beautiful Future features Kate O'Connor, Rico Spence, and Charlie Shew. \$. 7 p.m.

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 2

Memorial Hall, Shelburne: *Chocolat*. Part of the "food season" series of movies. Live music before the movie. \$. 7 p.m.

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Seth Glier* and *Matt Nakoa*. Singer-songwriters, folk-pop artists. \$. 8 p.m.

Hubie's Tavern, Turners Falls:

Acoustic Country. With *Heath Lewis*. 9 p.m.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 3

Memorial Hall, Shelburne: *Chocolat*. Part of the "food season" series of movies. Live music before the movie. \$. 7 p.m.

Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *The Mammals* and *Sean Rowe*. \$. 7:30 p.m.

Root Cellar, Greenfield: *Gluebag*, with *Pine Taar* and *Golden Slugs*. \$. 8:30 p.m.



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By MISHEL IXCHEL

TURNERS FALLS – Japanese people bow to one another. This form of greeting is completely accepted in their culture, and to varying degrees, internationally. One of my teachers once put this into perspective as he talked about the immense amount of energy we exchange when we shake hands. Our hands contain concentrated energy fields, which both give and receive energy. And so, bowing is seen as an amazing alternative that allows people to acknowledge one another without physically exchanging energy.

Earlier this year, my kiddo and I met our friends at the botanic garden for the spring bulb show. Our eyes danced around the colors of the flowers, and the children were having a blast exploring this magical space.

At one point, my kid, at the time a little over 2, was standing in front of a sign that held the name of the tree behind it. I was standing beside him. Within seconds, we both felt the

Thanks, But No Thanks

presence of a woman as she approached us. She stopped and stood on his other side. My kid looked up at her, and she said something like, “Isn’t that a big tree?”

To which he replied, “Go away.”

She looked insulted and shocked. She had, after all, had the best of intentions, and had not been expecting that response. She shot me a look that seemed to tap its foot while it waited with arms crossed for an apology of sorts. At which point, I knelt down next to my son, and began to read the sign he had been staring at.

The woman got no apology, and my child got no reprimand. I understood my child’s response, and I saw no sense in instilling social niceties. He responded from a place of intuition. I know this because in the past, he’s happily engaged with adults when he felt comfortable and wanted to.

The thing is, his vocabulary was far more limited than it is now, but in that moment I understood what he was trying to say: “Lady, you’re in my space, and I do not want to speak to you.”

As for the woman and her expectations, it made me realize that as children, we are generally programmed and expected to be nice and proper, even if we feel that our personal boundaries have been crossed by complete strangers whom we did not invite into our space.

It made me realize just how ingrained it is within me to say “yes” when I mean “no.”

This, of course, made me more aware of myself and my conditionings. In particular, it got me thinking about handshakes and hugs.

In the past, whenever I would meet a “hugger,” I would let them hug me without thinking twice. A “hugger” is the kind of person who

exclaims “I’m a hugger!” as they ignore your hand and embrace you in their arms when you meet for the first time. In those instances, it would sometimes be sweet. But most times, I would immediately freeze up and hold my breath. In both cases, I didn’t think too much of it because it would soon be over.

But if you can exchange energy from a handshake, isn’t this process magnified with a hug?

Only once, and only very recently, did I decline a hug from a stranger. We had merely met, and as she opened her arms and took a step towards me, I took a step back and said, “I’m sorry, but I don’t feel comfortable hugging.”

Declining the hug made everything awkward. And I’m now left wondering if there is a respectful way to say “Thanks, but no thanks.”

Since that encounter at the botanic gardens, I have consciously encouraged my child to stand by his “no.” I want to support him as he uses his intuition in different situations. And on the flip side, I also make sure he understands the importance of listening to another person’s “no.”

Will I ever hug a “hugger” again? Yes. Because there have been and there will be times and places where hugging a stranger is the perfect expression. I am, however, going to be out there experimenting with the different ways in which I can decline handshakes and hugs when they just don’t feel right.

Ecuadorian-born and New York City bred, Mishel Ixchel is mama to a toddler, and currently resides in Turners Falls where she practices and teaches the art of sacred self-care.

Tuesday, October 30: Bar Association Offers Free Legal Advice By Phone

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

FRANKLIN COUNTY – Western Massachusetts residents can receive free legal advice on Tuesday, October 30, through the Massachusetts Bar Association’s semi-annual Western Mass. Dial-A-Lawyer call-in program.

Volunteer lawyers from the MBA will field phone calls from 4 to 7 p.m. from residents of Berkshire, Franklin, Hampden, and Hampshire counties who have legal concerns or problems. The legal advice is provided at no charge as a public service of the MBA.

The Dial-A-Lawyer phone number is (413) 782-1659. If a caller gets a busy signal, they are asked to hang up and try again. Normal telephone charges will apply.

The MBA’s Dial-A-Lawyer program is co-sponsored by Western New England University School of Law, *The Republican*, *El Pueblo Latino*, the Massachusetts Association of Hispanic Attorneys, and the Hispanic National Bar Association.

“Many people in Massachusetts face unmet legal needs because their work schedules or other commitments prevent them from connecting with a lawyer, or they are unsure of where to go for help,” said MBA President Christopher A. Kenney.

“Our Western Mass. Dial-A-Lawyer program provides local residents with free and convenient access to a knowledgeable team of volunteer lawyers, who help us fulfill our continued commitment to increasing access to justice across the state.”

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