

The Montague Reporter

YEAR 18 – NO. 21

also serving Erving, Gill, Leverett and Wendell

\$1

EDITOR@MONTAGUEREPORTER.ORG

THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES

MARCH 26, 2020

Town Adapts To Emergency; Health Director Out on Leave

By JEFF SINGLETON

MONTAGUE – Gina McNeely, the former director of the Montague health department, is back on the job as of Wednesday, filling in while director Daniel Wasiuk is on a temporary leave of absence.

The decision was made at a meeting of the board of health on Tuesday. Town administrator Steve Ellis said that Wasiuk needed to take time off “when we can ill afford it,” but said his leave was not related to the coronavirus outbreak or for any “disciplinary or performance-oriented” reason. Ellis said Wasiuk might be out for “several weeks,” and the board voted to hire McNeely, who retired last June, for up to eight weeks.

The board of health meeting was held at town hall with chair Al Cummings, member Chris Boutwell, Ellis, town nurse Cheryl Volpe, and executive assistant Wendy Bogusz in attendance. McNeely, board member Michael Nelson, emergency management director and Turners Falls fire chief John Zellman, and the press participated by phone or computer, in accordance with emergency modifications of the state Open Meeting Law.

The board also approved a “Continuance of Operations Plan” (COOP) which “establishes procedures to respond to and recover from the effect of a wide range of see **TOWN** page A7

ERVING SELECTBOARD

Erving Passes School Budget, Wonders About Spring Elections

By KATIE NOLAN

Monday’s Erving selectboard meeting was held using GoToWebinar, with the three board members participating from separate locations. The board, and any documents being discussed, were visible to the members of the public who attended via internet. A phone-in, audio-only version of the meeting was also available.

Selectboard chair Jacob Smith reviewed the town’s response to COVID-19, including the declaration of a state of emergency in Erving on March 13 and the closure of the town’s buildings to the public.

As of March 21, only essential workers were to report to work. Smith said that the town’s state of emergency was indefinite. The board voted to keep town buildings closed to the public and maintain the essential workers-only policy until April 7. “This is fluid,” Smith noted, adding that the town’s response would change as the COVID-19 situation changed. He recommended residents check the town website for information on changes to the town’s response.

Chairman Smith said that it might make sense to postpone the annual town meeting and the town election (scheduled for May 6 and 11), in accordance with this week’s emergency state legislation. Administrative coordinator Bryan Smith said he would have more information see **ERVING** page A4

FACING THE CHALLENGE



These Turners Falls residents, out for a walk downtown Wednesday evening, said they made their own protective masks following a pattern they found online. “We know they’re not completely effective,” said the one with the puppy. The group did not disclose their identities. (For more information on making masks, see page A3; on their effectiveness, see page A5.)

G-M SCHOOL COMMITTEE District Offers Superintendent To Brian Beck; Break Extended To Seven Weeks

By MIKE JACKSON

GILL-MONTAGUE – “This would definitely not have been something I would have guessed could be happening this spring,” district superintendent Michael Sullivan said on Wednesday afternoon, following an announcement by governor Charlie Baker that all schools in the state will now be closed until May 4 rather than April 6.

The closure, now scheduled to total seven weeks, comes during Sullivan’s last semester on the job. On Tuesday night the regional school committee voted unanimously to offer the position to Brian Beck, a Montague resident who currently serves as principal of Hopkins Academy, a public high school in Hadley.

Thus far the state’s decision, aimed at slowing the spread of the novel coronavirus through the population, has essentially meant a vacation for students. But according to Wednesday’s announcement, “the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) is requesting that educators continue to develop and assemble high-quality educational materials to provide students with effective remote learning resources through the month of April.”

Sullivan said superintendents had received no prior warning of the decision, but that he expects to hear more details during a statewide conference call Friday.

“We’ve been anticipating this might come, so our team’s been trying to plan for it a little bit,” he said. “It’s going to be tricky – there are really significant equity issues involved that will make it a challenge to have expectations for learning that teachers and kids are held accountable for.”

Sullivan said these include schools’ obligation to provide counseling, physical therapy, and other “in-person” supports and services for various students. Additionally, he said, not all families in the district have “the kind of equipment you would need to do significant online learning,” even if they may have internet access via smartphone.

“We’re trying to determine the best way to get information from families about who does not have any kind of computer,” Sullivan said. “Then we’ll see if we can provide Chromebooks to the families that don’t.”

The superintendent also speculated that the longer break might push the school year to the end of June.

Like many public bodies, the school committee has switched to meeting via phone and video conferencing, and its search for a new superintendent reached its culmination this week. Three finalists called in for public interviews Monday evening, and the committee deliberated on Tuesday and decided to offer Beck the position, pending contract negotiations.

Beck was one of four finalists for the same position in 2013, but withdrew his application. On Monday he explained to the committee that at the time, after three years as principal of Athol High School, “I was not sure I was ready,” but that his tenure at Hopkins had see **GMRSD** page A4

Jail Staff Work to Lock the Virus Out

By SAMANTHA WOOD

GREENFIELD – As the number of known COVID-19 cases rises around the country, there is a growing concern about the inmates of prisons and detention centers.

For weeks, Sheriff Christopher Donelan has been working to keep the coronavirus out of the Franklin County House of Correction, and as of Wednesday, he reports there are no known cases among inmates or staff. For three weeks, the jail has been taking the temperature of all staff and inmates on a daily basis. Staff who register a fever are not allowed to start a shift.

Donelan reports three or four members of staff have reported flu-like symptoms and were told to stay home for 14 days, or at least until they can see a doctor.

see **JAIL** page A6

Relief for Tenants By April 1 Unlikely

By SARAH ROBERTSON

FRANKLIN COUNTY – In response to mass layoffs and closures caused by the coronavirus pandemic, renters across the state may be wondering if they will see any relief before rent is due next week.

As of press time on Wednesday, the US Senate was making last-minute amendments to a \$2.2 trillion coronavirus relief bill that would give \$1,200 to most American adults, with a \$500 stipend per child.

If it passes, however, the one-time payouts are not expected until at least May.

On Wednesday, Massachusetts governor Charlie Baker announced efforts underway that would aid low-income renters statewide. The Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) is see **RENT** page A6

What the Scientists Can Tell Us

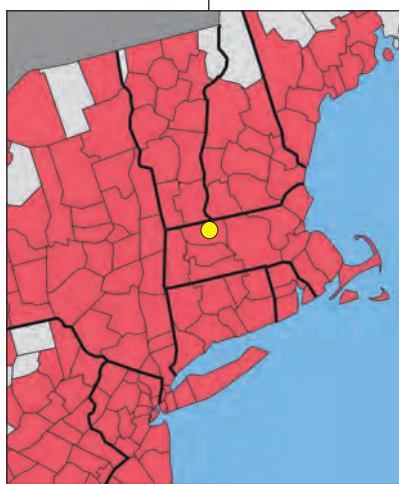
By LISA McLOUGHLIN

NORTHFIELD – Did you see the viral photo of a dolphin in a Venice canal? While the clear water in the picture was real, due to the lack of motorized boat traffic churning up the sediment, the dolphin, unfortunately, was not.

Neither is the advice, purporting to be from Taiwan experts or Stanford University, to hold your breath for 10 seconds every morning to check for respiratory distress, and to sip water constantly.

In a time when information is easy to get, but difficult to vet, it’s important to know your sources. Science is the best way to understand a scientific problem like this.

Here are recommendations collected from trusted national and international sources for some of the thorniest questions about COVID-19. The sources used in this article are, unless otherwise noted, the US Centers for Disease Control (CDC.gov), the US federal government’s research and health protection agency, and the see **SCIENCE** page A5



COVID-19 has now spread into most Northeastern counties (shown in red).

Readying The Heart For Sorrows

By NINA ROSSI

TURNERS FALLS – Today I talked by phone with Shutesbury resident Dina Stander to follow up on something she wrote to me, where she mentioned that she was trying to “ready her heart for sorrows.” That sounded like a good thing to try to do as we wait for loss to ripple across the country during this coronavirus pandemic.

Personal loss, financial loss, loss of our community spaces, and loss of our regular roles in the world: we are ass-deep in potential and actual losses right now. Our families and communities face an illness that may manifest itself in anything from very mild cold symptoms to respiratory distress, pneumonia, and death.

Stander, in her many roles of celebrant, coach, and end-of-life navigator, has valuable experience to share. She’s been a hospice volunteer, a hospital chaplain, and a certified End of Life Doula and Life-Cycle funeral celebrant, and is a frequent contributor to the see **HEART** page A5

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The Montague Reporter

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August 2002

Round One

Strange times. This is the first issue of the *Montague Reporter* in our seventeen and a half years to not come out in a print edition.

You will notice we have made use of the free colorization! But we hope that this is only a temporary state of being for the newspaper, which built its readership hand to hand, delivered door to door in our villages, stocked diligently at farmstands and grocery stores by volunteers each week.

It feels terribly wrong not to be sending the issue to the printer after filling this editorial column, but not much is going terribly right at the moment. Coronavirus infection rates in the United States are curving sharply upward. There aren't enough test kits. Elon Musk is retooling Tesla's battery plant in Buffalo to manufacture ventilators as quickly as possible to send to New York City, the first location in America where the wave of illness is cresting past our healthcare system's capacity to treat the sick.

The nation's public spaces have by and large shut down. Part of the populace is sheltering in place, possibly out of work for a long time – while another is works overtime, risking exposure to the disease in order to keep essential infrastructure and logistics moving.

This was also the week when our president got bored trying to outflank Democrats on their left with promises of no-strings cash assistance to all Americans, and pivoted to screaming at people to get back to work. "WE CANNOT LET THE CURE BE WORSE THAN THE PROMISE ITSELF," he Tweeted late Sunday night. "AT THE END OF THE 15 DAY PERIOD, WE WILL MAKE A DECISION AS TO WHICH WAY WE WANT TO GO!"

Just as various conservative pundits announced that they would happily die of excruciating respiratory failure if they knew it would help shore up the stock market, the downward-plummeting line seemed to perk up hungrily. To be fair, speculators weren't only responding to the president's ghoulish disregard for public health and safety, but also to a stimulus package sent from the House to the Senate.

As of the time this paper went to (digital) press, the stimulus had cleared the Senate, but not without modification, and some fire-works on the floor.

While there has been much public focus on the novelty factor of direct cash assistance – which for

this round at least will come in the form of a relatively small, one-time check (\$1,200 per adult, \$500 per child) – the most significant aid the bill makes available to the working class is a \$600 weekly supplement to unemployment benefits, and their extension to independent contractors and freelancers.

In the face of a historically unprecedented spike in unemployment – 3.28 million new claims last week alone; servers are reportedly crashing under the volume of applications – this additional infusion of \$2,400 per month for four months for those who have lost their jobs is significant indeed. (If the House signs off again; if the president signs it...)

A clique of senators tried to overturn this provision; South Carolina senator Lindsey Graham complained that for some presumably poorer workers, "this bill pays you more not to work than if you were working."

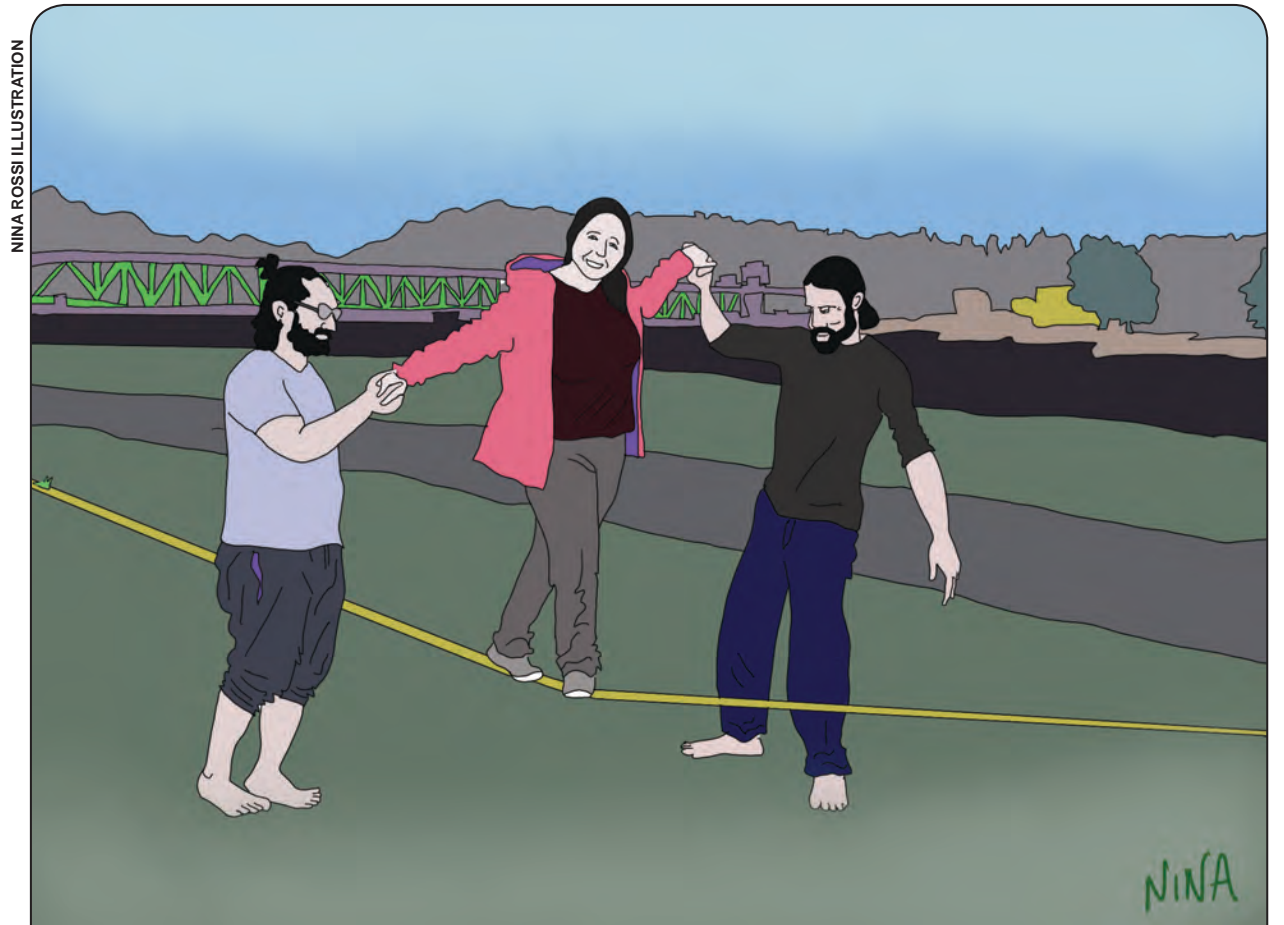
"Some of my Republican colleagues... are very upset that somebody who's making 10, 12 bucks an hour might end up with a paycheck, for four months, more than they received last week," thundered Bernie Sanders of Vermont. "Oh my God, the universe is collapsing.... What kind of value system is that? Meanwhile, these very same folks had no problem, a couple years ago, voting for a trillion dollars in tax breaks for billionaires and large, profitable corporations."

Sanders then threatened to retaliate by amending the bill to remove what he called "corporate welfare" provisions, which seemed to worry conservative Democrats enough to keep them from crossing the aisle.

And so it's looking like the first round of the coronavirus bailout will include strong provisions to allow laid-off, non-essential workers to maintain their social distance while the viral wave sweeps by.

The Senate, which is having its own virus scare, now plans to recess until April 20, and House speaker Nancy Pelosi has called for a second stimulus package to be assembled, with larger direct cash payments. We will see if the first wave of benefits is dispersed through the population in time to stave off an anticipated collapse of rent and mortgage payments.

If you end up with any extra this month, please consider supporting this newspaper's continued coverage of the crisis as it unfolds locally – and hopefully getting back in print, as soon as it safe to do so.



Robin Chabot of Greenfield gets to try out a slack line at Unity Park on a recent warm day, with help from Turners Falls residents Joe Farina (left) and Chris Schott (right). Thanks to Anne Jemas and Karen Guillette for the source photo!

Letters to the Editors

Disturbing Presentations

Like many citizens in our country, I have been carefully following the comments put forth by President Trump during his Coronavirus Task Force presentations. Aside from his misstatements, obfuscations, outright lies, and frequent "massaging" of the truth, his recent introduction of martial and military terminology into his statements introduces a dangerous new level of intended manipulation.

As was the case with George W. Bush during his proud and somewhat puerile reflections upon himself as a wartime president, Mr. Trump's recent proclamation of himself as a wartime president attempts to prepare the public for a further consolidation of power in the executive. Additionally, it attempts to limit criticism of his past self-serving and incompetent behaviors by employing a variety of martial metaphors.

These metaphors, which have historically served to rally loyalty to the president, and further unquestioning support for presidential decisions, are now a daily element of the Task Force presentations.

For several weeks, the Trump Administration minimized the coronavirus threat, in an attempt to bolster support for the President's economic and political agenda. Although there is now evidence that the Trump Administration is taking the virus seriously, the President's past lack of candor prevents our ability to trust that the statements arising out of his administration are a true reflection of events as they occur.

Also, his frequent absurd gaslighting – such as his claim that he recognized the pandemic weeks before anyone else, when he was, in fact, minimizing and denying the threat that the virus represented during those weeks – only serves to further a lack of trust in regard to his past and present claims.

The recent change from the administration directed toward controlling the virus and mitigating its effects offers some hope that the administration can be more effective in the future than it has been in the past weeks.

There is also evidence that Mr. Trump is being somewhat supplanted by more knowledgeable individuals; this can be seen in the Task Force presentations, in which non-political appointees have been giving more accurate information than we have come to expect from this administration.

Additionally, after particularly egregious misstatements by Mr. Trump, Mr. Pence has tended to interrupt, quickly stepping up to the lectern to clarify matters.

Although these interventions do somewhat diminish the inaccuracies that arise from Mr. Trump, they also, unfortunately, appear to be primarily attempts at formulating the administration's claims in a more cogent and palatable manner than Mr. Trump is capable of achieving.

Robert Shulman
Montague

Positive Good Spirits

Hopes and prayers for everyone in our community. We are very thankful for all nurses, EMTs, police, fire, etc. during this international crisis. Please stay safe.

Also, we need to work together to help support those in need. Love and also caring. Being kind to each other, bring positive good spirits to everyone. Best wishes and good luck.

Remember, going back to history during our great-grandparents' time, the flu of 1918. They didn't have technology in medicine like we do today.

It will take a miracle, and hopes and prayers each night. Just remember the person who invented the idea to wash your hands, the famous Hungarian doctor Ignaz Semmelweis.

Please still continue solid social distancing. Also, stay tuned to find out more about the sickness, tips, etc. Support your local paper in this time of need. And please keep up the good work together in our community.

Thank you,

Joe R. Parzych
Greenfield and Gill

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Compiled by NINA ROSSI

Since Briefs are usually **event-driven tidbits** that have been rounded up to share with readers, social distancing and self isolation during the COVID-19 outbreak creates a challenge.

Last week I sifted through a few free online entertainment and support options to present things that might be of interest. Similar collections of weblinks on various themes – food, entertainment, music, impact surveys, fundraisers, etc. – are being curated by people and organizations and posted online. Some interesting collaborative projects have started in round-robin form as well, circulating via email, as well as mail art projects, digital galleries, and online open mics.

If you are offering support services online, or have a particular digital curation you would like our readers to know about, please send the information to editor@montaguereporter.org and I'll try to include it here.

One thing people have found to do with this time is to **sew face masks to donate** where they are needed as protection *in lieu* of the regulation surgical and other hospital masks that are in such short supply. While not as effective as the official disposable masks, the homemade cloth ones are better than nothing.

An analysis of the effectiveness of different types of cloth in passing particles while still allowing easy breathing is available at www.smartairfilters.com/en/blog/best-materials-make-diy-face-mask-virus/.

Testing information presented on [smartairfilters.com](http://www.smartairfilters.com) shows that cotton t-shirt and anti-microbial pillow cover materials are among the best fabrics to use, but other cotton fabric will also work, including dish towel fabric. Workers will need to replace these fabric masks after four hours of use, as they will get moist from breathing through them, and wash them.

Some patterns are a pocket style that can hold a replaceable filter, but I have also read advice that says these may not get washed often enough because of the filter, and that the filter material could possibly lead to more leakage from the sides of the mask unless it is of the right density.

You don't have to dig too deep on Facebook to find discussions on the pros and cons of various patterns, and how and where to donate them. Even if you can't launder them yourself before donating them, it is still worthwhile, as these donations are being washed before being employed by workers anyway.

Nursing homes, fire departments, hospitals, home health aides and other folks working with immunocompromised populations are all seeking coverage. In some cases, cloth masks are worn over the regular masks so they can last longer.

See information on the Facebook group page, "DIY Masks of Western Mass" to find out more about making and donating these. Cooley Dickinson Hospital recommends this pattern: www.deaconess.com/

How-to-make-a-Face-Mask.

People who can't find the elastic that goes around the ears to hold it on can make stretchy ties from t-shirt material, according to one post on the DIY Masks page. And others are coming up with inventive ideas for wire that keeps the mask close to the nose bridge, too: twist ties, electrical wire, or bent strips of metal. You will also find information on where to drop off finished masks on that page.

Happy Sewing!

Got a 3D printer at home? You can use it to **print out critical medical supplies and masks**, according to an appeal by the Cooley Dickinson Hospital. For guidelines and instructions, email covid_innovation@partners.org, the Partners Covid Innovation Center.

not be holding its weekly food distribution on Sunday, March 29 or Sunday, April 5.

For information about whether distribution will resume on Sunday, April 12, call (978) 544-3112 on or after Friday, April 10.

Hey, there *is* something happening of note! On Monday, March 30 the Turners Falls Water Department is going around to **read water meters**. They will probably not be singing, but wouldn't that be nice?

The **Gill-Montague Educational Fund Annual Gala**, featuring Philip Bauer as "the Man in Black," has been rescheduled for Saturday, September 26.

"The Legend of Johnny Cash with Philip Bauer" brings the sound and charisma of this important musical icon to life during a 90-minute stage show, backed by a four-piece touring band. All advance tickets sold previously for the show will be honored; get yours online at www.thegmef.org.

I'm not much of a "watcher," so when I do try to pick out something to stream on Netflix or Amazon



"Like many of us," reader Maggie Sadoway writes, "Rocco, King of the Patch, Chief of the Canal, is staying inside, taking care of his family."

Another action we can take during this time is to **go out and pick up litter!** Chris Pellerin sent a notice about "Trashy Tuesdays for Troublesome Times," coordinated by Greening Greenfield, where residents get outside to pick up litter the day before their neighborhood trash day, wearing gloves and keeping their distance from each other.

The DPW in that town is supplying some special trash bags that they will pick up for free with the regular collection, available on the front porch of 34 Pierce Street. Peg Hall of Greening Greenfield also encourages people to sing, if they want to be outside singing alone or with others, she will help spread the word within that town: email GGTreasurer@Major2nd.com.

Montague DPW superintendent Tom Bergeron cannot offer special bags like Greenfield; our trash services are very different from theirs. Montague DPW offices are closed to the public right now, but they are happy to supply black plastic trash bags, which will be available on the front porch at 21 Central Street in Turners Falls for any local litter pickers to take.

When you have filled a bag, you may sticker it yourself and put out with your household trash, or call Bergeron for free pickup at (413) 863-3217 x 112.

Wendell Good Neighbors will

Prime, the choices feel pretty overwhelming. More often than not I end up not picking anything at all.

But now I've been getting **home cinema selections from the Amherst Cinema** via emails on Tuesdays and Fridays. These recommendations from the cinema's staff are mini-reviews that also point to which streaming service you can find the selection on. Very helpful! Sign up for their newsletter at www.amherstcinema.org.

Amherst Cinema also pointed to a **free women's film festival online** at www.wmm.com commemorating women's History Month of March. Available through the end of the month.

Community Involved in Sustaining Agriculture (CISA) sends a reminder of how COVID-19 affects our local farmers.

"Many of the small farms that we know and love have seen an immediate loss of sales because of COVID-19 related closures, including farmers' markets, colleges, schools, and restaurants. This has led to a dramatic loss of income threatening many farms' ability to stay viable at the most precarious time of the year," their appeal reads.

CISA is raising money for an **Emergency Farm Fund** to provide the region's farms with zero-interest loans. They hope to raise \$50,000

by March 31 to provide at least ten farms with \$5,000 loans. Learn more and/or donate at www.cisa.salsalabs.org/effcovid/index.html.

Signature Sounds has announced the **Parlor Room Home Sessions**, a series of online concerts. Get a seat at www.signaturesounds.com/homesessions and watch the *Suitcase Junket* at 8 p.m. on Friday, March 27.

Signature Sounds director Jim Olson writes: "Now more than ever, it's important for us to stay connected and support the artists who bring us so much joy. Since it'll be awhile until we can gather again, let's share the gift of music together and look forward to better days ahead."

Turners Falls RiverCulture director Suzanne LoManto had to cancel the last Cultural District meeting on Thursday, March 19, but is proposing a **Downtown Cleanup this weekend**, March 28 and 29.

She writes, "I think a good way to get together while practicing social distancing is by working outdoors on spring cleanup, gardening and small beautification projects like refurbishing benches, wayfinding and making repairs on public art. The weekend of March 28/29 is on the books for raking, sweeping and pruning downtown."

Bring your implements of beautification, and stay six feet away from everyone else.

The Montague selectboard is looking for input on a **townwide mural policy**. If you want to be part of a group that discusses and drafts a mural policy to cover the five villages of Montague for consideration by the board, contact Suzanne at riverculture@montague-ma.gov.

Among Wednesday's new emergency orders from the governor:

"Grocery store and pharmacy employees shall not perform bagging of retail products if reusable checkout bags are used and customers at grocery stores and pharmacies **shall not use reusable checkout bags** until further notice."

"Grocery stores and pharmacies, food banks and emergency food programs, including those currently subject to municipal ordinances or regulations banning single-use plastic bags, may choose to use recyclable paper bags, compostable plastic bags or single-use plastic bags."

Bronwen Hodgkinson has been the behind the scenes for the Valley Arts Newsletter, an indispensable resource for area gallery shows and artists' resources (www.valleyarts-newsletter.com). During this time, she will be posting links to **resources for artists, creatives, and small businesses** on the Valley Arts Newsletter Facebook page, since so many venues are closed.

Great Falls Yoga studio shared big news recently, before closing for COVID-19. They are transforming into a cooperative, where instructors will rent space and retain 100% of their class earnings.

They plan to change all their drop-in rates on all classes to be sliding scale fees, and partner with two area nonprofits, the People's Medicine Project and the Recover Project, to offer totally free classes to the people they serve. Keep updated on these and other changes at www.greatfallsyoga.com.

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GUEST EDITORIAL

A View from the Bike Path

By GREGORY BALSEWICZ

TURNERS FALLS – I discovered the bike path shortly after moving to town in 2003. At first I was content to walk to Barton's Cove, exploring the wide expanse of lawn that stretches from the pock-holed parking lot east to the river. Gradually I started walking further afield until one day I walked all the way to the Deerfield railyards via the path. What an incredible resource we have in our backyard!

One thing I noticed early on was the friendly manner most walkers and bikers greeted one another, if not by words, then a nod of the head or a wave of the hand. I was amazed by the lack of crowds. Do people not know this path exists?

Almost two decades later the path still seems to me underutilized. When I tell my friends that I just walked the bike path yet again, they roll their eyes and I can detect their scorn for my lack of adventure.

What I try to explain to them is that it's not about the challenge, but of enjoyment. If I traversed terrain like some of our neighboring hillsides I would be less likely to get out as often as I do. As a retired person I like the rather level path that is non-threatening to my knees and ankles. The familiarity of the route lets me put my feet in auto mode, freeing my mind to ponder

greater things, or to just enjoy the ever-changing scenery.

Recently, due to the upheaval caused by the coronavirus, I have noticed more activity along the path. More kids on bikes chaperoned by a parent or two. The friendliness is still there, but cautioned with a good dose of social distancing. It's comforting to know that even in times of crisis, a certain politeness holds the social fabric together – or apart, as the case may be.

There is one negative aspect that I've noticed through the years, though. While downtown sidewalks are fairly clean thanks to responsible dog owners picking up after their pets, the same cannot be said of the bike path. Perhaps these dogs are running loose, unsupervised by their human companions. In any case it is a problem for multiple reasons.

As we face down the coronavirus we need to better acquaint ourselves with zoonotic diseases, i.e. those pathogens that travel from animals to humans. And while this might sound speciest (aren't we all animals?), ever since the domestication of livestock some 12,000 years ago we've been sharing germs, bacteria, and viruses.

Unattended to, dog feces can impact the environment in a myriad of ways. Fecal coliform bacteria can wreak havoc in the human intestinal tract, as could campylobacter and *E. coli*. Also there is a

possibility of catching hookworms, ringworms, or tapeworms. Not a pleasant thought to ponder, because many of those infections happen to children who innocently play in the dirt.

Not only are the consequences steep for humans, but also for our waterways. Many of us older folks remember a time when we wouldn't go near a river, so full were they of pollutants from factories and sewage discharge. But attitudes began to change in the 1960s which sparked an environmental movement that carries on to this day.

The salmon haven't returned, but the water quality sure has improved, thanks to wastewater treatment plants. Let's protect our most precious natural resource, clean water. (Read more at <http://efpub.epa.gov/npstbx/files/Pet%20care%20fact%20sheet.pdf>)

I hope to see more folks enjoying this wonderful resource, stewarded by FirstLight Power and the Massachusetts Department of Conservation & Recreation. Perhaps they can put out more trash receptacles along the path to facilitate better disposal of this waste.

So watch where you step! And please be a responsible pet owner and pick up after your dog. Thank you.

Gregory Balsewicz lives in downtown Turners Falls.

GMRSD from page A1

prepared him for the role.

The committee also interviewed two other finalists, Frontier Regional director of student services Karen Ferrandino and Maynard interim superintendent Mary Jane Rickson. A separate, confidential screening committee fielded 22 applications, gave six interviews, and recommended the three.

"I feel like I'm playing Hollywood Squares," Rickson joked as the committee members, their faces aligned in a grid, took turns asking questions Monday night. "These are the best three candidates I've ever seen in one search," Montague member Michael Langknecht said the next day. "I've only seen two other better candidates in my whole time at GMRSD. There's really no reason to put it off."

"There has been some question about the speed with which we moved," said Timmie Smith of

Gill. "I can't see belaboring anything – I think it's good to make the decision and have our first choice, hopefully, available."

After the committee members shared their impressions of all three candidates, including those gleaned from virtual "site visits" to speak with stakeholders in their current districts, they took a straw poll. Seven of the nine said Beck was their top choice, with Langknecht and Gill member Bill Tomb favoring Ferrandino. They then voted, unanimously, to offer the position to Beck.

Reached on Wednesday, Beck said he has been living in Turners Falls since 2004, when he moved here from the eastern part of the state to take an assistant principal position at Mohawk Trail. He is a parent of three children who went to Gill Elementary, he said, who went in different directions – homeschooling, Hopkins Academy, circus school – at the secondary level.

ERVING from page A1

about the legislation and its effect on town meeting and town elections by the March 30 meeting.

Selectboard member William Bembury, who is running for re-election, asked what would happen to his seat if the election is postponed. Town clerk Richard Newton replied that, according to the legislation, Bembury would remain in office until an election is held. Newton said that the Massachusetts secretary of state was encouraging voters to use early-voting procedures rather than in-person voting.

Jacob Smith said that the board also needed to consider postponing the annual "Almost Anything Goes" residential bulky waste pickup, traditionally held in early May, "if we don't have significant change in the virus's projected spread." The board will revisit the issue at a future meeting.

Town Ambulance Service

Fire chief Philip Wonkka recommended that the town switch from using two ambulance services – Orange Fire Department for the east side of town, and AMR for the west side – to using the Orange ambulance townwide.

Wonkka said AMR's response "has been less than desirable," and said that Orange would charge "roughly \$20,000" to increase its coverage. Wonkka estimated that the response time for an ambulance on the west side of town might increase if Orange is the only provider.

Later in the meeting, after Wonkka had signed off, the board and finance committee members

Benjamin Fellows and Debra Smith discussed the proposal. They agreed to an increase in the Orange ambulance budget line item for FY'21, in order to have the option to switch to only one provider, if the board and the full fin com decide to follow the recommendation.

Erving Elementary School

At the February 10 joint selectboard and fin com meeting, Union #28 finance director Bruce Turner, superintendent Jennifer Culkeen, Erving Elementary principal Lisa Candito, and school committee chair Erik Semb had presented a \$3.4 million FY'21 budget for Erving Elementary School, a 5.88% increase over FY'20. Turner said that 90% of the increase was from contractual increases to staff salaries and special education costs. The board and fin com asked for a reduction in the proposed budget to closer to 2.5% growth.

At Monday's meeting, Bryan Smith reported that the school committee had submitted a revised budget with a 3.6% increase. The board voted to accept it.

"It's not what we wanted to see," commented Jacob Smith, "but it's more reasonable." He and Bembury both warned that the elementary school costs cannot keep increasing at a rate higher than other town departments.

Other Business

Franklin Regional Council of Governments transportation planners Beth Giannini and Laurie Scarbrough presented the draft Complete

Streets Prioritization Plan, a summary of 22 proposed sidewalk and pedestrian safety projects in Erving. Top priorities for the five-year plan include sidewalk rehabilitation on River Street, sidewalk construction on Strachan Street, and sidewalk rehabilitation on Central, Park, and Pratt streets.

The board will decide whether to approve the plan on March 30. An approved plan is necessary for applying for grants from the state Department of Transportation.

Planning assistant Mariah Kurtz presented guidance for planting trees in the grass belt along roadways, which she developed in coordination with the tree warden and highway department. The guidance provides recommendations for species to plant in small, medium, and large areas.

The town will plant trees in the grass belt on residential properties where the trees are visible from the road. The town will permanently maintain the trees planted in the grass belt, and the trees on residential properties for the first year after planting. Kurtz said the goal is to begin planting this spring, and proposed a tree inventory to document Erving's already existing street trees.

The board voted to sign a memorandum of understanding in order to apply for a grant from the state Assistance to Firefighters program to replace all of the town's air packs. Chief Wonkka said that the fire department will receive disinfectant and hand sanitizer from the state.



IMAGE COURTESY MCTV

School committee members Jane Oakes, Heather Katsoulis, Bill Tomb, Haley Anderson, Jennifer Livey, Cassie Damkoehler, and Thomasina Hall interviewed final candidates by video chat Monday night under the supervision of Tracy Novick (lower right) of the Massachusetts Association of School Committees.

"When I looked at the resume of, in particular, Mr. Sullivan, who ended up getting the job, I thought 'That's the best person to carry my town's district forward, not me,'" Beck said of his 2013 decision to withdraw. "It was a great point of reflection." He said that since then, he had grown professionally through

collaboration with Hadley superintendent Annie McKenzie.

Beck said that his experience as a Gill parent left him with a "really good feeling about the quality of the people who work here in the district," and added that he looked forward to being able to walk to work.



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RENT from page A1

recommending that all owners of state-assisted low-income housing suspend both pending evictions and the filing of any new “non-essential” evictions. DHCD is also working to halt any possible suspension of federal and state rental vouchers.

“We’ve issued a whole series of guidance, directives, and orders around renters and homeowners, and we’re going to continue to do that,” Baker said during the press conference. “We are going to play a very aggressive game with respect to making sure people don’t lose their place of residence as a result of this current circumstance.”

Using \$5 million from the quasi-public agency MassHousing, DHCD will help support people struggling with housing insecurity through its Rental Assistance for Families in Transition (RAFT) program. The homelessness prevention program provides short-term financial assistance to families and individuals to cover moving costs, rent, utilities, and security deposits.

The Franklin County Regional Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA) administers RAFT

assistance locally, provides information and guidelines on its website, and will be seeking \$100,000 in funding from the state program. According to HRA director Gina Govoni, about 15 households are approved for the assistance each month, for up to \$4,000 each.

Housing Authority staff are processing an influx of interim adjustments to income-based rent payments, as many tenants’ incomes have been disrupted.

Typically, tenants need to have received a court-ordered eviction to qualify, but DHCD has waived that requirement due to COVID-19 and the closure of housing courts statewide.

“While we applaud the Baker administration for its efforts to combat homelessness, we are concerned that far more funding will be needed just for the balance of this fiscal year,” Govoni told the *Reporter*.

While their physical offices are now closed, employees at the HRA are working remotely to serve their tenants, clients, and applicants during the crisis.

Their priority right now, according to HRA director of property and asset management Pam Parmakian, is processing an influx of interim adjustments to income-based rent payments as many tenants’ incomes have been disrupted.

“We’ve been doing more interim adjustments than we’ve seen ever before,” said Parmakian. “If income is being affected because you’re no longer working, because your place of employment has closed down due to COVID-19, that affects what you’d be paying.”

Last week, the *Boston Globe* reported that 19,884 people filed for unemployment insurance in Massachusetts in just one day, more than all the applications filed for the entire month of February.

As murmurs of a nationwide rent strike spread online, housing activists in Massachusetts are pushing for the passage of House bill HD.4935, “An Act providing for a moratorium on evictions and foreclosures during the COVID19 Emergency.”

Co-sponsored by First Franklin representative Natalie Blais and over 70 other representatives, the bill would enact a statewide moratorium on evictions for the duration of the governor’s emergency declaration.

Earlier this week, Massachusetts attorney general Maura Healey announced a freeze on all evictions until at least April 21. Housing courts across the state will subsequently resume non-emergency proceedings on April 22.

The HRA manages 265 units of affordable housing in Franklin County, and administers over 600 Section 8 vouchers. Parmakian said she could not say whether the HRA has seen an influx of new clients seeking its services.

“Every department has been able to keep up with the workload that they have, but our priorities have shifted over these last few weeks to include interim adjustments,” she said.

For the duration of the pandemic, Parmakian said, the HRA is being more lenient with paperwork requirements, so if something is missing, a tenant or client will not be denied assistance at this critical time. Paperwork can be delivered to a drop box outside their office at 241 Millers Falls Road in Turners Falls. Tenants and other participants in any of the HRA’s programs can still contact the organization over the phone and online.

Maintenance requests are now being processed exclusively online, for emergencies only, as the agency’s staff are stretched thin with additional cleaning duties. “We never thought we’d need excessive amounts of masks and gloves,” Parmakian said. “They’re straight out with this extra cleaning.”

The HRA is also accepting donations of unopened boxes of gloves, sanitizer, and face masks at the drop box.

**NOTES FROM THE WENDELL SELECTBOARD**

Troubles With Conference Call; Broadband Drops Eligible for Loans

By JOSH HEINEMANN

The Wendell selectboard observed social separation and held its March 18 meeting by conference call. Fire chief Joe Cuneo, emergency manager Lonny Ricketts, and board of health chair Barbara Craddock also participated.

The telephone connection was terrible, and almost every sentence was interrupted by static or by silence. Whole sentences were lost, and at the meeting’s ending conversation stopped abruptly mid-sentence as if the telephone line had been severed.

This reporter’s call back was answered, “[We are] currently experiencing technical issues. Please try again later.”

Cuneo tried four times before he was able to connect, and later in the meeting, Brian McHugh, director of community development at the Franklin County Regional Housing and Redevelopment Authority, connected only after his 10th try.

As might be expected, a good part of the evening’s discussion involved implications of coronavirus, and attempts to contain its spread by isolating people and closing institutions. Selectboard members agreed to go to the office individually on March 19 to sign the warrant so the town’s bills are paid on time.

Cuneo said that the highway garage and fire station are now closed to the public, not a big challenge because regular citizens seldom use that building. He said he was ordering more protective gear for firefighters, EMTs, and other first responders. He reported that Franklin Medical Center had one confirmed case, and five under observation. Ricketts added that Cooley Dickinson hospital had two confirmed cases.

Craddock said that the state would reimburse expenses that follow from the virus and quarantine efforts after the town fills out and submits a form. The federal government is in line to reimburse

the states.

Good Neighbors held its regular food distribution on Sunday with extra precautions, as described on the front page of the March 19 *Montague Reporter*.

The question of whether the distribution should continue came up. Ricketts argued that the Wendell common is probably better – less conducive to spreading the virus – than a grocery store, and said Good Neighbors is an important food source for some families.

Selectboard chair Dan Keller said that he and Craddock observed the March 15 distribution on the common, and that a few bugs were worked out during the day. Board members agreed that the distribution should continue. Keller said the weather looked good for the following Sunday, March 22.

Ricketts said other towns may follow Wendell’s example. [Editors’ note: The distribution was since suspended for March 29 and April 5.]

After a limited discussion, the board agreed to postpone indefinitely the auction of town properties that was scheduled for March 28. Keller brought up the \$400 that has already been spent on advertising, but board member Christine Heard said that could be added to the town’s form for reimbursement from the state.

Developments Unfold

Town coordinator Nancy Aldrich said that the Friends of the Wendell Meetinghouse are comfortable with a new proposal, crafted by lawyer Sam Lovejoy, that would allow the meetinghouse to be connected to town water and sewer. Wendell would continue to own the land and cede to the Friends rights to the building for a long-term lease.

Keller said it seems the only alternative, selectboard member Laurie DiDonato did not see a downside, but the proposal did not appeal to Heard. She said the process would be long and complicat-

ed, and would have to be approved at an annual town meeting.

On his tenth try, Brian McHugh reached the conference call with updates on Wendell’s community development block grant (CDBG) funding. Two of 10 Wendell households have closed on applications for housing rehabilitation loans, and the others are still in the process. A whole sentence of his talk was lost through the poor connection.

McHugh said that numbers are necessary, but internet drops are definitely eligible for CDBG grant money, and can be rolled into a more thorough project. After a drop is installed, its cost is not eligible for CDBG reimbursement.

The grant deadline is December 31, though the state projects an extension.

Other Business

Aldrich said that Peter Golrick had moved to New Hampshire and was no longer able to act as the town’s IT consultant. She said that New Salem had some success with Tech 1 of Orange, but now no one is working at the office there. She will call and find out if Tech 1 is interested in working with Wendell.

Maggie Houghton, Wendell’s dog officer, animal control officer, and animal inspector, is leaving those positions at the end of the year. If no local person steps up to train and take the jobs, then the next option will cost Wendell more money.

Town clerk Gretchen Smith said that people who want to run for office now need a selectboard vote to be put on the ballot. Keller and DiDonato approved Mara Bright to run for library trustee, and appointed Patricia Miller for board of health clerk. Heard abstained from the vote, explaining that she had missed too much information due to the poor connection.

DiDonato said she would look into Zoom for the board’s next meeting on April 1.

JAIL from page A1

The shortage of personal protective equipment (PPE) reported throughout the United States is now critical for medical staff at the jail, Donelan says. There are currently 175 people incarcerated in Greenfield. Sixteen of those are ICE detainees; 25 of the inmates are women.

The facility recently received more than 100 cloth masks made by inmates in the sewing program at the Hampden County House of Correction. These aren’t ideal, Donelan said, but they are better than nothing. Testing is still not available on a routine basis.

Support programs remain suspended while the jail works to keep the virus out.

One such program normally provides “bridgers,” people previously incarcerated and now rebuilding their own lives, whose first-hand expertise can help as inmates prepare for release.

George Ballentine, who works at the Greenfield Recovery Learning Community (RLC) and serves as a bridger for inmates, said Franklin County House of Correction isn’t like most other jails. “This sheriff actually cares as much as he possibly can,” he said.

The medical staff are “well-trained and diligent,” Ballentine said, “but they are going to be overwhelmed. If one person [with the virus] gets it in that jail, it’s going to spread.”

That concern is shared by many. There has been a growing call around the country to release people from jails, prisons, and detention centers to avoid catastrophic infections sweeping through populations unable to protect themselves.

On Sunday, *The Atlantic* published a piece by John Sandweg, former acting director of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), saying “the administration must do more: It must release the thousands of nonviolent, low-flight-risk detainees currently in ICE custody.”

“By releasing from custody the thousands of detainees who pose no threat to public safety and do not constitute an unmanageable flight risk,” Sandweg wrote, “ICE can reduce the overcrowding of its detention centers, and thus make them safer, while also putting fewer people at risk.”

On Tuesday, *The Nation* reported on a leaked Department

of Homeland Security document from last week stating that detainees in 10 ICE facilities were under quarantine or being monitored for symptoms, and that Customs and Border Protection “is working to convert several of its major border facilities into quarantine facilities.”

By Wednesday, the *New York Post* was reporting that 75 inmates at Rikers Prison in New York had confirmed cases of COVID-19, and 37 employees of the New York Department of Corrections had tested positive for the virus.

And in Washington, inmates have sued the state, alleging it has not acted to prevent the introduction of the virus to the incarcerated population and “needs to do more to prevent a coronavirus outbreak in prisons.”

A number of states have begun releasing people held for nonviolent crimes, and those in groups at high risk of infection.

Last Friday, Northwestern District Attorney David Sullivan announced a review of pretrial detainees in the region. “We are advocating for release of low-risk, non-violent inmates where appropriate, through the Department of Correction, our local Sheriffs, and the Parole Board,” he wrote.

The DA’s office says it is not considering releasing people convicted of violent crimes or repeat offenders, as it weighs both the risks posed by the virus and those some prisoners may pose to their victims, according to the statement.

Ballentine said his impression was that the inmates at the Franklin County House of Correction are generally pretty well-informed about the situation and they understand the safety precautions. Family members, he said, certainly aren’t happy that visitation has been suspended, but he said they also understand the risks posed by the coronavirus, and want their loved ones to be safe.

Sheriff Donelan said he is also worried. He added that he wakes up most mornings now at 4 a.m. and can’t get back to sleep, and has been reading and meditating in the extra hours he finds himself awake.

Ballentine said that he is certainly no fan of incarceration. But, given the health care in the jail and efforts underway to try to keep the virus out, “to me,” he said, “it’s the safest place to be.”



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TOWN from page A1

emergencies which may disrupt normal board of health operations.”

The COOP, which fortuitously was updated last year, estimates that “in a pandemic flu, 40% of the population may become ill,” and that health department “staff and members will be among them.” It established a plan for leadership succession from the board of health itself to the health director to the emergency manager, and prioritizes “essential functions” for the board.

Prior to his leave of absence, Wasuk told the *Reporter* that the department would prioritize inspections based on their relationship to the COVID-19 outbreak, an approach Boutwell has described as “triage.”

Health department clerk Anne Stuart said she had been getting “plenty of calls,” but so far it was “business as usual” for the department. “We still have to deal with that couch on Sixth Street, and those beaver permits,” she said. Landlords are responsible for furniture placed in front of their property, and residents must apply to the board to remove beaver dams flooding their property.

Town nurse Cheryl Volpe, who works with the health department, will be available at her office Mondays and Fridays in addition to her regular hours on Wednesday afternoons. Like other town employees, Volpe will not meet with residents directly, but will answer phone calls and make referrals.

The response of town departments to the COVID-19 emergency varies widely depending on the services they provide. All are currently closed to the public, but attempting to implement necessary services, and can be contacted by residents over the telephone, through the internet, and via a drop box in the vestibule of town hall.

“Non-essential” meetings have been canceled, and essential ones may take place remotely. Planning and implementation of scheduled construction projects, some funded by time-sensitive grants, continues.

The *Reporter* asked officials in key departments how they were faring in the early stages of the emergency. Here is a summary of their responses.

Council on Aging

The Council on Aging, primarily through the Gill-Montague Senior Center on Sixth Street in Turners Falls, provides “referral, outreach, nutrition and health services in cooperation with other town departments and area agencies.” The senior center is currently closed, but director Roberta Potter is at the facility “taking phone calls and returning emails” from seniors seeking information and assistance. She urged people who need help to call (413) 863-9357 or email coa@montague-ma.gov.

“Right now the situation is very fluid,” she said, urging seniors to stay at home and call if they need referrals for services or supplies.

Police Department

According to Montague police chief Chris Williams, his department is providing “essential services,” with patrols and responses to calls to the department at the normal level. Williams said that on Monday, for example, police responded to a domestic dispute and a major car accident, and took a man with outstanding warrants into custody. (The individual said he was sick, and was taken to the hospital.)

The only service limitation Williams mentioned is that his department would only respond to “life-threatening” medical emergency calls, leaving non-emergency calls to the Turners Falls fire department ambulance. “People are getting emergency medical service,” he said.

Residents seeking to speak with someone at the department can be met in the front foyer of the safety complex on Turners Falls Road, but should try to reach them by telephone. This does not include emergency calls, which should still be made over the 911 network.

Town Treasurer

One of the busiest departments in town is the town treasurer, particularly because it receives payments for property taxes, excise taxes, and sewer bills. These can be made online or at the drop box in the town hall foyer.

Treasurer Eileen Seymour said the biggest problem she faces is cash payment. She says that “there is no way of verifying the amount” if the resident paying the bill and the office clerk are not both present during the transaction. A sign in the foyer warns residents not to pay in cash.

Another key function of the treasurer’s office is short- and long-term bonding. Several key long-term bonds were recently approved by the selectboard, and none are planned over the next month. Short-term bonds, which maintain the town’s cash flow between tax seasons, should not be necessary until the fall.

Town Clerk

“It’s tough not being able to meet with people face to face,” town clerk Deb Bourbeau told the *Reporter*. “We get lots of foot traffic, and everyone wants instant gratification.”

Bourbeau’s office issues dog and marriage licenses and birth certificates, organizes elections and town meetings, issues and reviews petitions for candidates for office, and posts meetings under the Open Meeting Law – just to name a few activities. Like other town departments, the clerk’s office is answering questions over the phone, issuing and receiving forms online and in the drop box.

Nomination papers for the annual town election can still be picked up by March 26, and still have to be dropped off with signatures by March 30. Bourbeau said these dates follow state law and regulations, although it is not clear if these will be modified by the governor.

As of press time, Montague still plans to hold a town meeting on May 2 and an annual election on May 18, though those dates should probably be considered provisional at this point. While the annual meeting is set by town bylaw for the first Saturday in May, meetings have been continued to June in the past.

As far as the town election is concerned, Bourbeau said that “I am happy that we are far enough from there that we may not have to cancel it.” But that was yesterday.

Parks and Recreation

As of the writing, the parks and rec offices in Unity Park are closed, though director John Dobosz is responding to inquiries from the public. Dobosz told us on Wednesday that as of now, all the town’s parks and playgrounds are open, but those using them need to practice “social distancing,” meaning keep over six feet away from other individuals or families. Dobosz said he believes there needs to be a balance between

**LOOKING BACK:
10 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK**

Here’s the way it was March 25, 2010: News from the Montague Reporter’s archive.

**Governor Patrick Builds
Bridges In Montague**

Governor Deval Patrick came to town on Friday to tout his administration’s travel and tourism initiatives, and got detoured by a one-lane bridge.

The roundtable discussion at the Great Falls Discovery Center was intended to give an opportunity for a dozen Franklin County tourism industry leaders to hear about efforts to make Massachusetts a four-season destination for regional and international travel and commerce.

But as he shook hands and made the rounds, Patrick heard from Montague officials and residents about their fears that decades of state investment in the revitalization of downtown Turners Falls are on the line as the pending four year reconstruction of the Turners Falls-Gill Bridge – and its result-

ing traffic detours – gets underway. “Couldn’t you have a light in the middle of the bridge?” mused the governor.

**Ten-Year-Old Police Officer
Can’t Easily Jump, Will Retire**

Top of the Montague selectboard’s agenda Monday night was discussion of the planned retirement of the Montague Police Department’s faithful “K-9” Kyra.

Ten years old now, Kyra is beginning to show her age, slowing down a little and not easily making the jumps she used to, reports Officer John Dempsey, her trainer.

Chief Ray Zukowski asked board members to authorize the department to begin the search for a replacement, with a plan to bring on a new dog who meets with Kyra’s as well as their own approval, and train the animal over the next six months, at which point Kyra will step down.

Cost for a new dog is substantial, as much as \$6,500, as there is over 240 hours in training.

social distancing and healthy activities.

The prognosis for spring activities is uncertain. The department’s website says that “all MRPD programs, events and services are suspended until further notice.” However, Dobosz said that final decisions on the April 11 Easter Egg hunt at Unity Park, as well as the T-Ball and Rookie Baseball programs at the end of the month, have not been made. The March meeting of the parks and rec oversight board was canceled, but no decision has been made concerning its monthly meeting.

For more information, check the department’s page on the town website or call (413) 863-3216.

Planning Department

Montague’s planning department oversees a broad range of activities including permitting for small- and large-scale construction projects, bidding and oversight of grant-funded construction, and the activities of the RiverCulture program.

Ramsey said that as of March 25, all key grant-funded projects starting this spring and summer are moving forward. The four Complete Streets projects, including the Montague Center sidewalk project, are slated to begin “late this week or next week.” HM Nunes and Sons Construction of Ludlow has integrated a “COVID plan” into its contract with the town.

Similarly, the Millers Falls Riverfront Trails project is slated to begin next week. A contract for hazardous materials abatement at the former Strathmore Mill complex will be awarded next week, and must be completed by June 30.

According to RiverCulture director Suzanne LoManto, all spring events her program helps to sponsor have been canceled until next fall. Summer and fall events, such as the Soap Box Derby in September, are still on, but “we are keeping an eye on the situation.” Like other town officials, LoManto stressed that the future is uncertain, but that “the fall could be really packed.”

Building Department

Several years ago the town

Library Department

The three Montague libraries are closed to the public but continue to be staffed, according to head librarian Linda Hickman. Hickman said staff will be able to answer telephone inquiries and will help residents order e-books to read online.

Staffing will include working from home and, on a “staggered” basis, at the libraries themselves. “We still want to process books as they come in,” she said, “so we do not have to deal with boxes and boxes of books when we reopen.”

Town Accountant

Carolyn Olsen, the town accountant, has been in her office, processing funds for local operations and planning the FY’21 budget in conjunction with the finance committee, selectboard, and town administrator.

At a joint meeting of the fin com and selectboard on Wednesday, 24 “money articles” were approved for the annual town meeting warrant. These included a town operating budget of \$10,527,445 to fund town departments; the budgets of the water pollution control facility and Turners Falls Airport; assessments from the Gill-Montague Regional School District and Franklin County Technical School; and a variety of capital projects.

Nearly all the articles passed unanimously. The longest discussion involved proposals to reduce a \$42,762 funding shortfall. This was addressed by a proposal from fin com chair Jen Audley to redirect lease payments from the Kearsarge Solar Company originally destined for the capital stabilization funds.

The meeting did not discuss the status of the annual town meeting, which is scheduled for May 2, but Audley agreed to write the annual fin com report and distribute it for member comment to be prepared for that date.

Water Pollution Control Facility

The Water Pollution Control Facility (WPCF) – the town’s wastewater treatment system – is in a state of transition with a new director, Chelsey Little, set to take over the plant at the end of March. Until then, interim superintendent Kevin Boissonnault and former superintendent Bob Trombley are at the helm.

Trombley said the plant is still operating as normal, but making an aggressive effort to stagger staff time so workers are not in the same place at the same time.

Trombley emphasized that residents should avoid flushing products like paper towels and wipes, which will be more heavily used in the coming weeks, into the sewer system. He said he had not yet seen evidence of an increase in these products coming into the plant, but that staff would be closely monitoring inflow.

Trombley said there are varying opinions, “depending on what research you read,” on whether wastewater can carry COVID-19. He said the virus might not be able to “survive” in the system. According to a recent posting on the site of the federal Centers for Disease Control,

“At this time, the risk of transmission of the virus that causes COVID-19 through sewerage systems is thought to be low. Although transmission of COVID-19 through sewage may be possible, there is no evidence to date that this has occurred. This guidance will be updated as necessary as new evidence is assessed.”



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Amidst Crisis, Staff Work To Keep a City Running

By SAMANTHA WOOD

GREENFIELD – This week brought a new stay-at-home order from governor Charlie Baker’s office, shutting down businesses deemed nonessential, and advising those that do keep running to take extra safety precautions for workers to reduce the risk of spreading the virus.

The mayor’s office and city departments are coordinating the emergency response with area towns, staying up to date on infection rates even as testing is still scarce, adapting to changing state protocols, and keeping the city running.

Last Friday, mayor Roxann Wedegartner announced at a press conference outside the John Zon Community Center that in response to the coronavirus pandemic the building would serve as an Emergency Operations Center (EOC).

The city sent out a press release this week asking for donations of personal protective equipment (PPE). One local resident arranged for a large donation of hand sanitizer, but there is still a shortage of safety equipment.

Testing for the virus has increased, but is still in short supply. “It is difficult for our first responders to get tested,” the mayor said in an interview this week. “In my mind, that’s critical.”

Just keeping a city running in the midst of a pandemic has required swift and creative action from every department.

“We rolled out a temporary work-from-home telecommuting plan for the staff a couple weeks ago,” said chief of staff Danielle Letour-

neau. “Most of our employees are essential, and those that aren’t, some of them have been reassigned to help with the emergency.”

For instance, a parking enforcement attendant is providing security and safety enforcement at the EOC, to reduce the risk of infection to the people from multiple departments working there. Greenfield Recreation employees, who would normally be running after-school programs, are setting up emergency childcare for first responders.

“Everybody who is employed by the city right now is still getting paid,” said Letourneau. “Most of them are still working their full schedule in some capacity, many remotely.”

“The EOC is in Greenfield; we are the biggest community in Franklin County, and they are working with other towns,” she continued. “So something like that call for PPE: we may be giving them to our first responders, but we also may be giving them to the hospital or Gill-Montague or to Deerfield, so we are all working together.”

When asked about the numbers of confirmed cases and test results reported by the state for Franklin County, Wedegartner said, “I know it’s concerning for the public that they don’t think they’re getting the right numbers. There’s still kind of a lag time – as far as I’m concerned, too much of one, in the DPH numbers that are released at 4 o’clock.” Letourneau reiterated that because the county has not yet seen widespread testing, the number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 is expected to rise as more patients are tested.

Wedegartner said one local manufacturer, BETE Fog Nozzle, reached out to her office



The John Zon Center on Pleasant Street has been repurposed as an Emergency Operations Center.

this week to discuss plans for reconfiguring shifts and allowing some employees to work from home, and two other companies have asked for help interpreting the state’s new guidelines designating essential and non-essential businesses.

Wedegartner said she expects her office to offer more such guidance in the days ahead, but city officials aren’t getting advance warning of the governor’s ongoing changes, so they have to adjust as they come.

The mayor praised city employees across the departments and her staff. “I am continually amazed, not only at what we’ve got done as a city... to just make processes and systems that allow us to function, such as the paid time off policy and the emergency work from home, and getting the community response line up. I think in many ways we are so far ahead of towns in the eastern part of the state, because I know, I am on the calls with the mayors.”

Legislators and the governor “are doing their part,” Wedegartner said, by filing bills to provide assistance to municipalities and schools. The mayor says she is waiting for legislation “to give us further relief. There’s one I think [that] was already filed this week with regard to budget and scheduling. But I am hoping that the legislature works very quickly through that.”

While COVID-19 may be dominating the news, the mayor is balancing emergency and routine municipal responsibilities. “I have the finance director here,” she said at the end of an interview, “because, yes, we do have to get the budget out.”

Greenfield’s coronavirus information number is (413) 775-6411. The line is staffed from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, in order to keep the public informed about resources related to the crisis, as well as opportunities to volunteer and make donations.

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WEST ALONG THE RIVER TWILIGHT ALONG THE RIVER

*Well, two things are certain –
The sun will rise and the sun
Will set.
Most everything else is up for grabs.*

– Charles Wright

By DAVID BRULE

ERVINGSIDE – A glorious day came to a close, in spite of this time of fear and uncertainty. On Sunday, we walked in the sunshine of the open fields of Deerfield, my old friend, the dog and I, with only occasional crows as further company. Those crows in many ways were a familiar reminder. There is comfort in wild things, a reassurance that somehow it will work out alright. The sun felt good, and the sun will rise again tomorrow, as always, at least we can count on that.

Yet tomorrow, the weatherman is promising snow, of all things. Some of us have been waiting for snow all winter, and now it's spring, and the snow comes! This month of March has been a tease, not spring, not winter. Neither dog nor wolf, as some cultures would say.

I'm personally pleased that not many winged migrants have arrived, so they'll not be affected by the bad weather a-rising. Redwings are already here and can handle a minor setback, but our phoebes would likely suffer. Fortunately they haven't yet ventured this far north. Anyway, we've got other things to worry about rather than the plight of phoebes. Yet it does help to find some solace that they will be all right when they arrive near Patriots' Day in April; it's a help to take your mind off other matters going on in the human world once in a while.

This evening, the sun drops low, and stars will be ready to show themselves soon. Out here on the back porch, a chill glass of wine brings a simple comfort, takes the edge off latent tension that lingered in spite of the walk in the sunshine. Late robins call in the dusk, so late even that the cardinals have ceased

their constant song earlier and have reluctantly relinquished favored daytime perches near supplies of sunflowers. They lilt off for the sheltering pines.

Stark branches of the towering grandfather oaks at the edge of this ancient floodplain terrace are silhouetted against the sky, gnarled fingers reach up in something like graceful symmetry. Unlike the early swelling buds of the maple branches, the oaks will begin to bud later on.

At 38 degrees and still falling, a chill is settling along my river. No wood frogs call tonight, it's just too cold to be out courting. Last night and the night before, it was a different story. They spent the last few days frolicking and copulating in the pond in the sunshine, splashing and singing, double-decking and spawning a new generation of this batrachian population.

Tonight that ancient pond on the flood plain is quiet. Egg clusters, the aftermath of the froggy orgy already float in a jelly mass, soon to be tadpoles. They are anchored to branches afloat on the pool where I tossed them just for that reason. Can't stop myself from trying to help out, even though they've gotten along fine without me for millennia.

No woodcock calls either. He likely had some fun last night though. He started calling and sky-dancing in the early twilight. Maybe the courageous little fellow got lucky, impressing some demure female who was watching his cock-of-the-walk strutting and daring-do twitter-flight one hundred feet up in the air. But that was last night's fun, not so tonight.

We are still waiting for the shad-blow to whiten, to make ghostly, hazy white shadows along the shore, to bring the shad back. That's maybe another two weeks off into our future.

The river still does rush by, as it has for 10,000 years. That's reassuring too. Somewhere, in the see **WEST ALONG** page B3



American woodcock (Scolopax minor).

Above: The view of Unity Park – and across to Riverside – from Prospect Street in Turners Falls.

GREAT FALLS APPLE COLUMN

By ANNABEL LEVINE

TURNERS FALLS – When once the coming of spring may have heralded a collective sigh of relief from a still shivering New England populace, this year spring comes with its own cosmic shiver, a global pandemic unprecedented in scope. I can't say what is to come, but for now I'm working on processing what is, and to no surprise of any regular Great Falls Apple Column readers, my mind keeps circling back to growing food.

For now, it looks like food supply chains are active. Grocery stores are open, with food on the shelves. Local farms are taking to social media to show off greenhouses full of trays of tiny vegetable starts. With the news whipping by at a mile a minute, I can't help but hear whispers of my inner worrywart asking if this stability will last.

One day last week I put all of my news-giving electronics out of sight and took out my notebook to try and process some of my anxiety about what's going on. I opened to a fresh page and found myself sketching my yard, labelling the perennials I already have growing. It wasn't enough, I thought. I want to start a vegetable garden.

I chose the sunniest spot in the backyard, an area neglected year after year in favor of tending the perennial clusters that line the edge of the property. I used a shovel to



Lawn becomes garden in this columnist's backyard.

outline a rectangular plot, measuring about 7 by 17 feet when measured with my size 11 boots. I don't have it in my budget to buy soil, so instead I just used my shovel to dig under the sod and flipped it over, continuing until the whole bed had been flipped. I blanketed the freshly uncovered dirt with last year's maple leaves, and now it sits, waiting to be planted, under a few inches of

a surprise March snow. I am not alone in turning towards growing food to deal with global insecurities. Major propaganda pushes during both World Wars advocated starting "Victory Gardens" at home. Growing your own food meant farms could focus on growing food for the troops overseas, and food from the gardens see **APPLE CORPS** page B3



By MISHEL IXCHEL

TURNERS FALLS – Things have shifted in what feels like a blink of an eye.

These days, it's impossible to answer the question "how are you?" with a mere "great, thanks and you?" Instead, I find myself choosing my words carefully when answering that question, because the truth is that it's been up and down, and everywhere in between.

Every day has brought new adjustments. As a healthy, functioning adult, I can barely wrap my head around all that is going on. Harder still has been communicating some sense of all this to my four-year-old. It was only initially that he succumbed to boredom, unable to grasp why we couldn't play with other children. He now seems to under-

Silver Linings

stand the need to isolate ourselves, and has adapted in a way that I'm only just beginning to.

Of vital importance to me has been to not succumb to the collective fear. I certainly have allowed it to take me into some dark places that have felt almost paralyzing. And yet, my years in the health and wellness industry have exposed me to enough teachers and tools to understand that while it's important to feel my feelings, it is equally – if not more – important to move through and not to dwell in them. Time and time again, I've managed to pull myself back up into the light.

Because, as they say, life goes on. I still have a child to raise and bills to pay.

At the time that I am writing this, it feels like the dust has somewhat settled. It's settled enough to see somewhat clearly and take a few steps forward. Mostly, it's stirred my creativity and innovation, because collapsing into fear is simply not an option.

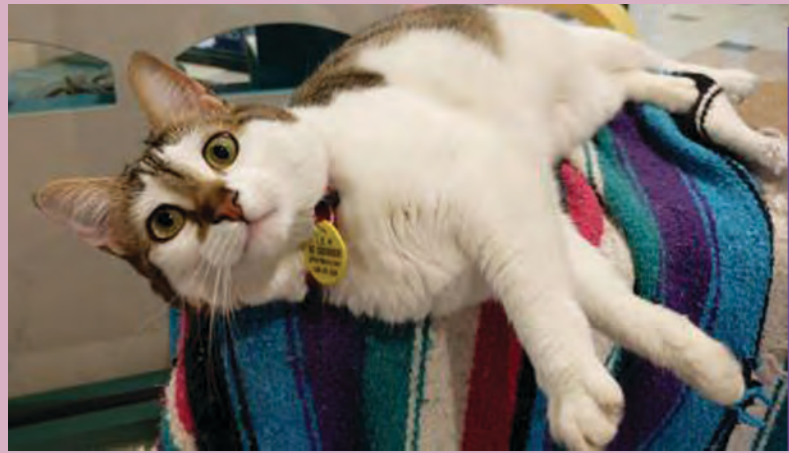
In the past, I have shared aspects of my co-parenting journey, in particular, our various attempts to have some kind of routine. Ever since our son was born, we've been winging it, and our lives have been non-stop changing for the last four years.

This whole thing hit just as we were beginning to carve out a flow. We recently pulled our child out of daycare, and while I've toyed with the idea of homeschooling, I know I am definitely not one of those moms who can manage what feels like the impossible task of having her child around 24/7 while managing a business and carving out alone time.

And yet, here we are. We started our homeschooling yesterday, with a schedule and everything. To my wild surprise, it was the missing ingredient in our lives. Our day flowed, and by the evening, we had managed to do more in one day than we ever have before.

I am surprised by this, because even in the best of times, I've felt see **INDIE MAMA** page B3

Pet of the Week



“BELLA BEEP”

Bella Beep's previous home described her as a playful, one-person cat. She would like to be in a quiet home where she can be the only pet. She lived with adults but was not a fan of the kids. She is accustomed to living indoors. Adoption staff can explain further about her specific behavioral needs.

Here's the latest from the Dakin Humane Society website:

“In an effort to consolidate staffing and focus on animal care needs, we are temporarily closing

our Adoption Centers to visitors and volunteers. Animals are still available for adoption by appointment only. Please call (413) 781-4000. Leave your name, pet's information and a callback number. We will return calls on a first come-first served basis within 48 hours. Finding homes for our current population of animals is a critical need as pets arrive under emergency situations.”

See www.dakinhumane.org for more information.

Remembering George Wrightson

By JEFF WEBSTER

TUCSON, AZ – In June of 1965, as the band played Pomp and Circumstance for the final time that year, I marched out of the Turners Falls High School auditorium in my blue cap and gown. Principal George Wrightson stood at the podium watching (I want to inject the adverb wistfully there, but I cannot report that as fact) until the last of my classmates was out of sight. It was, in a sense, his graduation, too.

Mr. Wrightson was the principal of Turners Falls High School for 27 years, from 1938 to 1965. Ours was the last class he would guide through those confusing and hormonally charged years. My three sisters and my brother had all attended TFHS during his tenure. I was the last in the family to leave the building.

He was a very dignified man who exuded authority. Being around him, you just knew he was in charge and more than up to the task of dealing with a bunch of kids trying to figure out their place in the world.

It was not much of a secret that I was not a good student. I enjoyed some classes, but all in all, I was disengaged during high school. (I did make the honor roll one time after my then-girlfriend read me the Riot Act.)

So, even though I had not seriously considered college, I had taken the SAT because Mr. Frederick Oakes had encouraged me to. He had told me about a program at Greenfield Community College that would guarantee my admission if I took the SAT and other tests before and after attending a summer program at the original Federal Street campus.

One day, while waiting for my SAT results, I was called to the principal's office. When you were unexpectedly summoned to Mr. Wrightson's office, it was not usually a good thing – at least from my perspective.

On that Spring day of my senior year, I stood before his desk as he retrieved my test score from a folder. “Jeffrey,” he said, “I don't know what you have been doing these last four years, but your test scores do not reflect your work here. Your scores are much higher than your grades would have indicated.”

Okay, despite the quotation marks, I'm obviously paraphrasing a bit. But that was the gist of it. He handed me the scores and I thanked him as I left. I do not remember ever having the opportunity to speak to him after that day.

My only interaction with Mr. Wrightson outside of school was a tragic one. I believe it was in my sophomore year. As I recall, a friend and I had ridden our bicycles from downtown Turners to the old pumping station covered bridge in Greenfield and back. I was pretty tired when I came home. As soon as I walked in, my mother said a classmate had called to say that visiting hours for Mr. Wrightson's recently deceased wife were being held that evening and that she was trying to get our class to attend.

I felt compelled to go. We filed past the open casket and I shook Mr. Wrightson's hand. Even though I am



Principal Wrightson, as he appeared in the TFHS Class of 1965 yearbook.

now a hospice volunteer and have attended many funerals and wakes since then, that moment has stayed with me all these years. It was the first time I had seen a dead body.

Not having been an athlete in high school (or at any time since), I was unaware of Mr. Wrightson's intense interest in basketball. I recently read that in 1967, he was presented the Harold M. Gore Award “in recognition of his years of influence in perpetuating the philosophy of the Small High School Basketball Tournament and in acknowledgment of his contribution to high standards of schoolboy athletics by his adherence to those sterling qualities that made him an outstanding educator in western Massachusetts.”

Even though he could come across as stern, I felt Mr. Wrightson was approachable. One time, we were filing out of an assembly just prior to Christmas break. As I went past his podium, I said, “Merry Christmas, Mr. Wrightson.” He replied in kind.

A classmate right behind me said, “I never could have done that.” This was a young woman who was a good student, someone I thought of as confident and poised. I reflected on that for a while, realizing that some students' respect of him was based on fear.

Despite my poor grades and shaky standing in high school, I respected Mr. Wrightson. He was a gentleman, always well-dressed, and fair-minded.

It has been 54 years since I left TFHS, but I was immediately reminded of Mr. Wrightson when we moved into our current home in the Sonoran Desert south of Tucson, Arizona. The view from our kitchen window is of the Santa Rita mountain range. The tallest peak, at about 9,500 feet, is Mount Wrightson.

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

Eggtooth Offers Artist Grants

Eggtooth Productions offers a Request for Proposals to local artists from Franklin and Hampshire counties. Eight grants of \$250 each will be offered. These works, curated by the board of directors of Eggtooth Productions, will be presented online via Facebook, Instagram, and www.eggtooth.org, with the possibility of wider distribution.

Eggtooth anticipates this being the first commission in a series. All proposals are due on Monday, April 6 by 5 p.m. Selections will be made the following week.

Eggtooth seeks new artwork that may be shared online and that responds to the current pandemic. This includes theater, dance, visual art, audio art, multimedia, animation, video, or any other form. “In this unprecedented time, we encourage experimentation and innovation. Priority will be given to work that might be shared with a wider audience,” reads a press release from the organization.

Formats accepted are: Visual art (.jpgs of 300 dpi or greater); video art (maximum length of 10 minutes, presented via Vimeo or Youtube); spoken word, literary arts, poetry and short stories (no longer than 1,000 words).

Please direct questions or submissions to Linda McInerney at lmciner@gmail.com.

LAVA Center Continues Online Open Mic Project

GREENFIELD – While we're flattening the curve and staying out of the public realm, let's keep being creative!

The LAVA Center's first Online Open Mic went live on Wednesday, March 25: www.localaccess.org/online-open-mic/

The artists in the first event are Paul Richmond, Nina Gross, Lindy Whiton, John Lentz Trio, Jan Maher, Michael Nix, Trena Loftin, Tina Louise, Samantha Wood, Joshua Daniel Hershfield, Amie Hyson, Vanessa Query, One-Word Story Project, Zoe Lemos, Jessica Beck, Phil Ragland, and s. g. collins.

The next two events will take place on Tuesday, April 14 and Tuesday, April 28. For details on submitting, visit www.localaccess.org/submit-to-our-online-open-mic/

Submission guidelines: Take a video of yourself performing a song, reading, or whatever you'd like. You can also send creative short video projects. It should be 5 minutes or less, and family-friendly. Include your name and any other information you wish to share with the public (short bio, introduction, link, etc.).

For more details, visit localaccess.org or our Facebook page, www.facebook.com/theLAVACenter.

The LAVA Center is an arts incubator, black box theater, and community space in Greenfield, MA. It is located on the first floor of 324 Main St., in the heart of Greenfield's Crossroads Cultural District. It is run by Local Access to Valley Arts, a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit corporation.

Senior Center Activities

MARCH 30 to APRIL 3

GILL and MONTAGUE

The Gill Montague Senior Center is closed and will reopen when advised by state and local authorities that it is safe to do so. This measure is taken not lightly but with the utmost concern for the most vulnerable in our community.

The Council on Aging staff will be available for referrals and information from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., Mondays through Thursdays, at (413) 863-9357 by telephone, and coa@montague-ma.gov by email.

ERVING

Erving Senior Center director Paula Betters writes:

“We will be closed for the next three weeks. All programs are canceled or postponed. With that said, I will be here or at least checking my messages daily. I want anyone to call me and leave a message if they have any questions or concerns regarding food or other services. I will call them back and if we can help with services of any kind we will do so. I am working with other agencies so we can be sure to keep our seniors healthy & safe.”

Paula can be reached at (413) 423-3649 or paula-betters@erving-ma.gov.

LEVERETT

Leverett senior activities are currently canceled. Further updates are being distributed via TTY telephone and email. For more information, contact the Leverett COA at (413) 548-1022 x 5, or coa@leverett.ma.us.

WENDELL

Wendell senior activities have been canceled. The Wendell Senior Center is closed. The Wendell Council on Aging will continue to provide transportation for essential medical visits if volunteers are available. For more information or for rides, call Nancy Spittle at (978) 544-6760.

GROCERY SHOPPERS!:

Stop & Shop is open only to customers age 60 and over from 6 to 7:30 a.m. daily. Green Fields Market is open from 9 to 10 a.m. for those over 60, pregnant, or immunocompromised.

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INDIE MAMA from page B1

utterly defeated by all the juggling that I have to do. Accepting the fullness of our new reality has brought me to the one thing I've been longing for years: routine.

Although the word "routine" doesn't quite resonate, it feels like we finally have encountered a "way of being" that allows for ritual. A way of living that allows for fine tuning, for improving, for showing up with presence and reverence.

One of my mentors recently shared the key to her productivity: working in 40-minute blocks, and taking 15-minute breaks in between each task. I've carried this into our new way of being, because in the past, when I would sit down to work, this often included having all sorts of browsers open, and my attention would be spread out all over the place. Now, whether it's sitting down to teach my child how to write the letter "A," or hunkering down in quiet time, the 40 minutes allows us to do exactly one task.

One of the downsides of being a single parent has been the loneliness that comes with the territory, such as not having someone to share the tough moments with, as well as those little gems that surface every now and again. In the past, I managed this loneliness by planning constant playdates and outings. My lifeline to deal with this loneliness has come in the form of meditation and spending time in nature, but mostly, it's been the countless hours I've spent on the phone with people. Connecting, processing, and sharing. Knowing that amidst this loneliness, I am not alone. And trusting that, in a way none of us can comprehend yet, there is gold to be mined in all of this.

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.



WEST ALONG from page B1

woods, a streetlight flickers on. Duck is falling as fast as the temperature out here. Time to get up and light a fire in the 1912 Glenwood C.

But just now, in spite of all my expectations, a far-off, faint nasal peent call echoes out over the birch and alder pebble-stubble pasture.

That plucky little woodcock is at it again, courting in the cold, and ever hopeful. He'll resist the coming brief snowfall, as we will resist our own coming challenge.

Everything is up for grabs, indeed. But who knows? We all just might make it.



APPLE CORPS from page B1

own food meant farms could focus on growing food for the troops overseas, and food from the gardens would strengthen the workers left on the homefront. In the current time it is not the troops we are worried about feeding, but rather those of us who rely on store shelves being stocked to get fed. If you can grow your own, you free up food on the market shelf for someone who can't.

To some readers, those of you who know intimately the planting of seeds as a natural consequence of the turning of the seasons, I may be preaching to the choir. But to those with space to grow in the ground or in a container, even if you've never thought of yourself as a gardener, or fear that your thumb is anything but green, I want you to consider growing some of your own food.

There are a myriad of benefits I could try to use to convince you that starting your own garden is a good idea. You save money! You grow an abundance of exactly what you like! You can't get any fresher than just picked from your backyard!

But really, at base, the Great Falls Apple Corps is advocating for you to grow a garden because we don't want anyone to go hungry. If there

is anything we can do ourselves to offset that possibility, I think it's well worth the dirt under your fingernails.

With an abundance of food grown by your hands, you can feed yourself now while putting up food for the winter. You can share excess with neighbors and friends, or put a table out along the sidewalk and give away your produce for free. You can donate produce to the Survival Center on Fourth Street, which will take any amount of produce donations, even from a backyard garden.

We understand that not everyone has the resources to plant their own food, but we don't want that to stop anyone from getting their hands dirty. If it is land you lack, get in touch, and we can try to connect you with a place to grow. If you need seeds, we have a variety of donated seeds to give away. If it's knowledge you need, GFAC can offer as much advice as you need. Reach out to us; we're all in this together.

You can contact the Great Falls Apple Corps via Facebook and Instagram or via email at greatfallsapplecorps@gmail.com. Our next meeting, conducted remotely, will be on Wednesday, April 1 at 6:30 p.m. Drop us a line or check out our social media streams for more information.



HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MONTAGUE POLICE LOG

Dirtbikes And Airsoft Guns; Dog Disputes; Idling Trains And Leaf Blowers; Brush Fire; Theft; Locked Gate; Furniture In The Road

Saturday, 3/14

11:30 a.m. Report of people riding dirtbikes or ATVs in the area of Randall Wood Drive; advised ongoing issue. Referred to an officer.

4:19 p.m. Caller from Randall Wood Drive inquiring about trees being dropped in the road. Advised caller that an officer had already spoken with these people.

Sunday, 3/15

11:04 a.m. Caller from Lake Pleasant reporting that the train has been idling since last night and is very loud. Caller called Pan Am Railways, who told her that it should be taken care of by tonight. Caller requesting to speak with officer regarding town bylaws. Called Pan Am dispatch, who report that the Hoosac Tunnel is down and that's why trains have been parked in unusual locations. Train should be moved from the area by this evening.

6:08 p.m. Caller from Millers Falls Road reporting a party wearing a black-and-red backpack leaf blower blowing sand and leaves into the road. Officer advised party to keep the debris out of the road as much as possible.

8:36 p.m. Caller from South Ferry Road states that there is a truck running with headlights on parked next to one of his barns; someone is sleeping in the front seat. Caller wants vehicle moved along. Officer reports .146 PBT; vehicle off roadway upon arrival, parked and not running. Two involved parties are taking control of vehicle and driving male party home.

Monday, 3/16

8:23 a.m. Caller from Lake Pleasant reporting that the Pan Am train has been parked on the tracks since Saturday morning and has been idling the whole time. Pan Am advised of complaint. They are unsure when the train will be moved from this location. Inquired about idling; Pan Am reported that if they shut the train down, they will lose the air test which results in

them having to perform a brake check once running again, and that takes up to a few hours. Pan Am also reports that they do not run antifreeze through the train engines, and due to the cold weather, they need to keep trains running in order to prevent issues or damage. Contacted original caller and advised her of this information.

5:17 p.m. Caller from Lake Pleasant states the train is still sitting outside her house idling; requesting that we call the railroad to see if they are able to move the train even a few feet so it is behind the trees, which might help minimize the noise. No response from Pan Am.

Tuesday, 3/17

1:45 a.m. Officer reports damage to the bus stop in front of Food City as well as various signage in the area. Second officer reports it appears that a trash can was thrown through a part of the glass bus stop and smashed the window. Officer advises they have cleaned up the mess left behind.

Wednesday, 3/18

12:49 p.m. Caller from Greenfield Road states that there is a person on a red four-wheeler going up and down the road; operator has no helmet on. Area checked; nothing found.

3:01 p.m. Caller from Millers Falls Road states that someone is burning brush near this location; fire looks unattended and might be spreading. Referred to other agency.

4:23 p.m. Report of 2-car accident near Red Fire North on Federal Street. No injuries. Both vehicles pulled off road.

5:45 p.m. Caller states that there is a brush fire in the area of Turners Falls Road. Shelburne Control toning out Montague Center Fire Department.

Thursday, 3/19

12:13 a.m. Officer out with suspicious vehicle in Millers Falls railyard. Vehicle is secured; appears to be railroad gear in the back; nothing suspicious in the area.

1:17 a.m. Caller from DPW states that they will be out sweeping the area of L Street tonight because they didn't get to it last night. Caller states there are 9-10 cars that they would like moved from the area. Officer advises he has a total of 8 cars on the southern end of L Street. Two vehicles being towed by Rau's (revoked/no insurance). Four vehicles have parking permits and are in the correct location; DPW will work around them.

10:29 a.m. Staff member at Farren Care Center requesting officer respond for a patient who is not listening to staff prompts. Caller later advised that this would not require an officer response.

10:40 a.m. Caller states that there is a large piece of furniture in the middle of Montague City Road. DPW notified.

5:55 p.m. Caller from I Street reports that a male party in the neighborhood keeps coming into his yard; states this has happened about five times now. Caller states that when confronted, the male party stated that he was trying to catch his dog, yet the dog is on a leash. Caller would like an officer to respond; he can point out where the male party lives. Advised of options.

8:55 p.m. Westfield PD called requesting information on a female juvenile who is a Franklin County Technical School student; advise they found her wallet and student ID in a backpack that was in the possession of another male party. Information provided from in-house records. They will be contacting the parents directly.

Friday, 3/20

2:28 p.m. Caller from Fifth Street reporting two other male parties threatening him. Both male parties took off down K Street while caller was on the phone. Took call from another involved party who is looking to speak with an

officer. Officer advised. 2:54 p.m. 911 hangup call; could hear a male and a female party arguing in the background. Officer reports that dispute is only verbal at this time. Involved party was upset that the homeowners put her name on the census. Involved party gone on arrival.

5:09 p.m. Caller requesting officer to let him out of the locked gate on Migratory Way. While caller was on the phone, somebody pulled up behind him and opened the gate for him.

Saturday, 3/21

12:10 a.m. Caller from Millers Falls states that every night when the train comes through, it sounds like they are banging on something or throwing barrels out. Caller states this is an ongoing issue, and was wondering if there is anything we can do to have them do whatever it is in the daytime. Referred to an officer.

12:09 p.m. Caller from Montague City Road wants it on record that her neighbor's dog comes onto her property and nips at her dog. States it is an ongoing issue. She will try to speak with the neighbor again before requesting intervention from police or animal control.

1:34 p.m. Caller from First Street reports two adult males firing a handgun into the woods near her house. Caller reports that the gun is making a clicking sound rather than an actual gunshot sound, but she is still concerned. Officers made contact with two male parties and confirmed that it is an Airsoft gun. Parties moved along.

7:16 p.m. Caller from H Street reports a possible sick squirrel in his driveway. Advised of options.

8:30 p.m. Caller reports that he is in Shelburne Falls in a vehicle driving with someone who is not letting him exit the vehicle, driving erratically. Call transferred to Shelburne Control.

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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

March Poetry Page

Lovesong

When at daybreak the nights for you commence
our phosphorous eyeballs will clamber down the walls, strewing walnuts,
You will toss them aloft and an ocean wave will come coursing in through the window.
Through the translucent floor--our singular shipwreck--we will gaze into the empty room below;
With your walnuts you will furnish it, and for curtains for the windows I will hang your flowing hair,
Someone will arrive, and finally, it will be rented.
Upstairs, we'll return, to drown alone at home.

- Paul Celan
translated by Edouard Roditi
and Christopher Sawyer-Lauçanno

Alone

The black cloud is crawling above me
Splitting the night in two
Because of this loud noise
I cannot hear your steps anymore
Nor mine

The river below
Neither black nor green
Is cramping in wonder
Straining its eyes
Fire is glowing from somewhere
And splashes the horizons

The moon
Not in the river
Not in the cloud
Just a bit closer to you
Covered with blood
With whiteness
Covered with foam
And sets sail
Across a pupil broken in two parts

- Ibrahim Honjo
Vancouver, BC

Virtue Viper

I bare my fangs,
and droplets of virtue glisten;
acid rain
in a bleak terrain
where I lord over
the high ground.
I hiss
a cold, scaly love,
and swallow rats whole.
No one cares more than I
about the evils of the world.
I lash out at them
with forked tongue,
French kiss embrace
for the evils, my lover,
the evils I must eradicate,
and without whom I starve.
My virtue is venom,
hate smelling like cotton candy
in a fun house
of horrors,
where everything is evil
except myself
and all amenable prey.

- Kevin Smith
Turners Falls

When will you show your documents?

Those queuing for aadhar-ration-cards
between thumb-scans and monkey-tricks of servers
who lose their lives - their documents you demand,
When will you show your documents!?

Those to the gallows went smiling for freedom
refusing the martyr's fame,
their history pages you tear,
When will you show your documents!?

Of Taj-Mahal-Char-Minar domes
Red-Fort-Qutub-Minar minarets,
their proofs you demand
When will you show your documents!?

Bootlickers of the British rule,
in their intoxicating hate, you -
a Goebbel's breed - drink blood
When will you show your documents!?

Men lived selling pakoda
and chai in my city, humanity
they didn't sell, dignity they didn't
sell, a concoction of lies they didn't brew.
Tell us, when will you show your documents!?

When thorns pierced, tore, ripped
tyres, tubes which he mended and pumped air
the puncture-man did not sell his identity.
You who sold this country
Tell us, when will you show your documents!?

You who swindled the nation
to whom fake documents mean a trifling
matter must attest at least to humanity.
When will you show your documents!?

- Siraj Bisaralli
Koppal, Karnataka, India
translated from the Kannada by Dhanya Gopal

Contributors' Notes


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

A number of years ago I had the pleasure of being a guest poet at an international poetry festival in India. Among the many poets who read there was Siraj Bisaralli, a young poet from Karnataka, in southwest India. A couple of weeks ago I learned he had been arrested for reading in public a poem critical of the recently passed Citizenship Amendment Act, which discriminates on the basis of religion. Along with the email from another poet whom I had met in India was a translation of this poem, originally written in Kannada for a Kannada-speaking audience, that landed Bisaralli in jail. I am proud to be able to publish it here.

In light of the pandemic we are facing, two poems by distinguished poets seem to address the notion of isolation. The first I recently received from Ibrahim Honjo. Honjo grew up in Herzegovina and published his first book of poems in 1971. Since then he has published 25 more books in his native Serbo-Croatian and seven in English. He has lived in Vancouver since 1995. The second is by Paul Celan (1920-1970), one of the last century's great poetic innovators whose challenging work is often an attempt to dismantle and reinvent the very language of poetry. Although Celan wrote poems mostly in German, his first book of poetry was in Romanian. In the late 1980s Celan's close friend, poet, translator, critic and memoirist Edouard Roditi and I began working on translating Celan's Romanian poems. Sadly, Roditi died before we could complete the work. More than 30 years after Edouard and I embarked on the project, "Lovesong" was published this January by Alyscamps Press, Paris. We thank the editors for permission to reprint.

ALEXANDER ROTONDO PHOTO

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THE GARDENER'S COMPANION

Searching for Some Normalcy



By **LESLIE BROWN**

MONTAGUE CITY – Something is askew these days.

We've had flu epidemics before – swine, bird, and others – but this new coronavirus is something more to be feared.

This virus spreads more readily and can be quite deadly in persons with compromised immune systems. People are told to stay at home, to avoid shaking hands when they do go out, and to keep six feet away from others. Many folks are choosing to wear masks and gloves (if they can find them). Hugging is a thing of the past.

Travel to this country is restricted. There is less interest in going somewhere else.

All this has led to an extreme sense of isolation for some.

I miss my classes at the Y because it has always been a motivator to work out with others, enjoying the social interactions, the new friendships which have been formed. Yes, the comradery.

What a pleasant surprise to receive a call from one of the instruc-

tors inquiring whether we had family supports available to us, and to ask if there was anything we needed.

We have been grateful for the calls made and received from family and friends. We are old-fashioned enough that telephone calls feel that much warmer than emails.

Everything is on hold.

My sister's younger daughter planned to get married in late May and to honeymoon, in all places, with a trip to Disneyland. Of course, now Disneyland is closed, and further, her boyfriend is afraid his large group of friends may not want to attend a large ceremony just now.

Well, they'll just continue living together instead of being able to make the formal commitment they wanted to with friends and family present. Maybe next year.

My nephew's girlfriend is Korean. Her mother is dying of cancer. They went to see her a few months ago, but may or may not be able to return for a funeral.

On the upside, Spring is coming.

The snowdrops my stepdaughter sent to her dad some years ago have bloomed again. The sap is running

and folks are sugaring, apparently having one of the best seasons ever. As soon as I get out and rake the dead leaves out of the garden, it will be time to plant peas.

The daffodils have broken through the softening earth and are budding. The crocuses have poked up in the planters outside.

As we speak, we are planning to do our first charcoal grilling of the season. We have picked up a beautiful steak at Pekarski's smokehouse. We went for real bacon and left with a steak because their supplier had no more bacon.

We'll have to settle for store-brand bacon for now. We can do that. It's no great hardship.

Despite the national gloom exacerbated by the media and the presidential attempts to present a positive view from behind his well-made-up face, we will survive. As a people, we are strong and willing to take on challenges as they come.

Enjoy the glory of this new season – sunny days followed by days of sleet and cold rains – it is still spring as we know it in New England. We welcome it with open arms.

Montague Community Television News

Make Your Own Video For Local Access TV!

By **MICHAEL SMITH**

Along with most businesses, MCTV will encourage people to stay at home and limit visits to the station. Keep an eye on our Facebook page for updated station hours.

One way to connect with your community from the confines of your quarantine is to make videos! It's easy to film a tutorial, a public service announcement, a story, or a hike by using your phone, computer, or one of MCTV's cameras, which are sanitized and available for pickup!

Any editing can be done by MCTV staff editors, or you can try it at home. Email hannahbrookman@gmail.com for editing assistance or

filmmaking questions.

Residents of Montague can find MCTV on Channel 17, and the MCTV Vimeo page is available online. Under our "Latest Videos" tab on montaguetv.org you can check out the finance committee meeting which took place on March 18, as well as video from Gill's selectboard meeting which took place March 16.

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 or infomontaguetv@gmail.com.

Our office hours are 10 a.m. through 4 p.m., Mondays through Fridays. We'd love to work with you!

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