

The Montague Reporter

YEAR 17 – NO. 39

also serving Irving, Gill, Leverett and Wendell

\$1

EDITOR@MONTAGUEREPORTER.ORG

THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES

AUGUST 22, 2019

THE BIG PICTURE

“Nobody Ever Likes You, On the Private Sector Side”



FirstLight Power communications director Len Greene poses in front of the solar array on the front lawn of the Northfield Mountain pumped-storage station.

By MIKE JACKSON

NORTHFIELD – “I think that hydro tends to get ignored,” Len Greene told me on Monday morning. “It’s a much more valuable resource, I think, than people realize or give credit for.... It’s partially the fault of the industry itself: we’ve never done a very good job at touting the benefits of hydro. It’s just existed, and we do what we do.”

Greene is the director of government affairs and communications at FirstLight Power, which owns both the pumped-storage generator at Northfield Mountain and extensive works at Turners Falls, including the dam, power canal, and two power plants.

I had been offered an interview with Greene, it seems, in the context of public-relations repair. The company’s decision to hold its Northfield and Turners Falls licenses under two separate subsidiaries has sparked widespread local opposition and distrust, especially coming toward the end of a lengthy federal relicensing process.

If the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission requires FirstLight to leave more water in the Connecticut River, or significantly invest in migratory fish passage infrastructure at the dam, the Turners project may become less profitable. The company has insisted the split is not a first step toward selling those assets, leading critics to speculate instead that it may be attempting to dissuade FERC from holding it liable for the health of the river.

According to Greene, what really drove the decision was FirstLight’s intention to grow its energy-storage division, which is centered on the flagship Northfield Mountain project.

Readers hoping for a hard-hitting, contentious interview may be disappointed: Greene was clear going into the conference room that he would be unable to comment on any points under dispute in the company’s ongoing relicensing process. This ruled out a number of key topics, including riverbank erosion, improved access to properties between the power canal and river, and the passage of migratory fish at the Turners Falls Dam. A number of my questions were met with an apologetic grin, and a promise that more can be discussed once the licenses are settled.

But what Greene did provide was an in-depth look at how FirstLight views Northfield Mountain’s role in shifting the New England energy grid away from fossil fuels, as well as its desire to change policies that limit its operation. This should be of interest to everyone

who lives, swims, fishes, or pays taxes along the Mountain’s “lower impoundment” – the living river it draws from as it stores potential energy, and discharges into whenever it creates electricity.

What appears below is only a portion of our much longer conversation, reordered and edited for clarity.

MR: So... you’re based in Connecticut?

LG: I’m in charge of all the government affairs for the company itself, throughout New England and sometimes, unfortunately, in DC. I’m also in charge of communications for the company.

I was originally hired by GDF Suez when the company owned these assets, and then when they sold them in 2016, I transferred with all our Connecticut and Massachusetts hydro assets....

Right now we are actually the largest energy-storage company in New England. A lot of people don’t realize that. Northfield Mountain, in and of itself, dwarfs anything else – 1,168 megawatts (MW) of energy storage. If you look at most batteries, they’re 1 or 2 MW at the most, tiny compared with this.

MR: How has FirstLight been able to maintain itself as its own company, going from Northeast Utilities to GDF Suez to the current owners?

LG: The primary reason FirstLight has been able to remain as it is, is hydro is a bit of a different animal than other generation sources when it comes to the regulatory environment, particularly at the federal level. We have a lot of things that we need to comply with that most other generators don’t ever think about.

MR: You’re interacting with the outside environment in a different way.

LG: Exactly. A gas plant that you build, that can be retired in five or ten years, has nothing like what a hydro goes through....

We’re three years in from our sale, and we’ve had to build ourselves up as a company almost from the ground up – the people that were working in the Mountain before are still the same people, but from a company standpoint we had to build everything up.

MR: Because now the parent company is – you’re essentially a portfolio asset, right?

LG: It’s a pension fund, yeah. Public Sector Pensions. It’s the federal government pension plan for

see **BIG PICTURE** page A6

G-M SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Pioneer Towns All Agree To Six-Town Study

By MIKE JACKSON

All four towns in the Pioneer Valley regional school district – Leyden, Bernardston, Northfield, and Warwick – have agreed to form planning committees to study the pros and cons of forming a new six-town district with Gill and Montague.

The special town meeting votes taken in June allow the towns to form planning committees without needing the approval of the Pioneer Valley school committee. The Gill and Montague selectboards approved forming committees earlier

see **GMRSD** page A8

MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD

Sewer Rates Stabilize

By JEFF SINGLETON

After paying large increases which nearly doubled sewer rates over the past two years, sewer users in Montague will only see a very small hike this year, an average of only 1%, water pollution control facility superintendent Bob McDonald told the selectboard on Monday.

McDonald attributed the small increase partly to a very favorable contract with Veolia North America, which hauls away sludge. He said he was seeking to negotiate an extension of the contract with the company.

The previous years’ increases reflected the closing of the Southworth paper mill and the end of the so-called “Montague Process,” which

had provided revenue by processing sludge from other towns.

“I would just observe that this is the most settled sewer rates have been recently,” said town administrator Steve Ellis. “We talked about it being a very difficult three-year transition period, when we were standardizing to a more traditional process, so I would like to thank Bob and the staff.”

“I agree,” said board chair Rich Kuklewicz. “You came into a very tumultuous situation.”

McDonald told the board the town has hired a company with a centrifuge on a “very long trailer” to process some of the excess sludge remaining at the plant. He said he hoped to reduce the sludge from

see **MONTAGUE** page A2

No Stay of Wendell Logging, But Judge Delays Decision

By JEFF SINGLETON

GREENFIELD – Massachusetts Superior Court Judge Michael Callan did not issue a “temporary restraining order” on Wednesday to stop forest cutting at Wendell State Forest, as requested by opponents of the project, which is being directed by the state Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR).

However, Judge Callan did not reject the injunction request, but rather requested more information from the parties involved by Friday.

Gia Neswald and Glen Ayers represented 29 litigants who filed affidavits claiming that the forest cutting project violated a number of state laws and regulations, including the 2008 Global Warming Solutions Act. Assistant state attorney general Kendra Kinscherf responded to the complaints for the state.

“When I went into court, I thought we had a snowball’s chance in hell of getting this. But the judge listened to us, he was engaged, and he did not reject our request outright and tell us to go home,” said Ayers. “Now I



Dressed as a moose, Wendell’s Sally Alley Muffin Stuffin sings a protest song.

think we have an ice cube’s chance.”

The forest management operation, which has been criticized by environmental activists since it was proposed three years ago, began last month and could be completed by the end of August. The project involves

see **LOGGING** page A4

Major FirstLight Tax Settlement Frees Up Cash For Montague

By JEFF SINGLETON

The town of Montague will receive a significant infusion of tax revenue as a result of a settlement with FirstLight Power Resources, Montague director of assessing Karen Tonelli told a joint meeting of the finance committee, selectboard, and capital improvements committee on Wednesday.

Tonelli called the settlement “very favorable” to the town, and said it would free up revenue Montague had set aside for tax challenges in an account called the “assessors’ overlay.” However, the agreement signed by town officials has not yet been returned with a signature from FirstLight, so Tonelli urged the joint meeting to avoid discussing specifics of the allocation of new revenue.

The assessors’ overlay currently contains \$2.1 million. Some of this will be retained to pay for future abatements – Tonelli said the

see **SETTLEMENT** page A6

Contract Fight at Kennametal Boils Over

By ANNABEL LEVINE

GREENFIELD – Machinists at Kennametal in Greenfield went on a three-day strike last week in an attempt to compel the company to return to the table in the latest round of contract negotiations with the United Electrical, Radio, and Machine Workers Union (UE) Local 274.

The company agreed to resume negotiations this Tuesday and Wednesday, but after a one-day session with a federal mediator, company representatives did not show up to the table on Wednesday. The union has filed a grievance with the National Labor Relations Board concerning the absence, as well as what it calls other instances of “bad-faith bargaining.”

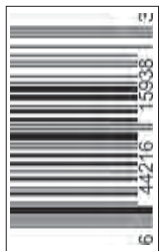
see **STRIKE** page A4



Striking workers and their supporters held a moving picket last week outside Kennametal’s North Street gate.

Further Suggested Reading

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The Montague Reporter

"The Voice of the Villages"

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About Face Computing

Founded by
Arthur Evans Harry Brandt David Detmold
August 2002

MONTAGUE from page A1
40,000 to 10,000 pounds. “We’ve been trying to do this over the past year and a half with our own little press, but we haven’t gotten anywhere,” he told the board. “The EPA is saying that ‘your plant can no longer store sludge.’”

Kuklewicz asked if this would need to be done “occasionally.”

“No, I hope this is one and done,” McDonald replied.

McDonald presented the board with a modified permit he had negotiated with Lightlife, a natural-food processing company located in the industrial park. He explained that all “industrial pretreatment permits” are being evaluated, after the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), concerned about the amount of sludge the plant is generating, requested that the town update its permits to be sure they are consistent with federal, state, and town laws. McDonald also said the EPA has requested the plant reconsider accepting septage from outside the town.

McDonald is also proposing a change in the plant’s staff organization, replacing the current chief operator position with a third lead operator called the “lab/industrial pretreatment coordinator.” He said this new position would be better aligned to the “skill set” of Kevin Boissoneault, the current chief operator. “His value to me is running the lab and doing the industrial pretreatment,” said McDonald.

Ellis noted that the chief operator position had been designed a few years earlier to run the “Montague Process” for reducing sludge. “Not having the option of running that process, we can now work back toward a normal treatment plant,” he said, though he added the reorganization still needed to be negotiated with the union, the National Association of Government Employees (NAGE). “We’re not adding a position. We’re not making the plant more expensive to operate,” he said.

The staffing change would also need to be approved by Montague town meeting. The board tentatively set Wednesday, October 2 as a date for a special town meeting. Ellis said it was shaping up to have a “fairly robust agenda,” due to the need to approve several negotiated union contracts as well as to appropriate funds for a “badly leaking roof” atop the fieldhouse at Unity Park. A state grant for that project has been secured by state representative Natalie Blais through the recently passed state budget.

Project Updates

The selectboard approved a plan by the board of the Shea Theater to install a “foam cornice” at the top

of the building’s façade. Ellis said the addition will hide the building’s HVAC and create a more “integrated look.” The work would be paid for from funds raised by the Shea Theater Arts Center, pending further discussion with the company reconstructing the building’s roof.

Ellis updated the board on the progress of the project to construct a new building for the department of public works (DPW) on Turners Falls Road. He said the DPW had cleared the site, leaving a barrier of trees along the cemetery that borders it. He said that “we have started the 300-day clock” on the project, which is expected to be completed in June 2020.

Asked about the plans for the current DPW building at 500 Avenue A, next to the power canal and bike path, Ellis said the town would attempt to market it, but that until construction of the new building is completed, DPW equipment “needs to be sheltered” there.

The state has approved a Community Development Block Grant of \$612,065 for the current fiscal year for the town. Ellis said the money would fund a number of community service projects, as well as the reconstruction of Spinner Park, a small “pocket park,” in Turners Falls. He noted that a number of residents had raised concerns about the final design of the project – including the relocation of the statue of a female spinner – that needed further consideration. Board members indicated they were happy with the final design.

Other Business

Ellis reported that MassDOT is enforcing a “no left turn” onto the General Pierce Bridge from Mountain Road in Greenfield. He said the policy was implemented to reduce delays in crossing the bridge, which has been reduced to one lane of traffic to reduce the weight load.

The selectboard approved a request by police chief Chris Williams to transfer reserve officer Michael Williams to the Greenfield Police Department. It also executed an agreement with the Franklin County Sheriff’s Office for services at the regional dog shelter, which the sheriff operates on Sandy Lane in Montague.

A request by library director Linda Hickman to appoint Jeri Moran as a library substitute was approved by the board, as was a request by Montague Community Television to place a sidewalk sign on Second Street advertising a community-access film series.

The next selectboard meeting is scheduled for September 9, though the board agreed to meet on August 26 if agenda items accumulate.



Danny Botkin looks on proudly as Hannah Brookman transforms his goat, Karma, into a unicorn during last Saturday’s “Fairy House Day on Avenue A” live show at Peskeomskut Park.

Letters to

the Editors

“Opinion”

Challenges Priorities

The “opinion” piece in the *Reporter* parrots industry talking points and exhibits a stunning level of ignorance. Climate change impact has been a constantly raised issue with DCR for 10 years. We submitted substantive comments on this proposed logging in 2016, but our concerns were completely ignored.

DCR is intentionally targeting one of the most special and beloved places in WSF as an act of aggression and to brutalize the community.

Was this opinion piece meant to be provocative and intentionally hurtful? What was the motivation?

My opinion is that I will no longer support an anti-environmental paper that expresses its opinions with such shallow thoughtlessness.

Please print this comment as a letter to the Editor.

**Glen Ayers
Greenfield**

My only agreement with the Wendell State Forest Alliance (WSFA) is that the prospects for the health of our climate are dire.

According to the WSFA the highest priority solution to this dismal outlook is to stop a legal timber harvest. Blocking all of the logging in the Wendell State Forest, or even all of the Massachusetts state forests, will do little to mitigate unlivable climate degradation.

We could look into the reasons and the way we transport ourselves. How do most people heat their homes? How do we cook our food? What can we do to reduce the 25-30% contribution our agriculture contributes to greenhouse gas emissions? How many of us are ready to reduce the number of new human beings we bring onto our planet?

Do we have alternatives for wood to construct our homes? Do we want to give up paper for books, newspapers, and toilet paper? What other materials do we want to use for flooring and furniture?

Demeaning and denigrating an honest logging contractor will do nothing to solve this problem. Cultivating distrust and paranoia for the agency, DCR, which oversees the stewardship of this land and forest forecloses a conversation toward solving a huge and complex problem.

**Michael Idoine
Wendell**

Leverett SB: Charter Fosters Inequity

The Pioneer Valley Chinese Immersion Charter School lawsuit against the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education is a frivolous use of public resources. The Board’s denial of the School’s eighth expansion request in 12 years made clear that PVCICS is currently 55 students short of its enrollment cap of 584. Moreover, despite a robust demand for kindergarten slots, upper-grade interest falls off precipitously to a low of just eight students in 11th grade.

The school’s poor retention is good for towns that must cut programs to pay for every charter-tuition increase, but it hardly supports their request to increase enrollment by 368. Furthermore, districts are prohibited by statute from sending more than 9% of their budgets to charters (18% for “low-performing districts” which, arguably, most need the money in-house); PVCICS’ greatest waitlist demand is from towns currently near their statutory spending caps.

The charter trustees show a profound lack of understanding of the regional educational landscape. They blame the expansion denial on so-called “surrounding wealthy communities” that oppose sending taxpay-

er money to the privately-run charter school. Do they mean Amherst, with 32% economically-disadvantaged students, slightly higher than the statewide average of 31%? Or Northampton, with 27%?

In fact, PVCICS is the truly “wealthy community,” educating just 16% economically-disadvantaged students and 24% designated “high-needs” students (Amherst has 49% high-need). These inequities [demonstrated by Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education statistics] alone disqualify PVCICS from expansion.

Leverett sends \$110,000 to PVCICS for six students’ education. The town makes painful educational cuts in its own programs to transfer these funds to the charter school, while *PVCICS runs a \$354,000 average annual surplus*, and spends Leverett’s \$110,000 on advertising alone [DESE statistics].

The Board of Education correctly denied the expansion application. The PVCICS lawsuit is without merit.

**Leverett Selectboard
and Nancy Grossman**

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LOCAL BRIEFS

Compiled by CHRIS PELLERIN

Linda Ackerman wanted me to let you know that the special program that was to be held at Greenfield Savings Bank this Saturday had to be cancelled. Youth services librarian Angela Rovatti-Leonard was to read books from a special collection purchased with a grant from the Traprock Center for Peace and Justice.

However, all is not lost: these books can be found at all the Montague Public Libraries.

This Saturday, August 24 from 10:30 a.m. to noon, **Art Naturally: Discover Nature through Story and Art** continues at the Great Falls Discovery Center, 2 Avenue A, Turners Falls. This is the third in a series of water-themed summer programs featuring stories and art.

The storybook pages from *Water Dance* by Thomas Locker are on display in the Great Hall. Try your hand at watercolor resist, and follow water through its journey between earth and sky.

Art Naturally programs will also be held on September 21 and October 12. For ages six and up, accompanied by an adult. Teens and adults are welcome too!

On Saturday from 12:30 to 2:30 p.m., virtually experience an Apollo space mission at Leverett Library, 75 Montague Road, Leverett. Space walk, lunar landing and moon walk, robotics and balloons, too! Present-

ed by Arthur and Peter Evans of Makerspace Workshops. For ages eight and up. Supported by Friends of Leverett Library.

“Refuse to be a Victim!” is a crime prevention program hosted by George “Manny” Holmes at the Gill Church in Gill Center, starting at 6 p.m. on Tuesday, August 27. This program will make you aware of the fraud and scams going on in this area, provide you with ways to prevent identity theft, and protect your personal data. It will also mention things you can do to avoid fraud. It is open to the public and is free.

George is a certified training counselor and has offered this national informational program to our community. If you have any questions, please call him at (413) 863-9165. If you are unable to attend, it happens again on Saturday, August 31 from 10 to 11 a.m. at Greenfield Savings Bank, 282 Avenue A, Turners Falls.

On Wednesday, August 28, the day before school starts, the Great Falls Farmers Market is hosting a “**Last Day of Summer Kidsfest**” during regular market hours from 2 to 6 p.m. at Peskeomskut Park.

All of the regular vendors will be there, including PK Industries, Kingsbury Farms, Dry Brook Garden, Kitchen Kitchen Middle East Food, and Vermont Gelato. There will be free activities such as crocheted water balloons, sidewalk chalk, art activities, and more!

Lauren of Paisley Peacock Body Arts will be offering facepainting (and unicorn horns), and an additional delicious choice of frozen treat with popsicles from Crooked Stick Pops.

The Great Falls Farmers Market runs every Wednesday from 2 to 6 p.m., May through October, in Peskeomskut Park. SNAP and HIP are accepted. Please send any questions to greatfallsfarmersmarkettur-ners@gmail.com, and find them on Facebook and Instagram.

Lou’s Upcycling Workshop returns to the Greenfield Public Library, 402 Main Street, Greenfield. The library is pleased to welcome Lou Leelyn of Wendell on Wednesday, August 28, at 5:30 pm in the LeVanway Room.

Participants will learn about upcycling plastic bags through the process of fusing un-recyclable plastic bags and wrappers that would usually be thrown away. Attendees should save up their household’s cereal and cracker bags, and any other plastic bags and wrappers, and bring them to use or donate. If you aren’t sure what to bring, check Lou’s website at: www.lousupcycles.com/donate-recycle-upcycle.

Registration is required, and is capped at 15 people. Contact the library at (413) 772-1544 or librarian@greenfieldpubliclibrary to sign up. This free program is sponsored by the Friends of the Greenfield Public Library.

The **Kidleidoscope** program continues at the Great Falls Discovery Center, 2 Avenue A in Turners Falls from 10:30 to 11:30 a.m. The program includes a story, interactive games, and a craft to introduce young children to wildlife along the river. Meet in the Great Hall. For ages three to six, accom-

panied by an adult. Siblings and friends are welcome.

The theme for Friday, August 30 is **Rabbits**.

Northfield Mountain Recreation and Environmental Center naturalist Kim Noyes leads a “**farewell to Summer**” **paddle** on Friday, August 30 from 5:30 to 8:30 p.m. on Barton Cove. Bring dinner, snacks, water, and a flashlight.

The program is suitable for beginning as well as experienced paddlers. It is free with your own kayak, or rent one for \$25. Tandem kayaks are available. Call (800) 859-2960 for more information.

On Saturday, August 31 from 12 to 4 p.m., take a migratory journey on the grounds of the Great Falls Discovery Center, as we read together the story of “a teeny-tiny creepy-crawly bug” (a **monarch butterfly caterpillar**), who learns to eat milkweed, take a rest in a chrysalis, meet new friends, and fly with new butterfly wings, all the way to Mexico.

Everyone is welcome for the StoryWalk. Sponsored by CFCE playgroup and Friends of the Great Falls Discovery Center. If it rains, the storywalk and butterfly making will be inside the center.

Looking ahead...

A trio of local poets – Shelburne Falls resident Cindy Snow, Montague’s own Amanda Lou Doster, and Amy Gordon of Gill – will read their work at Flourish, 102 Avenue A, Turners Falls, on Thursday, September 5 at 6:30 p.m. Light refreshments will be served, and books will be available for sale.

Send your local briefs to editor@montaguereporter.org.



More Letters to the Editors

Apology Owed

I was dismayed to read Rob Skelton’s reporting on the sub-heading “Labor Trade” in the recent issue of the *Montague Reporter* covering the Leverett Selectboard meeting. Sam Karlin is one of the most diligent and hardworking producers of theater western Mass has the privilege of knowing. To describe him as a “cheapskate” is not only insulting, it is highly inaccurate.

Mr. Karlin has a long history of producing for one of the largest non-professional companies in the area, Amherst Leisure Services, where the finances of the group allow for greater flexibility. In his current project as producer for Ghost Light Theater the financial strictures are far greater. Ghost Light Theater is much younger and much smaller. This means we must often try to find creative solutions where money isn’t available.

This is long and hard work and it is not compensated financially. Every actor, director, producer, and technician is doing it out of the passion for the work.

In order to secure rehearsal space for our upcoming production, Mr. Karlin has worked through several different venues already. Leverett Town Hall is only being used for the few he could not already secure.

Mr. Skelton’s reporting of the agreement is unnecessarily vicious. What happened was a mutually beneficial agreement in which the cast agreed to do landscaping work (at a higher value than the rental fee of the room) in order to use the town hall. The cast was happy to help with the landscaping. They were able to participate in the town in a much more meaningful way than a fee would. Describing this agreement as “extracting from the cheapskate producer” lessens your publication.

Mr. Skelton should ask a few questions before editorializing as he did. Further, he owes Mr. Karlin an apology.

**Kevin Tracy
Northampton
Founder and Artistic Director,
Ghost Light Theater**

Commons Enclosed

Tonight (August 8) at around 10:30 p.m., the State Police came looking for us.

For more than three decades, sharing boundary lines with state land, the trees of Wendell State Forest have been my neighbors. Beneath their canopy I have hiked both in solitude and with friends, in every season, staggering at the beauty these trees reveal. Sunlight sifting through a thousand shades of illuminated greens, moonlight casting its glow on giant swaying birches, such mighty moonlight dancers. And it pains me still, that when these birches were harvested – was it 20 years ago? – I believe for veneer, and their trunks lined the road in piles, like corpses, I did nothing.

I had no voice, I didn’t know there was anything that could be done.

This was before I knew about the important role trees play in countering climate change, before I knew about the vulnerability of the ecosystem of organisms within soil who connect vast networks of life for miles and miles. Before I understood that when you butcher a forest, though trees may grow again, so much is lost from depletion and erosion that those trees will never stand as strong. I didn’t know that when you compress soil with skidders in August, Jefferson salamanders, an

endangered species are sacrificed at a rate they may not recover from.

And though other trees grew, those giant birches who used to be prevalent here, are now gone. They did not grow back. I miss them.

So now, when our oldest oaks are today being cut down, at the very least, I need to stand witness. I need to photograph what is happening here so that the world can bear witness to their demise.

We obeyed the law. I photographed the signs at the crossroads. Some say “Area Closed During Active Logging Hours.” Others say “Area Closed Monday – Saturday, 7 a.m. – 7 p.m.”

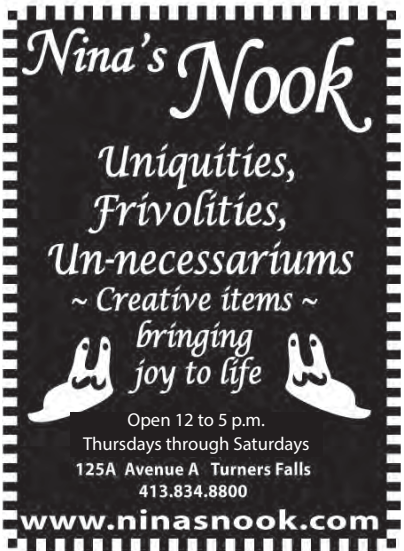
Obedying the signs, my friend Jim and I waited until 7 p.m. Then we walked the same roads and trails that we’ve walked for years, and photographed the devastation. Then we returned home.

A while later, State Police arrived saying what we did was illegal. They said that nobody was allowed there at any time.

I have a problem with this. I think the police were mistaken. The police are supposed to uphold laws. There are very stringent laws about how information is legally posted. There is something very wrong about the police acting on behalf of a private interest (logging contracts are



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local gossip, news & business listings



awarded to private companies) over and above upholding the rights of citizens in a situation where they are observing the legal postings.

And are they saying that nobody is allowed in the whole Forest? Logging contracts have never before necessitated closings of vast areas. I know their concerns are of equipment being sabotaged. So invite the contractors to walk beside me, and we can talk together as we view their day’s work.

We have a right to witness the butchery of our forest which contains our oldest oaks. We have a right to protest. We have an obligation to re-evaluate the function of state-owned forests in light of the crucial role they play in our ever dimming chances for thwarting climate change. Protection of our forests must be prioritized over short-term gains of private profit. And I have a personal obligation to do what I can, with a commitment to non-violence, to stop this cutting.

Let’s work together,

**Sally Stuffin
Wendell**

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Week of August 26

PAPER

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LOGGING from pg A1

two sections of the 7,556-acre forest: a pine tree stand planted in the 1930s under the New Deal’s conservation program, and a more diverse, 88-acre stand of trees along Brook Road. Opposition has focused on the Brook Road stand, which is over a century old.

Opponents of the project originally focused on potential Native American ceremonial sites within the Brook Road section, but during the past year have emphasized the fact that the tree stand removes carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, and argued that the project violates 2008 act because no estimate of its impact has been made available to the public.

Neswald and Ayers were given 30 minutes by the judge to summarize their arguments, which were made in a 68-page filing with the court. In addition to emphasizing that DCR had failed to evaluate the carbon impact of the forest management plan – or else had failed to respond to public records requests for data they had collected on the issue – the plaintiffs cited a 1958 law which barred from state recreation areas “commercial activities, except those essential to the quiet enjoyment of the facilities by the people.”

Ayers argued that the Brook Road project, which he called “industrial-scale logging,” did not facilitate “quiet enjoyment” by the people. He also argued that the public had been “excluded” from the decision-making process that led to the project.

Speaking for the state, Kinscherf argued the Brook Road stand comprised a very small section of the

STRIKE from pg A1

The company and union disagree over three main sticking points. The proposed contract includes mandatory overtime, a new healthcare plan which includes a provision that removes bargaining rights, and bringing temp workers into the factory to do union jobs.

The factory, formerly the Greenfield Tap and Die plant, has seen a dramatically declining workforce in recent decades. Bargaining committee chair Shawn Coates, a CNC operator, said there were 64 workers left in the unit. “Back in 1988, when I started, we had over 500 members,” he said.

On Wednesday, August 14, the last night of the strike, the union held a rally outside the factory gates. Their picket line blocked access to the facility by occupying North Street, directing passing traffic around the protest through a parking lot across the street.

Speakers including UE international representative Chad McGinnis and Massachusetts Nurses Association regional director Donna Stern condemned the company’s greed, and called for working-class solidarity.

“This factory is a bedrock of the Greenfield economy... We’ve got some of our crew in our union, their

great-granddads went on strike for union recognition here,” McGinnis said. “You hear that? Four generations deep.”

“They’d be proud of us today,” one member shouted.

“You’re absolutely right, my man,” McGinnis replied.

The rally grew contentious after two cars with out-of-state plates drove up to the picket line and refused to move until they were let through the factory gate. The men inside, McGinnis said, were members of the Strike Response Team (SRT), a division of a firm called the Phillips Group, hired by Kennametal for security. The men were permitted to drive through after Greenfield police arrived.

McGinnis told the *Reporter* that the men from Phillips, which he called “professional strikebreakers,” were still maintaining a 24-hour presence at the factory as of press time, and that the union believes this is meant as an intimidation tactic.

Attempts to reach Kennametal for comment were unsuccessful.

Additional reporting was provided by Mike Jackson.



Wendell State Forest, and thus did not need to be evaluated in the context of state global warming legislation. She pointed to over two years of public discussion and public input into the project, challenging the view that the public had been excluded from the process.

Kinscherf also stated that the plaintiffs had failed to show “irreparable harm” from the project, and that DCR was taking “great pains to minimize negative environmental impacts.”

The last statement elicited a good deal of laughter from the audience, comprised mainly of opponents of the project, which caused Judge Callan to threaten to clear the courtroom. “This is a courtroom, not a

free-for-all,” he warned.

Callan noted that the legal request for a stay would require the plaintiffs to show that there was a strong possibility their case would prevail.

Ayers stressed the number of state laws and regulations he believed DCR had violated. He also noted that the plaintiffs had, in their more recent filing with the court, presented “new information” to the judge.

The state attorney noted that she had only received this information several days earlier, and had not had time to review it.

“We’re here talking, with trucks in the fields,” said Judge Callan. “You could have filed a lawsuit in June.”

“We’re not lawyers,” responded

Ayers. “We tried to engage the agency. I’ve been up for days typing this.”

In the end, the judge agreed to review the new information presented by the plaintiffs, as well as a response from the state attorney, by Friday.

The hearing was preceded by a spirited rally and press conference outside the courthouse, attended by nearly 80 forest preservation activists. Both Neswald and Ayers reviewed the arguments they would make before the court. A man sang a song attacking forest clear-cutting to the tune of “Acres of Clams.”

“Life, Carbon. Keep it underground. Keep it in the trees,” sang a woman dressed in a moose costume.



GUEST EDITORIAL

Region’s Forests Increasingly Vital

By LISA HOAG

WENDELL – The Department of Conservation and Recreation has called our 110-year old oak stand in Wendell State Forest an “even age” forest, and said they must manage it to create mixed ages. But it is not an even age forest.

First of all, this 88-acre oak area where the first deeds were purchased to create Wendell State Forest was not intentionally planted, as some assume, like the 30-acre CCC pine plantation by the road. We did the land use research, and have the deed records and maps from the DCR plans office: the first deed was transferred from Charles M. Ballou to the Commonwealth on March 19, 1921. It was probably logged not long before that by the former landowner, but it has not been logged since – the forest has grown naturally by itself.

We toured with two foresters, two forest ecology specialists, an old growth forest expert, and two rare plant species experts through this area. They all agreed it was supremely healthy, needs no management, and is not a homogenous-age forest. It is diverse in age classes and has many other tree species, although there is a large quantity of red oak, and red oak-black oak hybrids.

Because land ownership in the Northeast is broken up into lots of little parcels, many logging projects are small ones like our 88 acres in Wendell State Forest, but there are a lot of them all around us on public, private, and also conservation land. There was just a massive clearcut of a conservation area near Hardwick, at a local conservation trust. Timber interests are donating large sums of money to conservation trusts, who are often cash starved, to create “working forests,” so even conservation land is now being logged instead of being protected.

What is happening now is new and different from what we have known in the past. I have come across multiple references to harvesting the entire Northeast. “The five counties of western Massachusetts have just over 1.2 million acres of ‘timberland,’ or land that is capable of growing wood and where no legal prohibitions on harvesting exist,” reads a 2016 congratulations letter from the

USDA to Peter Church, DCR’s director of forest stewardship. “The USDA Forest Service classifies 93% of Massachusetts’ forest as timberland.”

DCR plans to log 3% of its lands every year. So in 33 years, they will have taken 100% of our oldest trees. In 2009, a top DCR official proposed a 400% increase in logging.

Right now Pisgah, the Quabbin, and Tully Lake in Athol are all being heavily logged, as is Vermont. Maine has already been mined out of her trees – it is 25% successional habitat, whereas the natural amount of successional habitat is 3%.

The Southeastern US was targeted in the same way, and is now one of the most deforested regions in the world. A 2013 *Science* article describes a study that found that between 1999 and 2012, “[t]he disturbance rate of North American subtropical forests, located in the Southeast United States, was found to be four times that of South American rainforests.”

Around 2017, I was asked to do a Google search for the term “woodbasket.” Most of the hits then were about the Southeast. Now most of them come up for the Northeast.

We are the last, oldest, largest forest in the country, with the highest carbon density. Check out the Carbon Online Estimator (COLE) maps at *ncasi.org*, based on Forest Service data.

This is the only part of the country where the forest has been allowed to return to old growth after 1850, when we deforested the entire state. But within the last 10 years, according to Harvard Forest’s *Wildlands and Woodlands* study, our forest growth has been declining, not increasing.

A figure often used in the Midwest calls 150-year-old forest “old growth.” Wendell’s 110-year-old stand is younger than that. Meanwhile, a study that defines 100- to 150-year-old trees as “young” is being misrepresented to argue that the youngest trees sequester the most carbon. In fact, trees step into an accelerated phase of carbon sequestration at that age, and can continue for centuries.

Studies published in the past two years indicate that, at least for white pines and oaks, a tree doubles how much carbon it sequesters every 50

years. When we measured carbon in the Brook Road Forest, these trees were each sequestering a half ton of carbon over their first 50 years, and twice that over next 50 years. If allowed to grow, those 110-year-old trees could each sequester two tons of carbon during their third 50 years. The tallest tree in New England is in western Franklin County: 165 years old, and 178 feet tall. It is sequestering 7 tons of carbon.

Forests are the only planet-wide factor producing negative carbon, and our Northeastern forests have become mission critical because other forests in the Southeastern US and Brazil have become so deforested. Trees absorb 30% of the 9.4 gigatons of carbon that humans create (Moomaw, Masino and Faison, “Intact Forests in the United States,” 2019). And a 2018 study published in *Global Ecology and Biography* estimates that half of all the carbon stored in all the forests in the world is in the largest-diameter 1% of trees in every forest.

As for our local logging companies, they are having a rough time right now, as large, out-of-state lumber operations are coming in with outrageous bids. A lifelong retired DCR forester told me about one auction in which an out-of-state company bid \$75,000, triple the other bids. There is a company from New York State that wants only oak – and *lots of it*.

Conservation in Massachusetts began when, after we deforested all of the state, we decided to preserve land so we would again have forests to log. But now we see that our trees have a much more important role to play if we are to survive as a species.

Every 110-year-old forest that is logged brings us that much closer to the 1.5-degree increase, an irrevocable step that can’t be reversed for 100 years.

I love our local logging companies, and used local wood when I built my house. But what I have learned in the past two years has shown me that trees are our only hope for a livable future on the planet.

Lisa Hoag is a member of the Wendell State Forest Alliance.

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NOTES FROM THE LEVERETT SELECTBOARD

Leverett Pond Mystery Solved

By JERRI HIGGINS

Residents Macaylla Silver and Mitchell Mulholland came to the Leverett selectboard’s meeting Tuesday night to discuss recent issues at Leverett Pond.

Silver said he had noticed an encampment on the Leverett Pond island while kayaking there. He became concerned about what “looked like some sort of party: beers unopened – some open and drunk, and maybe s’mores activities, and litter in the area.” He went by more than once, seeing that the tent was open or closed, but the picnic table always had items on it.

So he docked to investigate the area. “As I was exiting,” he said, “I passed a part of the woods just about 12 feet away, and noticed either paper towels, or toilet paper, or paper towels used as toilet paper. I didn’t want to pick it up and see, and that was the extent of it.”

Silver says that he’s been using the pond area since 1973, and “the island has always been pristine until now. There was also a silver rowboat parked – with oars – but there were no people on the island, which I thought was odd. But not too odd.”

Silver contacted the Friends of Leverett Pond, and got a response from Mulholland, a long-time resident.

“We also had a similar experience,” Mulholland said. “We were out with our kayaks and we saw a green tent, but no one was there. We went about our business. I was out doing surveys out there and I passed it several times.... Macaylla complained, and I was asked to check it out.”

Mulholland emailed other residents, and the mystery was soon solved: “It turns out it was a family from California who has been visiting residents. They’ve been here three weeks or so, and have been going [to the island] with their kids.”

Mulholland spoke with the family, who apologized and said they would clean up the area. “I didn’t go walking through the woods looking for papers,” he went on, “but I asked that everything be removed, including organics.”

While Mulholland doesn’t take issue with those wanting to camp on the public island, Silver says there are state laws to adhere to.

“It’s actually state land,” Silver said, “and... up to this point, there’s never been a problem. As far as permission to camp on state land, I would suggest you look at the laws.”

“If it’s state land,” said selectboard chair Peter d’Errico, “it’s up to the state to figure out what to do with it. If people are camping on it, then somebody can involve the state if they want to.”

Silver said he was out on the pond “looking at the effects of pesticides,” and wanted the selectboard to put that as an issue on the next agenda.

“It’s really a board of health issue, or planning board issue,” d’Errico told him. “I don’t want to get into something that we don’t have any authority to deal with, so I would suggest you get on the con com agenda.”

Housing Rehab Audit

Brian McHugh, assistant director of community development for the Franklin County Regional Housing and Redevelopment Authority (FCRHRA), came before the board

to discuss several issues flagged by the state Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) after an audit of the town’s housing rehabilitation program.

D’Errico said the board had looked over DHCD’s letter, and that the “egregious violations were appropriately dealt with – with a slap on the wrist.”

The first concerned a conflict of interest: homeowners chose their son from a list of approved “municipal agents” to perform work. DHCD’s letter expressed concern that proper protocol was not followed in determining who could act as an agent of the municipality.

“I argued the conflict of interests issue at length,” McHugh said. “The complication has to do with state authority, and an agent being under contract [with the state] to provide services to the town.” McHugh added that he had never seen the state “go to that length.”

While the FCRHRA does include federal conflict-of-interest regulations in its documents, McHugh said, it does not clarify the definitions of who’s who. “We will clarify that,” he said. “If an agent is also a contractor, and if they have family or business ties to the homeowner, then they are ineligible to be on a project.”

D’Errico mused that he found the issue somewhat “like reading Dickens... since the two people in question that had the work done are both dead.”

The second concern regarded a lead-compliance issue. McHugh said work to fix a leaking roof was approved, but the state wanted interior lead paint removed from the building even though no interior work was scheduled. McHugh added that DHCD only wanted to reimburse for patching, not replacing, the roof, though the FCRHRA believes it may qualify as an emergency case, as the roof had seven leaks.

In a third case, a homeowner applied for a grant to fix a wobbly deck. Contractors also fixed a rocky walkway leading to the deck, work DHCD said it had not approved.

The FCRHRA’s responses to DCHD’s concerns have been written up, and will be forwarded to the board for their records.

Teawaddle Well Water

Residents asked for an update on the assessment Wilcox & Barton, Inc. has been hired to perform of the groundwater on Teawaddle Hill Road, where a plume of volatile chemicals leaching from a former landfill has infiltrated a number of residents’ wells.

However, the LiDAR survey has been hampered by a resident’s fear that a necessary depth calculation might further destabilize her well.

Stephen Nagy and several other residents were present at the meeting to ask for how long the assessment might disrupt their water usage, and seek assurance that any new problems wouldn’t fall on homeowners to fix. D’Errico assured them that they are covered by insurance if there are any mishaps, which aren’t likely.

Nagy asked why the company can’t move forward with one well, to which d’Errico responded:

“To bring... the crew that does this work on, and then have to reassemble that whole crew again... that’s going to cost more money than to have everybody there and do two

wells in one day.”

“I’m going back to the original proposal,” Nagy said, “which said they were testing one well to the tune of about \$39,000 – so is it now \$39,000 times two wells?”

“No,” d’Errico and board member Julie Shively simultaneously responded. “They wanted to go to the other well for a different reason,” said Shively: “they want to check the depth.”

Other Business

A timing delay is the main cause of a discrepancy between school records and the town’s general ledger. Shively and town administrator Marjorie McGinnis said the delay was caused by a collapse of accounting software at Erving School Union 28, which caused many other delays.

Seth Seeger and Michael Dover reported on the progress of the revenue committee, which meets again on September 10. Seeger and Dover said they are brainstorming to work with other towns to try to change the funding formula for charter schools. “We’re just being killed by the charter school formula,” Dover said.

D’Errico suggested the committee could also reach out to independent businesses in town for ideas and feedback for revenue.

Marjorie McGinnis shared that two levels of grants are available from the Massachusetts Interlocal Insurance Association (MIIA). “One is \$490, we can use on small projects,” she said. “The other is up to \$10,000, depending on the project.”

The grants must be for safety equipment, or somehow related to losses. McGinnis has received suggestions from department heads, with the most pressing needs being for a keyless entry system and video surveillance at the safety complex. The police department also suggested police body cameras. Given limited available funds, the board has to choose the biggest bang for their buck.

The highway department has received applications for superintendent, and the hiring committee and department are going to meet.

The conservation commission has discussed a property on Cave Hill Road, and agreed the town has no interest in taking it over. The selectboard voted unanimously to decline right of first refusal.

The board signed an agreement with the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG) for the town’s municipal preparedness grant evaluation. The process includes a six-hour workshop on how environmental changes will affect vulnerable populations.

A resident is requesting an agricultural license to farm the Gordon King property and sell the seeds of the harvest. The contract would start November 1 for a year. The con com has reviewed it, and has done all the negotiations to rent town land for a seed project.

A state Department of Conservation and Recreation forest stewardship application was completed and approved. The cost sharing to Leverett would be \$70.

Con com agent Miho Connelly has received a small culvert repair grant.

The board approved the dog control program, at a cost of \$350 for a year, and renewed the town’s Blackboard Connect emergency notification system.

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NOTES FROM THE ERVING SELECTBOARD

Roadwork Shortfall

By KATIE NOLAN

Administrative coordinator Bryan Smith informed the Erving selectboard on Monday night that the planned upgrade to the roads and sidewalks in the River Street, Warner Street and Strachan Street neighborhood has a budget gap of approximately \$150,000. “Project costs are higher than expected,” said selectboard chair Jacob Smith.

Currently, the town has \$541,732 in saved Chapter 90 funds, money appropriated for the project for the current fiscal year and funds carried over from fiscal year 2019. However, the preliminary cost estimate from Weston & Sampson, the engineers hired for the project, is \$690,450. The project is in the design phase; construction is expected to begin in the summer or fall of 2020.

According to a memo from administrative coordinator Smith, the purpose of the project is to improve the layout of the roadway, the drainage, street signs, sidewalks and crosswalks to make the neighborhood safer, more accessible and convenient for pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, commercial vehicles and emergency vehicles.

The board and the finance committee discussed various ways to fund the budget gap, such as waiting another year and accumulating additional Chapter 90 funds, raising the funds from taxation for the current fiscal year, or using the stabilization fund. However, board members found issues with each of these proposals.

According to highway foreman Glenn McCrory, the problem with saving Chapter 90 funds for another year is that the Massachusetts Department of Transportation allows saving for only a limited amount of time before work begins. “We need to start this fiscal year to get Chapter 90,” McCrory said.

Raising funds from FY’20 taxation would require a special town meeting, and given the time needed to develop and post a warrant, setting the tax rate would be delayed and real estate tax bills would be sent out later than usual in November. Using stabilization funds would reduce the town’s “savings account,” and fin com member Debra Smith observed that, when the annual town meeting voted to use stabilization account funds for unexpected library building expenses, the selectboard promised townspeople to return money to the account on an accelerated basis.

The board decided that the town should not raise the money from

FY’20 taxation, but use already appropriated funds, perhaps moving funds from accounts unlikely to use all of their funding, or use capital stabilization funds. Finding money to fill the budget gap will be discussed further at the board’s September 9 meeting.

Rhododendron Route

Daniel Hammock brought in healthy-looking azalea and rhododendrons to demonstrate his plan to beautify the Route 2 roadside. He said he would donate 30 azaleas and 40 rhododendrons to plant along Route 2 to create an “Azalea Alley” or “Rhododendron Route.” In addition, he said his vision expands beyond Erving, imagining a drive along Route 2 from Orange to Shelburne Falls with shrubs in full bloom along the roadside.

Hammock asked the board to approve help from the highway department with planting and help from the fire department with watering. He also brought in arbor vitae and cypress plants to demonstrate plantings he proposes for the town cemetery. “No answer is needed tonight,” he said.

Board members were clearly impressed by the plants, but put off deciding whether to approve help with planting and watering.

Other Business

Bryan Smith told the board that Tighe & Bond, the firm working on the former International Paper Mill cleanup project, had sampled soil near transformers at the property and had found pockets of contamination, but not widespread oils. The company will conduct more sampling and provide additional data at the end of this week.

The selectboard and the fin com agreed to a calendar for developing the FY’21 budget, starting with a joint meeting on September 16 to discuss budget goals and guidance, and culminating in the adoption of the 2021 budget on March 9, 2020.

After a unanimous recommendation from the search committee, the board voted to hire Pamela McNamara as a full-time building and grounds maintenance laborer.

The board appointed Jason Robinson to a three-year term on the cultural council, and appointed Peter Sanders, Betsy Sicard, Bryan Smith, Jacob Smith, and Philip Wonkka to the search committee for a planning assistant.

Jacob Smith was appointed as the board’s member on the capital stabilization fund, replacing Scott Bastarache, who resigned from the selectboard as of August 19.

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NOTES FROM THE GILL SELECTBOARD

Board Expresses Worry Over Hydro

By GEORGE BRACE

At their meeting Monday night, the Gill selectboard continued a discussion of issues surrounding the relicensing of FirstLight Power Resources’ Northfield Mountain Pumped Storage Project with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC).

Among the topics addressed were a request to FERC by local environmental journalist Karl Meyer for a rehearing of its approval of the transfer of FirstLight’s current license to two newly-created companies, and the possibility of Gill hiring a lawyer to join in the appeal.

Gill has intervenor status in FirstLight’s application to renew its license for the Northfield Mountain pumped-storage project. This process began in 2013, and was projected to take five years, though is now in its sixth.

The town of Gill, Meyer, and several others have also been granted intervenor status in a separate application made last December to assign FirstLight’s licenses for Northfield Mountain and its Turners Falls hydroelectric project to two separate limited liability companies.

Gill applied for intervenor status in these proceedings on January 31, and FirstLight filed its formal opposition to all intervenor applications, including Gill’s, in February and March. FERC approved the Gill’s request on July 1, but ten days later, on July 11, it approved FirstLight’s restructuring application.

Meyer has filed a request for a rehearing of this application. Town administrator Ray Purington said the basis for Meyer’s request was that FirstLight was not in compliance with their operating license this past May, when it did not leave the mandated volume of water in the Connecticut River during the spawning of endangered shortnose sturgeon.

Meyer asserted that FERC had erred when it decided FirsLight was in compliance with the terms of its license.

Chair John Ward and board member Greg Snedeker expressed a reluctance to commit town money to the rehearing effort, though Snedeker added that spending a little bit of money to see if there was something there may be in the town’s interest. “We’re all kind of wandering in the dark regarding what this means,” he commented.

Crochier and Ward agreed. “It’s not like we are going to tie up a large amount of funds, but not spending any could cost us later,” said Crochier.

Purington suggested reaching out to FERC to see if there was a way for the town to sign on to support Meyer’s request, but said he thought the deadline for the town to file its own appeal and raise any other issues had come and gone.

Among other issues board members cited with the license split, was a concern mentioned in a recent *Greenfield Recorder* editorial of the potential impact of the restructuring on FirstLight’s financial obligations. The board had discussed this issue several times previously. Snedeker read from the editorial: “[I]f one location were more profitable than the

other, would the less profitable be less liable for river health?”

Crochier said it may be too late for Gill to file an appeal of the split, but said hiring a lawyer to ask the question may be worthwhile. Purington suggested the answer may also be available from FERC for free.

Snedeker again questioned the timing of the split, noting that it came toward the end of the license renewal process, on the eve of the government shutdown in December, which had the effect of limiting public input on the issue. He said maybe there was nothing to worry about, but “we don’t know.”

Board members suggested reaching out to Meyer, the towns of Montague and Northfield, and several other parties to hear their thoughts.

Board members also discussed overall issues with the pumped-storage project. Ward said riverbank erosion is a major issue, but loss of habitat is also a big issue on his list: “Gill has been denied fish for decades.” He said that shad used to be called “Gill Pork,” because those in town who couldn’t afford pigs ate shad.

Crochier added that silt shifts were also a concern, along with soil erosion, which was the most visible.

Snedeker said he thought there were compelling environmental reasons to get involved, but also recreational and business issues, with the river bringing business to the town. He said the town should be concerned “for all those reasons: for the environment, for loss of habitat, for erosion, for people being able to use the river. It’s all connected.”

“I’m not saying... there’s a ton to worry about,” he said, “but we don’t know.”

“I’m worried,” added Ward. He emphasized the town’s stake in the matter, noting that Gill abuts “the lower reservoir, or impoundment – which I’ll just call the river,” between the pumped-storage project and the dam.

“I think it’s important that we hold FERC, FirstLight, all of them, accountable to the fact that... it is not their lower reservoir, it is a river,” Crochier agreed. “A lot of time, money and effort was spent to get the river to where it is. We’re trying to keep it as healthy as we can for as long as we can.”

The board took no specific action on hiring a lawyer, but decided to confer with a long list of interested parties, and did not rule it out.

Other Business

The selectboard went through the rest of Monday’s agenda relatively quickly. Purington notified the board that it was discovered that some asbestos abatement was going to be required in the installation of a second set of doors at Gill Elementary. Due to the cost being over \$10,000, the project will need to go out for bids, resulting in a delay that will mean the doors will not be installed before the start of school as planned.

He reported that one of the two water coolers for Gill Elementary school has been delivered, with the other on back order. “It’s a start,” he said.

Purington said the purchase of a tanker truck from Missouri Fire Apparatus is proceeding as planned, but a delivery date has yet

BIG PICTURE from page A1

Canada.... They have a strong interest in green energy, and renewable energy, and long-term assets.

Most of these hydros have been around for generations, and they’re not going to go anywhere.

MR: *Brick buildings on rivers.*

LG: And our Connecticut assets are a great example of this: those brick buildings on rivers have turned those rivers into lakes, and entire communities are now dependent on those lakes for all sorts of different economic drivers.

The Housatonic River, which comes down from the Pittsfield area, we have all but one of the facilities on that river are FirstLight facilities... Most of those resources have been there for a little over 100 years...

MR: *I’ve been amazed to find out just how many dams, especially smaller-scale ones, were installed during that era.*

LG: There’s thousands in New England – people don’t realize how many unpowered dams there are, that nobody wants to deal with because it’s expensive to maintain a dam in a safe manner.

MR: *Why is the company headquartered in Burlington [MA]?*

LG: When we were sold, we wanted to remain in Massachusetts – our biggest two assets are in Massachusetts – and, honestly, when it comes to the industry itself in New England, Boston is where a lot of other companies are based....

MR: *So essentially, it’s on the road from Beacon Hill to Northfield Mountain.*

LG: We’re a small enough shop, we’re only about 140 employees at the moment entirely,

to be determined.

Six applications for the highway superintendent position were received before the deadline. Purington said he was “pleased with the caliber of the applicants,” and was setting up a date to review them with Crochier and Tom Hodak.

The board renewed Gill’s annual contract with the Franklin County Sheriff’s Office for regional dog control services, and approved a sewer abatement request of \$198.51 for water used to fill a swimming pool.

The board appointed police sergeant Justin Bassett as officer in charge, retroactive to August 17. Board members commented that Sgt. Bassett and Chief Redmond are held in high regard in the county.

Purington reported that Gill’s share of the cost of a dump truck for the school district came in at \$4,400, which was \$250 less than projected.

The board made two public service announcements. There will be a Fraud and Scam Awareness seminar on Tuesday, August 27 at 6 p.m. at the Gill church. The free program will address identity theft, protecting personal data, and fraud.

Hazardous waste collection day will be Saturday, September 21. Collection sites are Greenfield Community College and the Orange Transfer Station. Pre-registration by September 16 is required. A link is available on the town website.

At the end of the meeting, the board went into executive session with Bill Tomb, chair of the board of assessors, to consider abatement applications.

and most of them are actually here in the Mountain.

MR: *I saw a recent press release about a partnership with a battery research project? [FirstLight acquired Advanced Microgrid Solutions’ batteries in Dartmouth and Waltham earlier this month.]*

LG: Yeah, that was a big step for us. It kind of all interrelates to where we’ve come from over the last few years, but our goal from day one was to provide a stable atmosphere in which our hydro and pumped-hydro storage facilities can operate.

Energy storage is different from hydro in how it operates, and what you need to do to run the system. It fits very nicely with what the New England grid is looking at for the future: there’s a lot of renewables coming onto the system, and most of them are intermittent, so energy storage is obviously going to play a huge role.

You’re aware of our restructuring efforts over the last few months, which were viewed in a certain way around here – from our perspective, we didn’t think it was going to be as big of a news story as it was, locally, but it obviously was. One of the reasons we did it was to grow the company with acquisitions like the AMS acquisition.

MR: *To grow the company on the storage side?*

LG: There are other opportunities we’re looking at as well, but storage in particular is something we’re interested in. We’re currently the largest owner of energy storage in New England, and battery storage is an up-and-coming technology, so we looked at this opportunity with AMS to learn about the technology a little more as a company...

We’re pretty excited about it: it’s two batteries; size-wise, they don’t

come anything close to [Northfield Mountain], it’s a little over 1½ MW total. It’s a Tesla power wall – you go into a yard and there’s a battery array sitting in the yard, not really much to look at, but it’s our first foray into the technology....

MR: *Because you’re already in a position where you’re interacting with the grid operators, live, so you’re in that communication loop – you’re actively turning on and off –*

LG: Yup. And energy storage, like I said, is different than traditional generation, and even hydro, in that it requires a spread between the demand and what’s on the system, the load.

So, without a high enough price spread to cover your costs, energy storage doesn’t really work – that’s why there’s been a lot of trouble in building out a lot of new energy storage in the system.

There’s been a lot of policies and efforts to try to increase that, but without a significant spread of price signals, you can’t really get very much out of an energy storage system; it just won’t operate.

MR: *As more solar, for example, comes onto the grid, that should increase the demand for storage, because the sun only turns on for part of the day.*

LG: The intermittency with solar, and even wind power – the offshore wind has a very high capacity factor, which means it’ll run a lot more than most other intermittent resources will, but it’s still only 40%. About 60% of the time you’re not getting enough wind to really power.

To make up for that loss, you have to find other solutions. A lot of people don’t want fossil. We view hydro as a great resource, but there’s only so much hydro out there, and see **BIG PICTURE** next page

SETTLEMENT from page A1

electric company Eversource, the second-largest taxpayer in Montague, is filing for one – and some will be used to fund the FirstLight settlement. A significant remainder, said Tonelli, will be transferred by a vote of the board of assessors into an “overlay surplus” account, which can then be appropriated by town meeting.

Any amount not appropriated by the end of next June will flow into so-called “free cash,” the town’s end-of-year balance which can also be appropriated by town meeting once it is certified by the state.

The brief discussion by the joint committees focused on the use of large, one-time revenues. Virtually all seemed to agree with town administrator Steve Ellis that such windfalls should not be used to balance the annual operating budget that funds town departments, but should be used for specific capital projects, or used to build stabilization funds.

There was a general discussion of the potential impact of the settlement on the town’s assessment to the Gill-Montague school district.

Selectboard chair Rich Kuklewicz said he did not believe there was an “obligation” to share one-time revenues with the district in the form of an assessment increase. He contrasted the FirstLight settlement with revenue the town is earning from the solar project on the old landfill, which pays on a “regular,” or annual, basis.

Former finance committee chair John Hanold said he was not sure he agreed, since the money flowing into the assessors’ overlay had lowered

the “affordable assessment” the district is entitled to under its agreement with the town. Fin com chair Jen Audley said the district and member towns would discuss the affordable assessment next month.

Ellis said one option would be to allocate a portion of the released overlay funds to the school stabilization fund for capital projects. “Once we have real numbers we can work with, we can have a conversation with the district,” he said. “I feel confident that they understand what one-time revenues are.”

FirstLight, which owns a total of 68 taxable parcels in Montague, began challenging its three largest assessments – Cabot Station at the end of the power canal; the value of its “personal property”; and the value on the canal itself – in 2014. The company lost an appeal in the state tax appellate court in 2017, and began negotiating directly with Montague town officials including Ellis, Tonelli, and Kuklewicz after that.

The final tax settlement covers the years 2014 through 2019, and includes an agreement for 2020 and a commitment by both parties for a negotiating framework for the next two years.

According to the 2019 calculations of the Montague assessors’ office, FirstLight owns real estate and personal property valued at \$138,599,988. The next-largest taxpayer, Eversource (taxed under the name NStar), owns property valued at \$61,487,400. The property of the Judd Wire Company, the third-largest taxpayer, is valued at \$9,309,100.



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BIG PICTURE from page A1

there’s not very much more you’re ever going to see built, new stuff, in New England.... The primary solution people are looking at are energy-storage solutions.

That’s why we view Northfield as a huge resource that can be utilized by the grid, by New England, a lot better than it is. Because what people don’t realize is that we only utilize about 25% of our capability as an energy-storage unit.

It all harkens back to the way energy storage is leveraged: the energy markets were created to find the least-cost solution possible, that’s why you see a lot of gas plants being built right now, because they’re cheap, easy to build and fire up....

Pumped-hydro storage on this scale, you’re not going to see anything built in this area again. But we do have two units in Massachusetts: Northfield and Bear Swamp, which is owned by Brookfield. Between the two of them, you have over 1,800 MW of energy storage. On the grid, it’s already there, and it’s only about 25% leveraged.

MR: *Does the New England grid have other storage that’s not pumped hydro?*

LG: Very small stuff. The batteries we just purchased are behind the meter, so you don’t see them on the grid, but there are a couple of other resources that have been built. There’s a 20-MW battery in Maine that’s owned by Nextera – it’s a battery that was stuck in the ground just north of Portland – but 20 MW, versus 1,800...

It’s helpful in small spots, but getting to the scale you need to back up something like the offshore wind procurements that are happening right now – where you have 1,600 MW being built off of Massachusetts and another 2,000 in Connecticut, coming in – the scale is just unbelievable. For battery storage to be able to back that up effectively is cost-prohibitive right now, and siting would be amazingly hard to do.

You have two units in Massachusetts that you can leverage more effectively, but you can’t do it using the energy markets the way they’re structured currently. We need to figure out, from a policy perspective, how to do it better.

MR: *And that’s state-level energy policy?*

LG: It’s a regional issue, but it’s dictated by state policy, essentially.

MR: *What are the main policies that limit you in Mass?*

LG: Right now, we’re operating these resources as merchant generation: we operate it based off of price that we bid into the energy markets every single day. It costs us a certain amount to pump the water, store the energy, and we need to be able to realize the spread between what we’re paying to store the water versus what we’re actually generating.

MR: *Buy low, sell high – you’re trying to pump water up when the*

price signal is low.

LG: Price signals have been very, very low for the last few years, so it’s been a lot more difficult to operate at an efficient level. But even when the spreads were high, we still would only operate at 25%, 30% of our capabilities....

Our argument is pumped hydro’s a great backup resource that, if we make a few policy tweaks in Boston and Hartford, and Providence, elsewhere, we could absolutely leverage it a little more effectively, and get closer to a more renewable grid that we have right now.

MR: *Once we understand the grid is operating as a whole and the Mountain is a battery, we imagine [grid operator] ISO basically saying “Turn it on! Turn it off!” That happens sometimes, in emergency situations, but you’re saying most of the time you’re making the decision of whether to run the water up or down based on price signals.*

LG: Yeah. When there’s an emergency situation on the grid, most of the time we are called, absolutely. There have been periods when there’s projected high demand, and because of other issues – fuel security and everything else – ISO’s actually held us in reserve, and dispatched things like oil and coal. I was surprised to hear this: we actually have one coal plant left in New England, which was dispatched ahead of the pumped-hydro units.

But when you have things like the Global Warming Solutions Act goals which limit specifically how much carbon you can put into the atmosphere every year, which Massachusetts does, you blow through that budget in two weeks if you start running those types of systems.

MR: *I know you can’t comment on relicensing, but there are so many things that the company provides that date to the ‘70s license: all the recreation opportunities here; the campground at Barton Cove... Is there anything you can say, outside the relicensing process, about the company’s hopes for the future of those public functions, and land stewardship?*

LG: We take those very seriously. I can point to Connecticut as an example: we went through relicensing of our Housatonic resources about 10 years ago; we got everything finally straightened out in 2013. We’ve since implemented all sorts of different aspects of the relicensing effort there....

There’s a lot more programming here than we have in Connecticut... We don’t anticipate eliminating any of that, but obviously, with relicensing and my restrictions on what I can say, I’d love to be able to tell you where I think it’s going to go... We’re looking to find a positive solution with all of our stakeholders.

I think I can say it that way. I’m not trying to dodge!

MR: *In downtown Turners Falls, and we’re surrounded by FirstLight assets, and a lot of it feels to most of*

us like public land most of the time: the bike path, Cabot Woods. I saw this week that there’s changes at the gate at Migratory Way?

LG: Yeah – we’ve asked them to close the gate, basically, at night. We’ve had issues with people dumping down there, and there’s been safety issues, [and] illegal dumping of hazardous materials. It’s a problem all over the river, but this is an area we can help to mitigate it....

It’s not a popular decision with some people, I understand, but if you saw some of the stuff that was dumped down there you’d probably understand; you don’t want it in the river. You’ll still be able to access it, just not drive into it.

“We need to be able to realize the spread between what we’re paying to store the water, versus what we’re actually generating.”

MR: *What’s it like to be on the private-sector side of this? I know in the town in Connecticut you lived in you were on the public-sector side.*

LG: I was a deputy first selectman; I was a state representative as well, in that area, and all sorts of boards and commissions... My town, Seymour, Connecticut – it was different issues, specifically, but a similar state of mind.

And being on the private-sector side... You know, [sighs] nobody ever likes you, on the private sector side. It’s just part of life – we are very much viewed, by a lot of people in many communities, as the big, bad power company.

Maybe it’s a legacy of being an offshoot of utility-owned systems; maybe it’s just because people have a negative view of corporate America, and companies in general.

But the one thing you do realize, when you work on the private-sector side of it, is that most of the people that work for us are actually local people. They live in these communities....

We don’t wanna be some crazy enigma that no one really understands – “something’s happening inside the mountain.” You have that overwhelming feeling of doom, when you think about it like that. But beyond that, we’re not that faceless corporation that people think of, anymore. We’re not Mr. Burns in *The Simpsons* – it doesn’t work that way!

MR: *But it makes sense, in terms of the scale – there’s not a lot of sites of decision-making that affect as many people, that feel as opaque, in this region.*

You said you were surprised that splitting these two projects under different umbrellas became as big a story as it did...

LG: We didn’t think about it that way, but we absolutely should have, because it does impact your communities around here very, very much, what happens to this company, and these resources in particular.

[But] really, this was just a paper restructuring, so that we would be more successful in terms of how we operate the actual assets themselves. Things like financing of resources, and purchasing assets: where do we put them under, from a legal perspective?

MR: *I guess I don’t know how much it takes to pump the water uphill, but if you look at the scale of generation, there’s an assumption that Northfield Mountain is profitable than the Turners Falls Project.*

LG: That depends, really, on the markets. It’s not the slam dunk that people might think. It depends on the year, and on the demand curves, and on a lot of different pieces – it’s obviously much bigger, but they are all interrelated.

[Under] the current licenses, there are two, there is an agreement that they operate together. And frankly, I know that people were concerned about us trying to sell some of the assets or something like that – that’s not our intention at all... Our goal is actually to grow.

MR: *When you say “access to financing” – what are the opportunities that are opened up for the company by having a dedicated storage division?*

LG: Long term – I’m not a finance person by any means, I’m not a banker, I never went into that kind of stuff – my understanding is it gives us an easier way of leveraging those resources to grow them in certain ways than others....

The Turners Falls Dam is actually what maintains the lower impoundment for Northfield Mountain. So whether or not we have two separate entities legally, they operate together; and they always will. If they don’t then we would be cutting off our nose to spite our face, it wouldn’t make sense at all.

Whether Northfield is separated out, or together in one license with Cabot and Turners Falls, is irrelevant relative to what our responsibilities will be under the relicensing. Whatever comes out of it. Whether it’s a settlement, or if it’s decided by the FERC and eventually in court, we’re going to have to live with what those are, and that’s why we’re trying to find a reasonable solution.

MR: *But you’re projecting against a range of future possibilities.*

LG: We don’t know. We can model things, and we do....

The two primary sources of revenue for any energy company are capacity and energy. Both of those markets have been significantly down over the last several years.

The capacity market, in particular, hurts because of a range of issues: there’s been a huge influx of solar that’s behind the meter, that’s not

in the capacity market, but it reduces demand and it suppresses prices. There’s been this big push for large-scale renewables like offshore wind; that’s going to come in and suppress prices even more....

The hard part is, nobody cares if Northfield’s profitable until they realize that if it did go out of business, what would happen around here? I mean, that’s a humongous piece of, for example, the property tax, the grand list in Erving is I think 85%. It’s massive! So the company’s success should matter to people – we’re all interrelated, we’re all part of the same community.

MR: *Does it potentially improve your access to financing for growth on the storage side by protecting it against some of the uncertainty on the other side, putting the projects under two different [entities]?*

LG: Like I said, I’m not a banker. I don’t know how that all works. All I know is that whatever comes out of relicensing we will have to live with, and there’s no reason why we would ever want to sell, or dismantle, get rid of Cabot Station and #1, frankly, at Turners Falls....

I can’t say, 100% for sure, we’re going to be here in 100 years or 50 years, but we’re doing our best to try – we’re doing our best to maintain that level of success, if that makes sense.

MR: *It’s a big shift, from the paradigm where the rivers were just this convenient sewer, and an essentially mechanical understanding of what a river is when all these things were being built, to now – these are semi-permanent industrial machines that are interfacing with what we now understand to be really complex living systems.*

LG: Oh yeah.

I grew up in a town that was on the Naugatuck River – just upstream of Beacon Falls, this tiny little town – they had the Naugatuck Chemical plant. And my father grew up in the same town, and he said when he was a kid they’d know what they were making at the chemical factory depending on the color of the river. It was literally bright red, or yellow.

And the Naugatuck, when I was in grade school in the ‘80s, the Clean Water Act had gone into place so they weren’t dumping anymore, at least that we know of, but it was a dead river. Completely dead. I’ve never in my life stepped into that river, even though I grew up right there.

Now, people are fishing in it – it’s coming back. You still don’t want to eat anything out of it, but going from a dead river...

So, there’s a lot of different parts of it. As a company, we are very much engaged in trying to do as best we can, and trying to be a good corporate neighbor. We do take all of this very seriously. As much as I would love to talk about relicensing – because I see what’s being talked about, and I can’t talk about it – I do have a positive outlook for it, from an environmental perspective. For the future of this river, and elsewhere.



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GMRSD from A1

this spring, and the Gill-Montague school committee also endorsed the concept.

Once formed, the six committees will be able to merge into a regional school district planning board, tasked with studying the feasibility of a new district and making a recommendation to member towns. The decision to dissolve the existing districts and create a new one would rest with each of the six town meetings, and any such process would take several years.

Leyden municipal assistant Michele Giarusso said she thought the Pioneer Valley school committee vote was “a moot point now that all four towns have passed” their approvals.

Giarusso is the chair of the Honest Education and Retaining Trust (HEART) committee, which joined “civic leaders” from Gill and Montague to discuss education last year.

Gill-Montague superintendent Michael Sullivan has proposed reconvening the civic leaders’ group on September 17 to discuss next steps.

Changes

“Football is in jeopardy of not happening at the high school and middle school level this year,” Sullivan warned the Gill-Montague school committee at their August 13 meeting, despite that team already including Pioneer Valley players.

Montague member Jen Lively said she had heard the volleyball program was also a little light, and floated the idea of postponing or re-

ducing fees to encourage students to try out for teams.

Tom Gaffigan, the new assistant principal at the middle and high school, introduced himself. Gaffigan has lived in Turners Falls for 27 years, taught at Pioneer Valley and served as assistant principal in Greenfield, and has worked as a football coach. “I’m real, real excited to be here,” he told the committee.

Gaffigan said the second dean of students, Rebel McKinley, has been hired for the secondary schools.

The committee reviewed a list of 31 staff changes over the last year, which Sullivan summarized as “six retirements, seven new positions, nine resignations, a couple of non-renewals, and five changes of assignment, and then somebody whose internship ended.”

“That’s more movement than usual, but I don’t know that there’s any meaningful pattern to it,” he said, adding in response to a question that the changes were fairly evenly distributed among the district’s schools.

Equity

The district’s equity committee has begun holding regular meetings, and has given initial recommendations, including a district-wide training in its protocol to deal with instances of discrimination and oppression.

The first staff work day of the year, August 26, will be a special training day, Sullivan said, including an equity and diversity training for food service staff, bus drivers, and other employees who don’t have other trainings to attend.

Lively said she had heard concerns that the committee was staff-heavy, and included employees and supervisors, which may discourage open discussion.

Michael Langknecht, who serves on the committee, said it was already discussing that issue.

“If there are community members who are interested in joining in, the door is open,” Haley Anderson said. The equity committee’s next meeting will be in mid-September.

Food

Business manager Joanne Blier said that the district had looked into adding Gill Elementary to its CEP program, which provides free breakfast and lunch to students, but that adding Gill’s demographic figures would cause the district to lose eligibility for the program. “We’ll keep trying each year,” Blier said.

Blier said the district was not breaking even on the program, because not enough middle and high school students were eating the food. “There’s probably some waste, because you’re cooking enough in case those kids are eating,” she explained.

Thomi Hall recommended polling the students about their food preferences.

Lively suggested parents should be made more aware of the program.

Clothing

The school committee reviewed and approved updates to the high school and middle school handbooks, including to the dress code banning sunglasses and hoods.

“We understand that some stu-

MONTAGUE REPORTER



Lifelong Turners Falls resident Charlie Cholera took a trip with his wife to Italy in July. Here he is, reading the Reporter on the island of Capri!

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AUGUST 22, 2019

Above: A monarch, attending this month's Pocumtuck Homelands Festival.

INTERVIEW

Kleinmeister: Ruth Garbus Comes Out of Hiding

By MIKE JACKSON

BRATTLEBORO, VT – “It’s a mystery now / How the smallest ideas work out against me / But since I live here / I can polish my dreams and work for free...”

When she’s not working at the Brattleboro Food Co-op, Ruth Garbus has been quietly laboring as an underground singer-songwriter’s underground singer-songwriter for well over a decade. After stints in the freak-folk mob Feathers and garage-pop trio Happy Birthday, she hunkered down in this quiet corner, building a mostly word-of-mouth fan base on a string of murmuring, reflective bedroom pop recordings and hushed live sets.

This month, Garbus is releasing an album called *Kleinmeister*, on the Chicago indie label Orindal Records. It stands out from her past work: multi-tracked vocal harmonies; instrumentation beyond her trademark minimalist strumming; her voice strengthened by professional training; a newfound clarity and boldness.

I’m not unbiased. I helped book a number of shows Garbus played over the last several years at the Brick House in Turners Falls, and heard all this developing from behind the soundboard. I’m a fan as well as a friend in our small DIY scene. But when the *Reporter* received official publicity materials from the label, I thought it would be fun to set up an interview.

Garbus and I sat at a picnic table outside the Discovery Center and talked about what *Kleinmeister* represents for her, as well as her take on the music industry she’s

choosing to engage with this time around. Curious readers can catch her record release show on September 1 at 10 Forward (the Root Cellar) in Greenfield.

MR: So what’s the overall trajectory, from your perspective? This record looks like a big push.

RG: With the publicity and stuff?

MR: On a lot of levels!

RG: Well, what happened was I had a bunch of songs and I was going to try to record them myself.... I was still trying to use the cassette 8-track, and I was getting really frustrated.

I have a little bit of a tortured relationship with my art in general, with music, where I’m like “I gotta get to the studio, I gotta do this” – it’s like I’m whipping myself into it. It’s so much easier for me to work with other people, but I don’t have a lot of money or anything,

or the interest in recording equipment to really dig in....

So I was complaining to Travis Laplante and Kurt [Weisman], and Travis had a relationship with this guy Dave Snyder. He’s a professional engineer, and we used this crazy studio he built in Guilford – he built his dream studio, and it’s so beautiful and nice there... We worked it out and scheduled the time, and then I had this beautiful recording! And he used *two-inch tape* on me.

It felt like a gift, you know what I mean? It was on this whole other level. And then I was like, “I have this thing, and I need to do it justice!”

see **GARBUS** page B2



Garbus, on her career path: “I continue, over and over again, to make the decision: ‘This is what feels like the right thing.’”

THE AUTHORS’ CORNER: ASHLEY ELSTON

By IZZY VACHULA-CURTIS

TURNERS FALLS – Happy August!

When I went to the Book Expo, I met Ashley Elston, and got an Advanced Readers Copy of her book *10 Blind Dates*. I read it over vacation. Today I’m going to review *10 Blind Dates*, and then interview Ash-



Our peerless correspondent, with an advance copy of the book!

ley Elston. Enjoy!

This novel is funny, romantic, sad, and so amazing. It is one of my favorite books ever!

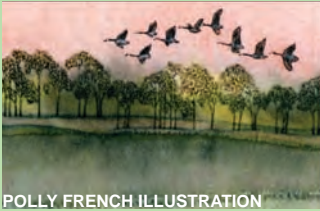
The main character, Sophie, has an older sister Margot who is having a baby over the holiday break, and is staying at a hospital three hours away from where Sophie lives. Sophie’s parents go with Margot and Margot’s husband to the hospital, but Sophie convinces her parents to let her stay at home, mainly because she wants to spend Christmas with her boyfriend Griffin.

Instead of having a perfect Christmas together, Sophie and Griffin break up before the holiday. Sophie goes to her grandparents’ house, where her very nosy family is staying for the holiday. Sophie’s Grandma hates seeing Sophie upset, and comes up with a solution to hopefully make Sophie happier: Ten of Sophie’s family members will set her up on ten blind dates over the holiday break.

This book is so funny, because Sophie’s family is super involved and dramatic. It’s exciting to see who each of her family members set her up with, like her evil cousins who set her up on a date at a very disturbing and inappropriate Christmas movie, or her crazy aunt who sets her up on a date with a middle-schooler, which involves Sophie getting a lead role in a Christmas play.

I loved this book so much because some parts of the book were really funny, and some parts made me cry, and some parts were really sweet and romantic. One of the saddest parts is when Margot is in the hospital, and she and her baby are sick. It was really sorrowful when

see **AUTHORS’** page B5



POLLY FRENCH ILLUSTRATION

WEST ALONG THE RIVER

AIN’T MISBEHAVIN’

By DAVID BRULE

ERVINGSIDE – Along about now at this time of the year, I get into that *laissez-faire* attitude for a while. Just let things go their own way for a week or so. Going to take these last days of August to simply mind my own business and let the rest of the world go by. Let the last lazybones days of summer play out. Got to take it easy before the weather turns serious again, come September, come October.

No use trying to build another shed, no use trying to bring in more cord wood, got enough for the time being anyway. Got to ignore that old New England work ethic urge to keep busy, just slow it all down to a Deep South drawl for a bit. Take advantage of the lazy warm weather while it lasts.

That’s exactly what late August is about, and there isn’t much left of it.

So out in the yard, I’m letting the Joe Pye weed and the jewelweed take over. The bumble bees and the hummingbirds are thankful for that. Let the firewood dry by itself, let the grass grow a little longer, since the garter snakes, the leopard frogs and the crickets like it just fine the way it is. It’s time to lay back in the hammock, look at the sky, watch the redtailed hawk turn in slow circles high up there in the blue, and sort of wonder about what he might be seeing from up there.

I’m content to let the river flow by for now, as it does every day, without me giving it a second thought. The kingfisher can dive and splash all he wants. Ol’ Man Great Blue Heron can stalk the shallows and eat up all the minnows he can find. He’s earned every one of them after the long summer he and his spouse have had raising their young. He’ll soon be slow-motion rowing through the evening air here, crossing the marsh, neck folded, long legs dangling in the dusk.

I don’t mind the racket the redstart brood has been making all day long, young trailing after their weary parents, begging for more and more food.

Most ambitious thing I did all August was to follow my feet down to the shores of the Connecticut River at Unity Park for the Nolumbeka Project festival. It was a chance to greet and welcome Indian brethren from all over the Northeast for two days of music and stories.

Some of you can grow nostalgic about the Woodstock Festival 50th anniversary. We have our own Pocumtuck Homelands Festival here every year, a time of peace, friendship, renewal and music. These Homelands welcome back Abenaki, Narragansett, Wampanoag, Nehantic, Nipmuc, Mohawk, Ojibway, and others. We spent two days and nights singing, drumming, dancing. Burned out an eighteen-foot white pine log *mishoon*, we’ll see if she floats in 2020.

That was about as busy as I wanted to be this August. I’ll be content now to kick back, maybe join the dog stretched out in the sun and think about nothing special.

Evening will come and just maybe I’ll still be lounging about, counting chimney swifts and bats in the growing dark. Hundreds of robins have been pouring in every night to roost in our trees along the clearing. Maybe I’ll just count them too, to see if my tally from last night will be any different tonight.

I know that any day now, I will have another morning after an all-night refreshing rain. The woods will steam, and the still-growing green will drink deep. The dog will stretch out on the damp deck, not minding the cool wet of the porch floor.

The cricket chorus has already begun growing louder and louder as August reaches its final days. That penetrating electric buzz of

see **WEST ALONG** page B5



Pam Kimball of the Nolumbeka Project (left) and Jonathan Perry of the Aquinnah Wampanoag (right) cook food on the mishoon.



“GIBBS” (AND HIS SIBS)

Meet Gibbs, a super-handsome little fellow with a lion’s mane, who is just waiting for the perfect person to come in and take him home.

Gibbs and his siblings came to us when his caregiver had too many cats and knew that they needed more attention. Gibbs can be shy with new people, but with time and

patience he’ll warm up to you. He loves to play, and will even purr to let you know he’s enjoying having you pet him.

Would you open your heart and home to this handsome boy?

Contact the Dakin Pioneer Valley Humane Society at (413) 548-9898 or at info@dpvhs.org.

GARBUS from page B1

MR: *How long did it take to make those recordings?*

RG: A weekend – maybe two and a half days? I think it was around November 2017. So then, for the first time ever, I actually approached labels. I’d never done this before. I’d usually been like “Come to me, and see what happens.”

Chris Cohen was amazingly helpful, and Owen [Ashworth] at Orindal Records was one of the places he connected me to.... We had a conversation on the phone and I was like, “this dude is for real.”

MR: *Were you shopping around a raw tape?*

RG: I had already mixed it with Ryan [Power]... I like layering tracks; I like singing harmonies and things.

MR: *Julia [Tadlock] is singing with you on like three songs? And on the rest it’s your own voice on top?*

RG: Yeah. All the other vocals, besides the ones Julia is on, are me – even the ones we’re on together, she and I did the basic track together and then I went in and did layers of harmony. Then I got a bunch of other raw material in there to work with, and then Ryan and I blended it.

On the first two and the last song, that’s Ryan doing magical things. But with the harmonies and stuff, for the most part I was like “I want this there, at that volume.”

MR: *What effect has having Julia on hand to sing with had on your composition?*

RG: Not to minimize the effect that she’s had on my musical life, be-

cause it’s been very significant – in terms of actually writing songs, the only way that I’ve altered things with her sometimes is changing the key to accommodate our ranges together.

MR: *Why did you decide to train your own voice?*

RG: I just wanted more power. My voice was so quiet, and I felt like... the only thing I was able to do was sound very feminine, and I felt like I was getting forced into this certain genre because I had limited abilities. I wanted more strength and power, and to be able to express myself in a different way that felt more true to what I actually feel.

And I don’t mean to dismiss everything I did before, and I’m probably describing myself in a way that didn’t feel true – but there was something about what I was doing that was a little ill-fitting... And maybe, partly, getting older? I needed to grow my voice to accommodate the way I felt. I didn’t feel like a girl: I felt like a woman. I was like, I’m a fucking woman in my thirties.

MR: *As a lyricist, you seem very interested in the materiality of things. The song “Strash” is one of the most blatant, because it’s about these fantastical formations of waste. (Cup of sun / orange breeze / visceral viscera, wet cardboard steam / pressing on the head like a fruit about to explode...) And you have that newer song, the road trip song, where there’s this line, “fill the tank to the level with that bird bone broth...”*

RG: I’m pretty tactile. In my family there was “art” and “music” – my sister was “music,” and I was “art,” and we both did both but I was the visual-art person. I went to art school.

My album *Rendezvous with Rama* is called that because of that Arthur C. Clarke book that’s all long descriptions of an alien environment.... I guess I like that.

MR: *Why’d you add the word “redemption” to the end of that song?*

RG: That’s an interesting question. I don’t know! That song makes me think about like mountains of plastic, like trash.

That was from this time where I’d had this lightning-strike moment where I was like “a life path for me, that would be amazing, would be to own and operate a cooperatively-owned dump.” And I think maybe there is something that seems like redemption in there.

Part of the reason that felt like such an epiphany, like with electricity going through my body, is that the world is so fucked up, and I feel like there’s part of my brain that’s constantly trying to figure out what I’m supposed to do about that, and how I can be okay in a not-okay world....

There’s something that buoys me out of the devastation of it – maybe it’s aesthetic, I don’t know what it is.

MR: *I’ve always thought of you as a minimalist: in paring everything way down, there can be a lot of resonance or power in very subtle gesture. In about 2016 and ‘17, you started bringing these other elements in: both on guitar, and doing more with your voice. It felt like adding a broader range of colors, brighter colors. Do you think about music in terms of coloration? Or does it feel like a broader tactile range – experimenting with more textures?*

RG: I don’t really think about music in that way! I wish I did; I wish I had synaesthesia. But I’m not like, “before I was black and white, and now I’m color, with more layers.”

I think of it just like “yeah, I’m getting closer to Joni’s middle period!” I’m like “bring on the saxophone.”

I’m not very premeditated... I definitely do things sort of in the moment, a lot of the time. This isn’t true in all ways, but I’ll do things in the moment, instinctually, like “this is coming, yes, I will use this,” as opposed to “I want this right there.”

I like harmonies that make me feel a little bit weird. I’ve always had that kind of ear, since I was a kid. So adding those, and pushing them into a little zone of something a little more unusual, felt really natural. That feels like a home place for me.

I have a lot of respect for the minimalist thing, but I think maybe on this album – and maybe as I get older – I just let myself do what I think is beautiful, as opposed to sticking to a more principled idea of what makes something good.

And when I say I do things without a lot of premeditation: Maybe part of the reason why I’ve been so minimal is that’s been the circumstance for so long.

MR: *That was just your toolbox.*

RG: Yeah.

MR: *Your whole family are musicians?*

RG: Yeah, my immediate family. My mom started playing piano when she was like 3. She ended up a church organist, and then went to college and got her master’s degree in music. She was a classical piano major, and now she’s a piano teacher; she teaches kids and adults. She was also a folkie.

My dad grew up in the Bronx, and would go to Washington Square Park with his dad, and he started playing banjo when he was 12 and then became a really good fiddle player. He’s really good, but he had a corporate job while I was growing up, and was a visual artist, he went to architecture school. When I was a kid he was learning how to play bebop alto saxophone, but that was like a blip.

And my sister is tUnE-yArDs, she’s like a famous indie rock person. *[Laughs.]* She was always in choir, in the madrigals and shit like that. She had more vocal stuff her whole life, and was in theater. She’s 2½ years older, and it’s just the two of us.

MR: *Has watching – nevermind.*

RG: It’s cool. You can ask me anything about that.

MR: *OK. Has being able to see the state of the music industry, through your sister’s voyage, informed decisions that you’ve made?*

RG: Uh, yeah. I think so.

She’s the main example of it, but also there’s Kyle [Thomas, a.k.a. King Tuff] who I was in Feathers with, and who became a professional rock musician.

And before that, I was in Feathers. Which doesn’t seem like it now, maybe, but I was getting a taste of something in that whole experience, going on tour – we were on this weird trajectory, because of the freak-folk tide that we got swept up in. We were like, “Oh yeah, we’ll go lay some tracks on Devendra [Banhart]’s record at Bearsville...”

That was the first thing that gave me a more realistic sense of what fame is, and feeling, to a degree that had an impact on me, what it was like to be around it. Everybody’s the same: there’s no people who are celebrities and famous and a different species or something. There have been a lot of ways in which I’ve been

see GARBUS next page

Senior Center Activities

AUGUST 26 TO SEPTEMBER 6

GILL and MONTAGUE

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

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

M, W, F: 10:10 a.m. Aerobics; 10:50 a.m. Chair Exercise

T, W, Th: 12 p.m. Lunch

Monday 8/26

12 p.m. Knitting Circle

Tuesday 8/27

10:15 a.m. Chair Yoga

11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Senior Farm Share Pick Up

Wednesday 8/28

12:45 p.m. Bingo

Thursday 8/29

9 a.m. Tai Chi

10:15 a.m. Chair Yoga

1 p.m. Cards & Games

4 p.m. Mat Yoga

Friday 8/30

Senior Center open

Monday 9/2

CLOSED – LABOR DAY

Tuesday 9/3

10:15 a.m. Chair Yoga

11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Senior Farm Share Pick Up

1 p.m. Knitting

Wednesday 9/4

9 to 11 a.m. Veterans Outreach

12:30 p.m. Bingo

Thursday 9/5

9 a.m. NO Tai Chi

10:15 a.m. NO Chair Yoga

10:30 a.m. Brown Bag

1 p.m. Cards & Games

4 p.m. Mat Yoga

Friday 9/6

12 p.m. Pizza Party

ERVING

Erving Senior Center, 1 Care Drive, Erving, is open Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. for activities and congregate meals. Lunch is at 12 p.m., with reservations required two days in advance. Call (413) 423-3649 for meal information and reservations.

For information, call Paula Betters, Senior Center Director, at (413) 423-3649. Transportation can be provided for meals, shopping, or medical necessity. Call to confirm activities, schedule a ride, or find out about the next blood pressure clinic.

Monday 8/26

8:45 a.m. Step & Sculpt

10 a.m. Healthy Bones & Balance

11:30 a.m. Breakfast Brunch

12:30 p.m. Pitch card games

Tuesday 8/27

8:45 a.m. S.W.A.P. Exercise

10 a.m. Stretch & Balance

12 p.m. Soup & Sandwich

Wednesday 8/28

8:45 a.m. Line Dancing

10 a.m. Chair Yoga

12 p.m. Homemade Lunch

12:30 p.m. Bingo

Thursday 8/29

8:45 a.m. Aerobics

9 to 11 a.m. SHINE

10 a.m. Healthy Bones & Muscles

12 p.m. Congregate Lunch

Friday 8/30

9 a.m. Quilting Workshop

9:15 a.m. Flex & Stretch

9:30 a.m. Bowling Fun

10:30 a.m. M3 Exercise Games

12 p.m. Lunch

Monday 9/2

CLOSED – LABOR DAY

Tuesday 9/3

8:45 a.m. S.W.A.P. Exercise

10 a.m. Stretch & Balance

12 p.m. Soup & Sandwich

Wednesday 9/4

8:45 a.m. Line Dancing

10 a.m. Chair Yoga

12 p.m. Homemade Lunch

12:30 p.m. Bingo

Thursday 9/5

8:45 a.m. Aerobics

9 to 11 a.m. SHINE

10 a.m. Healthy Bones & Muscles

12 p.m. Congregate Lunch

Friday 9/6

9 a.m. Quilting Workshop

9:15 a.m. Flex & Stretch

9:30 a.m. Bowling Fun

10:30 a.m. M3 Exercise Games

12 p.m. Lunch

LEVERETT

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

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

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

WENDELL

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

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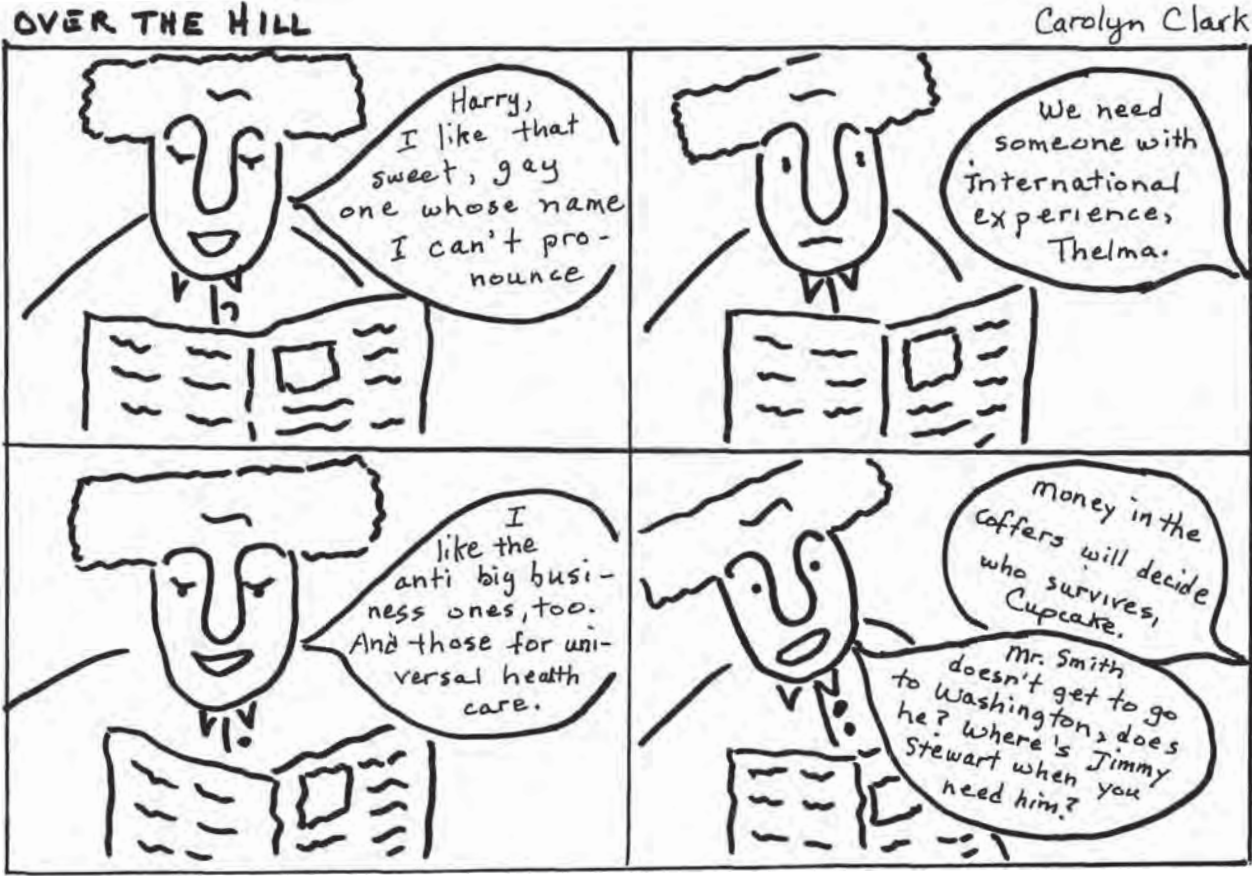
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Sunderland: (413) 665-5030
Gill: (413) 863-5730



MPD from page B3
vehicle on K Street. Female party has taken the dog; unknown where they are now. Caller/vehicle operator still on scene awaiting an officer. Unknown whether dog is injured or extent of potential injuries. MPD and ACO responding. Officer advises ACO can disregard; unable to locate female or dog. 3:44 p.m. Male passenger arrested following a stop on First Street [details redacted].
Wednesday, 8/14
4:01 p.m. Caller states that a passing truck spilled a large quantity of rocks into the road and kept driving. DPW notified and responding. 5:04 p.m. Caller from Federal Street states that there are loud vehicle noises and people yelling from a neighboring property. All quiet upon arrival; however, involved male was hostile to-

wards officers and did a burnout with his vehicle as they left.
Thursday, 8/15
5:08 p.m. Following a motor vehicle stop at Seventh and K streets, a 24-year-old Greenfield man was arrested and charged with possession of a Class A drug. 5:21 p.m. Caller reporting that a female drove to his house with her son while he was helping his son move some things out for college. Female got out of the car and live-streamed video on social media saying that her son is going to kick his son's butt. Summons issued to female for two counts of reckless endangerment to children; disorderly conduct; and disturbing the peace. 5:32 p.m. Greenfield PD advising lights at the General Pierce Bridge are blinking; they will be contacting highway department directly. Received sev-

eral phone calls reporting same. State police and MassDOT en route. Officer advising they are able to get to the light panel and get a solid red light; they are going to see if they can get the light to cycle through. For now, everything is shut down. Officer now advising bridge is opened and MassDOT is on scene to make sure the light continues to work properly.
Friday, 8/16
4:22 p.m. Caller from Center Street complaining about the loud music coming from the Barbes in the Woods Festival; states that it is shaking their windows. 6:59 p.m. Caller from Country Creemee reporting that a customer came in, threw a pen at them, then said that their boyfriend was going to do harm to them. Unable to locate. Caller advised to call back if female returns.



MONTV / MUSIK / MOUNTAIN

Number Nine: Wednesday Knudsen

By J. BURKETT

TURNERS FALLS – Wednesday Knudsen is a contemporary musician from Austerlitz, NY. She plays in western Mass regularly in bands like the Pigeons, and solo as well. She is also part of the Lovelights collective. The Lovelights pilot episode is now available to watch on Vimeo!

MMM: Is anything as magical as music?

WK: Much is magical in music! The best music is magical. Other kinds fall short, but that is maybe just a matter of taste. Other kinds are just fun, and that is a slightly different kind of magic! Some magical musics take you away, and other magical musics bring you impossibly close to the present moment. Both movements, outward and inward, approach the transcendent.

And the transcendent, a good friend once told me, is the essence of Poetry – all the things we cannot say

or voice in our everyday modes but somehow find another, novel way to expression, which is Truth. When it comes out right, it is rapture.

Whatever its direction, the magic of music is immediate and accessible. Love is as magical, and maybe adventure. But all of my own love and adventure have been in and around music.

MMM: What is your newest musical project?

WK: I don't have a new project *per se*, but I have been playing a lot of flute and saxophone. To the previous question: there are magical keys and tones and intervals on each instrument.

I am in a mode of study and meditation. Technically, there is so much to learn and improve on. Then there is the question of magic, which requires a certain kind of listening and a certain kind of musical pace. Even without a well-defined goal, it is an intense pleasure to pursue even these modest explorations.

I always wonder how other people work on their projects. My own way is just a stumbling along.

MMM: What do you like most about west Mass?

WK: What I like – love! – about western Mass is: everything! It is a very, very special place.

MMM: How did you meet PG Six?

WK: We live in upstate New York, near Hudson. Going to shows there, we eventually met a nice fellow named Pat, who also seemed to like music. It was a long while after our initial acquaintance that we learned he was Thee PG Six, Patrick Gubler. We were floored!

Then – thanks to you, Josh! – we asked him to help us with a cover of King Crimson's "In the Wake of Poseidon." Listening to Pat play music is astounding. There is always magic there.

MMM: How did you come up with the band "Pigeons"?

WK: Pigeons was originally a very free, fairly abrasive, absolutely scraggly duo. In Seattle, my husband Clark and I were in a band called the Sea Donkeys which was also free, abrasive and scraggly. When we moved to New York and started playing music, we thought of ourselves as an offshoot of that. Pigeons is kin to Sea Donkeys.

MMM: Any more solo releases coming out?

WK: There are no solo releases scheduled currently.

-Now Wednesday interviews Josh-

WK: I also want to ask you: Is there anything as magical as music?

MMM: No... but life is full of magic and mystery.

WK: Did you find music, or did music find you?

MONTAGUE COMMUNITY TELEVISION NEWS

This Week On MCTV

By MIKE SMITH

This week at MCTV we visited a new local business, Buckingham Rabbits Vintage, to hear their story and see what their store has to offer. Store owner Alexandra McGuigan talks about the support she receives from the local art community, and the role they played in helping her get the doors open. The video is now available on montaguenvetv.org.

We were also on scene at the latest Great Falls Discovery Center Coffeehouse, where Annie Patterson and Charlie King performed songs off their new CD *Step by Step*, as well as new original songs. It was both a fun and moving performance. See for yourself on our website.

Montague Center was host to a music festival this past weekend, Barbes in the Woods. Barbes, a little bar in Brooklyn, has incubated and produced some of New York's most creative music projects over the past two decades. The tiny venue only seats 60, and hosts more than 700 performances a year.

MMM: It found me. I'm glad it did... I was pretty lost and alone.

WK: Do your favorite albums stay the same, or do they change? What are some of your favorite things to listen to now?

MMM: Some are the same. But lately I am into old Hawaiian stuff... Folkways stuff... Dorothy Ashby and more jazz... I like to check out homemade albums, too.

WK: How does a song happen for you? Is it something that comes from you, or something that comes to you?

On Saturday 11 bands, headlined by Antibalas, arrived in picturesque Montague Center to perform their fun, high-energy music. Keep an eye on montaguenvetv.org for the videos!

There's still time to register for MCTV's 120 Second Film Festival! This is a contest designed for people who don't have a lot of experience with filmmaking but are interested in getting started. The videos can be simple – as simple as shooting them right from your phone!

But if you still feel like you need help getting started, or get stuck along the way, you can always stop in to our station at 34 Second Street in Turners Falls and we'd be happy to answer any of your questions.

Something going on you think others would like to see? If you get in touch, we can show you how easy it is to use a camera and capture the moment. Contact us at (413) 863-9200, infomontaguenvetv@gmail.com, or stop by 34 Second Street between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., Mondays through Fridays. We'd love to work with you!

MMM: Both. Usually things come together. In strange ways. Sometimes not, though.

WK: What is the "Gold Cosmos?"

MMM: A place close and far away...old and new... made just for you.

WK: How does music fit in your life? Is it everything, or just a part?

MMM: Just a part... What is life without it, though!



ZEBU1212 PHOTO

Wednesday Knudsen plays with the Weeping Bong Band at the 1794 Meetinghouse in New Salem in 2017.

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AUTHORS’ from page B1

Elston was describing the machines and tubes that were hooked up to Margot’s baby to keep her breathing. The book is mostly really light and funny, but it’s also really sad when they are talking about Margot and her baby being sick and in the hospital for the holiday.

One of my favorite parts of the book is Sophie’s last blind date, which her Grandma sets her up on. (I won’t say anything about it because it’s a surprise!)

I’d recommend this book to young adults who enjoy romance novels. *10 Blind Dates* comes out October 3, and I think it would be

a great book to read over your holiday break!

Now I’m going to interview Ashley Elston:

Izzy V-C: *Have you ever been on a blind date? If so, do you have any funny blind date stories?*

Ashley Elston: Yes! I actually met my husband on a blind date on Valentine’s Day in 1992! We were set up by mutual friends. I told my friend the next day that he was the guy I was going to marry.

IVC: *In the story Sophie’s family is very involved with her relationships. Is your family like that too?*

AE: I have a big family just like Sophie. My mom is one of seven kids and I grew up surrounded by cousins. We see each other often, and are very close, but thankfully I never had so many opinions on who I was dating!

IVC: *What inspired you to write this story?*

AE: Blind dates have always held a special place in my heart, as well as stories with big families, so I thought – I should totally combine the two!

All of my other books are mystery and thrillers, so *10 Blind Dates* was a little side project I started

writing for fun, just for me. I really wasn’t sure anyone else would ever read it.

IVC: *If you could go on one of the blind dates Sophie went on, which one would you pick, and why?*

AE: Hmmm... there are many that I wouldn’t want to go on! The bowling date would be fun, as well as the ugly sweater party!

IVC: *If 10 Blind Dates was made into a movie, who would you want to play the main characters?*

AE: This is so hard! And I get asked this a lot but I never have a good answer.

IVC: *What is your favorite part of this book, and why?*

AE: The dates were so fun to write, but I really love the relationship between Sophie and her sister, Margot.

IVC: *What is your favorite book that’s a love story, and why?*

AE: There are so many! I really love *To All The Boys I’ve Loved Before* by Jenny Han, and pretty much anything Kasie West writes.

Thank you so much to Ashley Elston for answering the questions above. I hope you all have a great rest of your summer!



WEST ALONG from page B1

the agitated cicada seems to indicate that he or she is complaining about the summer heat of the afternoon. Maybe it’s not a complaint after all, more like a mating call? More power to him and her if they feel like procreating in these temperatures!

I like to think of the cool mist from nowhere that drifts over this page of the notebook, smudges the ink from my pen just a little bit. That jenny wren and her brood of noisy kids keep scolding me from overhead, and harassing the hummingbird and the yellowthroat. Busy bodies they are, nosy and intrusive, disturbing all of us trying to enjoy the peace and quiet of a golden late August morning.

This year’s titmouse clan, looping in from the woods, are using the back of yonder Adirondack chair to think about what part of the garden they’ll explore.

All that seems too busy for me.

I’ll just sit here, and wait to see what happens next.

This is the time of year when you let the summer’s last month run its heedless ways. There’ll be time to get serious all over again with September on the horizon, soon enough, soon enough.

*I don’t stay out late,
Don’t care to go,
Stayin’ home just me
and my radio,
Ain’t misbehavin’
Saving my love for you...*

– Leon Redbone
and Fats Waller



By MISHEL IXCHEL

TURNERS FALLS – I just landed back from my yearly pilgrimage. Every summer, I pack my car up to the brim, and head to the Mountain for a week-long all-woman festival. I somehow showed up at the first fest six years ago. It was extraordinary on all levels. At the tippy-end, I knew that I wanted to come back again and again and again. I fervently hoped that we would keep returning till we were all well into our nineties.

The woman who had started it came up to me as we were all parting ways, and to my bewilderment asked if I would be interested in teaching at the next one.

My response? “As long as you keep having these, I’ll be there.”

Little did I know, or understand, the scope of my promise and commitment.

Because by the time the next fest rolled around, I was a little over eight months pregnant. In my

bones, I just knew that nothing would keep me from attending and facilitating. If the baby would come during that time, so be it. I was certain that amongst all those women, there had to be at least one midwife.

It was during that particular gathering, as I waddled around the mountain with a full-moon belly, that I made another promise and commitment. I would make sure that the child I was carrying, the one who would soon be born, would grow up being exposed to events such as this one: intentional gatherings where people come, even if only temporarily, to devote their time to community, self-growth, and love.

Places where we, as individuals, can come to fill our cups.

I’ve kept my promise, and have returned to the Mountain year after year. Between his dad and me, we have taken our child to sound healings, music and yoga festivals, contact dances, retreats, workshops – the works. And over the years, I’ve tuned in to what I feel is the most important thing about parenting: self-care.

Thing is, I am not proud to share what I’m about to write. But

Raising the Change I Wish to See in the World

here goes:

I’ve known, felt, breathed, experienced in all levels what it feels like to parent when my cup is nearly empty. When I’ve been beyond exhausted, having nearly zero time for myself, drained and cranky, and sometimes even completely numb.

Times when I’ve completely lost it and yelled at my kid, cried, and straight up had a complete meltdown. I’m not ashamed about these emotions. What I’m ashamed about is the fact that I processed them in front of my child. During those times, it’s felt as though he had to bear the weight of holding space for me.

That kind of responsibility is not one any child should have to bear. Because that’s where our support system comes in: other adults who can take care of the child while we go to wail, scream, and process, either alone or in the presence of another adult who knows how to hold space for it.

The answer, of course, has been to receive more support. The more my village helps me raise my child, the more I am able to tend to myself. And part of that tending is having the alone time (or sometimes, having that space held for me by another) to rage, vent, complain,

and let it all hang out.

I’m glad to say that especially in the last year, I have been blessed to connect with and grow my chosen family. My support system has strengthened, and I am able to regularly take care of myself. And even annually, take off for a whole week to spend on a mountain. This is not to say that I don’t lose it from time to time in front of my kid. It just means that it’s not as frequently.

And now that he’s older, when it does happen, I use it as an opportunity to ask for his forgiveness. To tell him that everyone gets cranky sometimes. And that it’s okay. And that I am so sorry.

So, what kind of human am I raising?

My prayer and intention is that he will grow up feeling free to feel his emotions. And that he finds healthy ways of processing them. And most importantly, to own up when he f’s up.

‘Cause, let’s face it, we all do.

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

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

- William Carlos Williams

edited by Christopher Sawyer-Lauçanno
Readers are invited to send poems to the
Montague Reporter at: 177 Avenue A
Turners Falls, MA 01376
or to: poetry@montaguereporter.org

August Poetry Page

Gouache for Jack

It's a wash.
O!
Um lutador para meu amor
Adore the sea, the shell, the shore
The stroke, the sand, the blushing waves
Pale strands, a rose of blues
Sea turtle grays
Her eyes, apple blossom sprays
Hoarse latitudes, be still,
Arrest
Gouache, a Praia da Falesia
Expanding Munch in Helsinki
Slips between the rushing sands
Cuneiform, Taconic hands
One hot stroke: the littoral
Liminal, F-stop mind
Chinoise pentadactyl probe
A sharp Moskito coast,
Be flat, in silhouette
Sim, a lavagem está em:
Descendre dans la oubliette
Ah! gouache apothegm
Dis-articulate
Scribbled on a psalmistry
Im...medi...ate
A forward looking backward glance
In 62nd place
The poet sets the sky askance
Alas, disrobes
Appears to disappear
Clean tissue,
Facia down,
Water colors run around the town
No... Copacabana,
Não!
Jair Bolsonaro elimina a Amazônia
No rinse, peat bogs cycle cedar brakes,
Hot, febrile, perfervid takes,
Art debriefed
Hold still, full stop
My brush is red
Be quiet, love,
Be quiet, now
Bird flies,
At hint of day.
Change the name he said
Lost Falls, and falls away,
Pale fire in a hint of clay
River broken dirty shore
Tall tree beside a chimney flue
Artista em residência com Elmer's glue
Take form, dissolve
Our Neighborhood
Come true, de uma vez só
We thank you, Jack
You are a dream
We always pray:
Gouache, gouache, blue

- David Detmold

Local Community Gardeners

Pioneer Valley women know the tilt.
Bosom to the earth, our hearts
raking close to ground, to open a garden.

It is the heritage of first harvest, Hadley Grass.
Asparagus in such abundance that point out
a seasonal something that begs fingertips to dirt.

After grey spring rain, surprise.
The sun and a wind chime breeze sweep colors
onto our plate in Western Massachusetts.

We are ready for the season, summer.
Red-fire cheeked seedlings share the dream
to ripen and fall into salads and sauce.

What more could we need?

Topsoil determination. The patience of nature.
Strong shoulders. Tomatoes waiting.

- Celia Lang

Me, paraphrasing Hinton, who wrote Johnny quoting Frost

The dawn is brilliant from the mountain
You and me and you and me
Echoing over and over
It will not be morning forever,
you remind me.
There is no goodness left, I complain.
Not in the books I read
Nor the company I keep
(Aside from you, of course)
The two of us are like this morning, I think.
Maybe that's too flowery for you
(I do not say what goes without saying)
This morning is good, you respond
The golden sunrise will not stay
Soon it will be day
Soon you will burn
Soon I will melt/Soon I will freeze

- Vivienne Potee

Blissful Bubble

Life is luscious
in my blissful bubble.
How like an embryo;
warm, opaque orb
where I hide
from everything
I don't want to see,
don't want to hear.
Your words are pins.
They will burst my bubble.
They might kill me.
How fragile this bliss;
blister over my fear,
birthing into rage –
blind bliss blossoming,
psychical miscarriage.
Nine months
is no longer than
a lifetime.

- Kevin Smith

Because

because
I am all that I need already
this body will heal itself
this heart will spring from
into the moments that it knew well
into
the places unseen time untouched
where my people and i do not need
to be anything other then alive
to be seen
i will
wake up to the joy of the sun rise
rest knowing the moon light washes us.
dance to the beat of black holes
& search for the heavens
beneath the rust of planets

- Chris Bolling

Contributors' Notes:

Chris Bolling recently moved to Turners Falls. He has been writing poetry for seven years.

Celia Lang has resided and worked in the Valley since 1984. She's lived in Montague, and returns weekly to nurture the garden and community of friendship she built while liv-

ing on Federal Street/Route 63.

David Detmold, founding editor of the *Montague Reporter*, is a community activist and writer. He lives in Turners Falls.

Vivienne Potee lives in Northfield, and is a ju-

nior at Pioneer Valley Regional School. She was a finalist in the 2019 Poet's Seat Poetry Awards.

Kevin Smith, tuba player and frequent Poetry Page contributor, lives in Turners Falls with his wonderful and inspirational girlfriend, Stephanie.

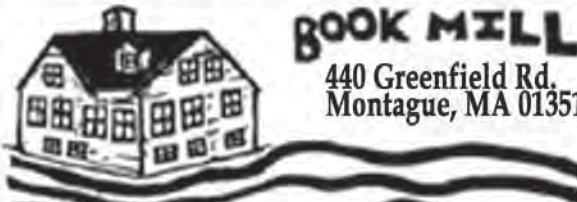
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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

EVENTS

THURSDAY, AUGUST 22

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Jazz Mezmerizers*. 6:30 p.m.

Leverett Library, Leverett: *Music on the Patio. Machine Shop* band. Bring a lawn chair. In the event of rain, concert moves inside. 7 p.m.

FRIDAY, AUGUST 23

Three Sisters Sanctuary, Goshen: *Zydeco Connection*. Outdoor amphitheater concert. Dancing in the grass. \$. 7 p.m.

Ten Forward, Greenfield: *Human Adult Band, Big Blood, Colby Nathan, Jim Schmidt*. \$. 8 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Heath Lewis*. 9:30 p.m.

North Village Smokehouse, Millers Falls: *TNT Karaoke*. 9:30 p.m.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 24

Porter-Phelps-Huntington Museum, Hadley: *A Perfect Spot of Tea*. \$. Live music from *Danse Cafe*; seatings at 2:30 and 3:30 p.m.

Ten Forward, Greenfield: *Daytime Trad Music Session*. 4 p.m.

Antenna Cloud Farm, Gill: *Cristina Pato, Mazzmuse*. World-renowned Galician bagpiper and master of the gaita Pato with violinist, singer, composer Mazz Swift. Outdoor concert, picnickers allowed; no dogs or glass. \$. 5 p.m.

St. James Church, Greenfield: *Freedom & Struggle Song Swap*. Singalong and potluck. Donation. \$. 5 p.m.

CALL FOR VENDORS

Hawks & Reed is seeking vendors of all kinds for the September 7 Saturday Market, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Rent an indoor booth for a \$10 to \$20 sliding scale fee. Info: marketing@hawksandreed.com.

CALL FOR DESIGNERS

ReVamp is an upcycled fashion show as part of FAB Fashion Passion 2019, September 21 and 22 in Turners Falls. This call is for wearable pieces made from recycled clothing or other materials, with creative interpretation and whimsy encouraged. Workshops will be held before the event; contact Rachel Teumin at rteumin@gmail.com for more information.

EXHIBITS

Barnes Gallery, Leverett Crafts & Arts Center: *The Vines of Enchantment: Alison Aune, Misa Chapell, Kirsten Aune*. Through August 30.

Brattleboro Museum & Art Center, Brattleboro: New exhibits for the summer include beach scenes, activist photography by *Dona McAdams*, immersive installations, steel sculpture, and more.

DVAA Center for the Arts, Northfield: *Cross Pollination Part II*. Art by members of the Leverett Crafts & Arts Center,

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Spirit Family Reunion*. \$. 7 p.m.

St. James Church, Greenfield: *Dance Spree*. Freestyle boogie: no shoes, no alcohol, no rules. \$. 7:30 p.m.

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Spanglish Fly, Rebirth, Peace*



David Flood's work leads him into forests to encounter how the forces of nature act on the figure of wood: "Lightning strikes a tree, wind or rain batter it, frost heaves its roots. Ice breaks limbs from trunks, legions of ants leave their calligraphic prints on the soft wood beneath the bark, man and machine wade through... all are alike, leaving behind dead wood." View Flood's work at the Great Falls Discovery Center in Turners Falls, along with oil painting by Maggie Hodges, through August 31. Open seven days a week, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

& *Rhythm*. Latin, soul, hip-hop, reggae. \$. 8 p.m.

Ten Forward, Greenfield: *Em Papineau and Sofia Engelman Dance, Jake Meginsky*. \$. 8 p.m.

Deja Brew, Wendell: *Owsley's Owls*. Grateful Dead music. 9 p.m.

North Village Smokehouse, Millers Falls: *Jimmy Just Quit*. \$. 9 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *The New Feudals, The Destructive Charm*. 9:30 p.m.

SUNDAY, AUGUST 25

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Jazz Brunch with John Lentz Trio*. 11 a.m.

Looky Here, Greenfield: *Gracious Calamity, The Cups, Mia Friedman*. 3 p.m.

through September 8. Paintings by *Leni Guadet* in back gallery through August.

Flourish With Grit, Turners Falls: *Amanda Judd: One Way Home*. Artwork by Turners Falls artist. Through August.

Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls: *Cantos From the Woods* by David Flood with paintings by *Maggie Hodges*. Flood produces natural art from wood that has been acted upon by forces of nature. Hodges creates oil paintings inspired by the Hampshire Valley where she lives. Through August 28.

Greenfield Gallery: *Linda Leigh-*

Ten Forward, Greenfield: *The Submissives, Old Pam, Aunt Vicki*. \$. 8 p.m.

MONDAY, AUGUST 26

Ten Forward, Greenfield: *Karaoke with Craig*. 8 p.m.

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Open Mic*. 9 p.m.

moves inside. 7 p.m.

Ten Forward, Greenfield: *Beverly Tender, Landowner, Editrix, Gay Mayor*. \$. 8 p.m.

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Hieroglyphics*, featuring *Del the Funky Homosapien*, with *Mr. Burnz, Wiki Good*, and *Don Gadi*. \$. 8 p.m.

FRIDAY, AUGUST 30

Millers Falls Rod & Gun Club, Turners Falls: *RPM Fest*. Over 50 heavy metal bands in week-end of music and games and tent camping on site. Through Sunday. Tickets: rpmfest.org. 10:30 a.m.

Abandon Dream, Turners Falls: *Kath Bloom, Alexander, Sunburned Hand of the Man*. \$. 7 p.m.

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *The '60s Experience*. \$. 7:30 p.m.

Ten Forward, Greenfield: *For Now, Via Intercom, Eli Salus-Keiner*. Folk-pop night. \$. 8 p.m.

North Village Smokehouse, Millers Falls: *TNT Karaoke*. 9:30 p.m.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 31

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Rosemary Caine, Chris Devine, Michael Nix*. \$. 7 p.m.

St. James Church, Greenfield: *Dance Spree*. Freestyle boogie. \$. 7:30 p.m.

Ten Forward, Greenfield: *BS Pain Control, Liz Tonne and Vic Rawlings, Carbus, The Molicé, DJ Gus*. \$. 8 p.m.

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 1

Ten Forward, Greenfield: *Ruth Garbus* record release show with *Potted Plant, Elliot Cardinaux*. (See interview, page B1.) 8 p.m. \$

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

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 2

Rendezvous, Turners Falls: *Bingo*. 8 p.m.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 3

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Music in the Morning*. Song, movement, laughter for young children and their caregivers. Marcy Gregoire and Hilary Lake with puppets, costumes, instruments. \$. 10:30 a.m.

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Irish Music in the Wheelhouse*. Free Irish music session. 7 p.m.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 4

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Sal-sa Wednesday*. With *McCoy* and *DJ Roger Jr*. \$. 8 p.m.

TUESDAY, AUGUST 27

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Music in the Morning*. Song, movement, laughter for young children and their caregivers. Marcy Gregoire and Hilary Lake with puppets, costumes, instruments. \$. 10:30 a.m.

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 28

Ten Forward, Greenfield: *Fundraiser Dance Party*. To benefit NELCWIT and Tapestry Health. \$. 8 p.m.

Hawks & Reed, Greenfield: *Sal-sa Wednesday*. With *McCoy* and *DJ Roger Jr*. \$. 8 p.m.

THURSDAY, AUGUST 29

Leverett Library, Leverett: *Music on the Patio. Juggler Meadow String Band*. Bring a lawn chair. In the event of rain, concert

scapes. Through August.

Nina's Nook, Turners Falls: *Cute Little Human Monsters*. Paintings by Wendell artist *Dona Horn*. The works in this show represent emotional landscapes and emotional creatures. Horn is the originator of the Wendell Misfit Prom and is well known for her elaborate costumes and floats. Through August.

Salmon Falls Gallery, Shelburne Falls: *Chris Hill: Nocturnal Landscapes*. Surreal botanical paintings depicting farmland and fallow fields "as they should be," combining painting, permaculture, organic gardening and a



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CALL FOR ART

Bernardston Unitarian Meetinghouse is looking for visual art that considers how music weaves in and out of our history, culture, and lives. Commission on sales of art will support music programs at the Meetinghouse. Drop-off is September 4. Call Annette for details: (413) 330-0807.



The Rendezvous

bar with food

THURS 8/22 6:30 pm
Jazz Mezmerizers

FRI 8/23 9:30 pm
Heath Lewis

SAT 8/24 9:30 pm
The New Feudals, The Destructive Charm

SUN 8/25 11 am
Jazz Brunch w/John Lentz Trio

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plea to repair the earth one garden at a time. *Sarah Holbrook: Driving Home*, photographs of the winding back roads of southern Vermont and western Massachusetts. Through September 1.

Shelburne Arts Coop, Shelburne Falls: *The Blue Show*. Celebration of this hue in paintings, photographs, collage, clay, glass and fiber art. Through August.

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GREAT FALLS APPLE COLUMN

By MAGGIE HAALAND

TURNERS FALLS – We are getting into the late summer season and goldenrod is just starting to bloom here in the northeast, its prolific yellow flowers covering meadows and roadsides, and perhaps the edges of your yard or garden. This is a bittersweet plant to see show up, as it's beautiful to take in, but also marks the winding down of summer and the shift into the slower, cooler, more introspective season of fall.

Goldenrod is also known as a medicinal plant, with an affinity for the kidneys and urinary system. It's anti-inflammatory and astringent, and its bitter flavor is supposed to support digestive function. My teacher Jade Allicandro Mace recommends combining it with yarrow and marshmallow to treat chronic UTIs. Paired with St. John's wort, an oil infused with goldenrod can be great for massaging into achy, stagnant muscles. Energetically, goldenrod is considered warm and dry, so it is believed to be really helpful for any condition that involves excess mucus or a feeling of being cold.

It's also a wonderful dye plant, lending a bright golden yellow to fabrics, a summer color that is sweet to harvest during the months of August and September. I like to make

a dye bath with goldenrod, marigold, and calendula (all blooming now!) to form a beautiful rich color that takes well to any natural fiber. Because it is so abundant around these parts, it's a great plant to play around with if you're just getting into natural dyeing.

Goldenrod often gets a bad rap as being one of the culprits for late summer allergies. However, in many cases what people are actually allergic to is ragweed, which comes out around the same time. Ragweed is wind-pollinated, meaning that its pollen is often swept about and hanging around in the air on its way to another plant.

Goldenrod, on the other hand, is insect-pollinated, so the bees, butterflies, and other creatures carry the pollen around on their bodies, making it a lot less likely for humans to breathe it in. In fact, goldenrod honey is used by some in treating mild seasonal allergies.

An important friend to the bees, I like to think about goldenrod as having *host* or *hostess* energy. One time I was watching a plant in mid-August and the huge quantity of buzzing bees reminded me of a fun pool party! The flower essence is believed to be great for people dealing with social anxiety, and for when someone needs to feel a stronger sense of self and personal power, especially when interacting with others. It is

supposed to work well for people who often get swept up in other people's feelings or expectations.

One of my favorite ways to prepare this plant is to make an infused honey. To do this, just chop up some flowers and leaves and place in a mason jar (I like to use a pint or half pint for this) and then cover with honey. Raw honey is preferred, as it contains active enzymes, but any honey will work fine in a pinch. Let this sit for at least four weeks, and then strain if desired. Goldenrod is edible, so if you want to leave them in, feel free. This is considered helpful in the winter to ward off colds and flu, and also mild seasonal depression.

Add to a cup of tea, or enjoy by the spoonful. The summer energy of goldenrod is sure to brighten up your day.

As always, make sure you have properly identified the plant before harvesting or making medicine. If you're new to herbalism, it's always a good idea to refer to a guidebook or take a class with a local teacher as you get to know the plants. In no time, you'll be noticing goldenrod everywhere, swaying its golden flower heads among the purple asters on a late summer day.

Upcoming Event

Sunday, September 22 at 1 p.m.: *Free Pickling in the Park.* GFAC will



Goldenrod, a wild plant with many useful properties.

be hosting its third and final pickling party of the year under the shade tent at Unity Park. Come learn how to use lacto-fermentation to make delicious pickled vegetables with just salt, and a little bit of elbow grease. Each participant will take home at least one jar of pickles.

Produce is donated by local farms, and thanks in part to a grant by the Montague Cultural Council,

GFAC was able to purchase processing supplies like cutting boards and knives for about two dozen participants.

Picklers of all ages and experience are welcome, and the event is free and accessible. You can direct any questions to the Great Falls Apple Corps on Facebook, Instagram, or via email at greatfallsapple-corps@gmail.com.

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