

# The Montague Reporter

YEAR 18 – NO. 30

also serving Irving, Gill, Leverett and Wendell

\$1

EDITOR@MONTAGUEREPORTER.ORG

THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES

MAY 28, 2020

MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD

## Board Lands on High School Parking Lot for Town Meeting

By JEFF SINGLETON

The Montague selectboard, after nearly a month of tortuous twists and turns, has decided to hold the June 13 annual town meeting in the east parking lot of Turners Falls High school. The decision was made at a joint meeting with the town board of health on Tuesday, after being presented with a map of the proposed setup by town administrator Steve Ellis.

A poll of town meeting members seemed to opt for an online virtual meeting, but pending state legislation allowing such a meeting has not yet passed, and the idea was met with

skepticism from the selectboard, and their initial decision made weeks later was to hold the meeting in the high school gymnasium.

Negative public reaction caused the two boards last week to cancel the gym decision, and opt for an outdoor location “to be determined.” Tuesday was nearly the last opportunity for the board to determine the meeting’s exact location in order to place it on the posted warrant and mail it to town meeting members.

Ellis’s map of the parking lot, which is between the football field and the high school, showed enough space to seat 100 people

see MONTAGUE page A7

## State’s First Phase of Reopening Includes Recreational Cannabis

By ISABEL KOYAMA

**TURNERS FALLS** – As certain businesses open with strict modifications during “phase one” of a four-phase reopening plan outlined by the state, Massachusetts’ cannabis industry has reopened to recreational customers as of Monday, May 25.

Of the 11 states where marijuana is fully legalized, Massachusetts is the only state in which adult-use recreational sales were deemed “non-essen-

tial” during the last two months.

An article in the *Boston Globe* dated May 18 reported that initially, Governor Charlie Baker expressed concern that dispensaries would draw out-of-state customers, thereby increasing possible spread of COVID-19. This decision has since received considerable push-back from the cannabis industry, that argued many recreational consumers may be using marijuana to

see CANNABIS page A6



Deb Cloutier staffs the pickup booth outside at 253 Farmacy, an adult-use cannabis farm and retail store in Turners Falls. The facility opened last spring in a former Hallmark Imaging complex beside the airport industrial park.

LEVERETT SELECTBOARD

## Leverett Plans Small, Short, Town Meeting In School Lot

By JERRI HIGGINS

The Leverett selectboard met Tuesday night through the GoTo-Meeting audio platform with the main agenda item being the fast-approaching annual town meeting scheduled for Saturday, June 20, from 9 a.m. to noon, with discussion about prioritizing certain warrant items to streamline the meeting as much as possible, following Massachusetts’ COVID-19 guidelines.

A dangerous dog hearing was also high on the meeting’s agenda, with the board ruling that two dogs be euthanized after an attack on Juggler Meadow Road.

Town administrator Marjorie McGinnis and selectboard member Tom Hankinson will schedule a site visit at Leverett Elementary School with town clerk Lisa Stratford and moderator Larry Farber to choose which parking lot at the school, the

north or the south, will work best for the town meeting.

A public address system will be rented, costing approximately \$270, and the town will use a borrowed 20-foot-square canopy tent that the town fire and police department will help set up.

Discussion centered on Massachusetts’ best practices for COVID-19 safety at town meetings. Masks will be distributed to all who need them, and the board is considering renting a high-gain “boom” microphone, which allows sound pickup further away from the microphone, or using disinfectant wipes after each speaker – subject to approval from the sound rental company.

“Housekeeping” warrant items will be offered first, along with any time-sensitive items, thus allowing the bulk of the time toward elections and setting the town’s FY’21 budget.

see LEVERETT page A6

GILL-MONTAGUE SCHOOL COMMITTEE

## TFHS Graduation Pushed To Late July

By MIKE JACKSON

**GILL-MONTAGUE** – With only three weeks left in the semester, the regional school committee discussed the future Tuesday night.

This year’s Turners Falls High School graduation, originally scheduled for next week, has now been postponed until Thursday, July 23 in the hope that it may be held on the football field. The plan for summer school is currently hazy, as is what exactly school will look like in the fall. Two of Montague’s representatives plan to end their terms after the June 22 election, and no one is running to replace them.

Remote learning thus far during the coronavirus pandemic has been a decidedly mixed bag. “Anecdotally, I think that there might be less participation as the year starts to come to an end,” Montague member Jen Lively reported. “The weather’s nicer, and people have been stuck at home for a while.”

And while a slate of changes to the high school program of studies was approved unanimously, the news that the state planned to resume standardized MCAS testing in the winter was met with only a brief, grim silence.

Outgoing superintendent Michael Sullivan reported that one finalist “rose to the top” of a “good, thorough,

see GMRS page A4

NEWS ANALYSIS

## Baker’s Panel Rejects Calls For a Regional Reopening Plan

By JEFF SINGLETON

**FRANKLIN COUNTY** – On May 18, Governor Charlie Baker released a four-phase plan to reopen the state’s businesses, hospitals and public facilities during the coming spring and summer. The reopening was accompanied by a 28-page report crammed with charts and graphs, although often short on narrative explaining the rationale for some of the key decisions he and his colleagues on an advisory panel appointed in April had made.

“Reopening Massachusetts,” as the document is called, lists in detail when various sectors of the state economy will be allowed to reopen. For example, during Phase 1, which began the day after the report was issued, “limited industries will resume with severe restrictions.” Beyond “essential services,” which have been open throughout the pandemic, these include manufacturing, construction, “office space,” and laboratories. In addition, personal services such as hair and pet grooming

see ANALYSIS page A4

## Making the Connection



Isaiah Matthews and Landon Cummings wave to the Sheffield Elementary School parade Wednesday evening as Landon’s dad, Alan Cummings looks on.

By MIKE JACKSON

**TURNERS FALLS** – By now, sirens are becoming a familiar sound of the coronavirus era – locally, not because so many patients are being transported to the hospital, but because it is becoming common for police cars and fire trucks to lead parades of encouragement and recognition.

In late April, teachers at Turners Falls High School delivered yard signs via parade to graduating seniors; this Thursday at 1:30 p.m., another parade is scheduled to mark their last day of classes.

Hillcrest Elementary School teachers held a parade on May 12, and the very next day, the town’s police and fire departments held their own parade to honor the community, driving the opposite way down Avenue A when they came through downtown Turners, joined by colleagues from surrounding towns.

Sheffield Elementary’s turn came this Wednesday. Students and their caregivers came out of their houses to wave to their teachers, who followed a large dog in a firetruck up the Ave, honking their

see PARADE page A8

## PPE Still in High Demand, But Other Shortages Ease Up

By SARAH ROBERTSON

**FRANKLIN COUNTY** – “I wish I could tell you I thought we had everything we needed,” state senator Joanne Comerford told the *Montague Reporter* this week. “I still think money is an issue for some, and I don’t think the supply chain has expanded enough as an assurance to make sure we have PPE everywhere.”

When the coronavirus pandemic hit mid-March, the Massachusetts state senate set up a special working group with nine subcommittees. One was tasked with monitoring possible disruptions to supply chains, particularly those surrounding the supply of personal protective equipment (PPE), and potential price gouging on these essential items. Comerford, chair of this subcommittee, said it has served as a “watchdog group.”

“For a long time supply was a

concern,” Comerford said. “We had a real dearth of PPE when the markets were near frozen. Those were really painful moments, and no one had enough.... The senate initially had concerns about whether or not the requesting mechanism for PPE was strong enough, because it was such an intense moment.”

Before Phase One of governor Charlie Baker’s economic reopening plan began this week, lawmakers pondered whether there is enough PPE to go around.

One local manufacturer, Simon’s Stamps, is still closed until they can acquire the proper PPE. Owner Simon Alciere said he has tried finding vendors to source the equipment, with no luck.

“We just called uniform supply places that were listed in the Yellow Pages,” Alciere said. “We’re still figuring stuff out.”

see SHORTAGES page A5

## Body in River Identified as Missing Woman

By REPORTER STAFF

**MONTAGUE CITY** – The body of a Colrain woman reported missing in early April was recovered by the from the Connecticut River on Sunday morning near Cabot Station.

Mary Carey, spokesperson for the Northwestern District Attorney’s Office, reported that the remains were identified by a medical examiner as those of Caroline “Morgan” Bren. They were spotted in the water, downstream of Rock Dam but upstream of the convergence with the Deerfield River, and removed by the Turners Falls fire department and Montague police.

Bren was reportedly last seen on April 7 walking eastbound into Greenfield on Route 2.

According to Carey, “at this time no foul play is suspected.”

### Another Full Issue

Editorial and Letters.....A2	Retrospective: In the Roadway.....B1
Illustration.....A2	The Benefits of Hospice.....B1
Local Briefs.....A3	The Downsides of Stress.....B2
Farmers Market Announcement.....A3	Montague Police Log.....B3
Gill Selectboard Notes.....A5	Trail Map.....B4
Faces and Places: Distance.....A6	Poetry Page.....B6
10 Years Ago This Week.....A7	Five Comics and a Puzzle.....B7
West Along the River.....B1	Great Falls Apple Column.....B8



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"The Voice of the Villages"

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## Anguish

The videotaped murder of a black man by four Minneapolis police officers on Monday has returned the nation's attention once again to the ongoing trauma of our racist social order. As of press time, George Floyd's killers had lost their jobs but were still free.

Protests Tuesday night boiled over with fury, and on Wednesday sections of the city were in full riot, and on fire. A pawn shop owner shot one looter dead. Phalanxes of police in military gear guarded the home of Derek Chauvin, the man recorded suffocating the hand-

cuffed and pleading Floyd to death with a knee to the back of his neck.

For the millions who have witnessed the murder on video, the Federal Bureau of Investigation's delay in arresting its perpetrators opens up a *time without law*. Any debate about the proper function of police, the protocols we issue governing the use of force, or trust that the system will in time deliver justice have been, at least until then, rendered moot.

It is terrible, but in this moment, every last one of us knows we are either above or below that knee.

## Outside Our Walls

Forty-nine US states are now enacting "reopening" policies of some form or another, coaxing non-essential workers back out of their homes. Only New Jersey remains at maximum vigilance, with a stay-at-home order in effect through June 5.

What reopening looks like, of course, varies widely, and seems to have become almost entirely a matter of politics rather than science. About half the country thinks we are being too hasty; half that we're dragging our feet.

But the United States is only one country, with about 4% of the Earth's population. How is everyone else faring?

For an interesting look at that question, we recommend the website [endcoronavirus.org](http://endcoronavirus.org), a project of the New England Complex Systems Institute. Click "See all countries" to see charts reflecting not the *total* impact of the virus on each country, but the shape of each country's "curve."

The nations of the world are neatly sorted: green for "Countries beating COVID-19" (Australia, China, Iceland, Israel, New Zealand, South Korea, Tunisia, Vietnam); yellow for "Countries that are nearly there" (Belgium, Ireland, Japan, Spain, Turkey); and red for "Countries that need to take action" (Brazil, Egypt, India, Iran, Poland, Russia, Sweden, the US).

"It only takes about 5-7 weeks of strong interventions to get rid of the majority of cases," the site argues. "[H]aving economic interruptions which last for several weeks is a historically validated response strategy."

While you're there, click through to "See data for states." Congratulations to Vermont, one of only five states with green curves, and New York, one of six yellow.

That does leave 39 states. Well, it's just one perspective. But the site provides a helpful visual indicator of where we've been and where we want to go.

Cultural and political wars are looming at home: Should the NFL reopen in the fall? Is mail-in voting subject to voter fraud? Should we kick everyone back off unemployment? Do meatpackers deserve a safe work environment? Should there even be college?

But this website also helps us remember that the US's overall progress against this virus will be evident on the world stage. We can better understand what does and doesn't work by looking at the other countries.

And if the peculiarities of election-year US politics mean that we can't set standards within this country for workplace safety, healthcare, and general social welfare, maybe it's time we try to set some globally.

## Review In Review

Thanks to Seamus Turner-Glenon for a stimulating review of the movie *The Way Back* (May 21). It was such a different take away from my own (positive) experience that I found it remarkable!

References to other comparable

movies soundly illustrated the reviewer's viewpoint, and I am happy now to have experienced the film from another angle.

**Stephen Cobb**  
*Turners Falls*

**Published weekly on Thursdays.**  
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or the Thursday closest to 12/25.

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This young artist in Montague Center turned out for some free entertainment as Lanoue Tree and Landscaping, with the aid of a crane and a 72-year-old arborist, took down a very large and ailing sugar maple last Friday.

## Letters to the Editors

### Thanks to Town Hall for Road Work

This spring, amidst the many disruptions that have occurred in our community as a result of the pandemic, we can be grateful to our Montague Town Leaders for working to make Montague Center a safer village for pedestrians and bicyclists.

Starting last fall, the project to narrow Main Street in front of the post office offered an important first step in slowing traffic through the village. Now, we are witnessing the final stages of a sidewalk renovation near the intersection of Court Square where Main Street curves sharply towards the Bookmill.

We thank Steve Ellis (Montague's town administra-

tor), Walter Ramsey (Montague's town planner), and Tom Bergeron (Montague's public works superintendent) for their collaborative and innovative efforts to improve safety in the Village.

**Leigh and John Rae**  
**Emily Monosson and Ben Letcher**  
**Julie Kumble and Bruce Watson**  
**Diana Allen**  
**Hannah Fuller-Boswell and Chris Wise**  
**Harry Rockland-Miller**  
*Montague Center*

### Service Corps: High Schoolers, Too?

Both Will LaRose ("It's Time for a Massachusetts Service Corps" in the *Montague Reporter*, May 14), and Collin O'Mara ("7.7 Million Young People Are Unemployed. We Need a New 'Tree Army' in the *New York Times*, May 18) make suggestions similar to a proposal I've been mulling over. Call it a New CCC, a Domestic Peace Corps, a Service Corps, or something else.

The idea is for governments to

hire millions of young people to rebuild infrastructure, plant trees, and so on, as was done from 1933 to 1942 as a major part of FDR's New Deal.

I'd propose adding that we let rising high school juniors and seniors volunteer to be hired by such programs. When they successfully finish one or two years of service, give them a high school diploma.

It would help free up space in

schools, teach usable skills, and help economically. Colleges could evaluate these non-traditional graduates the same way they have been doing for years with totally qualified homeschoolers and unschoolers.

And, unlike the original CCC, of course these programs would be open to females, not just unmarried young men.

**Maggie Sadoway**  
*Turners Falls*

**WE WELCOME  
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(ORIGINAL CONTENT ONLY, PLEASE)

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# LOCAL BRIEFS

LARKINROSSI ILLUSTRATION

Compiled by NINA ROSSI

**Forgivable micro-business loans** are available to Montague businesses through an application process with the town that began on Tuesday. The loans to eligible businesses are made on a first-come, first-serve basis, and may be made for amounts up to \$5,000.

Find out if your business qualifies by checking the guidelines and filling out an application online at [www.montague-ma.gov](http://www.montague-ma.gov) or by contacting Amy Shapiro at the Franklin County Community Development Center: [amys@fccdc.org](mailto:amys@fccdc.org).

Village Neighbors distributed **“pandemic preparedness” gift bags** to senior citizens this week, thanks to a COVID-19 mini-grant from Health New England. The bags contain “prevention essentials and a few other tokens of friendship,” according to the group’s press release.

The non-profit association provides support for aging adults to live independent lives at home, and membership is free to residents over 60 years old living in Leverett, New Salem, Shutesbury, and Wendell. Volunteers and new members who need services are always welcome. For more information, see [www.villageneighbors.org](http://www.villageneighbors.org).

Musica Franklin is going on-

line for their second annual “Fun Fest” event taking place from May 30 through June 5. The free, family-friendly event offers musical performances, activities, and entertainment for all ages.

This year’s offerings are made through Facebook and YouTube. Tune in at 5:30 p.m. daily for new releases of pre-recorded performances all week. After many of the premieres, you may join in for a live Zoom question-and-answer session with the artists.

The featured performer line-up includes the Gaslight Tinkers, Shoshana Bass, Carrie Ferguson, Todd Roach, Keith Murphy and Becky Tracy, and many more. Find the ever-evolving list of performances online at [www.musicafranklin.org](http://www.musicafranklin.org).

The **LAVA Center in Greenfield** presents another online installment of their “Lit up the Night” series. The focus of the literary spotlight this Monday, June 1 is on Ellen Meeropol’s new novel, *Her Sister’s Tattoo*.

Meeropol started a literary career after spending 24 years as a nurse and nurse practitioner; this is her fourth novel since she started writing in 2005. The description says the novel features two sisters who protest the Vietnam War in 1968 whose “conflicting priorities and loyalties drive a story of the intersection of family life and politics.”

Tune in to the reading with

Meeropol at 7 p.m. by emailing [info@localaccess.org](mailto:info@localaccess.org) for a Zoom invitation by 5 p.m. that evening. Signed copies of her book are available from Federal Street Books, [www.federalstreetbooks.com](http://www.federalstreetbooks.com), but you do not need a copy to attend. The event is free.

Eggtooth Productions has sent out a request for proposals from **artists 18 years old and younger**. The organization says it is committed to “supporting the next generation of artists. In these uncertain times where opportunities have been taken away, we offer Valley-area youth artists in all mediums an invitation to share their work.” Eggtooth will offer ten young artists \$50 to support their work.

For proposal guidelines and submission requirements, email Linda McInerney: [lmciner@gmail.com](mailto:lmciner@gmail.com). The deadline for proposals is Friday, June 5 at 5 p.m.

Eggtooth also offers a **24-hour durational performance piece** at the Shea Theater from 11:59 p.m. this Friday, May 29 until midnight on Saturday, May 30. The work is called “ARTIFACTS. of. the. e. p. h. e. m. e. r. a. l.” and is designed by Katherine Adler.

Information about the performance says that it includes 24 themes and artistic collaborations, and that it is a fundraiser for the Shea. Tune in to the performance through the Shea Theater Facebook page.

And don’t forget the **fifth annual Immigrant Voices event** on Sunday, May 31 at 7:30 p.m., streaming live from the Shea Theater. The event includes performances by students, allies, and

alumni from the Center for New Americans, and celebrates a diversity of cultures and traditions.

Frits van Paasschen, author of *The Disruptor’s Feast*, will speak on **“Inspiring Change and Giving Hope in the Exponential Age”** at the Charlemont Forum’s online Zoom event on Thursday, June 18 at 7 p.m.

Van Paasschen, a former top executive, points out that major disruptors, such as the current pandemic, call forth change and pose a major opportunity as well as a threat to the global economy.

“The COVID pandemic is a timely example of how rapid, unexpected change – disruption – can catch institutions off guard,” says van Paasschen. “Our human tendency to ignore threats, create comforting but false narratives, and try to go on with business as usual, follows a familiar pattern.”

Van Paasschen believes that individuals and organizations might overcome what he calls “change blindness” through exposure to new information and viewpoints. Visit the Charlemont Forum’s Facebook page to register for the event. Van Paasschen’s presentation will also be recorded and saved on the Facebook page for future viewing.

Bronwen Hodgkinson sends out the weekly Valley Arts Newsletter. During the pandemic, while events are limited, she has been working on a **Valley Artist Directory**.

Hodgkinson writes that the project is still a “work in progress and growing. If there’s a category that you think should be added, let me know. Artists, send me your info, I’d love to include you. Note that though the newsletter is limited to the visual arts, the directory is a separate project and is open to artists, musicians, poets, writers, etc. – if you identify as an artist, live in the Pioneer Valley, and are selling your creative work online, send me your info.”

She has been sending out weekly emails with updated valuable resources for creatives relating to the impacts of COVID-19 on the creative sectors. Join the directory at [www.valleyartistdirectory.com](http://www.valleyartistdirectory.com), and sign up for email updates at [www.valleyartsnewsletter.com](http://www.valleyartsnewsletter.com).

Got news? Send your local briefs to [editor@montaguereporter.org](mailto:editor@montaguereporter.org).



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## Farmers Market Returns June 3

By ANNABEL LEVINE

**TURNERS FALLS** – The Great Falls Farmers Market is opening for the season next Wednesday, June 3. We are excited to once again be providing residents of downtown Turners Falls access to fresh, local, and delicious foods every Wednesday from 2 to 6 p.m. at Peskeomskut Park.

Because we are opening our doors in the midst of a pandemic, this year the market will look different than in years past.

### New Layout

While we are lucky to be housed in Peskeomskut Park where there is a lot of room, we still need to make some changes to how the market is set up.

There will be one dedicated entrance, and the shopping area will be cordoned off to create a one-way flow. Social distancing of at least six feet apart is mandatory, and there will be clear markers on the ground showing where to stand. Please don’t come to the market if you are sick!

Masks must be worn inside the market. For those without a mask, local seamstress Lorraine Humpel has donated cloth masks to give out. If you take a mask and want to pay it forward, we’ll be taking donations for the Franklin Area Survival Center, as per the mask maker’s request.

### Vendors

This season we’ll be welcom-



Strawberries from PK Industries, on sale at last year’s market.

ing back PK Industries, Kingsbury Farms, Dry Brook Garden, Miner Family Farms, Kitchen Kitchen Middle Eastern Food, and Red Fire North. We’ll also be welcoming MapleMama and their delicious maple-sweetened beverages! Please note vendors are subject to change.

### Pennant Project

Did you see our PSA in last week’s paper outlining our Pennant Project? We will be cordoning off the market with a string of pennants, and we would like each pennant to be beautiful pieces of art made by members of the community! Make your own pennant (a triangle with a base of 8 inches and a height of 9 inches), or pick up a pennant-making kit at Town Hall. Visit Riverculture’s website for more details.

### Online Ordering & Delivery

We understand that not everyone can or wants to go shopping

outside of their home right now. To expand access to our market, we are instituting a new online ordering and delivery system for this upcoming season. The last details are still being finalized, but we are hoping to be up and running for next week. Keep an eye out on our social media and the Riverculture page, or wait for more details in next week’s Reporter.

### Volunteers

We are looking for volunteers to help with various market tasks, including grocery delivery. If you’re interested, please email us at [greatfallsfarmersmarketturners@gmail.com](mailto:greatfallsfarmersmarketturners@gmail.com).

Enjoy the rest of this week’s beautiful weather, and we’ll see your beautiful masked faces next Wednesday!

Annabel Levine is the manager of the Great Falls Farmers Market.

### PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

## Community Meals Resume

**TURNERS FALLS** – Franklin County Community Meals Program (FCCMP) will resume serving hot, free community meals from its meal site at Our Lady of Peace Church each Monday evening in June. These to-go meals will be professionally prepared following restaurant safety guidelines and will be available to anyone who needs them.

The shift back to hot meals has been made possible as a result of FCCMP partnerships with Our Lady of Peace Church, Frank Barrett-Mills, director of culinary affairs and training at Middleby Corp., and many dedicated volunteers from the community.

Chef Frank brings experience cooking thousands of meals for Mercy Chefs, a hunger relief nonprofit that assists communities around the world during disasters such as Hurricane Katrina. With this level of expertise, FCCMP

is confident that it will be able to provide nutritious, comforting, and safe food for all.

FCCMP’s mission is to work in partnership with the community to alleviate hunger, and is able to do so through these challenging times because of a committed community which provides food donations and volunteers’ time to help feed people.

Starting in June, meals will be available to-go from 5 to 6 p.m. or until the food is fully distributed.

Meals may be picked up outdoors at the front of the church. Strict social distancing protocols will be observed. Sanitized, homemade masks and grocery bags of non-perishable foods will also be distributed for free, as supplies last.

Our Lady of Peace Church is located on Seventh Street in Turners Falls. For more information, please contact FCCMP at 413-772-1033 or [fccmp.ma@gmail.com](mailto:fccmp.ma@gmail.com).

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## GMRSD from page A1

and competitive" search for a new Gill Elementary School principal, but he was not ready to announce a winner as of Tuesday's school committee meeting.

The administration believes state funding next school year will come in \$800,000 short of budgeted expectations. "It could be a significantly different number when all is said and done," noted business director Joanne Blier, "in either direction."

According to Sullivan the current plan is to draw down on three reserves – the school choice and transportation revolving funds, and the excess and deficiency account – and cancel seven of eight planned new positions to meet the shortfall.

Two paraprofessionals would also be laid off, and two who are retiring would not be replaced, changes in the district's union contract that should be approved by June 15.

Blier has applied to the state for a "1/12 budget" to start off the year, but was unable to furnish one requested piece of information, the date of Gill's annual town meeting.

### Adjustments

High school and middle school principal Joanne Menard shared the newest plan for the high school graduation. Though a "socially distanced" ceremony was approved last week by the town board of health, the plan was upset a day later by new state safety mandates. When polled, the majority of seniors' families said they would rather wait until late June than hold a drive-through ceremony next week.

"It's been a rollercoaster ride," Menard said. "We are on Gradua-



The meeting was hosted on Zoom, and aired on Montague Community Television.

tion Version 5.0, soon to go to 6.0."

The school committee unanimously approved updates to the Turners Falls High School program of study for next year.

One new class offered to grades 10 through 12 will be "Journalism – Read All About It," a partnership with the *Montague Reporter*.

"We wanted to have that relationship, and have the community see the students having regular articles in the newspaper," Menard explained. "We're doing incredible things at the school – we need to get it out there."

Other new offerings include AP European History, Intro to Law II: Mock Trial, Forensic Science, Trades Math, and Creative Cooking and Consumerism.

The school's history, graphic arts, and life sciences curricula will be restructured, with Climate Science, Connecticut River Valley Environmental History, and Native American Cultures in the Northeast also on tap.

Courses ruled obsolete included Contemporary Middle East, Recreational Sports, Accounting I and II, and Marketing. "I majored in marketing," Menard shared. "Around our region, that's not a hot class right now."

### Stretching Thin

Surveys are going out to parents and teachers to learn what has and has not been working with remote learning, in anticipation of pandemic response measures continuing into the fall.

Montague member Haley Anderson recommended allowing families with multiple children in the district to give separate responses for the experiences of each student.

"I'm wondering what we are doing to keep the engagement going," Lively said, noting that among friends, she was witnessing family attention to school flag during the school year's home stretch.

"Sometimes the kids we most need to see in summer school are the kids we don't see right now," said Sullivan. "So a summer school program that's more of the same is not likely to be highly effective."

Sullivan said the district is looking to the state for guidance on allowing groups of three or four summer students to meet directly with teachers or paraprofessionals, and that summer classes may not start until mid-July.

As for the fall, the superintendent said he had reviewed classroom floor plans. "I don't see how

we're going to get to six feet of social distancing without needing to have some students stay at home," he said.

The committee reviewed the numbers of possible school choice openings at various grades, and did not take any vote to restrict them.

Sullivan said the administration has asked school principals to come up with pandemic response plans that identify in advance who will be responsible for various safety measures or decisions. These plans, he said, would take precedence over the school improvement plans principals are usually expected to produce each year.

Gill-Montague Education Association president Karl Dziura reported that earlier in the day Tuesday, the state Department of Elementary and Secondary Education had announced it planned to hold MCAS testing in the winter for 10th graders in math and English.

"I think it's a horrible decision," the union leader said. "Decisions like this, coming suddenly, are going to have impact."

Montague member Heather Katsoulis will no longer be available to serve as a liaison to a six-town feasibility study of a larger school district. Anderson, Lively, and Michael Langknecht all demurred. Thomasina Hall and Cassie Damkoehler are approaching the ends of their terms.

For the time being, no liaison is likely to be appointed.

"We have to assume everybody's lack of volunteering is not that they don't want to," said school committee chair Jane Oakes.

The committee's next meetings are scheduled for June 9 and 23.



## ANALYSIS from page A1

are allowed, as well as car washes.

In Phase 2 restaurants, lodging establishments, and retail businesses may reopen, "with restrictions and capacity limitations." Phase 3 expands the list to include bars, casinos and museums, among others – but not night clubs or large venues – "with guidance."

And during Phase 4, economic and social institutions will enter a "new normal," although social distancing and other unnamed "restrictions" may remain.

### No Defined Criteria

Although these various lists and charts have their gaps – the report mentions playgrounds, athletic fields, and courts opening in Phase 2, but does not specify skate parks – they are relatively comprehensive for a report of less than 30 pages. As a result, press reports of the Governor's plan have been dominated by descriptions of which sectors of the economy can reopen when.

Less attention has been paid to two central issues: the criteria for moving from one phase to another, and whether these criteria would vary from one region to another.

The report claims that the reopening will be "driven by public health data" and lists six criteria for determining whether sufficient progress is being made. These include declines in the percentage of positive tests for the coronavirus; the number of deaths attributed to the pandemic; the number of COVID-linked hospitalizations; improvement in "health care system readiness"; the number of tests performed; and "contact tracing capabilities." The last criterion refers to the process by which local public health workers trace and notify the contacts of those who have tested positive for the disease.

But the report does not specify clear statistical benchmarks for determining when sufficient "progress" has been made to move from one phase to the next. It merely states each phase will last a "minimum of three weeks," and that "if public health data are negative, specific industries, regions and/or the entire Commonwealth may need to return to an earlier phase."

The lack of clear targets in the report contrasts rather sharply with policies adopted by some other states. For example, the metrics used by New York's four-phase plan list specific goals, such as a 15-day decline in hospitalizations, thirty residents tested on an average day per 1,000, and 30 contract tracers per 100,000 residents. (See [forward.ny.gov/regional-monitoring-dashboards](http://forward.ny.gov/regional-monitoring-dashboards).)

Connecticut's criteria for moving to Phase 2 of its reopening plan include, among others, a target of 100,000 tests per week and the completion of at least half of all open contact-tracing cases within a 48-hour period.

Although there is occasional reference to regional variation in the Massachusetts plan, the governor appears to have generally rejected an approach which would have allowed regions such as western Massachusetts, with relatively lower COVID infection rates, to reopen sooner.

Again, this contrasts with the policies adopted by a number of states. New York divided itself into ten regions, which will be allowed to move to different phases of reopening sooner if they are able to meet statewide targets, and California is allowing individual counties to move forward if they meet the criteria monitored by the state Department of Public Health.

### One-Massachusetts Policy

Leading up to the governor's announcement, a number of local officials and state legislators had advocated for such a regional approach. A May 8 letter to Baker's office, signed by state senator Joanne Comerford and four state representatives, including Natalie Blais, called for a reopening plan that is "unique to each region of the Commonwealth and reflects the need for an approach that is tailored to the specific population and needs across our state."

But the "Reopening Massachusetts" report is silent as to why a regional approach was rejected by the governor and his advisory board. Efforts to contact the governor's office during the week prior to the publication of this article were unsuccessful.

In interviews with the *Reporter*, Blais and

Comerford said they had not received a response to their letter, and declined to speculate on the rationale for some of the governor's policy decisions.

Comerford said the goal of the letter she signed was to create an "opening conversation" about a range of issues, including expanded targets for the distribution of personal protective equipment and clear guidance on protocols for employers and employees.

Comerford added that, although she would have liked to see more "concrete numbers" articulated in the report's goals, she was generally pleased with the governor's plan.

And both Comerford and Blais specifically mentioned the report's emphasis on increasing the availability of personal protective equipment, and the state's plan to expand testing capacity for agricultural workers at the Big E fairgrounds in West Springfield.

The *Reporter* also contacted Easthampton mayor Nicole LaChapelle, who served on the governor's reopening advisory board. LaChapelle said the board "went back and forth" about a regional approach, but in the end most members felt that the pandemic was "not limited by geographic boundaries."

Even if one local area seems to be meeting state benchmarks early, she said, "all it takes is one visitor with the virus, and you could suddenly have a hot spot."

LaChapelle also said the advisory board discussed recommending more specific criteria for moving from phase to phase, but concluded that "the virus does not work that way. There is no data point that can be imposed on it."

The Easthampton mayor said that serving on the advisory board had been a tremendous learning experience, likening it to going to graduate school. But she also stressed the uncertainties of predicting the future and setting policies cast in stone.

"Anyone who says 'I've got this' is just not being realistic," she said, adding, "I can't believe that I am a mayor during a pandemic."



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# State Begins Releasing Town-Level Testing Data

By MIKE JACKSON

**BOSTON** – In mid-April, in response to calls for transparency regarding the spread of COVID-19, the state Department of Public Health (DPH) began issuing a report each Wednesday listing the total number of confirmed positive cases in each town or city. A second column put those numbers into perspective, translating them into a rate per 100,000 residents.

This Wednesday's report includes three new columns, listing for each town the total number of tests administered to residents, the rate of testing per 100,000 residents, and the percent of tests that yielded positive results.

Other new items on the weekly reports include heat maps of confirmed cases, cases per capita, and percent positivity, and reporting from long-term care and nursing facilities.

The additional data comes as Massachusetts moves into "Phase One" of an attempted relaxation of pandemic-response guidelines, with the goal of continuing to expand testing and contact tracing. This week the state reported "positive trends" in both testing capacity and the rate of patients testing positive for the virus.

Examining county-by-county figures – which are released separately, in a daily "dashboard" report on the DPH website – it appears that during the week of May 21 through 27, confirmed COVID-19 cases decreased significantly over the previous week statewide, and in every county except one. In Berkshire County, 39 new cases were recorded, the highest single-week total since early April.

## SHORTAGES from page A1

He said the Turners Falls business, which manufactures rubber stamps and also functions as a UPS packing shipping location, will likely have to install plastic barriers like those now used in grocery stores.

## Printing the Numbers

State attorney general Maura Healey has been in charge of receiving and responding to complaints of price gouging. In March, her office issued emergency regulations to combat gouging on vital public health products such as masks, gloves, and hand sanitizer.

Prior to this order, comparable price-gouging regulations only existed for gasoline and petroleum products, the Associated Press reported.

As the state has intervened directly to provide local boards of health, hospitals, and nursing homes with PPE, a main focus of Comerford's group has been transparency and accountability in how it is being distributed across the state. She said she wants to ensure that the western Massachusetts region is getting their fair share.

The subcommittee, she said, has been in close communication with senate president Karen Spilka and secretary of health and human services Marylou Sudders to address issues as they arise.

"It's a perennial worry that western Massachusetts might not be remembered or will be inequitably serviced," Comerford said. "Secretary Sudders was on many of these calls herself, and really painstaking-

ly worked with her team to make sure that we could feel increasingly confident that equitability was not one of the concerns."

"We really saw the state begin to respond to the concerns we had as legislators," Comerford said, both in terms of regional equity and in "the need to ensure our hospitals have lines of communication."

Responding to concern about transparency, the state began publishing how much PPE was being distributed by the state by region. Western Massachusetts, one of six regions statewide, has received 258,507 N95 and KN95 masks and 60 ventilators as of this week. Compared to other regions, western Mass has received the lowest number of ventilators, and is third in the number of masks received.

As of May 26, Baystate Franklin Medical Center in Greenfield had nine COVID-19 hospitalizations, according to state data.

With local boards of health tasked with monitoring compliance with COVID-19 safety measures outlined in the governor's reopening plan, some are worried about their ability to enforce the rules.

"One of the concerns I have about the plan, the reopening plan is how much of it depends on local execution and enforcement," Comerford said. "I think that's concerning for everyone, especially out here in western Mass, where we had a disproportionate number of small businesses. It is harder for us to implement state guidance because we just don't have the resources or the ability to pivot as quickly."

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## NOTES FROM THE GILL SELECTBOARD

# Green Option for Aggregated Electricity; Renewed Call For Bridge Barriers

By GEORGE BRACE

The Gill selectboard continued to address issues arising from COVID-19 at their May 26 meeting, which was again held by conference call. Board members and town administrator Ray Purington discussed the availability of state and federal aid to cover costs the town has incurred due to the virus, along with likely future costs, and safety planning.

The board also held a special meeting on May 18 to review indicative pricing for the town's proposed aggregated electricity purchasing agreement, which was subsequently entered into on May 20.

Both meetings began with a report from members of the town's emergency response team, who reported no significant events, or updates to the town's status.

Fire chief Gene Beaubien said the fire department was all set on the supplies it currently needs, but was preparing for the possibility of a second wave. The chief also noted the department would be participating in a graduation parade starting at 10 a.m. on June 4, going past the high school and elementary schools in Turners, Gill, and Erving, "so if you hear sirens coming up through Gill on June 4, that's what it is."

The board reviewed the town's eligibility for a number of different aid programs, including the CARES Act and Federal Emergency Management Agency funding. Purington said if he had to guess, his rough estimate was that the town would incur less than \$20,000 in COVID-related expenses reimbursable through the two funding sources through June 30, with the bulk of those expenses from the temporary hiring of a

third full-time police officer.

The board also accepted an invitation by the town of Greenfield to join in an application for a regional Community Development Block Grant to assist "micro-enterprises," or businesses with less than five employees, in Franklin County. "I'd want to do it for them, if anybody," said chair John Ward.

Purington commented that small businesses are "the fabric and backbone of the town," in recommending the move, and board member Randy Crochier commented that past programs of this type have been helpful.

An ongoing effort to get MassDOT to install barriers on the French King Bridge to discourage suicides was also discussed, with board members and chief Beaubien commenting that the issue has taken on a new dimension with the general increase in depression, and added stress on emergency personnel due to the virus. (*If you or someone you know is having thoughts of suicide, you can call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255.*)

Beaubien suggested that having all of Gill's first responders sign a letter of support might be helpful, and the board said they thought it was a great idea.

The board also heard a concern from a resident of Mount Hermon Road over the road's closure to assist the Northfield Mount Hermon School in isolating itself. The board said it would have a broader discussion on the closure when it comes up for renewal in late June, and keep the resident apprised of the situation.

## Electricity

The board followed the town energy commission's recommen-

ations at its May 18 meeting, authorizing Purington to execute an aggregated electricity purchasing agreement, selecting a "plus-25% renewable" option for the town's default electricity option, with "100% local renewable" and "plus-5% renewable" as two optional choices.

Residents will be automatically switched over to the "plus-25%" electricity in early August unless they choose not to take part in the program, or "opt in" to one of the two optional choices. Information on the process will be posted on the town's website, and the town will be sending out a letter explaining the process in June.

At the May 18 meeting, energy commission chair Claire Chang and member Vicki Jenkins pointed out that though the commission did not recommend the cheapest option as the town's default supplier, the difference was small – perhaps only a couple of dollars per month – and said they felt choosing a plan with a higher renewable content was in line with the goal of creating a greener community. They also pointed out that residents had the option not to take part at all, or to choose a less expensive option.

When the final numbers came in, Purington noted that the cheaper option in the aggregated plan appeared likely to be less expensive than Eversource's default rate.

## Other Business

The board approved the appointment of Anna Hendricks as a library trustee.

Purington will be emailing and posting the memorial committee's wrap-up letter for Memorial Day ceremonies on May 24. Purington said it was a difficult undertaking, but the town made it work.

## Retail Adjustments

Meanwhile, after scrambling in the initial weeks of the pandemic to keep essentials stocked, some essential businesses have adjusted to the new normal.

The Greenfield Farmers Co-op Exchange has had an unusually busy season as people stock up on things like pet food, seeds, and starts. Coveted local asparagus, or "Hadley grass," is sold out until next year.

"We have sold out much sooner on many products, and I have many 'out of stocks' because of the demand," said Jeff Budine, general manager of the Farmers Co-op. "And some vendors are not running at full capacity because of COVID-19, which affects many stores' restocking of the products."

At McCusker's Market in Shelburne Falls, a part of the Franklin Community Co-op, shelves are stocked, even if some of the familiar brand names are missing. To keep up with demand, store manager Al Goodwin says the coop has been ordering from a wider variety of suppliers, with an increased focus on locally sourced goods.

"Right now we've really been able to get everything," Goodwin said. "We've really been able to work around certain brands that are out, and we're pretty much finding everything somewhere."

Budine shared a similar situation at the Farmers Co-op. "We may not have the brand you are looking for, he said, "but will have a comparable product to do the job for you."

Initially, some stores were subject to limitations on their wholesale order size, but most of those have since been lifted, according to Goodwin.

"What people are buying has definitely changed. It's more staples," Goodwin continued. "People are eating at home a lot more so they're buying more groceries."

Goodwin said that his store has had to adjust to higher demand in certain items, such as yeast and flour, but that overall, shortages caused by consumers' run on the stores in March, including paper products, had largely subsided.

In April, many people homebound by the pandemic decided to start gardens, which caused the Farmers Co-op to sell out of some items.

"This is the busiest year I can remember, and the added duties of cleaning the store to keep employees and customers safe have added to the challenge," Budine said. "We are very thankful that our staff has stayed healthy."

Additional reporting for this article was provided by Mike Jackson.

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## CANNABIS from page A1

self-medicate.

Municipal officials of cities and towns home to marijuana-related facilities also lamented the economic ramifications of this statewide closure in the *Globe* article, saying they rely on the tax revenue generated by marijuana sales.

"We typically get a fair amount of out-of-state customers," commented John Snyder, chief operating officer of 253 Farmacy, an adult-use cannabis dispensary in Turners Falls that reopened to recreational consumers on Monday after being closed for two months. Snyder said that the ratio of in-state to out-of-state customers over the last few days has been "pretty typical."

Unlike some of its counterparts, 253 has opted not to deliver orders to car windows. Instead, customers wait in a socially-distanced line to pick up their pre-ordered purchases at an outdoor booth, all the while monitored and helped along by staff. Those paying with cash are handled separately, in a different line.

"On Monday, everybody was coming out of the woodwork," reflected Snyder, adding that 253's first day open was "hectic," but that things were running more smoothly by Wednesday morning.

In the days since 253 reopened, Snyder said that he has noticed not only a rise in demand, but in volume. Customers are purchasing more cannabis.

"We have a pretty good idea — with no COVID — what the average purchase price of a customer looks like," he said. "Now, people are easily buying double what they were before."

## The New Normal

"For our adult-use customers, they use cannabis for a lot of the same reasons our medical customers use it: for anxiety, PTSD, et cetera," Ben Sussman, outreach director of RiSE, a cannabis company with locations in several states including a dispensary in Amherst, told the *Reporter*.

Usually in charge of setting up volunteer opportunities, sponsorships, instore events, and community partnerships, Sussman said his role has, unsurprisingly, "shifted drastically during the pandemic."

As a co-located medical and adult-use dispensary, RiSE has remained open for patients in need of medical marijuana. Patients and recreational users have used separate entrances and exits since the store's inception. But since reopening to recreational users on Monday, RiSE has been swamped with a surge of customers arriving curbside at predetermined times to pick up their online orders.

"That's the 'new normal' we're operating under," said Sussman of the curbside pickup system. "Understandably, customers have a lot of questions. Some people are nervous. Guiding everyone through the process has been the biggest challenge."

With curbside pickup designed to prevent crowding and maintain social distancing, Sussman said he hasn't paid much attention to whether customers are from in or out of state: "Whether someone's got a New York license plate or a Massachusetts license plate doesn't matter. Either way, they're in their cars."

## Outdoor Service

"The closure of adult-use was definitely a big hit for us," NETA president Amanda Rositano told the *Reporter*. "Many of our cus-



253 Farmacy executive John Snyder said the industry's stringent regulations prepared it well for the adjustments required during the current pandemic.

tomers rely on cannabis for medical reasons, but don't want to access it through a state registry. A lot of these folks are veterans or people with federal jobs."

NETA's registered marijuana dispensaries in Northampton and Brookline also opened Monday with a reserve-ahead curbside pickup system, after "a handful of very long days and long nights of planning and preparation," said Rositano.

Originally, NETA modified their dispensaries' interiors to reopen to adult-use consumers, only to find out on short notice that they would have to offer "curbside pickup only."

"Because we are deemed an essential service, we were really able to fine-tune our facilities to handle the return of adult-use in our stores, using markings for social distancing, barriers, and sanitizing throughout the day," said Rositano. She adds that she looks forward to "phase two" of the statewide reopening, when NETA can streamline customer traffic at 30 indoor registers instead of serving customers at mobile terminals.

"We have the infrastructure and setup to do that much more efficiently in store," she said.

The biggest challenge, according to Rositano, has been to meet the incredibly high demand of cannabis customers. "We open up online ordering around 9 p.m., and within 30 minutes we've sold out of 700 pickup time slots," she said. "We're [also] seeing a ton of traffic to our website, and an incredibly high volume of calls to our call centers."

All things considered, Rositano said that the cannabis industry in Massachusetts is accustomed to adapting to new regulations on the spot, which in turn has helped their reopening process this week.

"We're used to it," she said. "The smoothness of the operation within a few days' notice serves as an example of how we're able to respond to changes instantaneously. We're grateful for the opportunity to be open."


## Stocking Up

Snyder, the 253 Farmacy COO, speculated that the reason his store is seeing a high sales volume might be a combination of customers having run out of product, and simply wanting to stock up on the off-

chance dispensaries close again.

The Turners Falls company grows and processes cannabis onsite, but opened its retail operations last year selling products sourced from other companies while its initial crops grew. Now they are beginning to sell their own marijuana as well.

"We've had concentrates in there for a little bit," said Snyder of 253's homegrown cannabis. "Tomorrow morning, we'll be transferring flower that was grown in our own facility." Echoing Rositano, Snyder said that he and the 253 Farmacy staff have been well-prepared to adapt to the extensive COVID-19 procedures, partially because the cannabis industry is already used to meticulous regulations.

"Even before all this, on an operational side, cannabis was really treated like a food product," he said. "Everything is already being disinfected and sanitized all the time. We wear gloves and hairnets — it was all very clean. Now we're just doing a bit extra." 

## LEVERETT from page A1

"We could pass last years' budget," proposed McGinnis, "if we're thinking of level-funded, and then when we know what the state's going to do, we can come back and entertain increases or decreases."

Board member Julie Shively asked whether raises for town employees would be included in that calculation, and McGinnis said it would be the selectboard's decision.

"We can provisionally put in the raises, and say that's the top priority," offered finance committee member Ann Delano, "but [cuts] have got to come from somewhere. And if we have preserved positions so far, then I would say no raises for now."

"It might mean going back on some contracts," said McGinnis, responding to talk of a potential 14% funding cut at the state level this year.

"We have to be prepared for that," answered board chair Peter d'Errico. "Financial exigency is a factor that allows even collectively bargained contracts to be reopened."

Leverett requires a quorum of 75 residents for town meeting. Pending emergency state legislation would allow town meetings to be held with a quorum of one-tenth the regular number. D'Errico noted that if this measure passes, Leverett's quorum could be reduced to seven.

## Dangerous Dog Hearing

Following a complaint filed with chief of police Scott Minckler and animal control officer Roberta Bryant by Miriam and John Jenkins of Juggler Meadow Road, the selectboard held a hearing to determine the fate of two dogs owned by Daniel Mendelsohn and Stephanie Hucker, also of Juggler Meadow Road.

The dogs, which were off leash, reportedly bit Miriam Jenkins three times, inflicting wounds on her neck and eye and dragging her to the ground. Her husband, John, described it as a "coordinated attack," with the dogs taking turns.

Testimony was heard from each party, including neighbors who helped on the scene after the attack, as well as from Leverett resident Melissa Colbert, who has extensive

knowledge of dog behavior through her former work at the Dakin Humane Society. Colbert described the wounds Jenkins received, along with the manner of the attack, as "intended to be fatal."

Mendelsohn and Hucker expressed shock and remorse at what their dogs had done, saying that the dogs had never acted that way before, had been around many adults and children without incident, and that they were willing to do whatever was necessary "to never have this happen again."

After closing testimony, the selectboard deliberated on several options outlined by Massachusetts law, but ultimately decided that the dogs be euthanized.

D'Errico informed the dogs' owners that they could appeal the board's decision in district court within ten days.

## Other Business


Non-regular town employees may return to work in accordance with Massachusetts' COVID-19 opening-up guidelines, and the police department will also return to a more regular workforce as of June 1.

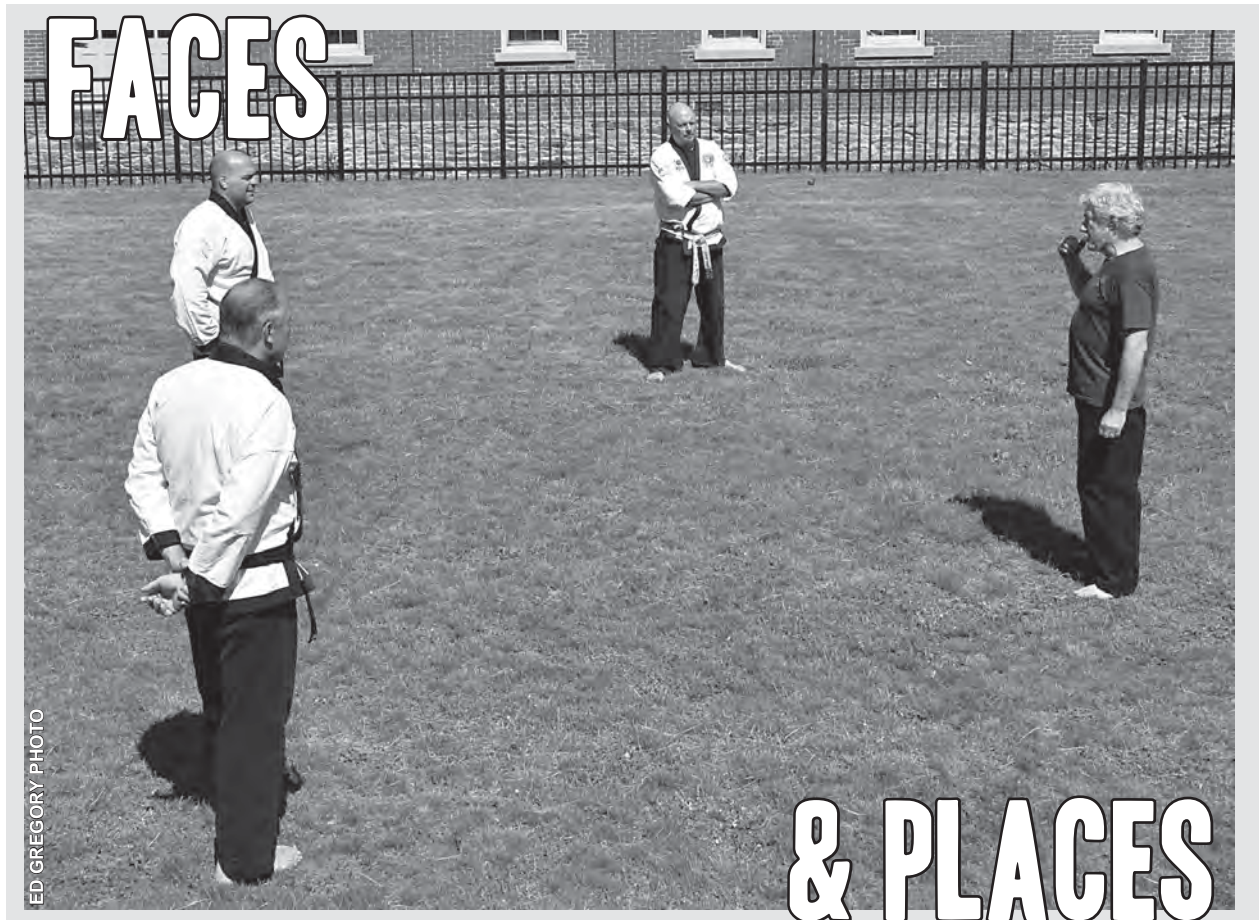
A "culture issue" question was raised by Hankinson about potential pressure to not wear a mask inside town departments, even though staff may be practicing social distancing.

Department heads are responsible for helping all workers feel comfortable about their choice to wear or not wear a mask, as long as other guidelines are being followed departmentally, and in interactions with the public.

The board approved a new police policy on social media use by staff.

A reserve transfer request, a FR-COG highway products contract, and an EMPG grant contract extension were all approved.

An executive session will be scheduled in the next week for the board to discuss costs to the town of the state Supreme Judicial Court decision in the case of former Leverett Elementary teacher Susan Boss, which obligates the town to pay 50% of the health insurance premiums for retired town employees and their dependents. 



Taekwondo aficionados (left to right) Charles Garbiel, Michael Ryan, Jim White, and instructor Roger Lynch practice their discipline, as well as social distancing, on the former site of the Clark & Chapman Machine Company boiler and power plant near the Great Falls Discovery Center on Sunday. The group, known as Central TKD, has a studio on Central Street in Turners Falls, and if anyone is interested in learning they can be reached at (413) 325-5553. Thanks to Ed Gregory for the photo!

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**MONTAGUE** from page A1

while maintaining distances of seven feet or more between attendees. It also showed accessible bathrooms nearby, a criteria consistently emphasized by selectboard chair Rich Kuklewicz over the past months.

The bathrooms, according to Ellis's presentation, will be "professionally monitored and sanitized," and EMT services will be provided by the Turners Falls Fire Department.

Ellis said Gill-Montague school district staff will be in charge of set-up and breakdown, as well as cleaning all chairs and the bathroom prior to the meeting with "electrostatic cleaning wands."

Selectboard member Michael Nelson said he has secured a "large stockpile" of KN-95 masks for use by attendees.

"Its biggest vulnerability is rain or extreme heat," Ellis said of the parking lot location. He went on to say the meeting would begin at 8:30 a.m., and should last for only three or four hours in an attempt to avoid midday heat.

Preliminary rain dates have been established for the next day, Sunday the 14<sup>th</sup>, and Saturday the 20<sup>th</sup>.

Nelson asked about the potential problem of "solar glare," and Ellis replied that the sun would be situated "perpendicular" to the seating and therefore pose no problem.

"I guess we'll need someone to forecast the weather for the next three weeks," said Kuklewicz.

Nelson commented on the need for an extra effort to insure a quorum. "We want to do more than our ordinary outreach," said Ellis. "We need to call people."

The board voted to accept the plan for the meeting.

**Reopening Steps**

Ellis reviewed the local progress of Phase I of the governor's reopening plan, the first phase of which began on May 18.

He noted that the 253 Farmacy, a cannabis production and distribution business on Millers Falls Road, had reopened "with permission of the state." Town officials have reviewed the business's reopening plan. "They were very well organized in what they were doing," said Ellis.

Police Chief Chris Williams said the cannabis facility had been "really busy" over the past few days, and there was "no problem at all."

Parks and recreation director Jon Dobsz reviewed the potential reopening of the high school tennis courts, as well as the basketball courts and the skate park in Unity Park. He said the tennis courts were the purview of the school district on which they are located, and the board health voted to give the district permission to open the tennis courts at its discretion.

Dobsz said the basketball court at Unity Park, which has been open for most of the pandemic but closed last week, hosted a "contact sport" and would therefore probably remain closed until Phase II of the state reopening.

He said the skate parks are not specifically mentioned in the governor's plan, but the only such park in western Massachusetts that had been reopened is in Pittsfield. He called skateboarding a "a highly social activity," which could make social distancing difficult, and said that monitoring the park might create "liability" problems for the town.

"If we can just hold out another

three weeks or so, I think we would be better served," Dobsz said.

**Restaurant Initiative**

An issue that has consumed a great deal of the board's time over the past few weeks has been a request by the Rendezvous restaurant and bar to be allowed to place outdoor seating next to their business in the Third Street town parking lot. Board members have been sympathetic to that request, but the previous week delayed a decision in order to develop a more "comprehensive" plan for other businesses in downtown Turners.

Although Rendezvous owner Chris Janke was present at the meeting, the issue appeared on the May 26 agenda as the "Streetside Café and Sidewalk Sale Initiative."

Town planner Walter Ramsey opened the discussion by saying his department had begun "step one" of the process, a survey of local businesses to "find out what their plans are," but "didn't get the response we were hoping for."

"It's hard to plan when businesses don't know what they're doing," he said. He asked the board for "another week or two to get some more information... and study best practices" in other communities.

"I'm also curious how this broad plan intersects with the plan we brought to the board last week," Janke said.

Ellis said the town "was trying to create an infrastructure that allows an equitable access to an opportunity," though he commended the Rendezvous for being "proactive" and "catalyzing the process." He later said he felt that if the town "rushed forward" with a plan, it could create an "insurance liability that would

break the backs of businesses."

Janke said that there had already been delays in ordering outdoor tables, due to their scarcity, and applying for an outdoor liquor license from the town.

"Each week that this is delayed is weeks of delay on top of it," he told the board. "The one thing I would request is that those of us who have a plan and are ready to go are not put at a disadvantage because of the many businesses that are not sure of their plans."

"We considered putting plywood over the windows," Janke added, "and that may still happen, but we're trying not to do that."

After Ramsey discussed the possibility of using parking spaces along Avenue A for pedestrian traffic, freeing up sidewalk space for café use, the board decided to continue the discussion next Monday.

"I don't think the board has to approve a comprehensive plan next Monday," Ellis argued, "in order to grant a license for a streetside café to an individual business that puts in an application."

**Other Business**

Kuklewicz and Nelson then took

turns reading the entire town meeting warrant, with the location of the town meeting listed as "at the Turners Falls High School" rather than "in" the school. The board then approved the warrant.

Chief Williams informed the selectboard that his department would begin issuing permits for pistols this Wednesday, with procedures to insure adequate social distancing.

David Withers was appointed as attendant at the town transfer station, and the town department of public works was given permission to fill a vacant truck driver/laborer position.

The board voted to execute a \$5,800 contract with the Franklin County Community Development Corporation for the administration of the program to oversee the small business COVID-19 relief fund approved the previous week, and to award Moody Consulting a contract for technology services.

The board approved and signed an agreement with the Franklin Regional Council on Governments to enter into certain highway contracts for the town.

The next selectboard meeting will be held on Monday, June 1.

**PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT**

## LifePath Offers Five New Programs In Response to COVID-19

**FRANKLIN COUNTY** – In response to the financial and food insecurity caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, LifePath is offering a variety of new options for help:

**1. Coronavirus Food Assistance**

The Massachusetts Executive Office of Elder Affairs applied for, and was accepted into, the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP). This new US Department of Agriculture (USDA) program will take several actions to assist farmers, ranchers, and consumers in response to the COVID-19 national emergency.

The Executive Office of Elder Affairs will coordinate the procurement, processing, and delivery of a food box designed to help elders access needed protein. LifePath has signed on to be a regional distributor for area elders, and will work with Councils on Aging to distribute the food.

Participating elders will receive one 10-pound box of pre-cooked meats or cheeses per delivery – chicken sausage, pork sausage, chicken patties, and cheeses, at a value of about \$50 per box. LifePath has signed on to distribute 469 boxes four times a year (May/June; July/August; September/October; November/December).

People 60 and over are eligible, and there is no cost to our community. The program will bring about \$93,800 in food to Franklin County and North Quabbin elders.

The delivery of the boxes will be "Truck to Trunk," with food available for pickup or delivery. Eligible people interested in getting a food box can contact their local COA. Participating sites are the Northfield, Bernardston, Greenfield, Athol, Gill-Montague, Orange, and Shelburne senior centers, and the Petersham and Leyden COAs.

**2. Gift Cards & Caregiver Grants**

Financial support is also available from LifePath during this time in the form of grocery store gift cards, in limited quantities, and caregiver grants, as long as funds are available.

Contact LifePath if you are experiencing financial insecurity and could use these supports.

**3. Grocery Shopping & Delivery**

In addition, LifePath is offering volunteer grocery shopping and delivery in Franklin County and the North Quabbin areas for people over age 60 or people with physical illnesses or disabilities, or people who are immunocompromised. If this is you, and you are concerned about visiting the grocery store and don't have someone who can help, LifePath can.

**4. Phone Pals**

For people who feel isolated because of social distancing, LifePath has initiated the Phone Pals program, where volunteers will call participants to chat. If you or a loved one are feeling lonely, this is a way to reach out.

**5. For PCA Consumers Under 60**

Besides continuing to respond to increased demand for Meals on Wheels for those 60 and over, LifePath is also reaching out to PCA consumers under 60, to provide a 7- or 14-day supply of frozen meals as well as offer personal protective equipment (PPE). A team of volunteers is making the deliveries on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

You can take the first step to receive help for you or a loved one by contacting LifePath at (413) 773-5555, or by emailing [info@lifepathma.org](mailto:info@lifepathma.org).

Finally, none of these new programs in response to COVID-19 would be possible without the support of LifePath's incredible volunteers, the people making and donating PPE, the USDA, the Councils on Aging, the Executive Office of Elder Affairs, the Community Foundation, Meals on Wheels America, and our amazing sponsors and individual donors.

We at LifePath thank them all for their immense generosity toward elders, people with disabilities, and caregivers.

## LOOKING BACK: 10 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

*Here's the way it was May 27, 2010: News from the Montague Reporter's archive.*

**Powertown in the Dark**

Last night around 11 p.m. damaging storms blew through the county knocking out power in many towns. For the second time in a month, our readers woke up to food warming in the refrigerators and no ability to turn on their electric lights or computers.

This morning at dawn the street lights were out, the neighborhood was quiet, unusually quiet, in downtown Turners Falls. Neighbors had been up all night removing tree limbs from the streets and alleys. Delivery trucks brought supplies to darkened stores. Emergency generators kept the coolers running at the supermarket, and power supplied to the bank.

**Noise Complaints Aired At Selectboard Hearing**

Complaints about loud music emanating from La Bodega, 104 Fourth Street, during a specially permitted Mother's Day event brought Marc Cannon, owner of La Bodega, before the Montague selectboard on Monday night to answer to the continued complaints against his store.

Pat Allen, chair of the selectboard, outlined two specific issues regarding the noise complaints: first, the loudness of the second annual Cinco de Mayo / Mother's Day event which ran from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Sunday, May 9, and secondly, that there is continuous music playing from an outdoor speaker on nice days on the bodega's L Street patio.

The Cinco de Mayo/Mother's

Day event prompted six separate calls to the police for noise complaints.

Cannon said only one person has ever come up to him personally and asked him to turn down his music.

**Ceiling Falls at Between the Uprights**

"It sounded like someone dropped a pair of barbells in the apartment upstairs," said Between the Upright's owner and manager Lew Collins.

"There were about a dozen people in the bar at the time," said his sister, Brenda Collins. That was about 10 p.m. on Monday night. "Lew said, 'Everybody get the hell out.'"

No one was injured when three layers of ceiling, including the original plaster in the old Oddfellows Building fell down, taking the tongue and groove pine and modern acoustical paneled drop ceiling down with it. More than three-quarters of the ceiling on the Second Street side of the bar collapsed.

**Mullins Hits 500 by Moonlight**

Bouncing back from a 4-1 beating at the hands of Pioneer Regional High on Tuesday, the Turners Falls girls softball team whipped Greenfield 14 to nada on Wednesday at Bourdeau Field, to hand coach Gary Mullins his 500th career victory.

Emily Mailloux pitched a strong game, and her team backed her up with a barrage of hits and an impressive showing in the field. Dakota Smith-Porter capped the evening with a three-run homer over the right field fence in the bottom of the sixth.



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Top: The parade stretched down Avenue A on Wednesday.  
Above: Best dressed. Below: A fire dog led the way.

**PARADE** from page A1

horns and waving back.

Second-grader Isaiah Matthews and his friend, fourth-grader Landon Cummings, came out to check out the festivities. Isaiah's teacher, Ms. Pelis, had written her name on her car window. Isaiah reported that he had heard about the parade beforehand, and rated it as "very, very good."

This spring's remote learning, he said, was different than regular school. "You have to do it on a computer, and your moms or dad has to help you," he explained. "That's really, really different."

Landon was less interested in talking with the press, but agreed that the parade was good. His father, Alan Cummings, said he has been helping with Landon's school assignments, which come in binders rather than online.

"It's tough," he said, "but hey, we get through it."

Isaiah's mom, Julie Auger, said the schools have been good about communicating with parents; she emails with his teachers, and they come by to drop off and pick up homework. Isaiah does reading and math assignments on the computer.

Auger said it was extra work, but that it had been "all right." "He gives me a hard time, a little bit," she added.

Isaiah said he was looking forward to eventually getting back into school. "I miss my friends and my teacher," he said.

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**Here's Our Deal...**

- As of this week, here is where you should be able to pick up the *Montague Reporter* on a newsstand: Food City, F.L. Roberts, and Scotty's in Turners Falls; Red Fire North, Rau's Sunoco, and the Village Store in Montague Center; the Leverett Village Co-op; the Wendell Country Store; Upinngil farmstand and the Spirit Shoppe in Gill; Dunkin' Donuts in Erving; Green Fields Market, Stop & Shop, and Foster's Supermarket in Greenfield.
- During the coming weeks we plan to return to **all newsstands** on which we were previously available.
- Until the end of June all issues can also be read **for free online** at [www.montaguereporter.org](http://www.montaguereporter.org).
- However, we depend on your subscription, so **please renew!** If you aren't a subscriber yet, please **consider subscribing**. It's an essential way to support our nonprofit, independent community paper.
- By default, we are **mailing print issues** to all subscribers. This is costly and time-consuming! We therefore encourage any subscribers who can comfortably read the paper online to do so. About 28% of our subscribers have **opted out** so far, and we still hope this will increase. Call us at 863-8666, or email [info@montaguereporter.org](mailto:info@montaguereporter.org), to opt out.
- Subscribers can also **pick up their newspapers** at the following locations: at or near our office in Turners Falls; Red Fire North; the Leverett Village Co-op; the Wendell Country Store; and Upinngil farmstand in Gill. If you're a print type who can work this into your routine, it helps us! Use the phone number or email address above to let us know.
- We plan to reinstitute **regular home delivery** to most neighborhoods in Montague/Turners, Gill, Erving, Wendell, Leverett, and Greenfield this summer. When we do that, we will also finally offer a **digital subscription** option for those who enjoy reading the PDFs.
- We also rely on **donations**. Send checks to 177 Avenue A, Turners Falls, MA 01376, or go online to [www.montaguereporter.org/donate/](http://www.montaguereporter.org/donate/).
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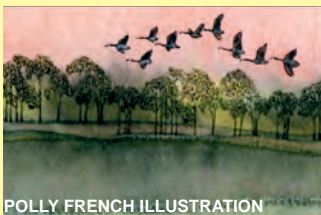


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OF THE MONTAGUE REPORTER

MAY 21, 2020



## WEST ALONG THE RIVER ON THE THRESHOLD OF SUMMER

POLLY FRENCH ILLUSTRATION

*For one thing, there's no more snow to watch from an evening window, and no armfuls of logs to carry into the house so cumbersome you have to touch the latch with an elbow...*

– Billy Collins

By DAVID BRULE

**THE BANKS OF THE MILLERS** – Well, we might as well declare it summer. In terms of seasonal change, we went from zero to sixty mph this month. Snow still fell on May 8, just two weeks ago, and frost was as late as the 14<sup>th</sup> of May. Now this week's temperatures are hovering in the high 70s!

Today holds a crisp brilliant morning. The sun is coming up golden over my shoulder as warm shadows lengthen, only to shrink again while the May morning sun rises higher. Nick, my Siberian, lies vigilant in the cool, his wolf's ears alert and pointed at the garden sensing something, or anything. What a luxury to be here in the morning glow and glory of another May day. We'll take it.

There's a lot to be thankful for. At least we're not dead. I'm pretty sure of that: I can't be because I'm writing this, and you can't be because you're reading it. So far, so good!

May 16. Emerging after last night's storm, this morning is full of birdsong and calls from every tree. But around 7 p.m. yesterday evening, smoky clouds swirled dark and full of menace like the Old Testament images of an angry God whose face appears from on high

amid the lightning and thunder.

I scurried along on my evening walk with Nick, who was paying no heed to the menace in the sky. His nose was close to the ground investigating every stray scent heightened by the evening cool and the coming storm. The sudden darkness came crowding off the top of Mineral Mountain, which overlooks our little settlement down here on the Flat.

*Ba-Room!* went the angry storm as the first drops pattered on the new leaves. Man and dog took the short-cut across the neighbor's lawn, scurrying to our front porch just in time. The skies grew darker and darker, the street lights came on although it was just barely after 7.

I shot a quick glance up at the phoebe nest near the front door. I could make out the silhouette of the small bird settled quietly on her nesting shelf I put up near the piazza ceiling. She was up high and dry out of the storm. She just began tending her clutch of eggs today. In a few weeks we'll have a new generation of flycatchers and mosquito-eaters to participate in maintaining the balance of our woodland system.

But that was last night. This morning is all bright, green and birdsong.

May 17. The busy resident wren has fallen in love with the little bird house, painted blue with the faded yellow roof. He, because I think he's a he, is singing a wonderful little aria from the stage he has chosen at the peak of the tiny roof. I'm hoping that he will sing so well that he will woo and win a little wife, whom we should call

see WEST ALONG page B4

*Above: A number of Franklin County residents have noted increased sightings of indigo buntings this spring, as well as other brightly-colored songbirds (notably scarlet tanagers and Baltimore Orioles). Photo correspondent Joe Kopera snapped this picture of one taking a break from snacking on apple blossoms outside his office window.*

## More Objects in Montague's Roads: A Police Log Retrospective

Compiled by EMILY ALLING / Illustrations by NINA ROSSI

**Tuesday, 6/25/13**

5:02 a.m. Vehicle passenger is seen placing a traffic barrel in the middle of the Canal Bridge.

**Wednesday, 1/8/14**

12:26 p.m. Report of large blue dumpster in the middle of the road in Millers Falls.

**Saturday, 4/26/14**

1:39 a.m. Officer observed "no bridge ahead" sign in the middle of the road on a railroad overpass; possibly left there as a joke.

**Monday, 6/2/14**

8:56 a.m. Metal in the road at Unity Street and Prospect Street. Officer and Good Samaritans were able to get items out of the roadway.

**Friday, 6/20/14**

7:30 p.m. Caller reports there is an item in the road that looks like a "home-made firecracker."

**Friday, 6/27/14**

1:55 p.m. Report that a neighbor on M Street has put out a DPW cone and a 10 mph speed limit sign in the road, when the actual speed limit is 15 mph.

**Tuesday, 2/10/15**

12:40 p.m. Officer flagged down near the canal bridge by motorist reporting that there is a traffic cone in the road and that vehicles are swerving around the cone and nearly colliding with oncoming traffic.

**Wednesday, 4/1/15**

10:08 p.m. Caller reports that there was an object in the middle of the travel lane on Turners Falls Road; she swerved to miss it but is unsure what it was. Officer checked the area and found a couch cushion that was moved to the side of the road.

**Monday, 6/15/15**

7:30 a.m. Report of milk crate in the roadway on Turners Falls Road.

**Thursday, 1/14/16**

10:09 p.m. Report of hay bales that were dropped in



Turners Falls Road, creating a traffic hazard.

10:23 p.m. Caller reports additional hay bales in the roadway, closer to the Montague side.

**Friday, 3/11/16**

7:08 p.m. Caller reports that parties just past the Pioneer Tavern in Millers Falls appear to be setting off fireworks into traffic. Officer checked the area and spoke to the caller; located remnants of fireworks in the roadway but was unable to determine where they came from.

**Tuesday, 4/19/16**

10:56 a.m. Report of a shopping cart in the road on L Street.

**Tuesday, 10/11/16**

10:41 a.m. Caller reports several hypodermic needles in the middle of the dirt road off Beach Road, in the area of the old shooting range.

**Sunday, 9/10/17**

2:40 a.m. Caller from Fourth Street states that his neighbors are yelling and a male party is

see OBJECTS page B5



## Birth is Terminal: Part One

By JEFFREY WEBSTER

**TUCSON, AZ** – My wife, Susan, was fourteen years old when she suffered a devastating loss. Her beloved father died from cancer. He was bed bound at home for weeks leading up to his death, and Sue and her mother cared for him. In effect, they were doing hospice work.

The formalized concept of hospice was not established in this country until a decade after Sue's dad died. The first US hospice opened in Connecticut in 1974.

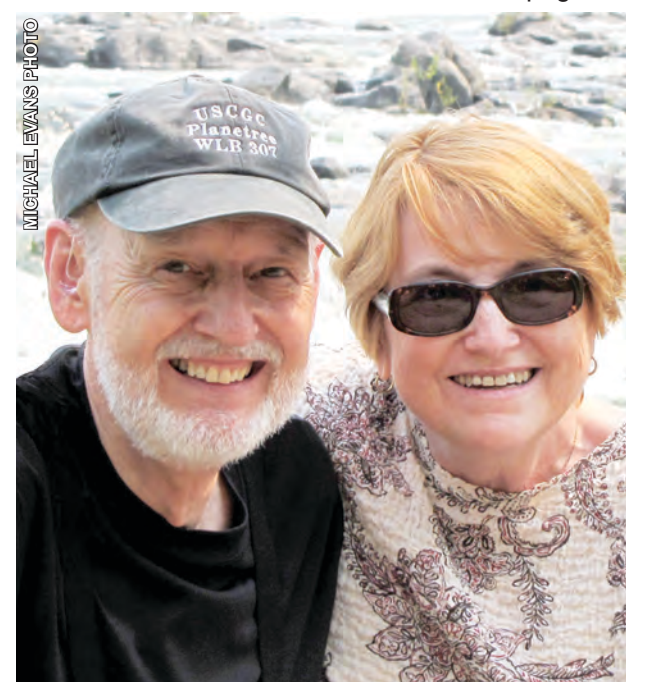
Thirty years after losing her dad, Sue's sister was admitted to hospice care in Greenfield, and Sue saw how well it worked. Sue's sister told her that she could tell the volunteer things that she wouldn't discuss with anyone else.

That conversation stayed with Sue, and a year later she signed up for hospice training. She served as a volunteer for 25 years. Upon my retirement, I applied for the training. We both believe that everyone should take the training, whether or not they want to volunteer. We learned from experience that it is beneficial to face your feelings about death and challenge your attitudes about the inevitable.

Here's a happy thought. From the moment we are born, we begin a process of loss, and I'm not just talking about car keys. We lose physical and cognitive abilities, the taste for food we once craved, people we love, and in my case, hair. Eventually the losses mount up.

One hospice training exercise involved writing items on index cards that have meaning to us: people, food, personal traits, etc. One entry per card. While the

see HOSPICE page B5



Jeff and Sue Webster have served as hospice volunteers for many years.



JJ AUDUBON ILLUSTRATION

House wren (*Troglodytes aedon*).

# Pets of the Week



## “CLYDE & CRICKET”

Did you know that ferrets are often referred to as wiggly kitten noodles? Well... not really, but we should be!

We are not cage animals; our cage should be thought of like a bedroom: we sleep there, but want lots of room outside of it to play and explore. We are very social and need to interact with people every day! We love to sleep in hammocks or under fuzzy blankets with our friends.

Do you know what it means to be *crepuscular*? It means to be most active at dawn and dusk – that’s us! Another fun thing about us ferrets is that we *love* shiny objects. Gone are the days of leaving your keys lying around! We have lots of energy and love to play with toys. Our inquisi-

tive nature makes puzzle toys, like kongs, loads of fun.

Our average lifespan is five to seven years, so make sure that you are ready to take on a high-energy, interactive, long-term pet. Please call to speak with an Animal Resource Counselor for more information, or to inquire about adoption!

Animals at the Dakin Humane Society are available for adoption by appointment only. Please call (413) 781-4000 or see [www.dakin-humane.org](http://www.dakin-humane.org) for more information.



## Veterans Encouraged to Apply for Available State Financial Assistance

**FRANKLIN COUNTY** – Massachusetts is home to 380,000 of the nation’s 21 million veterans. More than half are aged 65 and older, and one in seven lives in poverty. As a result, our veterans are particularly at risk of contracting COVID-19, as well as experiencing economic hardship during the current public health crisis.

For low-income veterans and their families, Massachusetts has a financial assistance program to provide both ongoing cash benefits and emergency support for things like back rent or mortgage payments.

Under Chapter 115 of the Massachusetts General Laws, the Commonwealth, along with town and city governments, provides financial assistance for low-income veterans, their family members, and surviving spouses, children, and sometimes even parents, when they are struggling to make ends meet.

Low-income veterans can be eligible for state financial assistance under Chapter 115 if their income is below 200 percent of the federal poverty level and meet other eligibility requirements. To find out if they are eligible, veterans can visit the Massachusetts Veteran Benefit Calculator ([www.massvetben.org](http://www.massvetben.org)), answer a series of simple questions, and receive an immediate estimate of their potential eligibility for Chapter 115 benefits.

Even if the veteran may not qualify for cash assistance, they may be eligible for reimbursement of medical expenses, a critical source of relief as families facing job losses may be losing employer-sponsored coverage.

The Calculator, which was created by the Legal Services Center of Harvard Law School, also provides self-help materials and answers to frequently asked questions about Chapter 115.

Veterans and dependents wishing to apply for Chapter 115 benefits should contact their local VSO. Information about how to contact a local VSO is available at [www.massvetben.org/find-your-vso](http://www.massvetben.org/find-your-vso).

In addition to assisting with Chapter 115 applications, VSOs can help veterans apply for other state and federal benefits and connect them with important local resources.

“Chapter 115 benefits have historically been underutilized, because too few veterans have heard of the program or know how to access it,” said Betsy Gwin, associate director of the Veterans Legal Clinic at the Legal Services Center. “During this public health and financial crisis, Chapter 115 benefits are poised to be more important than ever before in providing a strong safety net for those who have served in our military and their families who have supported them.”



## Sex Matters

a sex-positive health column

by STEPHANIE BAIRD

As a psychotherapist who specializes in empowering clients’ sexual health *and* treating trauma, I’d be remiss if I didn’t take some time to address the collective trauma we may be experiencing “from Pandemic.”

Many types of events can be defined as “traumatic,” including human-enacted events such as muggings, car accidents, verbal and physical abuse, bullying, sexual assaults, and sexual harassment. Acts of nature such as tsunamis, hurricanes, tornadoes, and fires, are also traumatic events for humans caught in their wake. Ultimately, my clients define for themselves what they consider to be a traumatic event, as we all react and experience life differently, and at different developmental stages as well.

In fact, what some clients might consider a “Big-T” Trauma such as a mugging at gunpoint, another client may consider that more of a “small-t” trauma for themselves, perhaps due to their line of work. This same client, however, may report as a “Big-T” Trauma being called a bad name by their partner, whereas someone else may regularly speak in coarse language and not give it a second thought.

In other words, what people consider traumatizing is relative to their own lived experience and the neural networks in their mind and body that store good and bad memories.

I’ve noticed different impacts Pandemic has had on my clients, colleagues, and friends. Many of us understandably have been placing ourselves somewhere in the stages of grief: shock and denial, anger, bargaining, depression, acceptance – perhaps visiting multiple stages in an hour or day!

I’ve seen this within myself, as I am still often in disbelief and depression that schools have gone virtual, my practice is now telehealth, and I can no longer easily run into a store or café. I keep hoping I’ll wake up and get a news bulletin that this was all a dream and that we can go back to “normal,” although I do enjoy less driv-

ing (and therefore less polluting).

Many of us are also having PTSD-type responses, such as hypervigilance about hygiene and nightmares about getting COVID-19. I’ve recently had nightmares about forgetting to wear my mask somewhere, or about worries that I wasn’t keeping six feet away from others.

We may be reading a book, or watching TV, and suddenly think of Pandemic. Many of us have lost folks to COVID-19 or worry about losing older or medically-compromised relatives and friends.

A couple of my clients who had nearly completed their Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) therapy prior to March 15 have experienced a renewal of some old PTSD symptoms, such as nightmares and interfering thoughts. I’ve also had a few new clients over the past month who reported that they were handling their old traumas pretty well until Pandemic came along, and now they are prompted to finally seek treatment.

Humans have a remarkable resilience and ability to contain and cope with traumas for weeks, months, years, sometimes even decades, but coping without effective treatment has its limits. I’ve had several clients for whom it is incredibly clear that natural disasters or global catastrophes directly triggered remembering and resurgence of old traumas perpetrated by humans. The reason for this is that neurons that “wire together, fire together.”

Anytime we feel unsafe or anxious, our mind and body will experience a set of responses likely already forged from a prior similar experience. For example, someone has now been in three frightening car accidents. After each accident, PTSD symptoms may have worsened until finally, after the third car accident, they can no longer get into a car and they have extreme sleep disturbances and other symptoms, interfering with their daily functioning.

While some of us may have easily adapted to the new Pandemic normal – I’m looking at you intro-

verts that are out there and enjoying living alone – many of us may be experiencing a resurgence of trauma symptoms, or new ongoing symptoms like mild daily depression, constant anxiety when away from home, panic attacks in the grocery store, fear of contracting or passing on COVID-19, and possible numbness to this new reality.

Any or all of these symptoms may be slamming on your sexual brakes, and any reactions you are having are completely normal in this global Pandemic. The key right now is to practice whatever kind of self-care you can muster (anyone else YouTube restorative yoga and cuddly kittens wearing bow ties?), cooking nutritious meals, hiking in our beautiful valley, exercising, meditating, practicing mindfulness, talking to a therapist, enjoying self-love, sleeping on a hammock, crafting, woodworking, gardening, reading fluffy books, taking breaks from the news or even from internet connectivity, spending time with pets, taking long baths, and more.

Lastly, to move towards sustained improved mental – and therefore sexual – health, it is crucial not to compare your functioning and needs with the publicized status of others. A meme I recently saw sums it up: “We are all in the same storm, but not in the same boat.” Some of us came into Pandemic with resources galore, others were hanging on by a thread.

Let’s help each other get our full mojo back by reaching out to friends, acquaintances, retail personnel, and others, and genuinely ask how they are weathering this storm, and how we can help. Helping someone else when we have the energy to do so may be just the pick-me-up we need to get some renewed body tingling going on.

*Stephanie Baird is a certified OWL facilitator and an EMDR psychotherapist and consultant who encourages her clients towards thriving sexual health. She welcomes feedback and suggestions at [sexmatters@montaguereporter.org](mailto:sexmatters@montaguereporter.org).*

## Senior Center Activities MAY 25 THROUGH 29

### 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](mailto:coa@montague-ma.gov) by email.

### ERVING

Erving Senior Center director Paula Betteres writes that the Center is closed until further notice:

“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-betteres@erving-ma.gov](mailto:paula-betteres@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](mailto: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.

## Local Supermarket Senior Accommodations

Supermarkets in Massachusetts are now required to provide special hours for seniors and immunocompromised shoppers. Call ahead – this information is accurate as of April 8; hours and accommodations are still changing.

**Big Y:** Senior hours from 7 to 8 a.m. (413) 772-0435

**Foster’s:** Senior hours from 7 to 8 a.m. (413) 773-1100

**Food City:** Senior hours from 7 to 8 a.m. (413) 863-9591

**Green Fields Market:** Senior hours from 9 to 10 a.m. Curbside pickup available. Order by 8 p.m.; order ready for pickup between 1 and 6 the following day. Delivery also available. \$6 per delivery inside Greenfield. \$8 outside Greenfield. (413) 773-9567

**McCusker’s Market:** Only six customers allowed in store at a time. Curbside pickup available. Order between 12 and 1 p.m. for pickup the following day. Delivery available. \$10 per delivery. Email [pickup@franklincommunity.coop](mailto:pickup@franklincommunity.coop) (413) 625-2548

**Stop and Shop:** Senior hours from 6 to 7:30 a.m. (413) 774-6096

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**WEST ALONG** from page B1

Jenny. Sometimes even the male is called that since they are so hard to tell apart. Although I'm going to assume that it is Johnny, not Jenny who is doing all the singing.

So, whoever it is, the little brown wren has taken over and locked the ruffian English sparrows out of the prized birdhouse bungalow and thrown their scruffy bedding odds and ends into the vegetable garden. The sparrows are no match for this feisty little wren, who will poke holes in their eggs if he gets the chance.

I'm not sad to be rid of the pugnacious street fighting sparrows, who would in turn trash the gentle bluebirds' home if they could. But those sparrows do a great job in ridding our garden of Japanese beetles. I never find any of those pests on the roses, and the sparrows spare us from suffocating the beetles in soapy water. I'd rather have them picked apart and swallowed by some sparrow than to waste their misguided lives by winding up struggling in my bucket of suds.

Just now a chestnut-sided warbler has dropped by from the lilac to sing out "very very pleased to meet you!" Same to you, my fine warbler friend. Good day to you too and safe travels! We all remember our good manners on such a fine Sunday morning as this. All of us except the wren of course who is busy taking out the sparrow trash, as I said before...

May 19. "Well hello," said I to the newly arrived yellowthroat who, in his raccoon Lone Ranger mask, perched nearby to look me in the eye. He just dropped in to check the

rose bushes for his breakfast.

I sit here so unmoving, only occasionally sipping from the coffee cup, that most non-human visitors think I'm just a piece of furniture. The only thing moving is my quiet eye, watching the blackbird just now, and *whoa!* the indigo bunting that appears out of nowhere. You never know who's going to turn up.

By my not moving much, just my pen across the page, some of these visitors have taken liberties, perching on the tip of my toe, like the catbird for instance, who quizzes me now at a safe distance from her peculiar perch on the back of the chair. Hummingbirds buzz up to my face and hover looking into my glasses to check me out; chipmunks have scampered across this notebook to get to the coffee can full of sunflower seeds on the opposite arm of my Adirondack chair.

From here I can spy on the wren couple, the fancy-dancing little male trying his best to lure Jenny Wren into his cozy bedroom in the blue bird house with the daffodil yellow roof. He's singing at the top of his voice while she plays hard to get.

The catbird is on her seat on the back of yonder chair vaguely looking over the fresh pile of bear poop dumped near that chair on the lawn last night. Was that a gift, a complaint, or a warning? Maybe it was a demonstration of the bear's bad mood, since the feeders are taken in every night leaving nothing to raid, knock over and trash. The bear messed up the compost pile instead, but finding nothing satisfactory, he galumphed over across the Flat to Cousin Annabelle's house to destroy a feeder or two.

May 22. The season is slipping, slipping into the future. Lusty spring is playing itself out here in the back yard. The voluptuous summer season is shaping up nicely, and none too soon.

So much for ephemeral spring: it seems to have lasted just one week. A lush summer season of heavily perfumed roses in their fancy plumed hats and billowy Mae West charms will soon flaunt their feminine allure before those who care to notice.

Bright festooned birds fly back and forth across the lawn in the sunshine, as though this were some sort of rain forest canopy full of chattering parrots and cockatoos. Flashing red, black, white, orange, yellow, indigo blue, all colors criss-cross the slanting golden rays coming in from the east on a late spring day.

While the lilacs' bloom is still only a promise, the flowering quince today welcomes the bejeweled hummingbird. Cherry, dogwood, flowering crabapple join orioles and rose-breasted grosbeaks in this riotous declaration of life in late spring, soon to be summer.

We are all still alive and mostly healthy after this winter season of plague. We have learned again that there is no time to waste during the short time we have together on this planet.

So join me out here in welcoming in the summer, for winter's gone away. Step through the door that is opening onto a new normal, and a new summer season that we have earned the hard way.

Visit [riverstoriesdavidbrule.com](http://riverstoriesdavidbrule.com) for daily entries of *West Along the River*.

**PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT****Eggtooth Offers Summer Theater Workshops**

Eggtooth's "Winter's Tale" Immersive, 2016, with Marina Goldman and Jack Golden.

**By REPORTER STAFF**

**GREENFIELD** – Eggtooth Productions will offer two creative workshops this summer.

The first one is a one-day workshop called "The Story of a Space: Immersive Theater Design," a designer's workshop with John Bechtold on Saturday, June 13, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

In this three-hour workshop, participants will explore a space of their choosing to develop it as a theatrical landscape. Using methods culled from leaders in the immersive theater movement and Bechtold's own creative process, this workshop will give participants some engaging tools to re-learn the world.

This workshop is intended for actors and theater designers with an interest in immersive and site-specific theater. The tools used in the workshop are accessible to anyone interested in this kind of work, regardless of experience.

Using Zoom, participants should plan to meet on location in a personally-engaging outdoor space they can play around in. For many, this could simply be the backyard or similar spot. A nearby common or park might do nicely, too. Reliable internet for Zoom is a must.

Much of the time will be meeting as a group before breaking off into the special spaces to conduct exercises that will set up each participant to develop a project of their own. Afterwards people will share and discover what they've found, and decide where to go next.

John Bechtold has been making immersive theater since 2010, most frequently with Eggtooth Productions. Having built his skills with immersive giants Punchdrunk on their award-winning *Sleep No More* in Boston and New York, John's productions across the region have taken myriad forms. The core of his approach comes from the relationships he makes with the spaces his work inhabits.

Recent productions include work at the Hawks & Reed Performing Arts Center, the Emily Dickinson Museum, the Shea The-

ater, and Chester Theatre Company, among others. John is the head of the Performing Arts program at the Amherst Regional Schools and DASAC, a progressive summer arts program at Deerfield Academy. In 2020, he was named the Children's Theatre Foundation of America's Robertson Award winner, a national honor given to a high school theater teacher once every two years.

Materials needed would be a notebook and writing utensil, phone, and a pair of headphones.

The cost is \$40; to join, email [jbechs@gmail.com](mailto:jbechs@gmail.com). Rain date will be Saturday, June 20.

The second workshop will be "Being Self," taught by Joe Dulude II. It is designed as a unique online camp experience for LGBTQ+ kids ages 15 to 18.

Each day will be a two- to three-hour session involving theater, self-discovery and artistic activities. The goal of the camp is "to help young people discover who they are in this moment, and who they would like to become."

All activities lead to a final video project where campers will record a documentary about who they are. These videos will be edited together into a short film which will be shown on the Eggtooth Productions website.

The camp will be led by Joe Dulude II, a member of the LGBTQ+ community. Dulude has worked the last eight years as a program director for Camp Highlight (a residential summer camp for children of LGBTQ families) and has developed several workshops on identity. The camp will run from August 10 through 14 from 1 to 4 p.m. at a cost of \$100. To register, email [joe@dulude2.com](mailto:joe@dulude2.com)

Joe Dulude II is probably best known for his Broadway, Off-Broadway, and West End makeup designs on such productions as *Wicked*, *Beetlejuice*, *Spongebob Squarepants the Musical*, and many more. He is also a fine artist, showing work in NYC and in Western Mass, and a performing artist and drag queen.

**Alderbrook Meadows Wildlife Sanctuary**

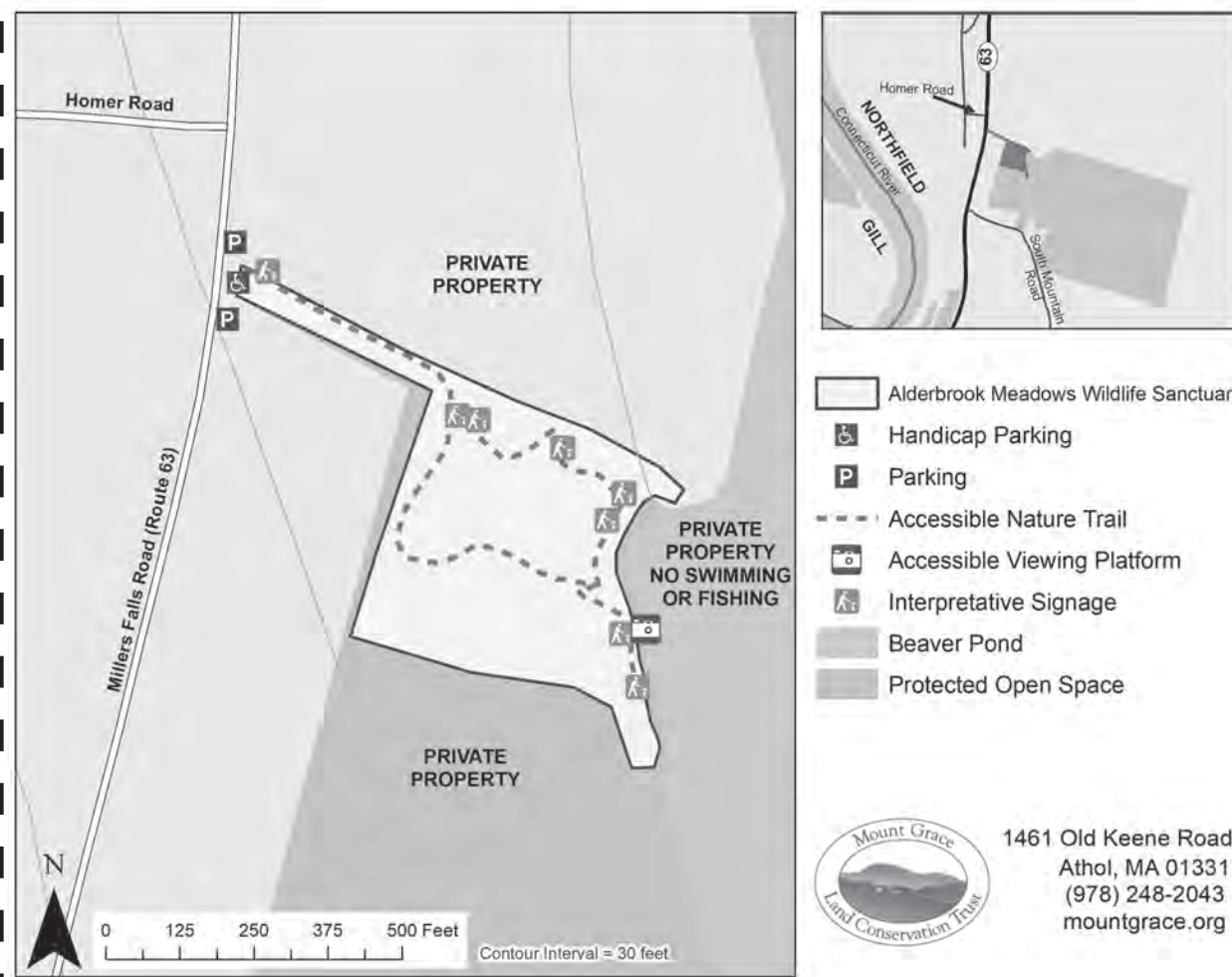
Millers Falls Road (Route 63), Northfield, MA

**Trail Map Courtesy of Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust**

During the COVID-19 crisis, we encourage you to safely get outdoors for your mental and physical well-being. All our trails remain open but are subject to recreational use guidelines in line with the Common-

wealth of Massachusetts, which are subject to change, but currently include physical distancing of six feet between visitors, wearing a face mask if social distancing is not possible, and keeping dogs on a leash.

Map produced by Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust. Source data obtained from Office of Geographic Information (MassGIS), Commonwealth of Massachusetts, MassIT, and from Global Positioning System (GPS) field data. Boundary lines and trail locations are approximate. Upload September 2018.



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**OBJECTS** from page B1

throwing stuff out into the street. Officer states all quiet upon arrival; some chairs and other objects are in the roadway and have been moved to the side; not a hazard.

**Monday, 9/11/17**

2:46 p.m. Walk-in report of a recliner in the middle of one of the travel lanes at Turners Falls and Hatchery roads. Cars are reportedly swerving into oncoming traffic to avoid it.

**Thursday, 10/19/17**

6:50 p.m. Report from Unity Hill of a large roll of plastic in the road creating a hazard.

**Friday, 1/12/18**

5:33 p.m. Motorist reporting that safety cones blocking a piece of steel that is sticking up in the road on the General Pierce Bridge have been knocked down.

**Tuesday, 3/6/18**

4:47 p.m. Report of a board in the road near the golf course with nails sticking up out of it.

**Tuesday, 5/1/18**

7:24 a.m. Report of tools in the road at Millers Falls Road and Cross Street.

**Sunday, 6/17/18**

3:36 p.m. Caller advising that a white man in his mid to late 50s is dumping dirt, broken bricks, and other fill



material in the middle of the First Street alley. Caller states that the man is moving material with a bicycle and attached baby trailer.

**Tuesday, 6/19/18**

3:37 p.m. First of two calls from the same caller complaining of a basketball hoop in the road at the end of K Street near the bar;



caller believes it is impeding parking for local establishments.

**Thursday, 7/5/18**

12:15 p.m. Caller states that there are railroad spikes, or something similar, in the roadway on the General Pierce Bridge.

**Wednesday, 1/16/19**

12:48 p.m. Caller reports that a tow

truck is towing a junk car and parts of the exhaust system are falling off into the road.

**Tuesday, 1/29/19**

4:47 p.m. Caller advising of a large trash bag in the middle of Hillside Road that is full of construction debris.

**Friday, 2/8/19**

12:33 p.m. Multiple calls for vehicle vs. traffic signs in front of Farren Care Center. Officer requesting DPW to respond due to the large amount of debris in the roadway.

**Tuesday, 4/16/19**

10:36 a.m. Caller from Crescent Street calling about a roofing company that is doing a roof on Bridge Street. Caller states that there are tiles with nails in them in the road.

**Tuesday, 9/10/19**

10:16 a.m. Report of glass in road in front of caller's residence on Turners Falls Road.

**Monday, 9/30/19**

11:31 a.m. Report of overflowing dumpster on G Street. Caller advises people have been coming by, picking through the items, and discarding items on the sidewalk and in the road.

**Sunday, 11/3/19**

2:38 p.m. Report of three youths, 8- to 12-year-old males, creating a disturbance in the neighborhood. Youths picked up some glassware that the caller had outside his residence in a free pile and smashed items in the road. Caller made kids clean up the mess; they left on foot, but returned shortly thereafter and loaded more glassware into their backpacks.



## Walk Five: Hoe Shop Road to the Town Forest (from "Eleven Ways to Walk")

Reprinted from the May 26, 2011 edition of the Montague Reporter.  
P.H. Crosby's series focused on walks around West Gill.

BY P.H. CROSBY

**GILL** – Don't ever assume you're alone in the woods.

I meet people all the time in the woods here and elsewhere, or find signs they've been there. Other nature walkers, quietly listening to birds or examining leaves and woodland flowers. Hunters, archers, trackers. Sheepish teenage couples. (Once even a sheepish adult couple.) At other times of year, cross-country skiers and snowshoe-hikers. Once in a great while – too infrequently – a little hut or pine cone castle that suggests a child has been playing there.

It can be startling to come around the corner of a path, lost in a reverie of sundappled leaves, trilling tree frogs, and the scent of damp earth and pine, and find someone just as startled, binoculars in hand.

Once, elsewhere, I ran into a man in pajamas just out for a smoke. I was on public property; he was at the edge of his backyard. The early spring lack of shrubs just suddenly made us aware of one another.

To me, there's something satisfying about knowing all these other people are out there enjoying the woods, without most people even knowing they are there.

Much of Massachusetts' "wilderness" – much of New England's, for that matter – is a lot less remote than you might think. Hiking in New Hampshire a few decades ago, after trekking for hours alone, I would sometimes

plant my sleeping bag just any old where in the woods if it got too dark, only to wake in the morning to the sound of slamming car doors, lawn mowers, and busy suburban life 50 yards away.

On the Metacomet-Monadnock Trail once, Granby to Northfield, I despaired one night of ever finding the lean-to indicated on my map. Finally, with dimming flashlight batteries, I set up my tent in the dark in a clear grassy space I thought was the edge of a big meadow. I put my head out of the tent in the morning to a body of water – and two environmental police. I had placed my tent right on the banks of Ruggles Pond in Wendell State Forest. Darn lucky I didn't fall in.

Walk Five is a woods walk, and it starts the same as always at the intersection of Center and West Gill, where you head west on Hoe Shop. The coltsfoot has gone by and the horsetail fern is scraggly. Now its banks of lemon-lime spurges that line the roadway, and pockets of spotted cranesbill – that violet, bellshaped (in the morning at least) flower with the distinctive, jagged-edged five-lobed leaf. Also lots of ugly burdock, one of those rank-looking and hard-to-dig-out weeds you don't want to let get into your garden. It would definitely fall into the category of weeds my little nineteenth-century book on perennials describes as "vicious, pernicious, obnoxious and thoroughly bad."

Ferns are shooting up everywhere now, far too many varieties to count. I have tried to mas-

ter just a few of them. Ostrich fern, because of the way it opens up, like an ostrich plume. Lacy maidenhair fern. The flat-leaved wood fern. Lots of bracken, the fern that branches like a three-cornered hat, that a Northfield Mountain guide once told me was a natural repellent that could actually be put on as a sort of hat, to keep bugs away. Once in a while, trudging along the road in the heat of summer with mosquitoes buzzing, I'll get really desperate and try it, but I have to remember to take it off quickly when I hear a car coming.

I stop briefly at the graveyard and happen to see buttercups. Most years, the haiku prompted by something my farmer husband once said has proved to be quite true:

*How does he know that?  
After the buttercups bloom  
You will see fireflies.*

Not yet, so far, this year.

In this walk, instead of going left at the fork to Bascom Hollow, stay right on Hoe Shop, pass by a private driveway, and look for a small wooded lane immediately on your right. This is a narrow wooded entrance, bound on both sides by private property, to the Gill Town Forest.

There is no trash in these woods. None. Sometimes my heart will sink when I think I've found some, but it will only be the white torches of new growth on the end of a pine branch, or a mass of aqua-colored lichen on a log. There are carefully-kept fences as you approach Hastings land, fences that would never be messed with if you saw how much time and work it takes to maintain them every year.

Underfoot is a starry white flower (gold-thread?), and something with dark green leaves and a red berry (maybe partridgeberry).

with friends, or attended to their own appointments. We have delivered supplies and picked up groceries. Some volunteers have taken their patients fishing.

My current role is to conduct ceremonies for patients who are veterans. I gather information about the patient, do some research, and write up a summary of their service. I play the appropriate service anthem while saluting, and give them a personal certificate, a flag pin, and other meaningful items in honor of their service.

Some hospices offer haircuts, musical therapy, massages, and more. Twenty years ago, my mother entered hospice care at a Greenfield nursing home. I was visiting for a couple of weeks. One day, Mom was napping when a lovely woman knocked on the door. She was affiliated with hospice and had with her a beautiful compact harp. Mom was still asleep when the harpist began playing gentle chords and runs. Mom opened her eyes, looked at the woman and said, "Beautiful! I thought you were an angel."

Hospice care is almost always free. Most hospice benefits are covered by Medicare, Medicaid, the Veteran's Administration, or private insurance.

I often hear, "Hospice? I could never do that!" That's what I once thought. Hospice training removed the fear and doubt. Check out the training – you'll be richer for the experience.

It is an honor to be the confidante of someone who is facing death. I have met people I wish I had known for years, rather than days or weeks. There are few experiences more profound than talking with someone who knows the end is near.

*Jeffrey Webster (Turners Falls High School '65) lives south of Tucson these days, with his wife Susan Hutchinson Webster (Greenfield High School '65).*



The first "wet spot" of the town forest isn't far away, to be followed by another, larger wet spot you can walk around if you have more time, and finally Otter Pond itself.

The wood thrush is playing its flute, a haunting multi-part melody even I – not very knowledgeable about birds – have come to recognize.

Look carefully near any grove of hemlocks you pass. You will probably find small piles of deer dung. They use those groves as their bedrooms. Of course this is tick city now, too, and you have to be careful. Stick to the paths, brush against branches as little as possible, and examine yourself carefully when you get home.

It is actually kind of hard to get infected by a tick, a doctor told me last year. (Brace yourself, this is graphic.) He claimed they have to bite you, ingest your blood, swell up, and then regurgitate it back into your system before there's even a chance you'll catch Lyme. This takes a while, and usually you find them and remove them before they have a chance to complete their repast.

I have spent far more than fifteen minutes on this walk today. It is one where you could spend hours, and there are hours more of faint walking paths here, slowly and quietly being tended by patient Gill volunteers. If you come, leave your dog at home or at least keep it close to you on the path, so it doesn't scare away or destroy the very things you come to see. Don't pick anything that there are very few of. But do take a deep breath and stand in silence a minute and thank the powers that be that there are still places like this on this poor troubled planet.

Four huge Canada geese pass very low, well under the treeline, honking forlornly, as I head back down the road toward home.

They are apparently as sad as I am to be leaving the woods.

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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  
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*Montague Reporter* at: 177 Avenue A  
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# May Poetry Page

## Two Haiku

### Week Seven Begins

Week seven begins  
This is solitude we have moved  
Into, puzzling what alone means

We are learning about  
Ourselves refracted  
Into our smallest particulates

Where is safe when every  
Intimate breath is dangerous  
And intimate begins at further distance

Six feet, thirteen, how far is safe  
If the smallest, internal moment  
Of our vulnerability is breached

Over coffee, or a glass of wine  
Laughing at a rapier turn  
Of breath into word play

The bounce and toss of conversation  
Lost, there is no more safety in  
Sharing across a table

Than there is hurtling  
Down a highway, feeling  
The wind of fast momentum

On our skin, wearing  
Our usual blindfolds  
It's been seven weeks

And some are ready for anarchy  
The right to do whatever  
Whenever, thoughtless

Careless, our desires  
Matched by the indifference  
Carried in the air between us

Sharing a joke, or sharing  
Any touch, this is a new level  
Of unclean we must learn

Another day of patience  
Another day of trying to imagine  
What alone or together mean

Our ability to decide  
Clouded by something  
Too small to believe

Answers who will live, who  
Will die, gasping for air  
Each breath intimate and dangerous

– Joannah L. Whitney  
*Greenfield*

### Fortnite

Pick a landing spot  
Jumping and Gliding from the sky  
Avoiding people.

### Tito

Acting puppy like  
Likes: food, running, rope and sticks  
Sleeps in brother's room

– Julian P. Bowden-Smith  
*Turners Falls*

## Pandemic Memories

Cutting back on beer  
Eating uncooked grapenuts with a spoon  
Breaking the habit of neglect  
Getting a pretty face mask  
Crying reading the newsfeed  
Realizing my serious addiction to cheese  
Zoom-ing with my kids  
Noting the fact I can live without bread  
Remembering the world I'm in  
Setting new habits: on Wednesdays 8 cups of coffee  
Getting my desk nice and messy  
Starting a garden in my mind  
It even had an adjacent patio (hello, I rent)  
Realizing I need more flexible clothing  
Deciding to design it (then changing my mind)  
Thinking too much – people will say – what a nice idea  
And what they mean is – could you just stop!  
Worrying about my brother and his wife up on the hill  
Being ever so grateful for my cat  
Talking to her far too much  
Referring to her as The Closet Inspector  
Realizing I'm old and I won't live forever  
Deciding I'd like to live a bit longer

– C. D. Finley  
*Greenfield*

## Encounter

I was hitch-hiking at a four corners  
just west of Minneapolis  
when they picked me up.

I was twenty, and they were about that,  
and they told me that they were from Delaware,  
and they laughed when they said they were  
running away – he from his wife,  
and she from her husband,  
and both from their kids,  
and they were staying with her brother  
where I could spend the night if I wanted  
which was fine by me.

Her brother had a trucking business,  
by which I mean he had one semi-trailer,  
and his house had a dirt floor,  
and his wife served fried potatoes for dinner,  
by which I mean that was all there was.

And I now think back on their generosity,  
since they never asked me for anything,  
although I gave him my full attention  
when he told me later  
that he did not like the situation  
that his sister was in,  
as they were God-fearing people,  
and this was not right,  
but she was family,  
so what could he do?

He said he had tried to help out the boyfriend  
by giving him a load to deliver,  
but on the way the headgasket blew,  
and when he tried to fix it he dropped a bolt  
down into the engine,  
and he did not believe  
this was an accident.

“He has the devil in him,” he told me seriously,  
and I could hear the tired sorrow  
and worry in his voice,  
though, thinking back, I do not remember  
any hint of fear  
or anger.

– Mike Naughton  
*Millers Falls*

## The Faces of Delusion

While Richard Dawkins rants and raves,  
Like any smart, materialist slave,  
The angels dance upon his head  
And sing about the living dead

Oblivious to such delight,  
He wanders through a world of blight  
Where madmen are considered sane,  
Their reason an eternal bane

With panic scientifically dressed,  
And logic dripping in duress,  
No magic is allowed to bear  
Upon such minds of disrepair

Yet nonetheless, as they insist,  
Theirs is the road to better bliss;  
The only road, in point of fact,  
All others being grimly hacked

By monsters of their own design,  
Their humanistic Frankenstein  
Whose rational destruction reigns;  
Behold the God they have ordained

– Kevin Smith  
*Turners Falls*

## Contributors' Notes

Mike Naughton has helped guide Montague for decades as a member of various town committees and as a town meeting member. He also writes occasionally about Millers Falls for the *Reporter*. The editor believes this is his first poem to be published on this page.

Julian Bowden-Smith is an 8-year-old boy who loves cornhole, football, Fortnite, and baseball. He loves his pet dog, Tito. He's a second grader at Sheffield Elementary School. Upset about not being able to say goodbye to his classmates. Loves his second grade teachers, Mrs. Tucker, Mrs. Whiteman, and Ms. Stephanie! Wants his class to know he misses all of them. He wants his teachers past and present to know that he thanks them all, for all they do! When he grows up he wants to be the next GRONK!?!?

Kevin Smith, tuba player, and frequent contributor to this page, lives in Turners Falls with his wonderful and inspirational girlfriend, Stephanie.

C. D. “Fin” Finley is a writer and self-taught artist. She attended Simmons Graduate School of Management and UMass before returning to LaSalle University in 2000 for writing. Ms. Finley was accepted to Bread Loaf Writing Conference for fiction in 2018, but she admits to being a late bloomer, and having had too many husbands. Member Straw Dogs Writers, SCBWI, ISA, AWP.

Joannah L. Whitney has been a finalist for the Poet's Seat Poetry Contest multiple times. Her poems have been published in *Silkworm*, *Anthology of the Florence Poets Society*. She lives in Greenfield.

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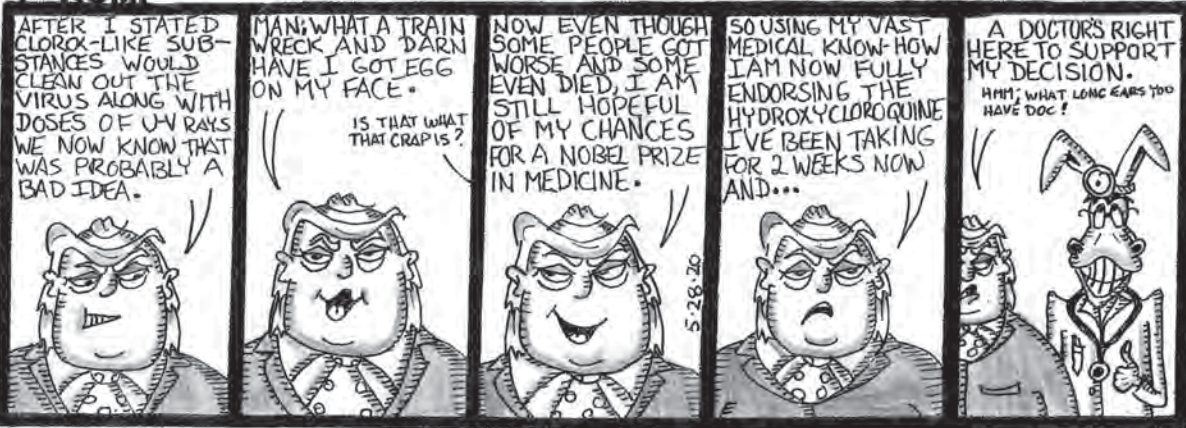
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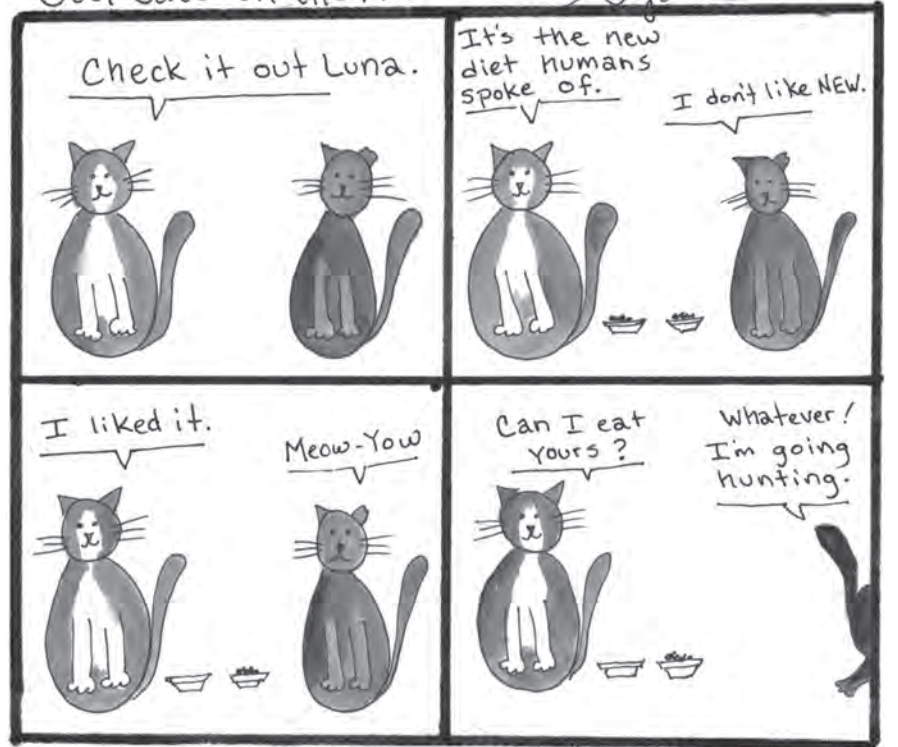
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by denis f. bordeaux



### Cool Cats on the Ave

Jaytin



### OVER THE HILL

Carolyn Clark



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# GREAT FALLS APPLE COLUMN

By ANNABEL LEVINE

**TURNERS FALLS** – I sit here writing on a wet and misty morning, which I feel grateful for, as the deadline for this column is swiftly approaching. For the past few mornings I've been watering before I get to whatever day's work I must attend to, but today I can just dive right into writing. The chore remains on my mind, because even though it's gray now, this fog is only delaying my watering needs and has not canceled them.

In the middle of a daydream, I remembered I needed to water and saw my watering can, but with it came a vision of another world. My plants were no longer just plants, but patrons at the bar that is my garden, waiting for their bartender to come pour them another one.

"A round of compost shots," yelled the pea plant, over the din of the neighbor's lawn mower.

"Another hoseful over here!"

I thought about how close the plants grow to one another, almost jarringly so in a COVID-19 world. They're all over each other! Leaves touching! Roots intermingling! Bees flying from flower to flower! Debaucherous pleasures that have been off-limits in our timeline for weeks.

Sometimes things get violent, as can happen in an establish-



Radishes display a loose interpretation of social distancing rules.

ment where one has imbibed too many shots of rainwater. Yesterday I saw a blue jay repeatedly attacking a young mourning dove that was trying to hide in a blackberry bramble, before flying off to wreak havoc somewhere else. It was a rough scene.

But the birds aren't all bad eggs. Their song provides a lilt and melodic ambiance for the twilight supper club, giving way to the insect and frog choruses that take over later as the soundtrack of the dark hours. These sounds are much preferred, I would imagine, to the sun-soakin' daytime sounds of operating machinery and parade sirens.

Imagining a line of inebriated radishes swaying in the breeze to the sweet sounds of the birds at the garden bar gave me a laugh for just a second, when previously all I could think to write about was tinted with COVID anxiety and trending dark. So, I decided to take you on this little mind journey with me. I hope it made you laugh a little, too.

## Apple Corps Update

While things up in my noggin may have gotten a little ridiculous this morning, that does not mean that the Great Falls Apple Corps is any less serious about filling downtown Turners Falls with edible landscaping and public food.

At the **Unity Park Community Garden** we have ten public "u-pick" beds growing strong, currently holding kale, peas, carrots, beets, and garlic, as well as some tomatoes and peppers donated by Franklin County Tech. (Thanks!)

We have beautiful new signs marking the public beds, so folks don't go mistakenly picking from someone's private garden. And as is perennially true, we have a copious amount of mint and strawberry plants growing in our paths, and they are free to whoever wants to come dig them up.

At the Unity garden we are also happy to announce we have planted our first bush, a gooseberry, in our new "edible hedge" that will separate the garden from the skate park. Looking forward to lots of delicious fruit there in the future!

Up at the old St. Andrew's church, work on our **sidewalk food forest** continues. Three of the four elderberry bushes we planted last fall made it through the winter, as well as a plum, a kousa dogwood, rhubarb, strawberries, garlic chives, and



Inebriated peas cling to their trellis after another shot of compost.

more. This season we are working on expanding our beds, and planting more and more food. We have some annual vegetables in there now – a few radishes, kohlrabi, corn – and will be adding more as the season goes on.

Because our group is made up of volunteers, the amount of work we can do, and food we can grow, depends on how many hands we have involved. Are you interested? Even if you've just got an hour a week, our gardens always need a spot of watering, weeding, planting, and expanding!

Lastly, we still have plenty of donated **seeds to give away**, including enough beet seeds to supply a factory farm. If you're feeling the gardening itch, let us help you dive in.

For seeds, to volunteer, or just to say hello, please reach out to us on Facebook, on Instagram, or by emailing us at [greatfallsapplecorps@gmail.com](mailto:greatfallsapplecorps@gmail.com). Happy gardening!

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