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THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES

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INVESTIGATION

Getting to Know Our New Secondary School Principal



PETERSON PHOTO

Joanne Menard started this summer as principal at the middle and high school.

By ANTHONY PETERSON

Montague Reporter: Where did you grow up?

GILL-MONTAGUE – Ms. Joanne Menard, pronounced *Jo-nee*, is the new principal of Turners Falls High School and Great Falls Middle School. She started working this July after Ms. Annie Leonard departed.

Joanne Menard: I grew up in northwest Ohio – Findlay, Ohio – which at that time was about 40,000 people. I graduated from a large public high school as my graduating class was 574 students strong!

Ms. Menard has been bringing positive change to the school. One example is during the weekly morning meetings, when she asks for ideas from the student body about improving the school. Another example is the “Principal’s Chat” she holds twice a month: once at the school, and once in the community. The next one will be held at TFHS/GFMS on Thursday, December 19 from 10:30 to 11:30 a.m.

MR: Why did you want to go into teaching?

JM: As an undergraduate at the Ohio State University, I majored in Marketing, so I worked for years as a Sales Manager for both Waste Management and Browning-Ferris Industries in Columbus, Ohio until I was married.

This being Ms. Menard’s first year, I thought I should ask some fun questions so that the community can get to know her.

Right after I was married, my husband and I moved to South Korea for his job. After three years, we returned to the States and started our family. I was very lucky as I was able to stay home with them
see **PRINCIPAL** page A5

GILL-MONTAGUE SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Superintendent Search Forums Scheduled for Next Tuesday

By MIKE JACKSON

GILL-MONTAGUE – On Tuesday night the district school committee discussed the timeline for screening and hiring a new superintendent this winter. It agreed to hire a consultant from the Massachusetts Association of School Committees (MASC) to manage the process – for a fee of \$9,500, plus up to \$2,500 in expenses – and set

next Tuesday, December 17 as the date for a first round of forums to hear input about the process.

Forums will be held for the public, administrators, staff, and students. “I know that it will be wise to get this feedback as soon as we can,” said Montague member Jennifer Lively, “but if it’s coming up that soon, we need to be really focused on making sure word gets out strongly.”

see **GMRSD** page A3

SCRIMMAGING



Turners Falls’ Brooke Thayer drives into the lane as Blue hosts the Green Wave for an early-season scrimmage at TFHS. Our coverage of the winter season of local high school sports will begin next week!

Athol Daily News Shuts Down Athol Office

By SARAH ROBERTSON

ATHOL – Two years after acquiring the *Athol Daily News*, the regional newspaper chain Newspapers of New England announced on Tuesday that it is closing the paper’s downtown office and laying off more staff members at two other daily newspapers.

“We spend every day working hard to be innovative to create a sustainable business model,” publisher Michael Moses told the *Reporter*. “We’re living in some strange times, and I don’t think hyperlocal news and community dailies have ever been more important. So that’s our mission: to sustain those products.”

Management announced the layoffs weeks before Christmas, around the same time of year that the *Daily News*’s former publisher, Richard Chase, announced the sale of the paper in 2017.

“I think it’s a shame, to tell you the truth,” said David Small, president of the Athol Bird and Nature Club and chairman of the town’s planning board. “It does seem that ever since they were bought out they’ve slowly – well, not even so slowly – they’ve really cut back on the number of employees covering news, and I think it shows.”

“As you may know,” Moses wrote in an email to employees see **DAILY NEWS** page A6



AMY BOREZO PHOTO

The paper’s parent company plans to gather and edit the news at the Greenfield Recorder office.

MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD

Meals Picked To Head Up Waste Plant

By JEFF SINGLETON

The Montague selectboard, at its December 9 meeting, has offered Eric Meals, who currently supervises the Hatfield wastewater treatment plant, a contract to serve as the permanent superintendent of the town’s water pollution control facility (WPCF).

Meals, who worked at the plant in 2011 and 2012, will replace Bob McDonald, who abruptly resigned from the position at the end of last summer. Since then the plant has been supervised by chief operator Kevin Boissonnault and former superintendent Bob Trombley.

Meals was selected for the job by a search committee that included Boissonnault, Trombley, several other WPCF employees, and members of town hall staff. Trombley introduced Meals to the board on Monday night. “This is like Old Home Days,” said Trombley, who served as wastewater superintendent for many years.

Trombley noted that Meals had served as superintendent in Northfield and Hatfield since leaving the Montague plant in 2012. “He’s had a learning curve over the years,” Trombley said, “and we think this is the right time and the right fit for him in his career path and for the
see **MONTAGUE** page A7

GILL SELECTBOARD

Hydro Split a Done Deal; Highway Super Wins OT

By GEORGE BRACE

At their Monday night meeting the Gill selectboard reviewed a notice from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) that it had denied local environmental journalist Karl Meyer’s request to rehear its approval of FirstLight Power transferring its local hydroelectric licenses to two separate subsidiaries. They also discussed a pay change for the highway superintendent, and continued looking at a fiber-optic cable proposal.

Earlier this year, FERC approved the transfer by FirstLight of its li-

censes to operate the Northfield Mountain pumped storage project and the Turners Falls generating facilities under separate entities. Town administrator Ray Purington said the notice stated that procedural errors were enough reason to reject Meyer’s request, but went on to explain that FERC would rule against the request in any case based on the material Meyer presented.

Purington said his “big takeaway” from the rejection was just how strict the commission’s process is.

“Basically,” said selectboard chair John Ward, “it was because he
see **GILL** page A5

General Pierce Bridge: On Track for 2020

By JEFF SINGLETON

MONTAGUE CITY – The project to rehabilitate the General Pierce Bridge, which spans the Connecticut River between Montague and Greenfield, appears to be on track to begin bidding and construction next summer.

“The first design submission was received by MassDOT and is currently under review,” wrote Department of Transportation (DOT) communications official Judith Reardon Riley. “The project remains a priority and is being ex-



GREENFIELD POLICE PHOTO

A 2015 hole in the bridge’s deck.

pedited as much as possible.” The MassDOT project inventory website says the design being reviewed, was received on November 27, and covers 75% of the project.

see **BRIDGE** page A8

A “Wonderful” Walking Night Friday

REPORTER STAFF

TURNERS FALLS – Once again, our downtown readies for It’s A Wonderful Night In Turners Falls, the annual late-night shopping event taking place for the eighth year this Friday, December 13 from 3 to 9 p.m.

Holiday activities have been planned for the whole family up and down the Avenue, including art exhibitions, live music, pop-up shops, restaurant specials, holiday promotions, and unique gift-buying

opportunities. Shops will be open late, many until 9 p.m. The event is coordinated by RiverCulture.

Starting in the afternoon, enjoy a variety of activities on Friday, starting with **making bird feeders** at the Great Falls Discovery Center from 2 to 5 p.m. Adults and children can learn about the birds that are likely to show up at their feeders and what they like to eat, and then make feeders to bring home. This craft activity also repeats on Saturday from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

It looks like a wonderful night for

dance, too. **Awesome Art in Motion**, a Turners Falls-based creative dance company for elementary-school children, will give an informal showing of their newest dance piece in the Great Hall at the Discovery Center at 5:30 p.m. Their performance will explore what it means to be at once a unique individual and a member of a group. Admission is free.

Shoppers at the LOOT store, 62 Avenue A, can enjoy a **fiddle performance** by Annika Amstutz from 5 to 8 p.m. along with light
see **WONDERFUL** page A2

All This And More!

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