



Silent Spring, Again

Is the EPA doing its job?

Page 16



Once Upon a Time

The Sawmill, a Busy Little River

Page 13

LAKE PLEASANT MILLERS FALLS MONTAGUE CENTER MONTAGUE CITY TURNERS FALLS

The Montague Reporter

YEAR 6 - NO. 43

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THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES

SEPTEMBER 4, 2008

G-M Schools Reduce Budget

To \$16,820,004, THE AMOUNT SET BY THE STATE

BY DAVID DETMOLD
The Gill-Montague school committee met on the eve of a Boston budget powwow between state and local officials last week, and took steps towards easing the fiscal crisis besetting the regional school district and its member towns.

On Tuesday, August 26th, the committee voted to reduce the Gill-Montague Regional School District's operating budget by nearly \$200,000, to the level already set for the GMRSD at the beginning of July by the state Department of Elementary and Secondary Education in a so-called '1/12th budget': \$16,820,004.

Interim superintendent Ken Rocke said the GMRSD was able to reduce the school budget to the level set by the Commissioner of the DESE because a preliminary examination of school choice numbers showed the schools were likely to face only "a modest net loss" in school

choice numbers, rather than the "drastic short-fall" school officials had been preparing for.

The Gill-Montague

schools have been forfeiting in excess of one million dollars in state funds to school choice out and

see **BUDGET** pg 12

Police Station Contract Signed

BY PAM HANOLD

MONTAGUE - The contract for construction of the new police station at 178 Turnpike Road was signed last week and delivered on Friday, August 29th, to R.A.C.



PHOTO BY TONY DILUZIO

On Wednesday, August 27th, Montague police chief Raymond Zukowski signed the contract for constructing the new police station with R.A.C. Builders of Agawam.

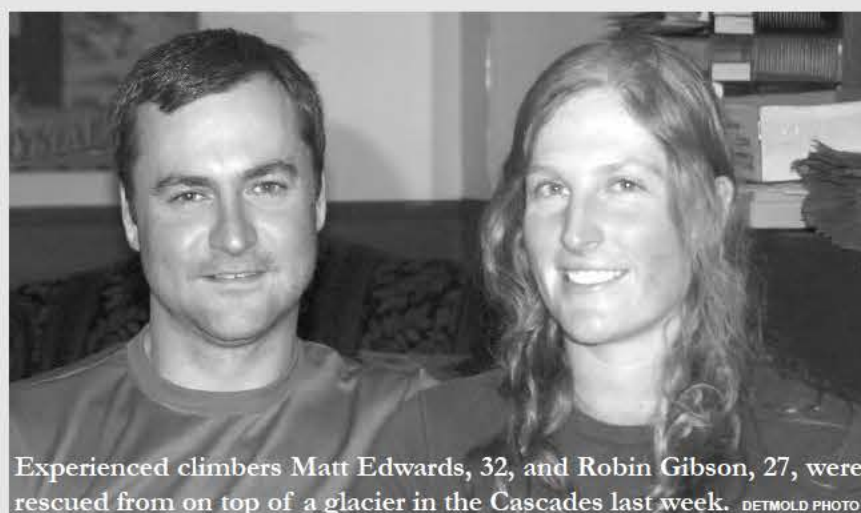
Builders of Agawam, the lowest compliant bidders. The contract is for \$3,968,730, which is \$95,918 less than last August's police station building committee estimate of \$4,064,648.

Tom Raschilla, project manager from R.A.C. Builders, attended last Wednesday's building committee meeting to go over the proposed site layout. To ensure smooth coordination and a full con-

tinuation of Turners Falls fire department operations during the adjoining construction, Raschilla pored over the plans with the committee to make sure all concerns of the fire, police, and water departments were addressed. He laid out work projections for the next four months, stressing the importance of getting the weather sensitive work accomplished before winter.

see **POLICE** pg 4

WENDELL CLIMBERS RESCUED FROM GLACIER



Experienced climbers Matt Edwards, 32, and Robin Gibson, 27, were rescued from on top of a glacier in the Cascades last week. DETMOLD PHOTO

BY DAVID DETMOLD

CONCRETE, WA - When he isn't climbing trees in the course of his work as an arborist, Matt Edwards can often be found climbing mountain instead. His partner, Robin Gibson, a horticulturist who runs Crescent Moon Gardens, a commer-

cial and residential landscaping business, is an equally enthusiastic outdoorswoman. So when they had a chance to get away for a summer vacation this year, they planned to hike in the Cascades in Washington state. But weather and circumstance

see **CLIMBERS** pg 10

Woodsmen, Spare that Tree!

BRIDGET SWEET

MONTAGUE - The town of Montague held an hour-long tree hearing on Wednesday, August 13th, to discuss the fate of nine posted trees, some of which are situated along the route of sidewalks being reconstructed this year. Seven concerned citizens of Montague attended to voice their opinions about the posted trees to the superintendent of public works, Tom Bergeron and to the town tree warden, Mark Stevens.

Bergeron informed the hearing that the town's sidewalk repair project had led to Stevens' study of trees along the route. The engineering company working with the town on the sidewalk reconstruction project, Weston and Sampson, hired an arborist to assess potentially damaged trees. Bergeron con-

cluded by assuring the public, "We decide if a tree they recommend comes down or not. We have the final say."

Stevens added, "As soon as I post a tree, the town's responsible," for it, unless an act of God takes the tree down first. Also, he said, "If (a tree is) on private property and if it is a hazard to public safety, I will take it down." He referred to a recent microburst in Whately, where property damage was caused by diseased trees blown down in the high winds.

Stevens said he had walked the streets where sidewalk repair is slated, and posted the trees that needed attending to. Some of the trees posted for removal drew no comment from the public. However, Roberta Potter of 11 Stevens Street was adamant that her 60-year-old

maple tree not be removed. She also wrote an objection to the select-board.

Potter received good news at the hearing. Her tree will be spared. Instead of being cut down, the maple tree will receive a root guard, and the paving work on the nearby sidewalk will be done in asphalt to allow for future growth, with Bergeron seeing to it personally.

Also, Michael Marcotrigiano of 22 Union Street in Montague

Center objected to the removal of a tree in front of his property, and two others on opposite ends of the street saying, "I don't want to be living in Holyoke."

By this, he apparently referred to sections of that city where numerous trees along the tree belt have been cut down without

see **TREE** pg 11



ROBERTA POTTER PHOTO

This maple tree in front of 11 Stevens was ordered "not to be removed."

PET OF THE WEEK

Unbearably Cute



Kittens!

We have plenty of kittens in need of good homes at the Shelter. For more information on adopting kittens please contact the Dakin Pioneer Valley Humane Society at 413-548-9898 or via email lev-erett@dpvhs.org.

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WENDELL LIBRARY NEWS

Play Group Resumes

Play group for pre-schoolers and their parents resumes on Wednesday mornings, from 10 - 11 a.m., starting September 9th.

Amy Simmons will be leading gentle stories, movement and simple activities for children ages six months to five years.

Citizen Survey on Wendell Library Services

The trustees of the Wendell Free Library and the library director are in the process of writing a strategic plan for activities and services offered by the library. This plan will set the library focus and goals for the next five years and will be useful in applying for grants to fund programs.

We are asking Wendell citizens to assist us in this effort by filling out a simple two page sur-

vey concerning the kinds of services that would be most useful to them. Even if your family does not currently use the library your survey responses will be helpful. A copy of the survey will be mailed to every Wendell household, inside the town newsletter, by the end of the week. The survey will also be available at the Wendell library website, www.wendellfreelibrary.org.

One survey can be filled out for an entire household, or feel free to print a copy for each member of your family. We are interested in receiving responses from citizens of all ages.

The survey deadline is September 15th. It can be mailed to the library or dropped off at the library or Wendell post office. The trustees and director thank you for your assistance.

CARNEGIE LIBRARY NEWS

Pre-School Story Hour

BY LINDA HICKMAN

TURNERS FALLS - Pre-school story hour with Ruth O'Mara will be held at the Carnegie Library in Turners Falls on Wednesday mornings at 10:15 a.m. Story hour includes reading a few books, a snack and a related art project. Upcoming themes are as

follows: September 10th - Snake stories, September 17th - Teddy Bear Tales (bring your favorite teddy friend to story hour!), and September 24th - Trees. This free program is for families and caregivers as well.

For more info, call the library at 863-3214.



TURNERS FALLS- Keemen and Oshen Ramirez of Heath and Alexander and Gray Davidson Carroll of Montague Center recently enjoyed an "I Spy" book at the Carnegie Library.

SENIOR CENTER ACTIVITIES -- Sept 8th - Sept. 12th

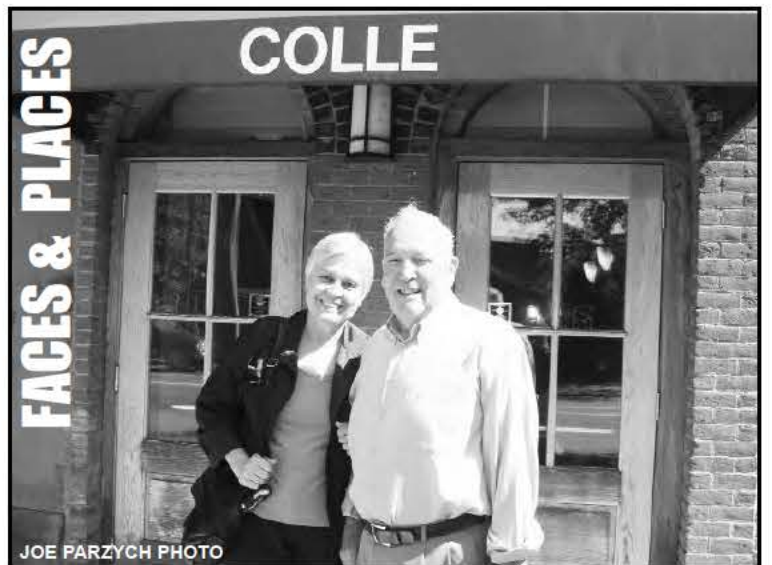
GILL/MONTAGUE Senior Center, 62 Fifth Street, Turners Falls, is open Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. for activities and congregate meals. Council-on-Aging Director is Bunny Caldwell. For information or to make reservations, call 863-9357. Meal reservations need to be made a day in advance by 11 a.m. Messages can be left on our machine when the center is not open. Mealsite Manager is Chris Richer. The Center offers a hot noon meal weekdays to any senior. A reservation is necessary and transportation can be provided. Trips: Call the Senior Center 863-9357 or 863-4500

Monday, 8th

9 a.m. Foot Screening
10 a.m. Senior Aerobics
11 a.m. Easy Aerobics
Tuesday, 9th
9 a.m. Walking Group
10:30 a.m. Chair Yoga

1 p.m. Canasta
Wednesday, 10th
9 a.m. Foot Screening
10 a.m. Senior Aerobics
11:15 a.m. Mealsite Meeting
12:45 p.m. Bingo
Thursday, 11th
10a.m. Coffee and Conversation
10:30 a.m. "Improving your Mood" presentation
1 p.m. Pitch
Friday, 12th
10 a.m. Senior Aerobics
11 a.m. Easy Aerobics
12:30 p.m. "Confused about Comcast" presentation
Trips: Call the Senior Center 863-9357 or 863-4500.

ERVING Senior Center, 18 Pleasant St., Ervingside (Old Center School, 1st Floor), is open Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. for activities and congregate meals. For information and reservations call Polly Kiely, Senior Center director at 413



Colles at the Colle

Susanna and Royal Colle, of Ithaca, NY, were back in town for the second time this summer, seeking information on family history. They are descendents of the woman who built the Colle Opera house on Avenue A, Mary Colle, Royal's great grandmother. His grandfather, Fred Colle, took over management of the Opera House in 1881. Fred was a druggist, and he operated a drugstore on the ground floor of the building. By 1920, Fred had sold out to Denis Shea, who built the Shea Theater next door a few years later.

People who may have information regarding the history of the Colle Opera house, or the Colle family, may contact Susanna and Royal care of this newspaper. Royal is interested in solving one particular mystery: what became of the five chandeliers that once graced the Opera House?

By the way, as older residents seem to know, but younger residents of town seem to have forgotten, the family name is pronounced as if it were spelled Coalie, not as if it rhymed with a popular breed of dog.

Training Active Bystanders

Quabbin Mediation is seeking twelve community members to take an 18-hour training to become TAB trainers, along with 24 high school students. In teams of one adult and one student, they will then teach the six lesson TAB curriculum to all 8th grade students at Athol-Royalston Middle School and Mahar Regional High. Susan Wallace, Quabbin Mediation's training director, said, "We are looking for parents, grandparents, retired people, recent graduates, and

others to be part of this unique program to improve school climate." The 'Train the Trainers' will take place 9/25, 9/27, and 9/30 in Athol and Orange. Each community volunteer would then make a 30-hour commitment over the coming school year.

TAB outlines skills for safely intervening to interrupt harm, develops bystander awareness of their power, teaches how bystanders can generate positive actions in others, and discusses the need for moral courage. Applications are due to Quabbin Mediation by September 8th. For further info and for an application, please call Quabbin Mediation at (978) 544-6142, or email us at info@quabbin-mediation.org. For more on TAB, go to: www.quabbinmediation.org.

CORRECTION

In the last issue, we incorrectly credited the photographer of the "Lawn Chair Precision Drill Team" photograph accompanying the Block Party article. The correct photographer was Steve Winters. We apologize for the error.

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Scrap Metal Thieves Strike in Daytime

STAFF REPORTS

GILL - Police chief David Hastings encourages citizens to report suspicious activity. With scrap metal prices at an all time high, thieves are brazenly stealing anything they can get their hands on, even in broad daylight.

"They are committing these crimes during the day when people are working and there's no one home," Hastings said. "We need citizen participation. On August 12th, we caught a guy scrapping someone's boat, during the day. We caught him only because someone passing by thought things didn't look right, and called us."

"It would be a great help to us if people would report suspicious activity. They are brazen, stealing not 200 yards from the [Gill police] station."

On Sunday, April 20th, a neighbor saw a man stuffing tubing into his car windows on the property bordering the Gill

police station. When the neighbor spoke to the man, the thief told the neighbor he had permission from the owner and was just getting gas money so that he could come back on Monday with a truck to clean the place out. Officer Sean Coughlin responded, but the trespasser had taken off.

Despite the property being posted with Keep Out and No Trespassing signs, eight days later, two men were observed with a truck and trailer taking loads of metal to the scrap yard. Another neighbor sounded the alert.

Chief Hastings immediately responded, blocking the truck with his cruiser. When asked if the truck owner had permission to take scrap metal from the property, "Yes," the truck owner replied. "The owner died and his son wants the place cleaned out."

"That's strange that you say the owner died," Hastings said,

"Because he's standing right there. So who gave you permission?"

The story changed.

"It was Jimmy."

"Jimmy who?"

"It was just a friend I saw at Food City who told me about all this stuff. He said it was right next to the police station."

"What's Jimmy's last name?"

"I don't know his last name; he's just someone I met at Food City."

The truck owner came up with other variations, even offering restitution for the two loads they had sold to WtE Recycling scrap yard in Greenfield that morning, producing receipts for two loads, denying they had stolen anything previously, despite large amounts of copper wire and copper pipe, brass pipe and fittings, radiators, plus a large amount of aluminum that was also missing. The two men unloaded the truck and trailer, including a large copper hot



Gill Police Chief David Hastings

water tank.

The site was cordoned off with yellow caution tape. Next morning the caution tape was down and the copper hot water tank was gone.

A moat dug to block access to the metal has kept thieves out since.

The truck owner promised to make restitution by the end of the week. His partner brought a check to the station for his portion, but the truck owner did not. On July 22nd, the truck owner, Mark Kuklewicz, 31, of Lake Pleasant, was arraigned in Greenfield District Court for larceny. The case is scheduled for

pre-trial conference on September 19th.

State Senator James Timilty-D-Walpole, has drafted a bill to address the growing problem of thieves stealing metal for scrap. As a result of many reports, the WtE scrap yard has instituted a new policy requiring sellers to produce a driver's license as identification. WtE has a policy of recording a general classification of material delivered, though not a description or source of the material. Surveillance cameras to be installed at WtE will help tie sellers to material delivered.

Thieves were observed cutting catalytic converters from a vehicle in the parking lot of the Coke plant at the Greenfield in broad daylight recently. And state police stopped a pickup with a load of catalytic converters on I-91.

Gill police chief Hastings urges people to be on the lookout for suspicious activity, day or night, and to call police if things do not look quite right. The number to call is 863-9398.

Upinngil Farm Takes Part in Raw Milk Tour

Eight dairies across Massachusetts, including Upinngil Farm on Main Road in Gill, will open up their farms for tours and other activities on Saturday, September 13th to highlight the benefits of raw milk. On Raw Milk Dairy Day there will be opportunities to pat pigs, see how cheese is made, watch cows being milked, learn how goats are fitted for a show or watch an ox driving demonstration. Many of the farms will welcome their visitors to bring a picnic to enjoy once they have completed their tours. Visitors will learn

why raw milk tastes so good and is so good for you.

Upinngil Farm is a diverse farming operation. The principal enterprises are: small fruits (strawberries, raspberries and grapes); dairy (registered Ayrshire Cattle); field crops (potatoes, wheat, spelt, beans, pumpkins, corn); forage crops; and market garden crops. Most of the farm's production is sold at the farm through a year round farm store, seasonal farm stand and u-pick. The farm's milk, cheeses, whole grain flours, honey and maple syrup are available only at the farm. Fruit

and vegetables are sold also at local food coops and markets. Tours of the dairy and cheese sampling will be available throughout the day. Tours of the farm's pastures, vineyard and berry patches will be at 11:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. There will be a demonstration of oxen driving from 2:00 - 4:00 p.m.

The following area dairies are also participating in the event: Bostrom Farm in Greenfield (10-3); Chase Hill Farm in Warwick (10-4); Cricket Creek Farm in Williamstown (10-6); Lyons Brook Farm in Westport (10-3);

Oake Knoll Ayrshires in Foxboro (noon - 4); Robinson Farm in Hardwick (2:30 - 5); and Sidehill Farm in Ashfield (2:30 p.m. tour).

Raw Milk Dairy Day is a free event. For more information see

www.nofamass.org/programs/organicdairy/rawmilk.php or contact Kate Rossiter, NOFA/Mass Organic Dairy Coordinator, at krossiter@nofamass.org, or (413) 498-2721.



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Straight Talk Excess

BY DAVID DETMOLD - Well, it's been a wild end to summer, what with hurricanes and political conventions and the unexpected fall of gas prices just in time for the election.

Needless to say, the telephone has been ringing off the hook here at the office, ever since John McCain abandoned his abortive first pick for vice president and called to say he had chosen me to round out the ticket instead.

I guess McCain rightly concluded that my years of experience as a town meeting member in Montague, and as a single parent of two high school graduates, (or rather one high school graduate, and one high school dropout who earned his GED while bussing tables in Hawaii) gave me all the credentials I needed to fill in as commander in chief at a moment's notice. Since then, Fox News and the rest of the pack has been camped on my doorstep, hounding my mother and my kindergarten teacher and my drinking buddies at the Rendezvous for all the biographical data needed to convince a wavering electorate that the Republican Party has what it takes to lead the country into a brave new world. And with me an erratic heartbeat away from the Oval Office, they will!

It's true, I've never been a member of the Republican Party before, but after watching the Bush administration run things for the last eight years, I figure, How hard can it be? So I'm taking a crash course in foreign and domestic policy, and working with Dr. Phil Gramm to get over my "mental recession" and stop whining about the economy. Which is something I've never understood very well anyway. But McCain insists that's not a requirement for national leadership. We'll get along swell.

He calls the shots, and I'm a team player. So I'm refining my energy policy, getting ready for my first big speech, to the Miners

Benevolent Association in Charlotte, West Virginia. Now I'm in favor of clean coal, once they find some, and more off-shore drilling. In fact, I'm in favor of drilling on coastal lands that will be underwater soon, once the rest of the polar ice cap melts. And more alternative energy, like nuclear power and wind. Or at least more hot air. Whatever it takes to free America from its dangerous addiction to foreign oil and to keep our troops occupied in Iraq for the next 100 years.

I plan to take up duck hunting. Somebody has to hunt up those ducks. Under the Democratic Congress, too many ducks have been allowed to go AWOL. Don't get me started on home foreclosures!

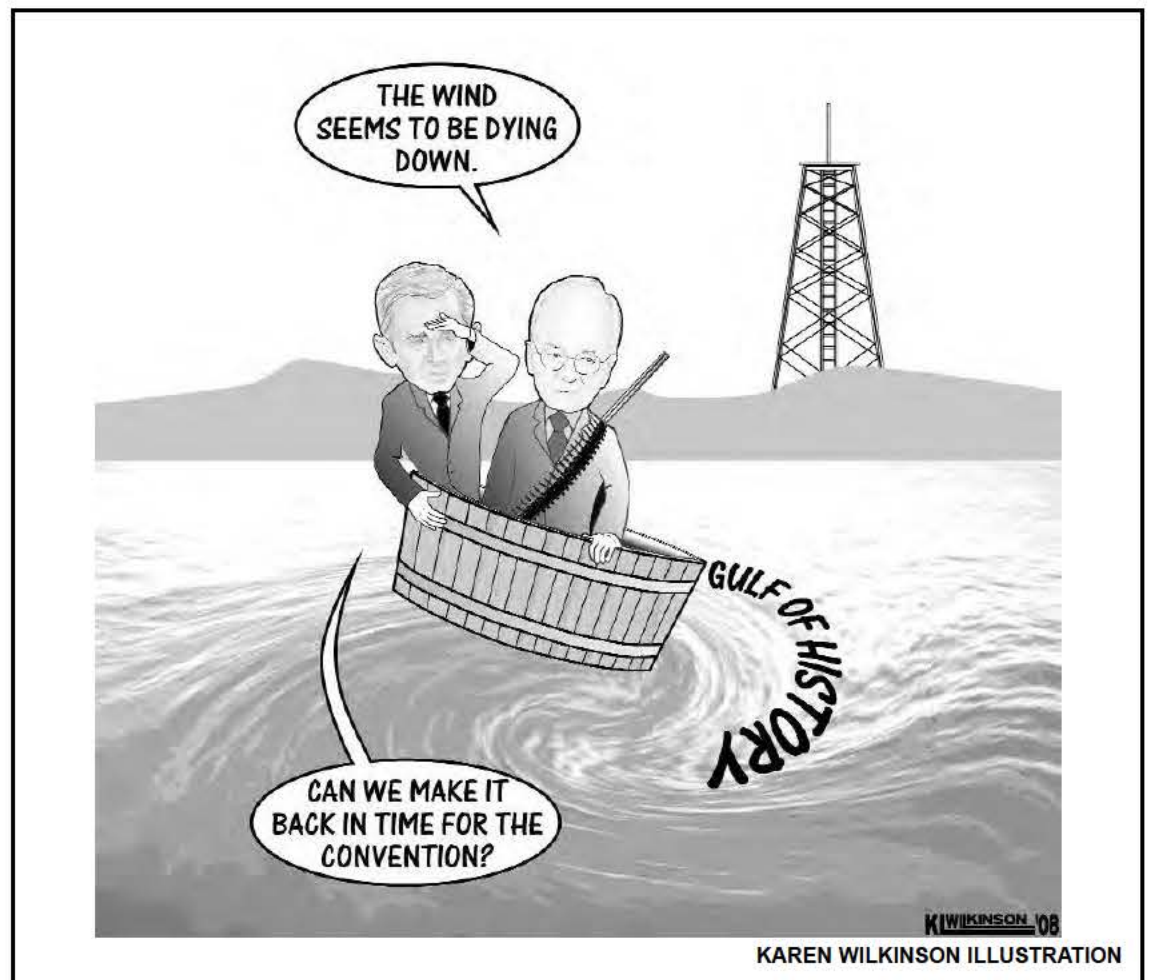
As a new true blue Republican, I am in support of the rich trickling down on the working class, once they polish off a few more glasses of Champagne on election night. Of course, it's a lock we'll win now that Diebold has voting machines in 28 states, including most of the so-called battlegrounds. The Democrats are such patsies.

Once we finish with the November charade, we can get back to the business of policing the world to make it safe for big business, and fixing things at home so the super rich can get even richer. As George W. Bush famously said, "Make the pie higher."

Now that's a slogan I can toss around with confidence.

Joe Biden, you can talk all you want, but I have what it takes to win the undecideds. Pot for every chicken, 40 acres of new pipe on the North Slope, more subsidies for Iowa ethanol farmers. God, guns, and gay marriage. Who would want a marriage that isn't gay? And I think Thomas Jefferson and Strom Thurmond should have been able to adopt.

I'm vetted and ready to serve on day two. Or three. Whatever.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Mug Race Thanks

For 28 years the Montague Mug Race has been held on the third weekend of August, along with the Old Home Day celebration.

This race has become a favorite among the runners, and this year many participants came to partake in a perfect morning for the run.

Four years ago the Mini Mug was added, hoping to entice folks to give our event a try. I am pleased to report that this

year we had a large number of young runners who tackled the course for the first time, along with many returning participants. Watching them come across the finish line was an inspiration to us all.

Many of the runners said how well organized the races were, and spoke appreciatively of our efforts. It was great to have such positive feedback.

The races could not have happened without the continued support of our faithful sponsors, our dedicated group of volunteers and the members of the Montague Center Fire Department. Thank you all.

I also want to mention the great coverage of the race (before and after) by Janel Nockleby of the Montague Reporter staff.

Next year will be the 50th anniversary of Montague Old Home Days and the Mug Race will definitely be part of the festivities. Mark your calendar for August 15th, 2009!

Again thanks to all who supported the race and Old Home Days.

- Ann Fisk
Montague Mug Race Dir.

Independence for Montague Center?

I live in Montague Center. I was born and raised here. I think its time for Montague Center to have its own government. We are outvoted and our town is no longer a community. Turners does not care about us except for taxes and water. I am interested in getting a discussion going that might lead to Montague Center becoming independent.

What do you think?

- Warren Welch
Montague Center

Interested parties may email Welch at warrenwelch@verizon.net

Montague Old Home Days FALL AUCTION & White Elephant Sale

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POLICE from page 1

The building that is about to take shape will come complete with state-of-the-art energy efficient systems tailored to the town's needs by the expertise of committee members working with the architect and engineers.

With the construction bid coming in below estimate due to the favorable bidding climate, chances are now good the committee will be able to further reduce the station's operating costs by adding photovoltaic panels to the project.

Over a hundred sets of plans were requested by contractors and subcontractors, and ten general contractor bids were submitted.

The committee expressed appreciation for the hard work of the town's architect, Brian Humes, and the clerk of the works team, Tony Diluzio and Ted Fiffy, to deal with the unexpected demands that have come up, and to ensure a successful bidding process.

Pam Hanold is the chair of the Montague Public Safety Facility Building Committee

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American Dead in Iraq and Afghanistan as of 9/2/08



(Casualty sign temporarily located next to Wagon Wheel Restaurant on Rte. 2 in Gill)

EYE ON TOWN FINANCES

District Meeting May Put the State on the Spot

BY MIKE NAUGHTON & JEFF SINGLETON

GILL - MONTAGUE - For the second year in a row, the Gill-Montague Regional School District (GMRSD) is starting its school year without an approved budget. Those who have been following the process are familiar with the details: the towns of Gill and Montague voted assessments that were well below what the district had requested, and in the absence of an agreement the Massachusetts Commissioner of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) imposed a temporary budget.

That budget was set at approximately 4% above the FY 2008 budget, which -- given that state aid was basically level-funded -- meant 8% - 10% increases in the towns' assessments. The towns protested the state imposed budget as an unfunded mandate, and on August 27th a delegation from the selectboards and finance committees of the two towns went to Boston to press their case.

Our state representatives had scheduled two meetings: one with representatives of state auditor deNucci's office, to discuss the unfunded mandate issue, and one with associate commissioner Jeff Wulfson from the DESE to discuss more generally the subject of school district funding. Our state representatives, senator Stan Rosenberg and representatives Steve Kulik and Chris Donelan, were present, as was interim superintendent Ken Rocke from the GMRSD.

By way of background, this meeting occurred in large measure because the towns of Gill and Montague have twice rejected funding requests from the school district, which were far beyond our ability to pay. As a result, the school district, by state law, will call a so-called district meeting in September to vote on a school budget. (A district meeting is an

open meeting of all eligible voters in the member towns). The Montague town meeting also sent a letter to the state protesting the inadequate levels of state aid, which created this problem!

This process means we have entered the fiscal year with no budget. As a result, the state has imposed a temporary budget on the schools and towns. This "1/12th Budget", if it continued throughout the year, would require an assessment increase of over \$800,000 for the towns. This is higher than the total available new revenues of both Gill and Montague.

Also this state-imposed budget directly contradicts the level of state aid we are receiving. The 1/12th budget assumes that the school district spending should increase by over \$800,000, or more than 4%. The level of state aid increases by less than 1%, or approximately \$37,000 a year. Obviously that is a pretty big contradiction and the towns are left holding the financial bag.

Finally, it must be stressed that this situation, in one form or another, has been going on for at least eight years. Between 2000 and 2008 school district budgets have increased by over \$470,000, or 4%, annually. State aid (Chapter 70) has increased by an annual average of under \$38,000, or less than 1% annually. This is a recipe for disaster in the form of assessment increases, which have consumed over three quarters of local revenue growth since 2000.

Last year the school assessment for Montague increased by over \$600,000, while our revenues grew by less than \$300,000. We dug ourselves into a very deep hole by using nearly \$1 million in reserves to patch the situation up.

This year Gill's potential assessment increase is over \$200,000, while their total revenue growth is under \$60,000.

To make a long story short, while the auditor's representa-



tive agreed that the state-imposed assessment probably constitutes an unfunded mandate, she said the legal remedy would be to go to court, and existing case law suggests that a judge would rule against us. Basically, by agreeing to form a two-town regional school district, the towns also agreed to the process that we now find ourselves in. In other words, we agreed to let the commissioner of the DESE impose a budget on us, so we can't complain now.

On the wider issue of school district funding, and the state's support (or lack) thereof, there was a lively discussion, out of which the following points emerged:

- Town officials made it clear that Gill and Montague have reached -- perhaps have passed -- their ability to fund the school district. The towns believe they need immediate help to get through this budget year.

- State officials were sympathetic, and noted that Gill and Montague are not alone in their difficulties in funding their schools.

- The state does not have any ready source of funds to help us out, other than so-called "pot-hole" funds, which are fairly limited.

- Any more aggressive attempt to help Gill and Montague would likely open a can of worms for the state, as many other towns and districts would want similar help.

- State officials realize there are problems with the way public education is funded, and various efforts are being made to come

up with solutions, such as the study of Franklin County schools organized by Senator Rosenberg and the Governor's Readiness Project. However, none of those efforts will help with the FY 2009 budget, and it's unlikely they will help with FY 2010, either.

- The state is committed to having a high-quality public education system, but there are no good answers as to how it should be paid for.

- The upshot is that state officials hope that the towns and the district can find a way to make it through the next year or two, after which they hope some of the things they're working on may offer some relief.

In other words, the meeting ended in something like a stalemate: town officials said we need more money, and state officials said there's not much they can do to help and we're on our own. We got the impression that more than one state official is waiting for the district meeting on September 17th to resolve the problem.

We'll see what happens, but we think they may be waiting in vain. There is a growing feeling among town officials that enough is enough. We have cut here and scrimped there and used one-time reserves to patch over the gaps for the past few years, and we can't keep doing this. Town assessments for the GMRSD have risen by an average of over 8% per year over the past few years, while state aid has risen by less than 1%. Essentially, we have been left to fund our public education system by ourselves, and we are not rich towns. There is no way we can afford the school system that the district has built without significant help from other sources.

At this point, there seems to be little doubt that the selectboards and finance committees of both towns will recommend a "no" vote on the district's budget request at the district meeting.

The question is whether there will be anything approaching consensus on a "yes" vote for some other proposal. One proposal put forward would allow Gill and Montague to fund their budgets, including the GMRSD assessments, without using one-time reserves or resorting to overrides. The effect would be to reduce the school district budget by almost \$2 million.

Another proposal, which would increase the GMRSD assessment by a nominal amount over last year, would decrease the district budget by over \$700,000. Other proposals may well surface, and these will be debated over the next couple of weeks.

Of course, the GMRSD school committee will have the final say. If the district meeting votes a budget and the committee accepts it, then the district has a budget. Otherwise, the DESE budget, in some form, continues in effect until a) another district meeting is held and approves a budget acceptable to the committee, or b) December 1st, when the commissioner of the DESE is obligated to assume financial control of the district.

Some of us are thinking that the only way to really get the state's attention is to dump the whole thing in their laps. What that means is anyone's guess at this point, but it seems likely that state officials will at least have to revisit the current budget they have imposed based on the district meeting vote.

There are others who argue that a state takeover would be a disaster - that it would bankrupt the towns and leave us in a worse situation than we're in now. But we are already in the process of bankrupting ourselves, so we have to ask - is forcing the state to become part of the process really worse than continuing as we are with the state watching from the sidelines?

see STATE pg 8

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Discovery Charter School for Franklin County

Families in Franklin County may soon have another option for elementary school education for their children. A proposal for the Discovery Charter School has been submitted and accepted by the Charter School Office of the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). The founding group includes community members committed to the education of students in local communities and parents with children attending schools both in and out of the district. Members are from Amherst, Gill, Leverett, Montague and Northfield. The Discovery

School is proposed as a regional Commonwealth charter school, meaning the school will operate as a public school independent from the district in which it is located.

The concept of a charter school for elementary students in our area has been on the minds of some community members for quite some time. The inspiration for action of the founding of a charter school grew out of discussions for an innovative Horace Mann charter school (which would have kept a charter as a district school). Responding to a desire for educational options, the

Discovery School will welcome children from 26 different towns and 14 different school districts. Admission will be by lottery, following guidelines of the DESE, which also requires that districts have a budget line item to support children in Charter Schools. This DESE requirement assures both geographic diversity of the student body, and protection of districts' budgets when funding follows a student from his or her district school to a charter school.

The Discovery Charter School will open in the '09-'10 school year as a K-3 school, expanding by one grade each year to ultimately serve students in grades K-6. It is projected to begin with an enrollment of 160 students, gradually increasing to 260 students. Potential locations are being researched.

A county-central location will be key to building a sense of community and providing accessibility for towns ranging from Northfield to Charlemont to Orange. A major benefit of

opening the Discovery Charter School is the earmarked funding provided by the state for building new facilities and capital improvements to existing buildings. This funding is highly beneficial to communities hosting Commonwealth Charter schools.

As part of its application for a charter from the state, the group working on the school submitted a document complete with mission and vision statements, descriptions of the school community and educational setting, governance models, as well as information on curriculum, assessment, and serving students with special needs. The proposed credo of the Discovery Charter School is: Caring, Curious, Creative, Collaborative, and Critical Thinkers. Students will be introduced to these values and habits of mind beginning at an early age as the foundation of their school culture. The school will also place a heavy emphasis on environmental sustainability and science education.

Another goal of Discovery is building strong bonds between students, parents, teachers, and the surrounding communities as well as providing educational models, including programs, curriculum, and teaching methods that can be replicated by other public schools in the district. Already the proposed school has formed alliances with local organizations and institutions such as the Hitchcock Center for the Environment, Antioch College, Hampshire College, and the Four Rivers Charter School in Greenfield.

For now, charter school proponents keep working and planning, awaiting a decision from the DESE in mid-September regarding an invitation to submit a formal application. Final charter school decisions are made by the department at the start of 2009. Anyone interested in finding out more about the school can email founding members at discovery_school@verizon.net.

Joanna Frankel, a Gill resident, is a member of the Discovery Charter School founding group.

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HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MONTAGUE POLICE LOG

Illegal Dumpings and Unwanted Persons

Tuesday, 8/19

11:08 a.m. Report of trespassing on Forestry Property, Dry Hill Road, Montague. Referred to an officer.

Wednesday, 8/20

2:36 p.m. Report of illegal dumping on South Street, Montague. Referred to other agency.

Friday, 8/22

12:39 p.m. Report of burglary / breaking and entering at a Prospect Street address, Turners Falls.

12:50 p.m. Report of larceny in front of Amies Used Furniture, Avenue A, Turners Falls. Referred to an officer.

3:04 p.m. Arrested [redacted] on a default warrant.

6:14 p.m. Following a traffic stop, arrested [redacted] for operating a motor vehicle with license suspended, no inspection sticker and possession of Class D drug. Arrested [redacted] on a default warrant.

9:46 p.m. Report of a fight at the Rendezvous, Third Street, Turners Falls. One subject taken into protective custody.

Saturday, 8/23

12:11 a.m. Report of an unwanted person at an L Street address, Turners Falls. Advised of civil action.

12:40 a.m. Arrested [redacted] charged with assault and battery, domestic.

12:50 a.m. Arrested [redacted] charged with possession of Class E substance, possession of Class A

substance, possession of Class D drug, subsequent offense.

1:03 a.m. Report of a fight at Second Street Sports Bar, Avenue A, Turners Falls. Investigated.

1:47 a.m. Report of an unwanted person at a Seventh Street address, Turners Falls. Arrested [redacted]

Charged with assault, domestic, disorderly conduct, threat to commit murder, and vandalism, damage or defacement of property.

Sunday, 8/24

8:46 p.m. Report of larceny at a Montague Avenue address, Lake Pleasant.

Monday, 8/25

9:31 a.m. Report of larceny at a Second Street address, Turners Falls.

4:59 p.m. Report of vandalism at the rail yard, Millers Falls.

Tuesday, 8/26

12:58 p.m. Report of vandalism at an East Main Street address, Millers Falls. Investigated.

7:22 p.m. Following a motor vehicle stop, arrested [redacted] charged with speeding, license not in possession, operating a motor vehicle with a suspended license. Arrested [redacted] charged with possession of a Class D drug, marijuana.

Thursday, 8/28

7:45 a.m. Report of larceny from a Park Street address, Turners Falls. Investigated.

5:41 p.m. Report of possible suicide attempt at a Fourth Street address,

Turners Falls. Subject removed to hospital.

Friday, 8/29

7:52 p.m. Report of unwanted person at a J Street address, Turners Falls. Arrested [redacted] Taken into protective custody.

7:54 p.m. Report of domestic disturbance at a Bulkley Street address, Turners Falls. Arrested [redacted] Charged with assault and battery, domestic, witness intimidation, malicious destruction of property, assault and battery with a dangerous weapon and threat to commit murder.

Saturday, 8/30

8:40 p.m. Officer noticed illegal dumping behind Food City in the J Street area, Turners Falls.

Sunday, 8/31

12:12 a.m. Following a traffic stop, arrested [redacted] Charged with operating a motor vehicle under the influence of liquor, speeding, driving to endanger, no inspection sticker, unlawful possession of ammunition / mace and registration not in possession.

2:16 p.m. Report of illegal dumping at Thomas Memorial Country Club, Country Club Lane, Montague City. Referred to an officer.

6:12 p.m. Report of possible suicide attempt at a Central Street address, Turners Falls. Subject removed to hospital.

Tuesday, 9/2

8:34 a.m. Report of domestic disturbance at a Montague City Road address, Turners Falls. Investigated.

11:25 a.m. Report of illegal dumping at a Fifth Street address, Turners Falls. Investigated.

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NOTES FROM THE WENDELL SELECTBOARD

Preparing for Auction of Surplus Land

BY JOSH HEINEMANN - The Wendell selectboard met Wednesday, August 20th with only board chair Ted Lewis and board member Christine Heard present. The bulk of the meeting was spent with treasurer Carolyn Manley, working on details of the upcoming auction of town properties on September 20th.

Manley said she had received advice from attorney Sam Lovejoy of Montague that she should make sure that no property the town auctions had ever been voted for public use at a town meeting. Any such property would have to be voted out of public use before it could be sold legally. Heard said she had not yet seen a complete list of the properties, and it may be good to check and make sure nothing on the list had ever been designated as a cemetery.

Town coordinator Nancy Aldrich said she would include a list of map, book and parcel numbers of properties to be auctioned in the upcoming town newsletter.

Manley said she would post town maps showing the properties for sale at the town hall and at the library by September 6th, and said she would post each property on the ground before the auction. The auctioneer is responsible for advertising the auction in a daily newspaper.

The selectboard as custodian of the properties has the right to refuse any or all bids, but if any bid is accepted it must be the highest. If there are specific needs for any piece, the sale must be carried out through a Request for Proposals (RFP). Buyers will have to come pre-qualified with a cashier's check for an amount the board will determine, and will have to close on their purchase within 30 days. It is the responsibility of any buyer to determine a lot's suitability for building.

Manley said most of the interest she has heard so far about the upcoming auction has been for potential woodlots.

At the start of the meeting

Lewis reported that the old well on the town common, that once supplied brackish water that was unfit for drinking and stained the town hall fixtures, had been backfilled and closed by the highway department.

Aldrich said she had sent an email to the state Department of Revenue offering three possible Wednesdays for a DOR representative to come to Wendell to help establish a system of preliminary tax bills, which would allow the town to return to the practice of dividing the annual property tax and sending two bills, six months apart.

Aldrich also relayed a letter from Patti Scutari, who asked if the selectboard had any concerns about the Hilltown Brewfest, a fundraiser for both the Wendell and the New Salem meetinghouses, which the Deja Brew pub plans to hold on the afternoon of September 27th, from noon to 5:00 p.m. Scutari wrote she had contacted the police about parking, and officer

Maselli will be present through the afternoon. The board said they found no outstanding concerns with the fundraiser as planned.

Building inspector Phil Delorey sent the selectboard a letter restating a verbal comment he had made about changing the borders of the library lot. The lot has enough frontage to conform to the town bylaw, but not enough area, and construction was allowed only because a building was on the lot long before the bylaw existed. If the town sells or exchanges a small strip on the south side, it must acquire at least the same area in the back of the lot.

The south side abutter was told informally 20 years ago by the then highway superintendent where the property line was, and he built a fence and planted right up to that line. A survey taken at the beginning of the library construction project showed that the fence and plantings are ten feet inside town property.

Since then, the abutter and the town have been working to arrive at a mutually agreeable solution for correcting the problem. Aldrich forwarded a copy of Delorey's letter to the abutter.

Franklin County Home Care Corp sent the selectboard a letter listing the services they offer to elderly residents, and the selectboard forwarded the letter to Wendell's Council on Aging.

The North Quabbin Chamber of Commerce is holding its annual Fall Festival in Athol on Saturday, September 20th, with a rain date of September 27th. They are hoping for input, and want a variety of entertainers and craftspeople from the nine town region to contact them and participate.

The Athol selectboard sent the Wendell board a letter asking Wendell to cooperate with the other eight towns in the North Quabbin area in establishing a fall conference agenda.

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NOTES FROM THE ERVING SELECTBOARD

Contract Awarded for Treatment Plant Renovation

BY DAVID DETMOLD

The town awarded R. H. White, of Auburn, MA, the bid for the renovation of the

Erving side wastewater treatment plant. R. H. White's low bid was for \$4,296,589, almost exactly a million dollars

less than the engineers' estimate for the job. The competitive bidding climate, which resulted in nine bids from as far away as Maine and Connecticut, was a pleasant surprise for the town.

Next Wednesday, at 6:30 p.m. at the Erving Public Library, the library trustees will meet to review applications for the new 17-hour a week library director position. After meeting with the selectboard on July 26th, the trustees received the board's support to increase the salary range for the director's job by \$3,000, to \$15,000, subject to approval at a special town meeting. The board also agreed to allow the trustees to continue to receive stipends for their work running the library, until such time as a library director is hired.

On August 25th, the board met with fire chief Mick LaClaire, who requested Edward Tetreault and Justin Fellows be appointed as Erving firefighters. The board approved the request contingent on the two applicants passing their physical exams.

The board met with the planning board to fill a vacancy

left from the unexpired term of Phil Wonkka, who resigned to meet his National Guard duties. After considering two candidates, Jacquie Boyden and Bill Newton, the selectboard appointed Newton to serve on the planning board until the annual town election in May, and Boyden to serve as an alternate until that time.

The town has been in discussions with the Franklin County Regional Council of Governments about adopting an expedited permitting bylaw for sites larger than 50,000 square feet. Erving has two such sites: the partially destroyed Usher Mill and the former IP Mill in Erving side. Tower Investments, in California, the owner of the IP Mill, has agreed to allow their site to be considered for expedited permitting. FRCOG believes the town may be eligible for a technical assistance grant for up to \$100,000 to implement expedited permitting and assist in the potential redevelopment of the Erving side mill.

Richard Lane, the superintendent of the Franklin County Tech School, met with the board to answer concerns raised about the admissions

policy of the Tech School. Student applicants are scored based on grades and attendance records, along with other factors, and sometimes local students may compete unfavorably for admission with students from outside the member towns. Lane said the problem cropped up very infrequently. The board felt the policy should be weighted more favorably for students from member towns.

The board agreed to have municipal clerk Betsy Sicard trained and certified as a notary public, as a service to residents.

The Erving Elementary School committee recommended, and the board authorized, the sale of 24 used school computers to the Swift River School district. Forty other used computers from the school will be made available at the bargain price of \$19.68 for any Erving student who may want one.

The board reappointed Bruce Bezio as Erving's representative to the Central Franklin County Veterans District.

The board appointed Louise Golosh, Sandra Beighley, and Patricia Russell to the Erving Council on Aging.

Montague Parks and Recreation Department FALL PROGRAMS 2008

YOUTH PROGRAMS

YOUTH SOCCER PROGRAM - The MPRD Office will be open on Saturday, Sept. 6th, 9 a.m. - 12 noon for soccer registrations.

SQUIRTS SOCCER - Children in grades K - 2.
Shin guards are REQUIRED!
Saturdays; 9:30 a.m. - 10:30 a.m. Sept. 13th - Oct. 25th
Montague Residents - \$25, Non Residents - \$30

JUNIOR & SENIOR TRAVEL SOCCER LEAGUE -

Shin guards are REQUIRED!
Junior League - Children in grades 3 & 4, Games will be 4 v. 4;
Senior League - Children in grades 5 & 6, Games will be 7 v. 7.
Montague Residents - \$35, Non Residents - \$40

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YOUTH TENNIS LESSONS - Ages 7 & Up
Saturdays 9 a.m. - 9:45 a.m.; Sept. 13th - Oct. 18th; Montague Residents - \$35, Non-Residents - \$40; Registration deadline Sept. 12th

INTRO TO TAE KWON DO for Youth -Ages 7 & up, Saturdays 8:45 a.m. - 9:45 a.m., Sept. 20th - Nov. 1st; Montague Residents - \$45, Non-Residents - \$50; Registration deadline Friday, Sept. 12th

NOAH'S ARK TOY ANIMAL STUFFING WORKSHOP - Youths ages 2 and up, Saturday, Dec. 6th, 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Fee information provided during pre-registration. Registration deadline Wednesday, Nov. 12th

SWIMMING LESSONS - Session I - *Oct. 25th - Dec. 6th; Saturdays - Parent/Child Class - 9 - 9:30 a.m. (A parent must be in the water w/ their child during the class.); Level 1 - 9:30 - 10 a.m.; Level 2 - 10 - 10:30 a.m.; Level 3 - 10:30 - 11 a.m.; Level 4 - 11 - 11:30 a.m. Montague Residents - \$40.00, Non Residents - \$45.00; Registration deadline Session I Friday, Oct. 24th.

MONTAGUE BLUEFISH SWIM TEAM - Our popular recreational/competitive swim team. Early November through early March 2009; Fees to be determined. Registration deadline Friday, Oct. 24th. (Enrollment limits supersede registration deadline)

ADULT PROGRAMS

PILATES - Adults 18 and over, Wednesday evenings 6 - 6:45 p.m.; Sept. 17th - Nov. 19th; Montague Residents - \$65, Non-Residents - \$70. Registration deadline Friday, Sept. 12th

ADULT TENNIS PROGRAM - Adults 18 & up, Saturday mornings; 11 - 11:45 a.m.; Sept. 13th - Oct. 18th; Montague Residents - \$30/person, Non-Residents - \$35/person. Registration deadline Friday, Sept. 12th

FAMILY PROGRAMS

7TH ANNUAL FAMILY FALL FUN DAY

Saturday, Oct. 18th; 1:00 - 3:30 p.m.; Enjoy scarecrow stuffing, pumpkin carving, bake sale, and more! Adopt your scarecrow now! Fees: Scarecrows - \$5 per, Pumpkin Carving - \$1 per
We need clothes for our scarecrows! If you have some long sleeve shirts and pants that you're not using anymore, we will gladly take them off your hands. Drop them off at our office.

FAMILY TENNIS PROGRAM - Family Members Saturdays, 10 - 10:45 a.m., Sept. 13th - Oct. 18th; Montague Residents - \$10/Family member; Non-Residents - \$12/Family Member. Registration deadline Friday, Sept. 12th

For more information please call 413-863-3216

STATE from pg 5

State officials at the meetings last week were essentially asking us to patch up the school budget problem, probably with more reserves and one-time revenues, until regional consolidation can take place.

For those who may not know, there is a countywide effort underway to investigate regional school consolidation, spearheaded by our state legislators, the Franklin Regional Council on Governments and Greenfield Community College. The oversight committee includes local town and school district officials in the region. A major

report will be produced next spring, which presumably will lead to a proposal for interdistrict school collaboration or consolidation.


Although we support the regional effort, some of us on the local level have serious doubts about this game plan. First of all, we are in a major budget crisis now. We cannot afford to dig ourselves deeper into the hole while we wait three years for regionalization to take place, if it ever does. Secondly, it is not at all clear that regionalization will address the core budget issues plaguing the public schools. The savings that we are hearing about would not reduce school budgets

sufficiently to address the basic dynamic - fixed cost increases that exceed state aid, dumping an ever increasing burden on the towns.

If the state believes regionalization is the solution, they should be willing to roll the dice on it with more state money! We should continue to vote down school budgets and assessments until there is a workable game plan for the future.


Jeff Singleton and Mike Naughton are members of the Montague finance committee. The opinions expressed here are their own, and do not necessarily represent those of other finance committee members.





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NOTES FROM THE MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD

Access to Dry Hill Cemetery Discussed

BY DAVID DETMOLD - The selectboard examined three alternatives to providing public access to the long neglected Dry Hill Cemetery, which is located on a disused section of Dry Hill Road near Wendell Road.

The abutting landowner had been locked in a decades long dispute with the town over access to the cemetery and use of the old roadway, which he had once barricaded with fences and no trespassing signs. The easternmost section of Dry Hill Road is now indistinguishable from the surrounding fields, and Though James Senn has agreed to drop his dispute over the town's right of way to the historical 33-foot roadway, the problem of re-establishing vehicular passage on the first 1500 feet of steep hillside leading up toward the cemetery has now become one of cost and engineering.

As Bob Mellstrom, the consulting engineer from Stantec, in Northampton, told the selectboard on August 25th, for the first 1500 feet from Wendell Road, "There's no semblance of a road there. It's a pasture."

A committee made up of town planner Dan Laroche, and members of the selectboard and cemetery commission hired Stantec to conduct cost assessments of various access routes to the public cemetery, where some of the town's original residents, including Revolutionary War veterans, are buried. On August 25th, three of those alternatives were presented to the board, along with cost estimates for each. The alternatives included paving a 16-foot wide road along the historical layout of Dry Hill Road for the first 1500 feet, and installing necessary drainage, to the point where the former road is navigable to the cemetery; improving the conditions of the Dry Hill Cross Road, a mile long section leading across the hill from East Chestnut Hill Road to the section of Dry Hill Road that

descends to the cemetery; or simply establishing a parking spot on Wendell Road for two cars and a foot path up to the cemetery on the historical roadway.

The first alternative, which would allow passage for any type of vehicle, and parking near the cemetery, would cost the town \$230,000. The second alternative, which would improve the existing Cross Road by removing sections of exposed ledge, replacing and improving drainage swales and culverts, and adding gravel, would provide primarily four-wheel drive access, and cost \$135,000. The footpath alternative would cost the town only \$44,000.

The board took the matter under advisement, but after the meeting, board member Pat Allen, who also serves on the town's capital improvements committee, said, "I think, in the long run, we want the access to the cemetery to be from Wendell Road; a one lane, three season

road. I think we might have to start with the footpath to open up access. I think the shorter route is the best way to go. I think we could find the money for a pedestrian route up there now. The highway trucks could go around by the Cross Road."

Allen made clear she was speaking as an individual member of the board in making these remarks.

At the meeting, board chair Allen Ross noted that the cemetery is once again overgrown with brush.

Bob Trombley, superintendent of the wastewater pollution control facility, said sewer rates would rise an estimated 6% to 8% this year, if his department were allowed to spend \$180,000 of the estimated \$216,192 in the sewer department's retained earnings to reduce the rising rates. Town meeting will consider his proposal on Thursday, September 11th, as part of a six-warrant special

town meeting.

Trombley said he still had to discuss the proposed rates with Southworth Paper, before finalizing them. Southworth is the largest user of the sewer system, and the town has a longstanding agreement with the paper mills to use the entire retained earnings fund each year to reduce rates. Trombley said he would like to keep \$36,000 or so in reserve funds to meet unexpected expenses in the coming year.

Trombley estimated the anticipated rise in the average residential sewer bill, if his proposal is approved, at approximately \$30 a year.

Besides sewer rates, the other items slated for discussion at the upcoming town meeting are raising and appropriating funds to cover collective bargaining agreements with town unionized employees, and elected officials' salaries to be brought in line with raises negotiated with other workers.

Also the selectboard will seek approval from town meeting to sell or lease the Montague Center School building, which is now vacant after consolidation

of that school with Sheffield.

"It could be very expensive to heat," said town administrator Frank Abbondanzio. "If someone were prepared to lease it for a short term, that probably would be a good idea. If we have a vacant building, insurance costs could be considerable." He said the town was constrained to begin insuring the building as of September 1st, when the lease officially reverted to the town.

Town meeting will also be asked to approve a sum of money for maintenance of the Montague Center School building, while a buyer or renter is sought.

Additionally, the town meeting will be asked to approve spending \$21,000 from free cash to reinstate the position of public health nurse. The amount is equivalent to the unexpended salary from the board of health's line item for the nurse from '08, when the former nurse, Joan Pajak, resigned two months into the budget year.

The special town meeting will be held at the high school at 7 p.m. on Thursday, September 11th.

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CLIMBERS

Continued from pg 1

played havoc with their plans and left the Wendell couple clinging to an 18-inch ledge in white out conditions on the side of a glacier, the subject of an intense national media focus and a coordinated statewide rescue effort.

After losing much of their gear, they spent two nights clinging to each other for warmth, wrapped in a soaked sleeping bag, conserving the dwindling battery in Edwards' cell phone to keep in intermittent communication with the men searching for them, and maintaining "totally positive thinking" through the entire ordeal. Edwards, 32 and

Gibson, 27, ultimately hiked down to the rescuers' base camp on their own power, amazing the search party with their physical condition despite the punishing conditions they had been exposed to.

Edwards and Gibson are experienced climbers. In an interview at the warm and relatively dry *Montague Reporter* office in Turners Falls, four days after a Navy Seahawk helicopter took the pair from Itswoot Lake and dropped them on the tarmac of the municipal airport in Concrete, WA, Edwards said he has been mountaineering "basically all my adult life." Gibson is also an experienced climber, starting at the age of nine when she made it up Katahdin, scaling a glacier in

Norway some years ago, and practicing back country mountaineering in winter weather.

They set out to hike the Ptarmigan Traverse, first accomplished by four mountaineers in 1938, now considered the most famous and among the most challenging high routes in the Northwest, from Cascade Pass to the Suiattle River. The trek should have taken them five to seven days.

"There are no trail markers, no signs, nothing," said Gibson. "You are responsible for having everything that you need when you go in. It's a place you can go and not see another human being."

Edwards acknowledged the difficulty of the traverse. "High alpine passes, glaciers, rocky peaks; it's technical. You can't do it without crampons, rope, ice axes, climbing harnesses, rock and ice protection..." But by week's end, they had lost much of their gear, and were reduced to one pair of crampons between them, half a tent, one sleeping bag, no compass, no trail guide, and no rope.

When Edwards and Gibson finally did see other human beings, after two nights of clinging to each other for warmth on the side of Dana Glacier, the rescue party told them they had given up hope of finding them alive.

A friend met over the internet drove Edwards and Gibson on Sunday, August 24th, from the southern end of the traverse, where they left their rental car in Darrington, to the Cascade Pass. For the first few days, the trek went as planned. Edwards had hiked the traverse twice before; it was Gibson's first attempt.

"It was cloudy and rainy ever since we left," Edward recalled. On Tuesday, a bad snowstorm closed in on them, and they considered digging in and camping where they were, on the LeConte Galcier.

"We would have been happy as a clam camping there," said Edwards.

But the snowstorm broke up before nightfall, and the pair were able to spot a landmark and make it down to White Rocks Lake, a glacial meltwater.

The next day, Wednesday, Edwards' and Gibson's goal was to cross Dana Glacier to the east of Spire Peak, find a certain pass to continue south, where the third gully on the left was supposed to take them down to Itswoot Lake, where they intended to camp that night.

But, as Edwards recalled, "We had been caught up in a storm all night. We decided to break camp and go for it at 11:00 a.m."

Gibson chimed in, "Every morning it had been snowing and raining. The clouds broke around noon: 'We're going for it.'"

Edwards continued, "We got to the main body of the glacier, no problem. Then, at 2 p.m., it got extremely dark and cloudy."

Gibson: "We roped up; we got our harnesses on..."

Edwards: "There was one hidden crevasse; my leg went right out of sight..."

Gibson: "He was probably 30 feet in front of me. I could barely see him."

Recounting the story in unison, the pair said they continued on up the main body of the glacier, heading south. The visibility worsened; the air was thick with flying sleet which stung their eyes; they wore dark glasses for limited protection.

"The wind was blowing so hard," Gibson began, and Edwards finished her sentence: "At one point we both dropped to the ground; the wind would have rolled us right off. We put the axe to the ground and held on."

Gibson said at this point, "Keep moving," was the order of the day. "Everything was good so far. We were going at a good pace. You could see the headwall, the top."

But Edwards added, "You couldn't distinguish which peak was which," and the trail guide specified finding a certain pass

just to the east of Spire Peak in order to make it down the other side of the glacier to Itswoot Lake.

It was by then about 5 p.m. Gibson said in the driving ice storm they decided to hike the whole headwall and check out all the different passes. "We thought about camping on top," but the need to get down out of the weather outweighed other caution. They chose what they thought was the correct pass and headed down.

Edwards said the down climbing was marked by a ladder steep descent, with loose rocks at every hand, all coated with white ice. The going was so difficult the pair finally decided to lower Gibson's backpack down using a long strip of webbing, to ease her descent.

"She was cold and tired by this time. One slip and you're done for."

Lowering the backpack until only four inches of the webbing remained, the pair could see a ledge just beyond, and decided to loose their hold of the pack and let it slide to the ledge, where they could climb down to it. But it slipped beyond the ledge, bounced, gained momentum, and careened out of sight, taking their only rope, Gibson's crampons, wallet, trail guide, compass, sleeping bag, and the top half of their tent with it.

They took this fresh adversity in stride. "All right. We'll get it at the bottom. We're going to be OK."

They were making progress down the mountain. It was starting to get dark. The rocks were totally wet and slippery. Then they came to a narrow ledge above hundreds of feet of vertical drop.

Edwards recapped the dilemma the pair found themselves in at that point. "We couldn't go back again. It was too slippery. We couldn't go down. It's vertical. We parked out and discussed it. We decided to call 911. For some freak reason, my phone worked!"

continued next page

MCTV Program (Ch. 17) Schedule: August 22nd-28th

Eagle Cam: Not airing until further notice.

Friday, September 5

8:00 am Journey to Wissatinnewag
8:30 am Into the Way of Peace
9:30 am MCTV Video Camp 2007
10:00 am Mind Control
10:30 am Mohawk HS Performs at Disney
12:00 pm Montague Update
12:30 pm Naturalist Laurie Sanders
6:00 pm Franklin County Matters
7:00 pm GMRSD (8/26/08)
9:30 pm Girls Softball

Saturday, September 6

8:00 am Living in the Shadow of Vermont Yankee
9:00 am Silly Wizard
10:30 am Songs for Wee People
11:30 am Tapping Maple Ridge
12:30 pm Teachers at Sea
1:00 pm The Western Mass Democrat
6:00 pm Turkey Day Game 2007
8:30 pm The Well Being: The Ageing Eye
9:30 pm 9-1-1 People, Facts and Stories
10:00 pm White House Chronicles

Sunday, September 7

8:00 am Fate of the Stallion
8:30 am Carlos W. Anderson: Living the Truth
9:30 am Birds of Prey
11:00 am Coffee House Series: Ferne Borke, Dan Tinen, Bruce Kahn Trio
12:00 pm Elder Law
6:00 pm Women Girls & HIV
6:30 pm White House Chronicles
7:30 pm Valley Idol Semi Finals
10:00 pm The Well Being: HIV

Monday, September 8

8:00 am The Well Being: Ergonomics
9:00 am The Three Rights of Spring
10:00 am This is Montague

10:30 am The Spirit of Lake Pleasant
12:30 pm TFHS National Honor Society
6:00 pm The Epics at the Vou
7:00 pm Select Board (Live)
10:00 pm The Flow of Time
11:00 pm The Spirit of Lake Pleasant

Tuesday, September 9

8:00 am Honky Thumbelina
9:00 am Journey to Wissatinnewag
9:30 am Physician Focus
10:30 am Over the Falls
11:30 am Peoples Harvest

1:00 pm Peske Park Dedication
6:00 pm Physician Focus
7:00 pm GMRSD (Live)
10:00 pm Preachin the Blues
11:00 pm Softball

Wednesday, September 10

8:00 am Reconciliation Ceremony
8:30 am Safe and Green Campaign Forum
10:00 am Senior Self Defense
11:00 am Sheffield Play Dancing Princess
12:00 pm Skin N Bonz
6:00 pm Senses of Place
7:30 pm Surviving the Vernon Reactor
8:30 pm Common People: Celtic Harp
10:00 pm Carlos W. Anderson: Living the Truth
11:00 pm Fossil Tracks

Thursday, September 11

8:00 am Silly Wizard
9:00 am Sustainable Energy
10:00 am Tiny Tim
11:00 am The Well Being: Arthritis Rehabilitation
12:00 pm UN Panel
6:00 pm White House Chronicles
7:00 pm Select Board (9/8/08)
10:00 pm Underground Railway Concert

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It was 7:30 p.m. on Wednesday. With not much battery left, Edwards knew he had to speak clearly and succinctly. Still, the dispatcher was not prepared for the information he gave her, and rerouted the call several times, until finally Skagit County sheriff deputy Brad Holmes got on the line.

"We're on the back side of Spire Peak," Edwards told him, "on the opposite wall of Dana Glacier."

"No problem," said Holmes. "Just sit tight. We'll get to you as soon as we can."

But there was the one little problem of how to sit tight on an eighteen inch ledge, at night, in an ice storm, with one sleeping bag and half a tent, and the wind howling.

"It never let up," said Edwards. "We jammed in our ice axes at our feet, curled the sleeping bag around us," wrapped the tent on top of that, and held tight to one solid rock. Edwards was behind Gibson, and they relied on each other's body warmth to stay alive.

"Every time we moved we got violently cold," Edwards said. The ice and rain soaked to their skin.

At 2 a.m. they reached Holmes again on his cell phone. "All helicopters are grounded until the storm lifts." Their position on the mountain face placed them at least a two day hike in for rescuers on foot.

On Thursday morning, wind and rain. They called Holmes a third time. He told them they were getting a ground crew up there via helicopter. They stayed in a positive frame of mind. "We're going to make it."

Edwards said the pair decided to leave the ledge and hike back to the headwall of the glacier. "We packed up and split. We were wobbly and weary."

He said the climb back up was "very technical. We had no protection. We placed our hands and feet really carefully."

Gibson pointed out that Edwards' pack, with the wet sleeping bag, weighed about 60

pounds at this point.

With one false move spelling certain death, they free climbed to the headwall of Dana Glacier and spent Thursday night on the top of the headwall.

Late in the day, they thought they heard a helicopter for the first time. They tried the cell phone again. Holmes told them they were done for the day; the weather was too severe for the helicopters to keep flying.

But one helicopter had managed to land a three person rescue crew from Bellingham Mountain Rescue at Itswoot Lake, and by dark the rescuers had hiked up and hunkered down at the bottom of the glacier.

Gibson said, "That night was not the greatest. The wind was blowing..."

Edwards said what remained of their tent was basically a bug net with curtain attached. The wind threaten to blow it and them right off the glacier, so they loaded the tent with rocks. At least the lay of the land was relatively flat, in comparison to the ledge of the previous night. They were even able to catch a few z's. In their waking hours, the maintained a positive mindset. "We're going to be strong. We're going to make it."

The storm never let up. Next morning, they could not see the sun. But at mid morning, Edwards said, "I thought I heard a human voice. I climbed out of the tent and walked back and forth on the headwall, calling out," until a climber answered. The three men from Bellingham Mountain Rescue had found them.

They expressed amazement at finding Edwards and Gibson alive. "We thought we were doing a body rescue," they admitted.

Though wet and cold themselves, the rescue team was able to provide Edwards and Gibson with dry gloves, long underwear, and hot soup, on a camp stove. A physical check revealed no hypothermia. Following the rescue team's footprints, they hiked out to Itswoot Lake and caught a ride



EDWARDS PHOTO

The Dana Glacier, seen from the north. Spire Peak just to right of center. Edwards and Gibson should have descended on the east (left) of Spire Peak. In whiteout conditions, they took a pass to the west by mistake, and spent one night clinging to an 18-inch ledge above a vertical drop, after losing half their gear, before free climbing back to the top on the second day. After another night on the glacier, they walked out with the rescue team the following day.

on the Seahawk to the rescue operation's command center at Concrete.

There, Robin Gibson's father, Bill Gibson, a resident of Rochester, VT, was waiting to shepherd them through the bank of cameras and tape recorders pointed at them. "I'm glad to see you guys," he said, understating the emotion of the moment.

Bill Gibson had arrived by plane and rental car from New England the night before. "I'm very much a praying man," said the elder Gibson, a congregant of an Afro-American church in Springfield, MA, St. John's. "There were marvelous prayer circles all around the country, in Washington, in Western Massachusetts," all pulling for a successful outcome to the hikers' plight.

He said he was impressed with "the shape the kids were in, and their general good spirits."

When Bill Gibson had arrived around midnight on Thursday, Sheriff Holmes assured him that the rescue team should have reached the hikers the night before, bringing them warm clothes and food. But at eight o'clock Friday morning, the command center was notified that the rescue team had been unable to establish contact with Edwards and Gibson that night. "That was a dark moment for all of us," Bill Gibson said.

But twenty minutes later the call came in that the rescuers

thought they had heard a woman's voice. "There was elation in the group, clapping..." and this feeling swelled when more positive reports came in minutes later that the couple had been found, alive and well.

Bill Gibson said his daughter complained only of having a sore jaw from her teeth chattering so hard. But that didn't stop them all from enjoying a steak dinner away from the media's prying eye that evening, before heading back East.

"I know she's going to keep adventuring," said Bill Gibson philosophically, speaking of his daughter. "But anytime we have a crisis, we gain through it, and

we gain knowledge. They experienced whiteout conditions up on the ridge. People are quick to say, 'What were they doing there?' These kids were extremely experienced. It could have happened to anybody."

Indeed, in the same storm, a 22-year-old climber fell and died in the Southern Cascades.

Edwards and Gibson thanked the dozens of rescue volunteers who worked around the clock to come to their assistance. They might have added Gibson's mother, Helen, of Montague to the list. She is the one who finally persuaded Edwards to bring a cell phone with them for the trek.

TREE from page 1 replanting.

Marcotrigiano, an arborist at Smith College, said he would be willing to volunteer time on a weekend to walk the route of the new sidewalks and reassess trees with Stevens, and to discuss species that would be favorable for planting in the tree belt.

Stevens, who in addition to his role as tree warden has numerous responsibilities for the DPW including town ballfields, sidewalks and the park fountain, noted that a large portion of the town's tree budget is spent removing trees that are actually located on private property, but which residents claim were planted

by the town in former years. It can cost several thousand dollars to remove a tree.

Stevens did respond to Marcotrigiano's offer of collaboration by noting that the town has a grant to replant 20 trees, for starters.

Talking of the tree in front of his house, Marcotrigiano said he has "put \$1,100 into the tree the last five years for pruning and two cables."

Stevens said he will review the status of the sugar maple in front of 22 Union Street, along with the other two posted trees on that street.

The hearing ended with citizens thanking Bergeron and Stevens for their time.

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THE ROGUE EDITOR

“That’s How I Roll”

BY NEIL SEVERN

GREENFIELD - Lately I’ve been drawn to the phrase, “That’s how I roll.” It is by no means a new phrase, and it is probably not one that a man in his early 30s (like me) can insert seamlessly into his conversations. It finds its origins in hip-hop culture, appearing in the lyrics of a few rap songs in the mid-1990s. More conspicuously, “That’s how I roll” was one of the catch phrases thrown out by Will Ferrell’s character in the 2004 movie *Anchorman*, and it surfaces a few times in the 2007 cult hit film *Superbad*. I have also seen the phrase screen-printed on more than one t-shirt. If past usage is any indication, it seems to carry the meaning of, “That’s how I do things; that’s the way I choose to live.”

The verb “roll” shows no fewer than 32 defined senses in *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary, Eleventh Edition* (transitive and intransitive), and many of them imply ease of

movement: “to impel forward with an easy continuous motion,” “to luxuriate in an abundant supply” (as in “rolling in money”) “to go forward in an easy, gentle, or undulating manner,” “to flow in a continuous stream,” “to walk with a swinging gait,” “to proceed or progress with notable ease or success” (as in “the team was rolling”).

It should be no surprise that so flexible a word has a fluid presence in American idiom. Perhaps its most well known usage is in “rock and roll,” which dates from the 1950s. Truckers say, “Let’s roll” when they’re ready to take to the road. When you “roll with the punches,” you ward off adversity without changing course. And of course, when you are “on a roll,” you are enjoying a streak of continuous success. “Roll” carries with it a connotation of coolness and confidence, along with a refusal to be deterred.

As might be expected with a

relatively new phrase, none of the current dictionary definitions for “roll” match up with the “That’s how I do things” usage conveyed in, “That’s how I roll.” That’s because this usage is new and unique, and still at the point of its development where you don’t see it expanded into other contexts. You might see something like “wait till you see how I roll,” but not something flipped around like, “I roll this way.”

As with a lot of slang, its shelf life is likely to be short. When you hear it now it’s usually with a heavy tinge of irony, wielded by people who are situated far from the phrase’s street origins. The comedienne Kathy Griffin used, “That’s how I roll” in a 2005 *New York Times* article, and a year later, *Chicago Sun-Times* film critic Richard Roeper requested that the phrase be officially put to bed. “You’re not rolling. I’m not rolling. Nobody’s rolling. Enough with the rolling,” Roeper wrote.

Rock on.

BUDGET from pg 1

charter school tuition losses in recent years.

The \$198,074 budget reduction, approved by a 7-2 committee vote, with Mike Langknecht and Sandy Brown dissenting, still leaves the towns of Gill and Montague facing a deficit of \$859,521 between what their town meetings voted to spend on the schools and what the state has ordered them to pay. In order to make a dent in this deficit, the school committee also approved, on an 8-1 vote, with Langknecht in dissent, a disbursement of \$100,000 from the schools’ free cash (excess and deficiency) account, to reduce the towns’ assessments. This move will remove a little more than 11% of the budget deficit the towns are facing in their school assessments.

In July, Rocke reported the GMRSD had approximately \$850,000 in the excess and deficiency fund.

Langknecht voted against using \$100,000 of the schools’ reserves to reduce the towns’ assessments, saying he would prefer to reduce the budget further rather than use one time monies to support a higher figure that would be “built into the base for next year.”

In a further attempt to ease the towns’ budget woes, the school committee voted 7-2 to share any additional state funds - in the form of a so-called ‘pothole grant’ - the GMRSD may receive this fall, on a 50 - 50 basis with the member towns.

Last year the GMRSD received about \$23,000 in pothole funds.

Although she did not join Langknecht and Brown in opposing this motion, Sorrell Hatch said she would like to see more than 50% of pothole grant funds given back to the towns for municipal relief, if possible.

Brown stated her opposition to the original motion, reducing the budget by \$198,074, saying, “I think the schools are

not doing enough to address the straits the towns are in. I understand Ken (Rocke)’s turnaround plan has lots of good things in it; I just don’t think you can do them all in one year. We now have fulltime principals in every school, and we’ve added a half time administrative position at the high school / middle school. We’ve done good things.”

Brown continued, “Gill can’t afford what they’re being asked this year, and they have no idea what they will do next year. I don’t see in this whole budget process any thinking outside the box.”

For example, Brown noted, as \$153,000 in grant funded programs have run out, the GMRSD is adding those programs into the regular budget. “Will we always add grant funded positions into the budget?” she asked.

She said in other school systems, parents come into the schools as volunteers to tutor children one on one. She argued that creative, low cost solutions to educational needs are required in tight budget times.

Rocke said, “There are many aspects of the turnaround plan as yet unfunded. We need additional reading specialists. We need math coaches for the middle school, computers for our graphics programs. We need to restore the high school school-to-work guidance program and so on. I believe if the school committee did not feel so acutely the budget pressures the towns are feeling this year, we’d be moving ahead with additional elements of the turnaround plan. But in light of the budget situation in both of our member towns, I think school committee members felt it incumbent to be satisfied for the moment with the modest progress we’ve been able to show.”

Registered voters from the towns of Gill and Montague will have a chance to weigh in on the GMRSD budget at a special district meeting at the Turners Falls High School, on Wednesday, September 17th, at 6:30 p.m. There will be only one item on the agenda: whether to accept the GMRSD’s proposed \$16,820,004 budget (the same figure mandated by the state in the 1/12th budget), “or take any other action related thereto.”

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE ERVING POLICE LOG

Great Dane, Erratic Driver on the Loose

Tuesday, 8/19

3:20 p.m. Report of subject having difficulty breathing on Route 2 near police station. Subject refused medical treatment.

Thursday, 8/21

9:36 p.m. Arrested [redacted] for operating motor vehicle after suspension, subsequent offense, possession of Class E drug, subsequent offense.

Friday, 8/22

10:40 p.m. Assisted Northfield police with a loud party on Burnham Road.

Saturday, 8/23

3:10 p.m. Citation issued to [redacted] for operating a motor vehicle without insurance.

Sunday, 8/24

3:20 p.m. Officer flagged down by passing motorist regarding a vehicle off the road on Franklin Street, Millers Falls. Subject had wrecker on the scene. 3:30 p.m. Arrested [redacted] for default warrant. Transported subject to

Montague police for booking.

Monday, 8/25

2:07 p.m. Report of domestic disturbance at French King Restaurant on Route 2.

2:22 p.m. Arrested [redacted]

[redacted] for assault and battery, domestic, and destruction of property over \$250.

Tuesday, 8/26

9:00 a.m. Report of parking problem on Route 63 at the elementary school. found several vehicles blocking the travel lane. Cited same.

10:45 p.m. Citation issued to [redacted]

[redacted] for operating a motor vehicle after license revocation.

Thursday, 8/28

12:50 p.m. Report of Great Dane walking down Route 2. Located dog and returned to owner. Advised of town by-law.

7:00 p.m. Citation issued to [redacted]

[redacted] for operating a motor vehicle after suspension of license and no license in possession.

Friday, 8/29

9:12 a.m. Citation issued to [redacted] for operating a motor vehicle after suspension of license.

Saturday, 8/30

12:20 p.m. Report of abandoned motor vehicle at Box Car Restaurant. Contacted owner to remove same.

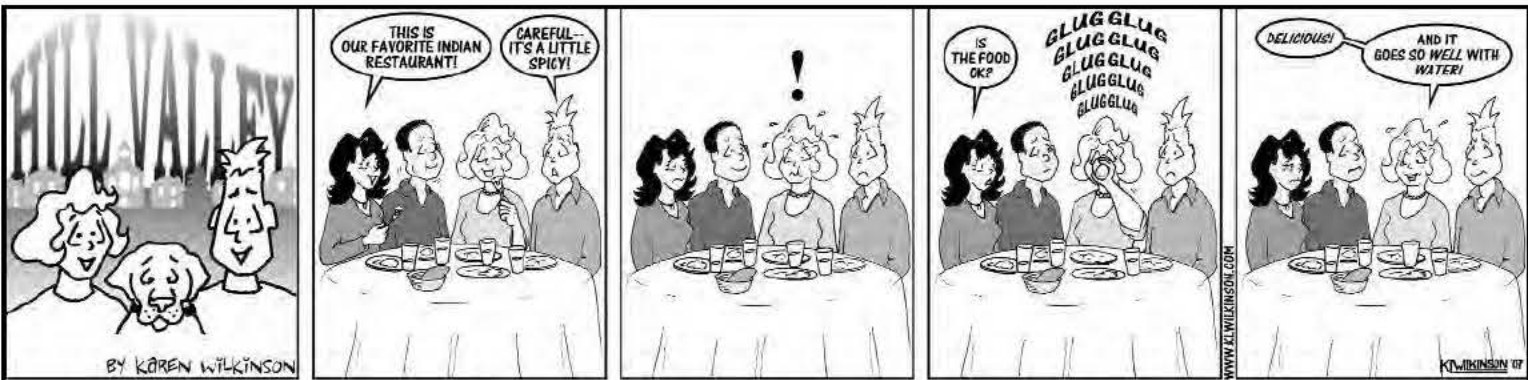
5:05 p.m. Report of erratic driver on Gunn Street. Reporting party stated vehicle struck For Sale sign on the lawn of a Gunn Street residence. Checked area, vehicle gone on arrival.

Monday, 9/1

2:40 p.m. Citation issued to [redacted] for operating a motor vehicle after revocation for insurance, unlicensed operation of a motor vehicle and failure to wear seatbelt.

5:02 p.m. All Terrain Vehicle accident, assisted Erving fire department and Orange ambulance.

11:40 p.m. Report of suspicious person at a Northfield Road residence. Subject lost and given directions.



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JESSICA HARMON ILLUSTRATION

BY FRED CICETTI

LEONIA, NJ - Q. What's the best way to get rid of athlete's foot?

As a victim of athlete's foot, I've had a lot of experience battling that nasty nuisance, so I can add some personal notes on this subject. I've had the most success treating my athlete's foot with an Australian remedy. I'll get to that later.

Athlete's foot is caused by tinea, a fungus that can also cause jock itch and ringworm. You can catch it from another person, from animals or wet surfaces such as the floors of public showers.

Athlete's foot symptoms

THE HEALTHY GEEZER: How to Beat Athlete's Foot

include dry skin, itching, burning, scaling, inflammation, and blisters. If blisters break, tissue becomes exposed and this can be painful.

Athlete's foot usually shows up between the toes, especially the last two toes. Tinea thrives on feet because they are usually in shoes, which are perfect for fungus - warm, dark and humid.

The fungus can spread on the feet. It can also travel to other parts of the body if you scratch your feet and then touch elsewhere.

Before attempting to treat what you think is athlete's foot, you should have your feet examined by a doctor. Symptoms you assume are from athlete's foot could be from eczema, psoriasis or other maladies such as a skin reaction to shoe dyes.

For a mild case of athlete's

foot, your doctor may recommend an over-the-counter or prescription preparation. There are antifungal sprays, powders, creams and lotions. If you have a severe case of athlete's foot, your doctor may prescribe an oral medication.

After the medication works, athlete's foot recurs in some people because they are prone to get it. The tendency to get athlete's foot repeatedly is a genetic condition.

This brings us to a remedy that works better than any I've tried since my first of many cases of athlete's foot, about 40 years ago. It's tea tree oil. You can get it in health food stores.

Tea tree oil is an essential oil distilled from the leaves of *Melaleuca alternifolia*, an Australian plant. For many years, the leaves of the plant were used for treating cuts, burns and infections.

A randomized controlled trial examined the use of 25 percent tea tree oil solution, 50 percent tea tree oil solution, or a placebo in 158 people with athlete's foot. After twice daily applications for four weeks, the tea tree oil was found to be significantly more effective than the placebo.

I have used many over-the-counter products on athlete's foot. A few did not work at all. A few were effective after several weeks. I applied 100 percent tea tree oil twice a day and my athlete's foot was gone in a week. I've continued to apply it once a day to prevent a recurrence.

Do not apply tea tree oil to your feet without consulting a physician. There are possible side effects that include allergic rash, redness, blistering, and itching. I experienced a mild burning sensation when I applied the undiluted tea tree oil, but had no other problems. There are ways to prevent

getting athlete's foot. The best general advice is to keep your feet clean and dry. Here are some good specific tips:

- When you can, remove your shoes.
- Change your socks at least once daily.
- Avoid walking barefoot in public areas. Wear sandals or flip-flops in communal showers.
- Never borrow other people's shoes.
- Dry carefully between the toes after showering.
- Apply antifungal foot powder daily to feet and inside shoes.
- Wear shoes and socks made of natural materials that breathe.
- Don't wear the same shoes two days in a row; give shoes a chance to dry out.
- Have a veterinarian check your pets for fungus.

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

Once Upon a Time, a Busy Little River

FRAN HEMOND

MONTAGUE CENTER - As Montague's Sawmill River tumbles down over rocks just outside the Book Mill's windows, we may give little thought to where it's been and what it's been doing these past centuries. Coming down from Shutesbury with hills and plains to furnish both momentum and calm, the Sawmill makes its way through North Leverett and finally sedately flows through Montague Center, here and there, until it gives a final burst of energy before reaching the Connecticut River. By then, the river has fallen 683 feet.

Its source is Lake Wyola, whose size was doubled in 1883 by a dam that gave a boost to waterpower on the river.

The Book Mill was a machine shop in the nineteenth century; the turbine that ran it is probably still in existence.

More than a century ago, all along the banks of the river and its brooks from the Shutesbury heights to the Connecticut River, enterprising folks had harnessed the Sawmill's waterpower. Gristmills were grinding corn and wheat. Little factories were producing such items as sap buckets, gunpowder, furniture, woolen cloth, crowbars, hoes and nails, scythes and boxes.

Perhaps most fascinating today is the sawmill currently



JANEL NOCKLEBY PHOTO

A picturesque view of the Sawmill River.

being restored at North Leverett. During World War II, when submarine warfare was taking its toll of our ships and lives, the sawmill was our country's source for forty-foot-long keels for sub chasers. The trees, the machinery and the capability for this important job were all found right here in Franklin County.

Moore's Corners, further up North Leverett Road, features an old schoolhouse, now restored to serve as an historical museum. It

is open on Sundays from 1 to 3 p.m., a charming little federal-style building that offers good information on this unique little town.

Continue along the woody road around curves and up the hills, and come to the source of this once busy little river, Lake Wyola. My father called it Locke's Pond, and told of driving assorted cousins and family by horse and wagon to daylong picnic and swimming parties from Montague Center. No party for him, the oldest of the group, lifeguard and fire maker.

Today, a quick trip by car up North Leverett Road takes you to Lake Wyola (Indian for Quiet Water) State Park, with its clear water and a well-supervised sandy beach. It is open from Memorial Day to Labor Day, from about 9:30 a.m. to 7 p.m. It is a worthy source for the elusive Sawmill River that has served so many, for so long.

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JEP'S PLACE Part LXXXVIII

Barn Fire

BY JOSEPH A. PARZYCH

GILL -- Late one night, I was sound asleep when Ma and Pa came home. Something woke me. An eerie red light bathed the entire bedroom. Shouts came from outside the window. I could see that the yard was lit up, but I couldn't figure out the source of the light. I could only hear shouts - desperate shouts.

I ran downstairs and stood in the open kitchen doorway. Fire engulfed the entire barn. The yard was lit in bright orange light. A fierce roaring, punctuated by popping and snapping, spellbound me. I could feel the intense heat. Flames surrounded the barn, clinging to the structure as

though it were not consuming it at all. A burning board near the peak pulled away and fell to the ground in flames. The rest of the barn stood like an animal in shock, waiting to be devoured by the raging fire.

Ma was in the pantry, frantically pumping water into a pail. She shouted, on her way by, telling me to put on my pants because people would soon be coming to put out the fire. Her words brought me out of my trance. Put out the fire? I wanted to tell her there would be no putting out this fire. I could see it was hopeless. Ma threw the pail of water on the woodshed attached to the house. The water turned to steam as soon as it hit the shed. I wondered how long

before the house caught fire and began burning too.

The town fire warden arrived with some copper fire extinguishers. Embers falling on the house roof were starting little fires. He put them out, one by one. Then he began shooting an extinguisher at the wooden saw rig platform that had caught fire.

He hollered to ask if there was gasoline in the saw rig gas tank. Ma hollered back, "No." Somehow, the gas tank didn't blow up. Perhaps the gasoline had evaporated from the heat. Maybe we were just lucky. The exploding gas tank would have blown flaming gasoline onto the woodshed hooked to the house.

I ran upstairs to get dressed and to wake my brother and sisters to tell them to get out of the house. The image of people burning in the holy picture appeared in my mind. Would we be like the people in the fire? Was God punishing us, I wondered.

Firemen arrived from Turners Falls, five miles away. The firemen didn't lay a hose to the fire pond by the brook. "Too late," they said. My mother and Irene lugged a washtub of water from the

brook. The firemen threw a suction hose into the tub. Water shot onto the woodshed where it immediately turned to steam. In seconds the tub was empty. Ma and Irene gave up.

Cars kept coming. People parked along the road and in the fields. They helped Pa lug furniture out of the house. More people came to help. They put contents from the house out onto the front lawn by the road on the side away from the barn.

I wanted to watch the fire because I knew it was a once in a lifetime experience. But my brother Louis was crying hysterically. He didn't want to see the fire and didn't want me to leave him. I wrapped him in a featherbed quilt. He cried in terror whenever I tried moving away from him. So I stayed with him, watching people running, smelling the wood smoke, listening to the flames roar and crackle, seeing the yard illuminated, hearing the frantic shouts.

While I sat with Louis, two men began gathering chickens from the fenced range. They stuffed them into burlap bags. "Hey! What are you doing? I asked.

"We're saving 'em, kid," said one of the men. A cigarette sticking out of his mouth wagged up and down as he talked. His speech was slurred.

The other man laughed, "Yah, we're taking 'em to a safe place."

"No you're not; you're stealing them."

"Shut up, you little brat," the man with the wagging

cigarette said. They jumped into their car and drove off.

Our dog Skippy ran up and down the road, dragging his chain and barking his head off. A second fire truck from Greenfield stopped a half mile away. Firemen sat on a distant neighbor's lawn and watched the barn burn to the ground. Someone took Louis to their car and comforted him.

People ran in and out of the house, carrying out the contents. I realized then that the house would probably soon burn, just like the barn. I wondered if this was all a bad dream. How can you go to sleep in your bed and wake up to a nightmare like this?

The scene was one of increasing panic, confusion, and frantic shouts. People threw clothes and bedding on top of furniture scattered all over the front lawn. Someone took the girls' clothes for safekeeping. We never saw the clothes or the chickens again. Years later when a new family moved to town, the father talked with a cigarette wagging in the corner of his mouth.

Arnold Studer and his wife Mabel took us to their turkey farm, and put us to bed. Mabel put Louis and me in a bed together. It was about four o'clock in the morning by that time. After I used the bathroom, I tried to stay awake. It was almost dawn, and I was scared to death I'd wet the bed. I figured, to be safe, I'd stay awake. When it started to get light I closed my eyes for a second and dozed off. The next thing I knew, I felt wetness. I was wetting the bed!

I jumped out of bed, got dressed and went downstairs, hoping they'd think Louis was the culprit. No one ever said anything. I don't know if they ever figured out who did it, but I always felt guilty about making it look like Louis had committed the dirty deed.

- Continued next issue

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COORDINATOR SOUGHT - Commonwealth Corps Opportunity: North Quabbin Timebank Coordinator. We are hiring a coordinator of the North Quabbin Timebank to make it a meaningful part of our regional economy and community. The NQ Timebank serves the 9 towns of the North Quabbin and is a free web-based community currency enabling members to exchange services without the use of cash. We currently have 41 members and are inspired by the successes of the Portland, Maine Time Bank which has 700 members who exchanged 20,000 hours of services last year! To see a short video about our Time Bank: www.nqtimebank.org. Compensation will start at \$10,000 for a total of 1600 hours of service over the year, with a \$2000 bonus at completion. There is a generous health insurance benefit. Questions and letters of interest, contact Karen Werner: kwerner@montaguema.net

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JACK COUGHLIN ILLUSTRATION

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 4th

Franklin County Fair Parade. 5 p.m. Join the Solar Rollers on bicycles in the No Nukes contingent. Parade begins at the Greenfield Middle School parking lot. Info cchang@nukebusters.org.

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 5th

At the Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls: Story Time. Come listen to the story of Owl Moon by Jane Yolen. Young people will enjoy learning about the natural world though this lovely book. 11 - 11:30 a.m.

The Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Lovewhip!* New wave/electro dance band from Boston.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Mass Production*, Simon White, Joe Cunningham and Christian Marano make this reggae night something special, 9 to 11 p.m.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 6th

At the Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls: Nature Observers, Track Changing Seasons. Join Refuge staff to explore ways to create nature journals and share your observations with others. Open to all ages, 1 to 2 p.m. **Photographer's Opening:** *Portraits, Fantasies, and Diverse Gallimaufry*. Join us in the Great Hall to meet photographer Bruce Kahn and explore his atypical portraits of nature, 2 - 4 p.m. www.brucekahn.net

At The Bookmill, Montague Center: David Lovelace - *Scattershot: A Memoir of My Bipolar Family*. Reading, signing, selling of books, celebration, mayhem, 8 p.m. www.davidlovelace.info

At the Shea Theater, Turners Falls: *The Heart of the Valley Chorus*, a high-energy women's a cappella group, performs a variety of music, jazz, Broadway, vaudeville and contemporary. The Fabulous Maurice and his accordion opens the show. 2 p.m. \$7, info. 863-2281. www.theshea.org

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Rt. 63 Roadhouse, Millers Falls: *Ghost Ramblers*. 9:30 p.m.

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 7th

Great Falls Geowalk 1 - 2:30 p.m. Turner Falls lies amidst some of the most interesting geology of Western Massachusetts. Join Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation Park Interpreter and geologist Steve Winters for a leisurely 90-minute stroll back in time to rocks that formed in the Mesozoic Era—about 200 million years ago. Meet at the Discovery Center. Free.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *A Ghost Quartet*, jazzy blues with a taste of fist fight swing, 9 to 11 p.m.

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 8th

Evening Sing-A-Long at the Montague Center Library, 6:30 p.m. Linda Hickman, plays guitar and banjo and performs a variety of children's music. For children of any age and their families. Info, call the Carnegie Library 863-3214 during the week, or Montague Center Library, 367-2852, Mon. eve.

At The Rendezvous, Turners Falls: Slope Editions presents a reading of poetry and prose, 7 p.m. Featuring poet Mary Clare Powell and writer Dennis Barone. Free!

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 10th

At the Discovery Center, Turners Falls: Science and Nature Brown Bags, bring your lunch to the Great Hall for a 30-minute presentation on science or nature. Continues Wednesdays 9/17, and 9/24 from 12:10 to 12:45 p.m. Topics include the science of climate change, continental drift and plate tectonics, the history of dinosaurs collecting in the Pioneer Valley, the geologic origin of the Connecticut River. Free.

Great Falls Farmers Market: rain or shine on the corner of 2nd St. and Ave A, Turners Falls. Fresh farm products, baked goods, maple products, plants, crafts, 3 to 6 p.m.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 11th

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Free Range*, rock out with Betsy, Mark & Bruce to oldie cover tunes from 60's and 70's, 8 - 10 p.m.

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 12th

At the Great Falls Discovery Center: **Friends Coffeehouse, Songwriting Contest Finals.** This spring, the Connecticut River Watershed Council put out a call for songs about the Connecticut River, and received 65 submissions from songwriters from the four states that border the river. The ten best songs will be performed in this special "Finals Concert" in the Great Hall. Judges panel will select the final contest winners. 7 - 9 p.m. Suggested donation \$6 - \$12 (children come free). Info. call 863-3221 x3.

Montague Senior Center and Comcast present an information session at Montague Senior Center

12:30 p.m. All are welcome to this free session, but sign ups are required at 863-9357. On February 17, 2009 local television stations will begin broadcasting a digital signal. TVs without converter boxes will no longer pick up any signal.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Mother Turtle*, soul rock, 9 to 11 p.m.

Rt. 63 Roadhouse, Millers Falls: *Everyspeak*, rock & roll covers, 9:30 p.m.

FRIDAY & SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 12th & 13th

Pothole Pictures, Shelburne Falls: *Shall We Dance*. Fred and Ginger in a musical drama directed by Mark Sandrich, 1937. 7:30 p.m. with music before the movie at 7 p.m.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 13th

At The Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *Monarch Mania!* - Explore the life cycle and migration of the Monarch Butterfly, 1 - 3 p.m. Join educator Rachel Roberts and Ranger Sue Cloutier for an afternoon learning about Monarch butterflies & tag and release Monarch butterflies into the wild. No pre-registration required, free for families with young children. Info www.greatfallsma.org.

Hallmark Institute of Photography public reception for Andarge Asfaw & Lynn Goldsmith - 1 to 5 p.m. Artist Talk in the auditorium at Hallmark Institute of Photography, Turners Falls, 7:30 p.m.

6th Annual John Putnam Fiddlers' Reunion & Sunflower Contest. Bring your fiddle, guitar, banjo, bass, harmonica or other instruments, join informal jams. Old-time, Appalachian, Irish, Quebecois, Swedish. Also the sunflower contest - carry your biggest and best sunflowers on stalks or bouquets. At the Energy Park, Miles Street,

Greenfield. Bring a chair or blanket. Noon. 774-6051 x 14

Conference at the Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *Working Woodlands & Land Trusts: Responsible Forest Management as a Conservation Strategy for Massachusetts*. Info (413) 397-8800 or emily@masswoodlands.coop.

At The Bookmill, Montague Center: Autonomous Battleship Collective presents *Joe McPhee / Paul Flaherty / Chris Corsano* trio with special guest *Josh Burkett*. Creative jazz. Arrive early for couches, armchairs, and to browse the books. Shows begin around 8 p.m., \$5-10.

Wendell Full Moon Coffeehouse, Wendell Center: *Compton Maddux and The Dirt Simple Band*. Open Mic begins at 7:30 p.m., feature at 8 p.m. For Open Mic sign up www.wendellfullmoon.org. Admission is \$6 - \$12 at the door; kids 6-12 \$2; under 6 free. Partial proceeds to benefit the Wendell Full Moon Coffeehouse.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Richard Chase Group*, acoustic folk/singer songwriter, 9 to 11 p.m.

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 14th

Rt. 63 Roadhouse, Millers Falls: *Second Sunday Comedy show*. Three Comics for \$5, 8:30 p.m. www.LaughAtDave.com/SecondSunday

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Steve Crow, Peter Kim & Joe Fitzpatrick*, warped Americana, 7:30 to 10 p.m.

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 19th

The Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Rusty Bell*.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 20th

Montague Grange, Montague Center: *Contra Dance*, 4 to 10 p.m. Gender-role-free contra dance. Open to all.

Fourth Annual Northfield Summer Arts Fest, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. On the grounds of Green Trees Gallery, 105 Main Street, Northfield. Art, food booth, bands, children's activities.

SATURDAY & SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 20th & 21st
The North Quabbin Garlic and Arts Festival. Forster's Farm, Orange. www.garlicandarts.org

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 26th

The Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Death Vesswl with Micah Blue Smaldone*, 9 p.m. Tickets \$8 in advance at the bar, \$10 by phone and at the door.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 4th

12th Annual Source to Sea Cleanup. Dozens of groups return for 4-state effort help out on the Connecticut River

Watershed Council's Cleanup. New and returning volunteers are asked to register with CRWC by Friday, September 5. www.ctriver.org for info!



www.gardencinemas.net

Showtimes for
Fri, September 5th - Thurs, September 11th

1. **MAMMA MIA** DAILY 6:30 9:00 FRI, SAT, SUN 12:00 3:00 PG13
2. **DEATH RACE** DAILY 6:30 9:00 FRI, SAT, SUN 12 3:00 R DTS sound
3. **THE DARK NIGHT** PG13 DAILY 7:15 FRI, SAT, SUN 12 3:15
4. **TROPIC THUNDER** R DAILY 6:45 9:15 FRI, SAT, SUN 12:15 3:15
5. **SISTERHOOD OF THE TRAVELING PANTS** PG13 DAILY 6:45 FRI, SAT, SUN 12:15
5. **PINEAPPLE EXPRESS** R DAILY 9:15 FRI, SAT, SUN 3:45
6. **BABYLON A.D.** PG13 DAILY 7:00 9:30 DTS sound FRI, SAT, SUN 12:30 3:30
7. **THE HOUSE BUNNY** PG13 DAILY 7:00 9:30 DTS sound FRI, SAT, SUN 12:30 3:30



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Saturday, 9/6, 9 - 11 p.m.
Jazzy Blues: *A Ghost Quartet*
Thursday, 9/11 - 8 - 10 p.m.
60's & 70's Covers: *Free Range*
Friday, 9/12, 9 - 11 p.m.
Soul Rock: *Mother Turtle*
Saturday, 9/13, 9 - 11 p.m.
Acoustic Folk: *Richard Chase Group*
Sunday, 9/14, 7:30 - 10 p.m.
Warped Americana:
Steve Crow, Peter Kim & Joe Fitzpatrick
Wednesday, 9/17 - 8 - 10 p.m.
Joe Laurin on Guitar

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TUES & WEDS - Ongoing

Music Project, 3 - 6 p.m.

THURS - Drop-in, 3 - 6 p.m.

& Movie Night, 6 - 8 p.m.

Free (except some trips), open to local teens. Some require permission slips.

Info: *Jared at 863-9559.*

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