

# The Montague Reporter

YEAR 18 – NO. 38

also serving Irving, Gill, Leverett and Wendell

\$1

EDITOR@MONTAGUEREPORTER.ORG

THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES

AUGUST 20, 2020

## ERVING SELECTBOARD

### Erving Police Chief Out On Indefinite Leave

By KATIE NOLAN

Erving police chief Christopher Blair is on indefinite leave. Town administrator Bryan Smith said Blair's leave is not disciplinary. "He has served Erving for two decades with a lot of pride and commitment to the community," Smith said.

The selectboard held two executive sessions on the subject on August 4, one to discuss "the reputation, character, physical condition or mental health, rather than professional competence of an individual" and one to discuss the town's strategy for negotiations with the New England Police Benevolent Association.

Smith said he cannot discuss the content of the executive sessions, but said Blair is still employed by the town. Lieutenant Robert Holst was appointed acting chief. Smith said the selectboard will begin a search for a new chief, but "is not firm right now" as to when the search will begin.

At their regularly scheduled meeting on Monday, selectboard members praised Holst for taking on the responsibility of acting chief. He assured them that the police shifts will remain fully staffed. "All of the patrolmen have stepped up," he said.

see **ERVING** page A4

### Farren Announces Plans to Close, Move Patients South



MIKE JACKSON PHOTO

*The hospital became a longterm residential mental health facility in 1990.*

By JEFF SINGLETON

**MONTAGUE CITY** – The news came out on Monday that another institution central to Montague's twentieth-century history will be closing by the end of the year: the Farren Care Center in Montague City, which has served the town as a medical facility since it was dedicated in 1900 and is currently home to over 100 longterm residents.

Town administrator Steve Ellis told the selectboard that evening that the owners of the Farren, a corporation called Trinity Health of New England Senior Communities, has pledged to move most of the residents to a facility in Holyoke called Mount Saint Vincent Care Center.

Trinity has also announced that

it plans to sell Mount Saint Vincent to iCare Health Network, a Connecticut-based healthcare management corporation. As it turns out, iCare has been managing the Farren since the beginning of the year. Trinity's press release announcing the Farren closure was produced in collaboration with iCare as well as the Sisters of Providence Ministry Corporation, the latest incarnation of an organization that has been closely connected to the Farren since its founding and merged with Trinity Health in 2013.

These developments may sound familiar to Montague residents. Three years ago this month the Southworth paper mill, the latest incarnation of an older mill established in the 1890s that had been bought most recently by a

see **FARREN** page A6

## GILL-MONTAGUE REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE

### School Semester Will Begin With At-Home Learning

By MIKE JACKSON

**GILL-MONTAGUE** – By a vote of 7 to 1, culminating a decision-making process that has lasted all summer, the regional school committee officially approved a back-to-school plan for Montague and Gill on Tuesday night. Students and teachers will begin remote learning on September 14, and as the fall semester progresses, the committee will review the COVID-19 data and decide whether and when to begin phasing in some limited in-school learning.

Though local incidence of the virus appears to be very low – official state data counts one positive

test in Montague in July, and zero in August – superintendent Brian Beck recommended that students begin with at-home learning while the school buildings' ventilation systems are reviewed and repaired, and new filters installed. "I'm not making this recommendation exclusively based on the numbers," Beck said. "I'm making it based on our preparedness."

Unlike the improvised spring semester, students learning from home will have expectations around attendance and participation this fall, and will receive grades.

On Tuesday, September 8 – or the following day, if the school

see **SCHOOLS** page A3

## MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD

### Montague Voting Locations Changed All Around Again

By JEFF SINGLETON

The Montague selectboard has approved a warrant for the upcoming September 1 state primaries that will move voting in four of the town's six precincts to the Franklin County Technical School (FCTS) gym. The move, justified by town clerk Deb Bourbeau as a response to social distancing needs related to the COVID pandemic, could be a prelude to permanently consolidating voting for all six precincts, a move that would require a vote of town meeting.

Residents of precincts 2, 3, 4, and 6 – covering Millers Falls, the Hill of Turners Falls, the Patch, and Montague City – will vote at the tech school. Precinct 5 (downtown Turners) voters will move from town hall back to their former location at the senior center on Fifth Street, and Precinct 1 will remain at the fire station on Old Sunderland Road.

Bourbeau told the board at its August 10 meeting that the current locations for a number of the precincts were too small to allow proper social distancing. "We're quite cramped," said Bourbeau about the recent locations. She said selectboard chair Rich Kuklewicz, who also serves on the FCTS board, helped her find the new location.

Town meeting member Ariel Elan asked how people who could



MIKE JACKSON PHOTO

*A new drop box for ballots has been installed outside the town hall.*

not drive would get to the polling stations. "The four precincts that I am moving," Bourbeau, "everyone has to pretty much drive anyway."

Although the board only approved the warrant for the primary, it also passed a motion recommending the new location for the November election. Selectboard member Michael Nelson asked if the new configuration was for "forever moving forward, until we come up with a different plan."

Bourbeau replied that "if all goes

see **MONTAGUE** page A7

## Sawmill River Photography Project Helps Machines Learn About Streams

By LEE WICKS

**MONTAGUE CENTER** – Ben Letcher has lived in Montague since 1995, and he works as an ecologist at the United States Geo-

logical Survey (USGS)'s Silvio O. Conte Anadromous Fish Research Branch in Turners Falls. He is not a man who leaves his job at the office. In fact, hours before he arrives at work, he can be found at

the Montague Conservation area with his wife Emily Monosson and their dog Ella, photographing one particular spot on the Sawmill River near the bridge.

He's been doing this since 2017, usually between seven and eight in the morning. If he can't for any reason, Emily steps in, so that the project has continuity.

Like all scientists, Ben is curious. "I started taking daily pictures on our morning dog walks to see how much water changes over time," he says, "and how the stream banks and stream bottom change."

The changes are sometimes subtle, and sometimes dramatic. "A lot of interesting things happen that can be tracked with daily pictures – trees fall down, the gravel banks change, timing of growing and falling leaves can be different year to year," says Ben, who loves documenting changes in fields and rivers around us. "Taking pictures from the same spot every day is a great image diary – a way to remember how things were and how seasons change. And, it may be a way to forecast the future."

Once he had a significant number of pictures, Ben wanted to share them easily, so he made a website, fpe.ecosheds.org. This project intersected nicely with his work. "This fit into my job because it is important for us to make science easier to

see **SAWMILL** page A6



BEN LETCHER PHOTO

*Ben Letcher has been compiling photos of this spot on the Sawmill daily for over three years. He took this photograph on August 6.*



### One More Break Now, Then Back To Weekly Biz!

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## Local Farms, Stores Eligible For Food Security Grants

By SARAH ROBERTSON

**FRANKLIN COUNTY** – The Leverett Village Co-op and Rainbow Harvest Farm in Greenfield are two recent recipients of a state grant intended to help strengthen food access and resilience in the fallout of the coronavirus crisis.

With a special focus on food produced locally, the program is meant to ensure farmers and food stores can continue to provide equitable access to healthy food, and mitigate future disruptions to food supply and distribution systems.

"Through this grant program, we are helping residents and businesses who've been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic while making investments in building a strong

and equitable local food system for Massachusetts that is prepared for the future," Governor Charlie Baker said in a statement.

The Leverett Village Co-op received \$18,897 to purchase new glass-door coolers to store refrigerable products. The grant will help the co-op re-establish itself as it climbs back from a period of decline and disputes over mismanagement.

"We're just beginning our comeback," said Paul Rosenberg, interim general manager of the Co-op. "We're restocking the store with a much wider range of things for shopping." The new coolers will arrive in about a month, Rosenberg said, and will be stocked with local produce, dairy, and meats from a

see **GRANTS** page A8



# The Montague Reporter

*“The Voice of the Villages”*

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*This Saturday is the final day voters may register for the primary elections on September 1. As voting options are particularly complicated this year, we’re turning this space over to Montague’s state representative, who has prepared a handy guide. Readers in Gill, Erving, Wendell, Leverett, Greenfield, and elsewhere can check their own town websites or town clerks for corresponding local details. – Eds.*

GUEST EDITORIAL

## Enhanced Voting Options Available for Registered Voters

By REP. NATALIE BLAIS

**MONTAGUE** – In recent weeks, registered voters in Massachusetts received a first-of-its-kind mailing from the Secretary of the Commonwealth: a vote by mail application.

Last month, the Legislature passed a bill to protect voters’ health and safety while also expanding and safeguarding accessibility during the COVID-19 pandemic. Under the new law, every registered voter can choose to vote by mail, vote early in person, or vote in person in the State Primary and General Election.

By law, the Secretary of the Commonwealth William Galvin was required to send vote by mail applications to all registered voters by July 15 for the September 1 State Primary. The application includes pre-paid return postage. The deadline to apply is next Wednesday, August 26.

You can expect another vote by mail application in your mailbox around the third week in September for the November 3 General Election. This application will also include pre-paid return postage. The deadline to apply is Wednesday, October 28.

Voters can choose to return their ballot in the mail, in a secure dropbox, or in person. For the State Primary, all ballots need to be returned to your local town hall by 8 p.m. on September 1 in order to be counted. For the General Election, ballots mailed must be postmarked by November 3 and arrive by November 6 in order to be counted. If you think your ballot may not arrive in time to be counted, consider returning it by hand to town hall.

If you did not receive an application or you lost the form, you can visit the Secretary’s website at [www.sec.state.ma.us](http://www.sec.state.ma.us) to complete an online application. Once your application is submitted, your city or town clerk will mail a ballot with pre-paid return postage.

For voters who choose to vote in-person, polling locations will have new safety measures in place to protect your health. In collaboration with the Department of

Public Health, the Secretary of the Commonwealth will issue guidelines around the physical distancing of voters and election officers, face coverings, personal protective equipment, the use of sanitizers, and the sanitary use of marking pens. There will be seven days of in-person early voting for both the primary and General Elections to increase accessibility and maximize safety.

For the State Primary, **in-person voting in Montague** will be available at the Senior Center, located at 62 Fifth Street in the village of Turners Falls, on:

Saturday, 8/22 (8 a.m. to noon)  
Sunday, 8/23 (8 a.m. to noon)  
Monday, 8/24 (9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.)  
Tuesday, 8/25 (9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.)  
Wednesday, 8/26 (10 a.m. to 5 p.m.)  
Thursday, 8/27 (9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.)

For the General Election, in-person voting will be available from Saturday, October 17 to Friday, October 30.

Alternatively, voters can still cast their ballots in person on Election Day. Not sure where you vote? Go to [montague-ma.gov/files/2020\\_-\\_Find\\_My\\_Precinct.pdf](http://montague-ma.gov/files/2020_-_Find_My_Precinct.pdf) or give town clerk Deb Bourbeau a call at town hall: (413) 863-3200 x 203.

The legislation also enhances accessibility and equity. Along with additional options for voting, the bill is in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and national standards to provide accessible voting options to everyone. Municipalities are required to evaluate and report any adverse impact a change to a polling location poses to accessibility on the basis of race, national origin, disability, income, or age in advance of any changes being made. Such changes must be made at least 20 days prior to the election to provide sufficient notice to voters.

The collaborative process that got us to where we are today included input from public stakeholders, local election officials, legislators, Secretary Galvin, and Governor Baker. Each recognized that expanding accessibility and protecting voter rights are of par-



*Adrienne LaPierre delivers a carload of fresh produce and eggs to the Franklin County Survival Center on Fourth Street in Turners Falls on a recent Tuesday morning. The harvest is donated by home gardeners to Drandown Montague, a group working locally to come up with creative solutions for recycling, sustainable consumption, green energy, and other issues related to climate change.*

Letters to  the Editors

## Help Design Erving’s Parks Gross!

The Erving Recreation Commission is engaging in a strategic planning process to create inventories, goals, and actions to be taken over the next five years. As part of this process, they have partnered with Franklin Region Council of Governments (FRCOG) to map several amenity options at three parks in Town. The Commission is looking for public feedback on the design options, strategic plan, and ideas for park amenities in Town.

The three design options are posted on the Town website. Hard copies are available upon request. A community comment session will be held online at 4 p.m. on Sunday, August 30. Registration can be found on the Town website, or at [www.tinyurl.com/yyj28crb](http://www.tinyurl.com/yyj28crb).

This comment session will review the three design options and solicit feedback from Erving residents and residents of neighboring communities. Feedback will be incorporated in the documents, and ultimately in finalized park designs. Starting in September, a new playground will be designed for Park Street Park in Erving’side. Construction is planned to begin in Spring 2021.

Participation from all age groups is encouraged.

**Mariah Kurtz**  
Assistant Town Planner  
Erving

**Robert J. Steinberg**  
Montague Center

amount importance to our democracy. Neither our right to participate nor our health and safety should be compromised as we cast our ballots during the COVID-19 pandemic. If you have any concerns about voting in person, I urge you to complete your vote by mail application today.

For more information, the Secretary of the Commonwealth has posted a Frequently Asked Questions page at [www.sec.state.ma.us/ele/eleev/early-voting-faq.htm](http://www.sec.state.ma.us/ele/eleev/early-voting-faq.htm). You can also reach his office at 1(800)462-VOTE or [elections@sec.state.ma.us](mailto:elections@sec.state.ma.us).

And as always, please do not hesitate to reach out to me directly if you have questions or concerns: [natalie.blais@mahouse.gov](mailto:natalie.blais@mahouse.gov) or (413) 362-9453.

*Natalie Blais represents the First Franklin District in the Massachusetts House of Representatives.*

IMPORTANT DATES

**August 22:** Last day to register to vote for the State Primary. Voter Registration will be held at the Montague Public Safety Building Lobby, 180 Turnpike Road in the village of Turners Falls, from 2 to 4 p.m. and 7 to 8 p.m.

**August 22 through 27:** In-person early voting, available at the Senior Center located at 62 Fifth Street in the village of Turners Falls.

**August 26:** Deadline for Vote By Mail Application to be received.

**September 1:** State Primary; ballots must be returned to your town hall by 8 p.m.

**Third week in September:** Vote By Mail Applications for General Election sent.

**October 24:** Last day to register for the General Election.

**October 17 through 30:** In-person early voting available.

**October 28:** Deadline for Vote By Mail Application to be received.

**November 3:** General Election; Postmark deadline for mailed ballots.

MONTAGUE POLLING LOCATIONS

**Precinct 1:** Montague Center Fire Station, 28 Old Sunderland Road

**PrecinctS 2, 3, 4, and 6:** Franklin County Technical School Gym, 82 Industrial Boulevard

**Precinct 5:** Gill-Montague Senior Center, 62 Fifth Street

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LARKIN-ROSSI ILLUSTRATION

Compiled by NINA ROSSI

A map of the United States showing **COVID exposure risks by gathering size** has been created by the Georgia Institute of Technology. The map is built by virus modelers and calculates the chances that at least one person at a potential gathering is carrying the coronavirus, depending on the number of people present and the area where it is located.

The model assumes that infection rates are ten times the number of cases being reported. For instance, in Franklin County, the chance that one person at a 100-person gathering is infected is 8%. By contrast, Chickasaw County, Mississippi has a 99% risk.

Explore the mapping tool at [covid19risk.biosci.gatech.edu](https://covid19risk.biosci.gatech.edu).

The Great Falls Farmers Market is looking to add **local craftspeople, artists, and other non-food vendors** to the market. The outdoor market runs every Wednesday from 2 to 6 p.m. through the end of October at Peskeomskut Park, and the daily vending fee is \$5.

Interested? Email [greatfalls-farmersmarkettturners@gmail.com](mailto:greatfalls-farmersmarkettturners@gmail.com), or message the market on Facebook or Instagram.

**Got fruit?** The Great Falls Apple Corps would like to come glean and distribute your apples, pears, peaches, or whatever you've got growing! If you have extra, or just need help picking your abundance, get in touch with them at [greatfallsapple-corps@gmail.com](mailto:greatfallsapple-corps@gmail.com).

MassHire is looking for **mechanical and electrical assemblers**

for a job fair ending today, Thursday, August 20. The jobs are for a railway car manufacturer in Springfield. Check out these opportunities at [www.masshirespringfield.org](http://www.masshirespringfield.org).

Also, MassHire will hold a **Healthcare and Human Services Job Fair** from Monday to Wednesday, August 24 to 26. Many local jobs are available in these fields, and some of them will train the right candidate as well. This is an online event, so go to [www.masshirefhcareers.org](http://www.masshirefhcareers.org) to attend.

A drive-through **Ham and Potato Salad Supper** is being held at the Montague Congregational Church this Saturday, August 22 between 5 and 6:30 p.m. The menu includes ham with pineapple salsa, potato salad, copper penny salad, bread and butter, and blueberry cake, all for only \$12. Wow! Reserve your portion by calling (413) 367-2652.

**Great Falls Books through Bars** will be packing books at Just Roots Farm in Greenfield on Sunday, August 23 starting at 4 p.m. The event will be held outside under tents, and there will be handwashing stations, masks required, and a limited workforce of ten people per session. Attendees will wrap bundles of preselected books, along with some letter writing to the recipients, who are incarcerated people. To volunteer, you must RSVP by emailing [gfbtb@riseup.net](mailto:gfbtb@riseup.net).

The LAVA Center in Greenfield is **looking for art** on the theme of "What Does Community Mean to You?" for an exhibit slated at their gallery in November. Send three .jpgs of work to [lindy.whiton@gmail.com](mailto:lindy.whiton@gmail.com) by October 1.

The **Memorial Hall Museum in Old Deerfield** announces free admission at the museum to celebrate their 150th anniversary this year! Masks (also available at the front desk) and social distancing are both required in all museum spaces, but timed ticketing or advance notice is not needed.

The current exhibit, *Fabric of Time*, covers the history of quilting in New England and how quilters expressed themselves in their craft. The museum is partnering with Sisters in Stitches Joined by the Cloth, a guild keeping traditional African American quilting alive. They have loaned their collaborative creation, the Roots strip-pieced quilt, to the exhibit. Check it out from Tuesday through Sunday, 11 to 4:30 p.m., through October 31.

Piti Theatre Company, Holyoke Media, and Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Franklin County are launching a **remote arts mentorship program** called Valley Arts Mentors. The new collaboration will pair artists with over 15 years of professional experience with younger artists ages 18 and up – or those considering a career change – to meet every two weeks over a six-month period. Pairs will meet remotely as long as COVID-19 remains a safety issue.

The goal is to provide early career artists with support and encouragement, and to broaden each mentee's base of contacts, provide guidance, and help them access financial and marketing tools for arts entrepreneurship.

Registrations are being accepted at [artsmentors.org/mentorship](https://artsmentors.org/mentorship). Questions? call (508) 439-2069 or email [admin@artsmentors.org](mailto:admin@artsmentors.org). Mentors and mentees will be matched on a rolling basis until all slots are filled.

A self-guided **Art Outside tour of the northern Berkshires**, put together by the Clark, MASS MoCA, and Williams College Museum of Art, covers ten miles and shows 30 pieces of art. You may walk or bike

it. Get the route through a link to Google Maps on the MASS MoCA website. The Museum has currently put their free Thursday night music series on hold, by the way, in order to concentrate on other programming.

Workshop 13 in Ware sends an announcement that they are going ahead with the call for their 2nd Annual **Northeast Fine Arts Exhibition in Traditional Realism**. They are calling for entries in seven different categories (according to medium), and offering a variety of awards, including \$1,000 for Best in Show. Online submissions to the juried show are due by August 31. Visit [www.workshop13.org](http://www.workshop13.org) for details.

An opening reception will be held both in person (with COVID-19 precautions) and virtually, for those who prefer to view from home, on September 26.

The Beals Memorial Library in Gardner announces their **annual Poetry Contest**. Deadline to submit one unpublished poem is August 31, for your chance to win cash prizes of \$100, \$50, and \$25 for first, second, and third place. For details, call the library at (978) 297-0300.

Don't forget to submit your **ideas and some samples of your work for our special Wrapping Paper Issue** by September 1! We aren't looking for finished designs right now, just proposals and samples that show your style.

Seven artists will be chosen to create full-color, double-page spreads that will be sold as unique, recyclable holiday wrapping paper. Each winning artist will get a \$200 stipend for their selected designs, courtesy of RiverCulture, and money from the sale of this "edition" will go towards supporting our non-profit community newspaper. Send up to three .jpeg image files, and your proposal, to [features@montaguereporter.org](mailto:features@montaguereporter.org).

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

## SCHOOLS from page A1

committee switches to Wednesday meetings in order to have fresh weekly virus counts from the state on hand – they will decide whether to call for a "hybrid" learning model to begin in October. "We would need lead time to hire additional staff," Beck explained. The question would be revisited every two weeks.

Montague representative Heather Katsoulis cast the sole dissenting vote. "I'm very comfortable with starting hybrid," she said. "We could even start with the youngest kids, for part time for a few hours.... We owe the children of our communities this. Our taxpayers are paying for this.... We need to look at reality."

Haley Anderson of Montague said that while she was concerned about the effects the lack of in-person teaching has had on her own children, her thinking on the matter had shifted in recent weeks. "The metric that I want to see improve is testing," she said. "If we're getting nasal swab tests that take 4 to 10 days to come back, that is essentially useless. We need widely available, cheap, spit tests."

And Montague rep Michael Langknecht disclosed that he himself had been sick with the coronavirus. "If I were to design a system that would spread the virus, I would create the public schools," he said, adding that commuting staff and school choice students made them "a vector hub for transfer from other communities."

Beck said that two-thirds of district families responded to a survey on the situation last week. Of those, 54.8% said they wanted the semester to begin with remote learning, including 20% who said they wanted their children to remain remote, given underlying health conditions in the home. If

there is a return to in-person classes, families will be allowed to opt out.

A phased-in return to school would prioritize students with disabilities, special learning needs, and homeless students. Once in full effect, most students at each level would be split into two cohorts, one group attending school Mondays and Tuesdays and the other Thursdays and Fridays. Meals would not take place in the cafeterias, and masks, six feet of distance, and frequent hand-washing would be required.

Karl Dziura, president of the Gill-Montague Education Association, read a statement on behalf of the union at the beginning of Tuesday's meeting. "Seventy percent of staff are, or have a family member, in a high risk category," he read. "The introduction of one infected individual into the community can lead rapidly to large numbers of infection.... the likelihood that we will join the ranks of institutions across the country that have had to revert to remote learning is high."

The union argued that "remote learning is the best method to insure continuous instruction for the largest number of students," pointing out that "the switch to remote learning [in March] occurred without warning or preparation... Educators across the district are already working on ways to make remote work considerably better, and we have enough time to refine our remote educational offerings before the resumption of instruction."

Montague school committee member Cassie Damkoehler, who mentioned that two relatives who live in Greenfield were "very ill" from the virus, also spoke of her experience as a teacher in another district. "What people don't realize is we had the state telling us we couldn't grade children," she said. "We now know that that's some-

thing that didn't work."

Langknecht, previously outspoken in his criticism of the quality of remote learning, said at the committee's August 11 meeting that he was "much more optimistic than [he] was just a week ago" after learning of teachers' preparations.

A list published this week by the state Department of Elementary and Secondary Education showed that of 376 districts who had filed their reopening plans, 66% were beginning with a "hybrid" model overall, 30% with a "fully remote" model, and only 4% fully "in person."

The Athol-Royalston school committee had initially endorsed reopening full-time for all students opting in, but agreed to revisit the decision after an outbreak of COVID-19 at Athol Elementary School and concerns raised by the district's union about the ventilation system at the high school. On Wednesday night, they voted to start the year with two weeks of fully remote learning.

## Other Business

The Gill-Montague school committee voted on August 11 to close school choice to new applicants, and approved a revised FY'21 budget. Business manager Joanne Blier said a \$480,000 increase in state Chapter 70 aid is expected. The assessment to Gill, which has not yet held its annual town meeting, will rise by \$9,469.

On August 18, Blier outlined a plan to continue the summer meal program until school starts. It is unclear whether federal funding will reimburse expenses for the first two weeks of September, but the food can be covered using a donation from Dean's Beans Organic Coffee Company.

The school committee's next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, August 25.

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ERVING from page A1

Sludge Dryer Loan

Morris Housen and Michael McAuliffe of Erving Industries discussed the \$18 million sludge dryer project planned for POTW#2 – the wastewater plant owned by the town and operated by the paper company – with the selectboard, capital planning committee, and finance committee.

Long-term, low interest construction loans are available from the Massachusetts Clean Water Trust, a state agency. Because the town owns the plant, it would apply for the loan. Town administrator Bryan Smith said repayment would be the subject of a structured agreement between the town and ERSECO, the Erving Industries subsidiary that operates the plant.

Considering the estimated cost, Housen said that ERSECO is re-examining the design in order to “shave some dollars off.” McAuliffe said that instead of the three dryers priced in the estimate, the project may only need two. Housen predicted the final project would be “the least expensive dryer solution that’s ever been installed.”

Housen addressed the issue of PFAS, per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, that have been detected in dried sludge from the plant. According to the Centers for Disease Control, human health effects from the levels of PFAS found in the environment are “uncertain.” However, in studies with laboratory animals, high exposure to PFAS affected growth and development, reproduction, thyroid function, the immune system, and the liver.

Housen said that PFAS are “ubiquitous” in the environment and have been used for non-stick cookware, Scotchgard, and weatherproof clothing. “We don’t generate PFAS, we receive them,” he said, suggesting that PFAS are probably present in town septage and adding that they have been detected in the Millers River water used by the mill. He said the company is “trying to solve where the PFAS are coming from. Finding the source and eliminating it is the best policy.”

Bryan Smith told the town offi-

cials that the application deadline for the Clean Water Trust loan is August 21. The loan would need approval from town meeting, and will probably be on the warrant for a special town meeting in the fall. The Trust will announce successful applicants in January.

Asked about other sources of funding, Smith said he and assistant planner Mariah Kurtz will continue to research possible grants. One from the federal Economic Development Administration (EDA) might fund as much as 80% of an infrastructure project. However, EDA will only fund one project in town at a time, and the Kurtz is also working on an EDA grant for work at the former International Paper (IP) Mill.

The board and fin com voted to support applying for the Clean Water Trust loan for the dryer, while considering other sources of funding.

IP Mill Development

Kurtz reported on the application for a MassWorks grant to construct an access road to the former IP Mill. Building an access road parallel to the river, she said, will allow the town to subdivide the property into three parcels, in case a developer wanted to develop only a portion of the property.

Kurtz said she was basing the application on “development concept #1” from the 2018 Tighe & Bond study of possible future uses of the site. Under concept #1, all of the buildings at the former mill, except Buildings 2 and 8, would be demolished, and a new light industrial building constructed, resulting in a mixed residential, commercial and light industrial use of the property.

Kurtz said that MassWorks is focusing on mixed-use projects this year, and asked the board to confirm that concept #1 was the town’s “ideal use.” Because MassWorks loans cannot be used for demolishing buildings, Kurtz said another grant, possibly from the EDA, would be needed to pay for demolition. The MassWorks deadline is August 28, and the EDA grant has a rolling application date. “Until we are ready to break

ground,” she said, “we are not prioritized for either [grant].”

Both Kurtz and Smith added that options other than the EDA grant might be available to fund the demolition.

Because the engineering for the sludge dryer project is finished, Kurtz said she felt it was a “strong application” to submit to EDA, while the IP Mill application was weaker, because the demolition and engineering were not complete.

Fin com member Daniel Hammock said that “if the chances on the IP property are slim to none,” it would be wise to proceed with the sludge dryer grant application.

“The option of turning the sludge [dryer cost] into a grant, as opposed to going into debt, seems to make a lot of sense,” said selectboard member William Bembury. “I’d be in favor of doing the two [MassWorks and EDA applications], in hopes we get one of them.”

Hammock said he strongly favored retaining Buildings 2 and 8 at the IP Mill. “I hate to see them go,” he said.

“What is most appealing to developers?” asked selectboard chair Jacob Smith.

“There is no answer,” said Bryan Smith. “The town needs to commit to a vision, and that comes with risk.” The selectboard decided to support “concept 1” for the purpose of the MassWorks loan, to review that application at its August 24 meeting, and to continue work on the EDA grant for the sludge dryer.

Old Town Buildings

The board, capital planning committee and recreation commission discussed the future of two town buildings: the former Pleasant Street School building at 18 Pleasant Street, currently housing the School Union #28 central office and the recreation commission, and the former library at 17 Moore Street, currently vacant.

Bryan Smith said that based on discussions with Union #28 staff, he understood that after working remotely during the COVID-19 emergency, the elementary school district might continue with “a new

version of the central office” without a physical office space. He said they plan to move from 18 Pleasant Street, likely by the end of 2020.

According to recreation commission chair Erik Eichorn, the commission doesn’t want to stay at the building either, because it does not meet Americans with Disabilities Act standards of accessibility, and “the elements don’t work.”

Parks and recreation assistant Breta Petraccia said that the commission has a vision of a recreation building with open public hours which would serve as a community center and gathering space.

Bembury recommended the town sell the property to a developer who would turn it into housing. Board members Jacob Smith and Peter Sanders supported the idea, as did the capital planning committee.

All of the board members also agreed that the former library building should be upgraded for the recreation commission. Bembury suggested that the footprint of the 17 Moore Street building could be expanded in the future.

The board, capital planning committee, and the rec commission agreed to meet again in late September to discuss the future of the two buildings.

Other Business

The selectboard decided to submit a subdivision plan to the planning board to remove the 1.471-acre parcel where the former Usher Mill building is located from the Riverfront Park property.

The board discussed colors, tones, borders, fonts, the shape of the river and hill graphics in a fourth round of reviews of draft town logo designs. The board agreed on a hexagon shape for the logo.

The board approved a \$5,000 Microenterprise Loan application from Freight House Antiques, Inc.

The meeting agenda included an executive session “to discuss strategy with respect to litigation,” but because the meeting had already been long and Jacob Smith said the issue was not time-sensitive, the board put off the session to a future meeting.



NOTES FROM THE LEVERETT SELECTBOARD

Streams Flood, Dogs Howl

By GEORGE BRACE

At their meeting Tuesday, the Leverett selectboard heard a presentation on proposed updates to the town’s hazard mitigation plan and conducted two dog hearings. Personnel matters were also on the agenda, with the board appointing a new library director, and moving to advertise for a full-time police officer after a previous candidate for the position withdrew her application to pursue other options.

Kimberly MacPhee, land use and natural resources planning program manager for the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG), gave a remote presentation of the town’s Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan. Adoption of the plan is necessary to qualify for federal grants.

FRCOG’s assessment highlighted climate change as a source of increasing risk from severe weather events such as flooding and storms. Along with temperature extremes, drought and invasive species were identified as sources of concern for the new five-year plan.

Jim Field, of the town’s emergency management committee and emergency planning board, advocated for prioritizing cutting trees back further from utility poles to protect electrical wires and fiber-optic cables from storm

damage. Field and others, including highway superintendent Matt Boucher and police chief Scott Minckler, said this might have the added benefit of helping to dry roads during mud season by letting more sunlight through.

A lengthy discussion was also held about streams becoming overgrown with brush, which increases flooding. Board member Peter d’Errico pointed out that in the past farmers knew how to take care of the problem and cleared streams of this brush, but there is less farming going on now, and state regulations make this kind of activity difficult anyway. All present agreed to try to come up with a solution.

The complete plan is available on the town’s website, and public comments may be submitted to town administrator Marjorie McGinnis at [townadministrator@leverett.ma.us](mailto:townadministrator@leverett.ma.us) by Monday, August 24.

Dog Hearings

Two lengthy dog hearings both ended with the selectboard strongly encouraging the parties to work things out themselves, abide by town noise ordinances, and keep their animals under control, but making clear that if they were unable to, the board had the authority to take a variety of actions.

The first complaint involved alleged excessive barking from a young hound dog on North Leverett Road. The owners of the dog said hound dogs do like to howl, but denied that the dog in question was making as much noise as the complainant alleged.

They said they were new to the town, still getting to know their neighbors, and had only been able to exchange “two words” with the complainant, who was present for the hearing. Board members suggested professional training for the dog, reiterated that if there was indeed excessive barking it would need to be taken care of, and additionally urged the neighbors to make efforts to get along.

One of the owners said he understood, and knew the board didn’t want to deal with it, and that he didn’t want to deal with it, at which point board member d’Errico closed the matter by saying, “Then deal with it.”

The second hearing involved dogs running loose on Sprinkle Road. One was hit by a car recently, increasing the emotional impact of the issue and, as noted by the board, providing clear evidence that the dog was not in control at all times as required by town regulations.

D’Errico and board chair Julie Shively said they had both received numerous complaints about the loose dogs over a lengthy period of time, and Shively pointed out that if the situation wasn’t resolved, the board had the authority to impose fines, or refer the matter to police and seize the dog. As with the previous hearing, the board closed by expressing their

view that it was best for the parties to work matters out among themselves.

Other Business

The board approved a grant application to the Massachusetts Interlocal Insurance Association seeking money for radios for the highway department, a safety evaluation of town buildings, security cameras at the safety complex, and police body cameras.

The board approved a loan application for the Teawaddle Road project from a state revolving fund at 2 % interest. McGinnis pointed out that market rates are currently 4 to 5 percent, so it was a good deal.

Chief Minckler informed the board that a prospect to fill a full-time police officer position had withdrawn her application to pursue other opportunities. The town will advertise for a new candidate.

The board approved the library committee’s recommendation, Misha Storm, as the town’s new library director.

The September 1 selectboard meeting will be held in the community room at the safety complex, as the town hall will be used for elections that day.

The board announced a public forum in Wendell to discuss the two towns sharing a police chief will be held at 11 a.m. on September 26. Chief Minckler will be in attendance, and will broadcast the event live on Facebook. The event will be held outdoors, with a rain date of the following day.

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## NOTES FROM THE WENDELL TOWN CLERK

## Primary Voting Guide

**WENDELL** – The State Primary Election will be held on Tuesday, September 1. The polls are open 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. This is a Primary Election, and voters who are registered in one of the four political parties (Democrat, Republican, Green-Rainbow, Libertarian) must take that party ballot. Unenrolled voters voting by mail or in person must select a party ballot type.

There are three options on how to submit a ballot for your Party on September 1:

**Option 1:** Voting by Mail is in full swing, and a good percentage of the voters in Wendell have chosen this path. Those voting by mail must first fill out a *mail-in* application, and mail it to the Town Clerk. The Clerk will review your application and return by mail the party ballot of your choice, a ballot envelope, and a postage-paid return envelope for you to mail back your ballot.

To speed things up, you are encouraged to use the drop box in the parking area of the Town Office Building to deposit your completed application and/or ballot. Completed ballots must be received in the drop box by 8 p.m. on Election Day to be counted.

The deadline to request a *mail-in* ballot application is Wednesday, August 26.

**Option 2:** Voters may choose to vote *early*, and *in-person*, at the Town Office Building on the following dates and times: Saturday and Sunday, August 22 and 23, between 9:30 and 11:30 a.m.; Monday, August 24 between 9:30 a.m. and noon; Tuesday, Thursday and Friday, August 25, 27 and 28, between 9:30 and 11:30 a.m., and Wednesday evening, August 26, between 6 and 8 p.m. There is no need to fill out an application to vote in person. Just come in and vote.

**Option 3:** Vote in person at the Town Office Building on Election Day.

The deadline for voter registration and/or changing your party enrollment status is this Saturday, August 22, and the Town Clerk Office will be open from 2 to 4 p.m. and 7 to 8 p.m. to accommodate these voters.

All in-person voters must wear masks and maintain social distancing while in the Town Office Building. For more information on any of these details, please contact the Town Clerk: (978) 544-3395 x2 or [wendelltownclerk@gmail.com](mailto:wendelltownclerk@gmail.com).

## NOTES FROM THE WENDELL SELECTBOARD

## Meetinghouse Friends Working on Proposal

By JOSH HEINEMANN

The Wendell selectboard made up for their long agenda and meeting July 22 with a five-item agenda and a 28-minute meeting August 5. No storm passed overhead, and Zoom participation was uninterrupted.

Transfer of the Wendell meetinghouse from the town to the Friends of the Wendell Meetinghouse moved one step closer to occurring. Selectboard chair Dan Keller said the engineering firm that designed the town's water and septic system, Dufresne and Henry, was now a division of Stantec. He offered to call and ask them to research the legality of connecting both systems to building owned by a private entity whose purpose is to make it available for public use.

The original request for proposals (RFP) of several years ago for the building is still valid, and Court Dorsey, member of the Friends of the Wendell Meetinghouse board of directors, said the Friends will be prompt with their response to it.

Town coordinator Nancy Aldrich said that, as operators of the public

water system, the town has to give monthly reports on water use to the DEP. No one has a good projection of how much water the meetinghouse will use once it is connected.

In the interval between July 22 and August 5, Aldrich spoke to Orange Oil about the highway department's disappointment with the company's service response in 2019. She was told the company furnace cleaner was not available when that call was made, but was assured that the repair crew is now fully staffed.

Selectboard member Gillian Budine suggested that since Old Home Day will not happen in 2020, the Citizen of the Year can be announced at the upcoming special town meeting, date soon to be announced.

The state awarded Wendell a \$500,000 grant to repair or replace the bridge on Kentfield Road over Whetstone Brook. That grant does not cover engineering and design costs.

Aldrich said that Andrew Hamilton had not yet given her, as he agreed to at the July 22 meeting, a list of the vehicles he has registered with farm plates.

## NOTES FROM THE GILL SELECTBOARD

## Temp Cop Extended; Still No Town Meeting Date

By JERRI HIGGINS

The Gill selectboard met Monday evening by conference call. Topmost on the agenda were approval of the state primary warrant and reopening town hall for voting, and an extension of the third full-time police officer.

The board unanimously approved reopening town hall beginning this Saturday, August 22 – the last day to register to vote, as well as the first day for early voting for the September 1 state primary election. It will remain open through the November 3 presidential election.

The warrant for the state primary, outlining the day of elections, times, and various positions on the ballot, was also reviewed and approved.

Selectboard chair Randy Crochier said he is hopeful for a late September date for the annual town meeting, but said it may be held in October. Town administrator Ray Purington wants the meeting scheduled in September, saying that “it should not, and cannot, go any later than that.”

Purington also noted that even if the meeting is held in September, October will likely see another “one-twelfth” monthly budget, due to questions that might arise about the FY’21 budget then.

“I say, get a budget together as far as you can,” said Crochier to Purington, “and then shoot it out to the finance committee and to us.”

A motion was approved to move forward with creating the FY’21 budget. Crochier cautioned the selectboard to “not over-question [the budget]” that Purington builds, as there will be time to review it later. “I think we have to accept that these times are so radically different that we have to do things a little differently than in the past,” he said.

September's one-twelfth budget was approved unanimously. Purington added the Gill-Montague and Franklin County Technical school assessments to bring the budget to

the \$305,367 minimum required by the state – one-twelfth of the town's FY’20 budget – even though the \$179,614 will not technically be spent until the second-quarter assessments are due in October.

## COVID-19 Response

While there were no official updates from Gill's emergency management team, Crochier discussed the latest COVID-19 order from Governor Baker's office, which caps gatherings at no more than 50 people – even on private property.

Asked about the students' return to Mount Hermon School, fire chief Gene Beaubien said that students on campus are currently quarantined, per state regulations.

The police department was approved to extend its third full-time officer, hired on a temporary basis in early July, for another six weeks. Officer Mitchell Waldron's position is currently half-funded by grants: 25% from FEMA, and 25% provided through the CARES Act, which is set to end in December.

Purington said he does not see the FEMA funds “ending any time soon,” because Massachusetts remains in a state of emergency while COVID-19 cases continue to rise, but that the loss of the CARES Act funds would prohibit retention of a third full-time officer.

“I really like having someone that has grown up in town be one of our police officers,” said selectboard member John Ward of Waldron, but he wondered “how fair is it to keep him” if that means Waldron might miss a full-time position elsewhere.

“He is willing to stay on indefinitely, and forego those opportunities as long as we can keep him,” said police chief Christopher Redmond, “but he realizes that he needs to have something lined up for when [the grant] ends.”

Crochier expressed gratitude that Waldron's position has afforded the

other officers to keep regular hours and use their vacation time, as well as help to enforce COVID-19 restrictions. Governor Baker has increased the enforcement authority of police due to the recent increase in COVID-19 cluster outbreaks.

“Just sitting at my house this weekend, it felt like the river was extremely busy, by the volume of boats that we could hear from the house,” said Crochier. “That kind of stuff brings extra people [here], which is an extra risk.”

“There was an uptick of boaters on the river,” said board member Greg Snedeker. “But what I am impressed with, from what I have seen, is that people... are keeping their distance from other boats, for the most part. I have not seen any large gatherings anywhere, so that is good.”

Ward, a Riverside resident, said that fireworks have been going off “around 10 or 10:30 p.m. most nights,” which he described as “a source of aggravation.” “I end up spending quite a bit of time afterwards trying to pull the dog out from under the bed – that she does not fit under,” he said.

Redmond said that his department has been aware of increased fireworks since early July, and has had an increased volume of domestic violence-related calls as well.

Selectboard members expressed concern about rising domestic violence, and mental health issues stemming from multiple stress factors the epidemic has wrought such as isolation, joblessness – along with the recent loss of the federal unemployment stimulus funds – or remote learning and its associated complications.

“At the beginning of [the pandemic],” Crochier said, “it was cooler weather, and spring was around the corner. But people were not ‘COVID-tired,’ and I am really concerned when the cooler weather starts putting people in their homes a lot.”

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FARREN from page A1

Wisconsin-based corporation, abruptly closed its doors, leaving employees jobless and a very large building empty. But the Farren’s closing comes with a plan to relocate residents who wish to move to Holyoke, and some of the facility’s roughly 150 employees may be able to make the move as well.

Several employees of the Farren, all of whom asked not to be identified for this story, told the *Reporter* they were blindsided by the closing announcement, but had been given a packet of materials and told they were welcome to apply for jobs at Mount Saint Vincent.

Ellis also reported that Trinity has been collaborating with state employment agencies regarding the closure. He called the company’s approach “a positive, in comparison to at least one shutdown we have seen over the past two years.”

Dedicated on October 3, 1900, the Farren hospital, according to Montague’s bicentennial history published in 1954, was financed and built by Bernard “Barney” Farren, “pioneer railroad builder and one of the chief architects in the development of Turners Falls, as a memorial to his only son, B. Frank Farren, who died in early manhood.” Farren,

who “had given generously to Catholic organizations,” gave over management responsibilities to a Catholic group called the Sisters of Providence.

The initially small hospital expanded over the next three generations, and by 1954 the facility contained 75 beds, along with operating rooms, a pharmacy, and x-ray department. Many of the town’s older residents were born there.

The Farren became a so-called “acute care hospital” serving vulnerable populations, but the economics of acute care “doomed” this focus by the mid-1980s, in the words of a later administrator, and the Sisters of Providence searched for a new mission. This was also the time of so-called “deinstitutionalization,” when traditional mental hospitals like the Northampton State Hospital were closing their doors, requiring a range of new services for their varied populations.

Under these circumstances, the Sisters of Providence reopened the Farren in 1990 as a specialized longterm care facility, serving residents with multiple physical and mental health disabilities. The hospital developed a reputation for serving residents who had been rejected from other facilities, and is considered the only longterm care center of

its kind in Massachusetts.

Trinity Health, which purchased the Farren two years ago, stated in its press release that the main impetus for the closure is the condition of the Montague City Road building. “This action is being taken in order to sustain services for this vulnerable population,” the document reads. “The aging Farren physical plant... is no longer able to efficiently support the requirements of caring for these complex residents.”

Trinity spokesperson Christine Looby told the *Reporter* that the company has not decided on a plan for the building after 2020.

Regional health agent Randy Crochier, who serves on the Gill selectboard and managed the kitchen at the Farren prior to Trinity’s ownership, said he believed the Farren had been seeking state assistance to upgrade the building for a number of years without success. He noted that the bulk of the facilities revenue comes from state and federal sources, mainly Medicaid and Medicare.

David Roulston, a mental health lawyer who serves as guardian for over 50 Farren patients, said that if the state had failed to support the facility, “the result is the death of a very, very caring community.”

Roulston expressed skepticism that staff

and patients will be able to create the same community in Holyoke. “A lot of what makes Farren special is the *esprit de corps* of the staff – meeting people on their own terms,” he said. “You can not just transplant that. I certainly hope it does work, but I am skeptical.”

David Skoczulek, a spokesperson for iCare, the company seeking to purchase the Holyoke facility where Farren residents will be transferred, says his company specializes “in caring for a challenging and complex patient population.” He noted that iCare operates a facility in Rocky Hill, Connecticut that is “very similar to the Farren Care Center.” Skoczulek also said that because the company has been managing the Farren since the beginning of 2020, “we are familiar with the staff, residents, families, and other partners.”

One staff member who has worked at the Farren for years, and asked not to be identified by name, said she is seriously considering applying to Mount Saint Vincent despite the long drive to Holyoke.

“It was a challenge,” she told the *Reporter*. “It takes a special kind of person to work at the Farren. But you grow to love the residents, because they are your family.”



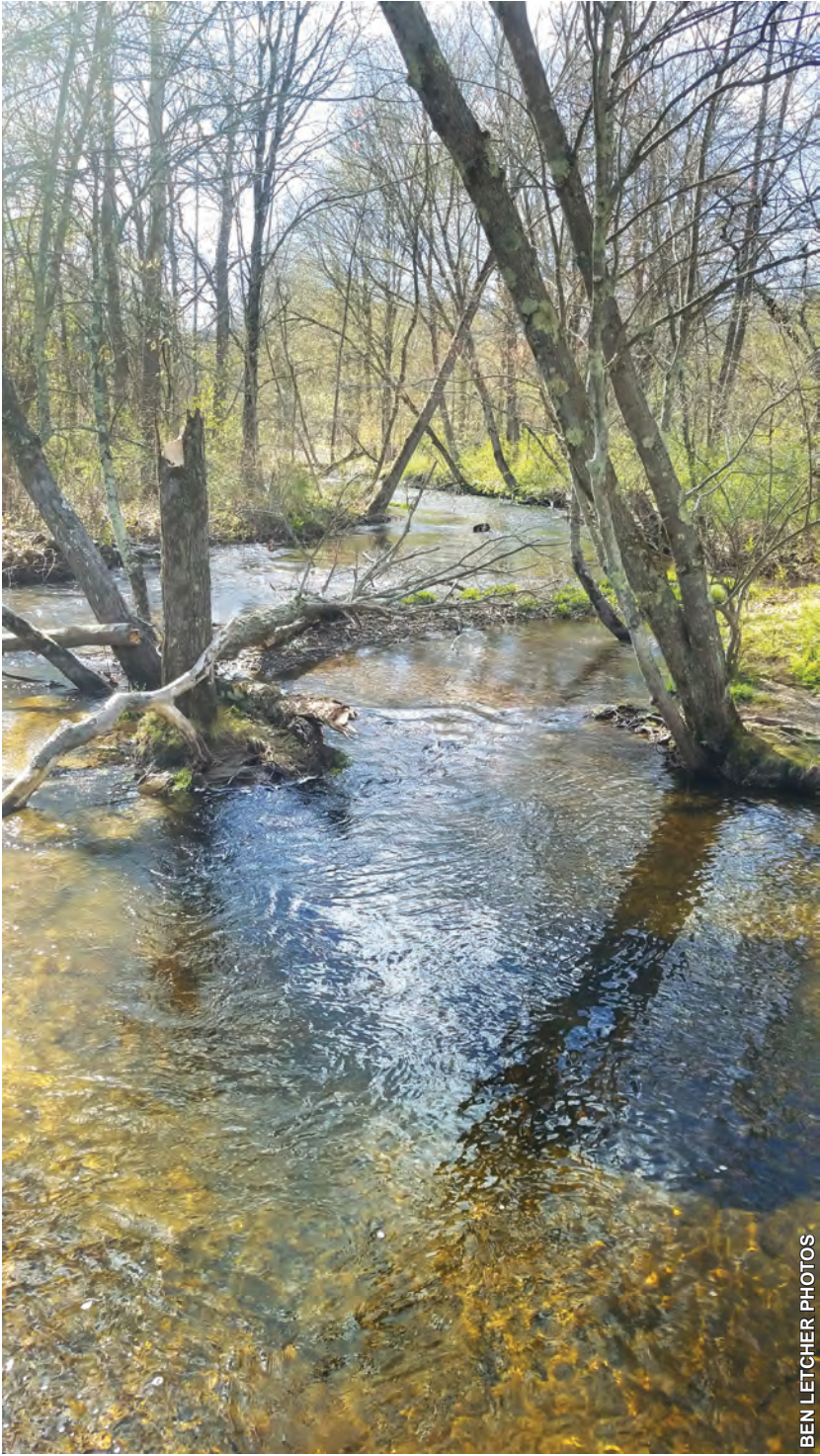
SAWMILL from page A1

understand and communicate,” he explains. “Step 1 of the website was to relate hydrographs (graphs of stream flow over time) to the images, so people could get a feel for what the graphs were telling them.” To do that he ended up linking each photo on the site to a point on the flow graph.

“Then,” he continues, “there was the artificial intelligence explosion, and we started wondering if we could use the same technology as facial recognition (deep learning) to estimate how much water is in the river and how it changes over time.”

According to Wikipedia, deep learning algorithms use multiple “layers” of computation to progressively extract higher-level features from raw input. For example, in image processing, lower layers may identify edges, while higher layers may identify the concepts relevant to a human, such as digits or letters or faces. Think about movies where a digital image slowly becomes clearer, at last revealing the suspect in an unsolved case.

This study of one spot in a small river led to big grants from the Environmental Protection Agency and *National Geographic*, to use deep-learning image processing to estimate how much water is flowing under the bridge in the conservation land. This is the same “artificial intelligence” technology as facial recognition and driverless cars.



BEN LETCHER PHOTOS

Sometimes the change is more dramatic: Between May 9 (left) and May 10, one of the trees that had long stood in the foreground of Letcher’s photos broke and fell.

The project adds to an existing body of knowledge. “USGS river gauges measure river flow across the country, but most are in bigger rivers, so we don’t understand flow so well in smaller rivers and streams,” Ben says, adding, “Streams are important for plants and animals, and also play a large role in local and downstream flooding. The amount and timing of stream flow is changing quickly now (more frequent floods and droughts), so we need a good way to measure flow in smaller streams.”

The grants, totaling \$200,000, will fund further website development – allowing for multiple sites, and easier upload for pictures – and further development of the deep-learning algorithm. The expanded website will allow anyone to upload pictures, and the images will be used to see how well the computer can predict streamflow.

Ben said it will soon be easy for people to upload their pictures to the site. “If it works well enough,” he explains, “using images to measure streamflow could be a very cheap way to estimate flow in a lot of places, and it could also get a lot of people involved and thinking more about streams.”

This new information could help in understanding which streams are more or less likely to have droughts and floods, and how streams contribute to downstream flooding. It will also help identify streams that are more resilient to climate change, and more likely to support animals and plants even

as flows are altered by increasing air temperatures and changing rainfall patterns.

Pictures uploaded by members of the public do not need to be taken at the Sawmill River, but they must be of a stream. “Other than that, we will trust that people are interested in the project, and uploading helpful images,” Ben adds. The effort will continue as long as it is useful, and the new site is being designed to be as “stand-alone” as possible.

“The study does not directly affect recreational usage, such as fishing or swimming,” Ben says. “Eventually, we hope that the ap-

proach will help us understand how flow varies in small streams over time and from place to place. This information could be useful for recreational use of streams.”

It’s also an exercise in observation, bringing attention to details that might go unnoticed.

“It did make me notice that river every day,” Emily tells me. “The most exciting thing? A tree fell this spring! Right there in the middle. Snapped right off. A really visible change, after all those years.” (See photos on this page.)

“Something kind of silly and thrilling,” she adds. “We could look at yesterday’s photo, and there

it was. And then it was down. Funny how your perspective of what’s exciting changes – maybe it’s just COVID.”

It could be that COVID and social isolation has developed changes in perspective. The simple act of paying attention can build a sense of awe in response to our natural surroundings.

Ben’s project brings one little river out into the world – and also, for those who see it every day on the website and those who walk it, looking a little more closely for changes, makes it into a small world of its own.



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**MONTAGUE** from page A1

well,” FCTS superintendent Rick Martin “is willing to let us stay there.”

Later in the discussion, Bourbeau noted that a plan to move precinct voting places permanently would need to be approved by town meeting. Several years ago, town meeting voted down an attempt by Bourbeau to consolidate voting into fewer precincts.

Bourbeau promised extensive public outreach to notify voters of the changes, and predicted there would also be a significant increase in mail-in ballots for the two elections due to the pandemic.

**Public Health**

Health director Daniel Wasiuk gave the selectboard and board of health updates on the state policy and the town’s status in the COVID pandemic. On August 10, he said the number of infections reported for Montague had remained stable, but that due to a “surge of cases in the eastern part of the state,” the governor was delaying the implementation of the second part of Phase 3 of his reopening plan.

Rhode Island had been added to the list of states from which travelers need to be quarantined for 14 days, and the number of individuals allowed in “outdoor gatherings” had been reduced from 100 to 50. Wasiuk said restaurants and bars may only serve alcohol with food, and that “commercially packaged items, such as potato chips,” do not count.

On August 17, Wasiuk reported “good news and bad news.” The official number of infections in Montague has remained stable for the past two months at 29 cases. He called this a “very positive thing,” but said “we need to stay vigilant with our practices and procedures.” The bad news was that Hawaii has been added to the states from which arrivals will be required to quarantine for 14 days.

The highlight of Monday’s meeting was the surprise announcement

that the Farren Care Center would be closing at the end of the year (*see page A1*). Ellis said this was “a major announcement that I regret to share with the community,” but added that the owner of the Farren, Trinity Health of New England, was “proactively” developing a plan to move residents and many employees to a facility in Holyoke.

Ellis called this approach “a positive, in comparison with at least one shutdown we have seen over the last few years.”

**Police Department**

On August 10, the board approved five letters of commendation to members of the police department and a dispatcher for their roles in responding to last month’s fatal knife attack on a couple on Randall Road, as well as efforts to find shelter for a homeless man who had been sleeping at the FCTS greenhouse. The board also approved a letter thanking Diane Hansen for donating \$16,400 for the town’s police dog Artie from a fund established by deceased resident Elaine Cuthbert.

Nelson, moving that the letters be “publicly released,” stated that “at this time of challenging conversations about the police, it is amazing to hear what these officers are accomplishing in this community.”

At both meetings it was reported that the group designated to recommend members for two police policy review committees, a town response to Black Lives Matter demonstrations, had not yet made final recommendations.

Ellis said that he “just wanted to point out that that is not a committee. It is simply a group of residents that are advising Rich Kuklewicz.”

Ariel Elan, who is serving on the simple group of residents, said the delays in appointing police committee members were “a pretty typical combination of work obligations, and illness in one case, and July/August vacations – so we’re gearing back in, because everyone is now available.”

**Small Change, Large Loss**

Brian McHugh of the Franklin County Regional Housing and Re-development Authority (FCRHRA) reviewed the progress of the Spinner Park rehabilitation project, which has been delayed due to the discovery of an underground electrical conduit that will require changes in the original design. He said he had received designs from an electrical engineer and the design company, but the final proposal will be available “in a few weeks” after review by the electric company Eversource.

“Our hope is that we still will get substantial completion of the project by November,” McHugh said. He also said the landscape architect for the design company had checked all park plans back to its construction in 1983, and they showed “no electrical lines running through the park.”

Just prior to McHugh’s presentation, Kuklewicz announced that Bruce Hunter of the FCRHRA who has worked with Montague on “countless projects,” had recently passed away. “The board is very appreciative of all the work that he did and we send condolences to his family,” Kuklewicz said.

Nelson said he “literally screamed” when he saw Hunter’s obituary in a newspaper. “This is awful,” he said. “This is such a loss for us all.”

**Other Business**

The board approved a request from water pollution control facility superintendent Chelsey Little for a “no-cost” change order to extend work removing a fuel oil tank and vault at the facility to September 30.

The board also approved a proposal from the engineering firm Wright-Pierce to conduct a “chlorine gas process hazard review” of the facility, required by the federal Environmental Protection Agency. The time-sensitive proposal was not on the agenda, which Little called “a hiccup.”

The board authorized a contract

with Sciaba Construction Company for repairs on the Grand Avenue stairway in Millers Falls, and executed a grant agreement with the state Department of Transportation for “street improvements” between Avenue A and Unity Park.

Ellis announced that the small bridge on the “Chestnut Hill Loop” will be permanently closed until it is replaced by order of the state. Town planner Walter Ramsey said the current plan is to bid out the project to build a new bridge this fall for construction in the spring. He estimated that the bridge closing could increase response times for emergencies by five minutes.

The board followed the public portion of the August 10 meeting with an executive session to discuss real estate negotiations.

At the end of the August 17 meeting, Ellis announced that the governor’s office has pledged to level-fund most forms of local aid in the 2021 budget, with a small increase in Chapter 70 school aid, despite a projected state revenue shortfall of over \$5 billion. He called this “good news,” though he warned the shortfall could impact other state programs of importance to Montague.

The next scheduled selectboard meeting will be held on August 24.



LOOKING BACK:  
10 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

Here’s the way it was August 19, 2010: News from the Montague Reporter’s archive.

Bridge Project Starts, But Signage Confuses

SPS workers are hard at work on the Gill side of the Turners Falls-Gill Bridge, sawing the first concrete slab to be removed, probably Monday, according to job superintendent Henry Mulvey.

A major subject at this week’s Gill selectboard meeting was the lack of sufficient signage regarding the project, which is a continuing issue and a very real danger, according to several in attendance at the meeting.

Nancy Griswold noted that the signs are very unclear and that there are not enough of them: “It says ‘Truck Detour Ahead.’ That isn’t very helpful to the regular driver.”

Several people agreed that the signs do not make it at all clear that one lane on the bridge is closed, but that it is okay to drive into Turners Falls on the single lane remaining, even though it is on the wrong side of the road. Drivers can be witnessed on a regular basis starting to turn, hesitating, and pulling off the road to try and figure out what is okay and not okay to do.

The sign causing the greatest concern is the one that says something to the effect that a driver should heed the signal when the light is flashing. “It should say outright, ‘Do not cross this bridge when the light is flashing,’” board member Ann Banash maintained.

The fact that the sign is not clear was amply demonstrated recently when there was a fire in Gill in the early morning. The emergency light was flashing, and yet the fire engine hurrying from Turners to Gill came face to face with a startled driver halfway across the bridge.

The selectboard intends to ask for another meeting with SPS Construction and other Gill and Montague officials to insist the company improve signage on the project.

There will be live acoustic music, and a permit was requested at this week’s Montague selectboard meeting to close one side of the newly-rebuilt Prospect Street bridge, which is now open again after years of being closed.

Selectboard member Christopher Boutwell expressed concern for public safety during the festivities, and suggested closing the entire bridge to automobile traffic for the four-hour duration.

Traffic needs will be assessed before the celebration and the permit request will be resubmitted, but Prospect and Central Street Neighborhood Association member Patricia Pruitt was told to “just have a great time” from selectboard member Mark Fairbrother.

DA Candidates Debate

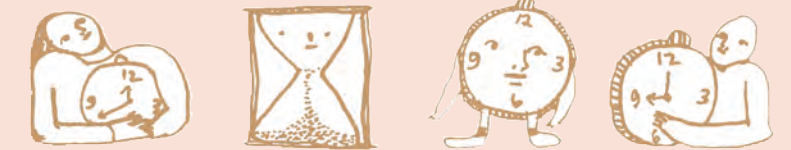
On August 5, Greenfield Community Television hosted a debate between the two candidates for the office of District Attorney for the Northwest District: Michael Cahillane and David Sullivan. The candidates are running for the nomination of the Democratic Party to be decided in the primary on September 14.

The DA’s office, uncontested for the last 28 years, possesses tremendous discretionary power in deciding when and how to prosecute criminal cases. The office also employs 70 people.

But the interested voter, with no other information other than that gleaned from this debate, may have been disappointed and hard-pressed to distinguish between the two candidates; on most substantive issues the candidates agreed.

Questioned as to their philosophy in deciding which cases to prosecute, Cahillane and Sullivan both agreed that first offenders, especially in drug-related crimes, should be helped with treatment and rehabilitation. For repeat offenders, Cahillane said that we need a “ratcheting up of sanctions.” Sullivan stressed the “paramount value of public safety” and “victims’ rights.”

Both candidates agree, however, that drug forfeiture money should not be applied towards rehabilitation or treatment; rather, the funds should be used directly for law enforcement-to buy equipment and fund investigations.



A Hope to Pace Place Name Debate

By MIKE JACKSON

**MONTAGUE** – At their August 10 meeting, the Montague selectboard brought in the town historical commission to discuss the proposal, raised earlier this summer by an online petition, to change the name of the village Turners Falls.

Though petitioners may gather voter signatures and bring any proposal to town meeting directly, the board members agreed with the historical commission’s recommendation that the debate be entered slowly, and after an initial period of research and public education.

“We’re assuming that we will serve as intake, pulling information together,” historical commission chair David Brule reported. We’ve already had a number of residents corresponding with us.”

Brule said the commission had voted to ask the town to “go slow,” first studying the origins of the name and collaborating with the battlefield grant advisory group, which he also serves on, to learn more about the 1676 massacre of native people at the falls led by Captain William Turner.

“We do have the beginnings of information, from archives, as to who was responsible for the name and when,” Brule said. “If it’s an issue of a petition, on automatic pilot, going to town meeting, then all

we can do is provide information and education.”

“Is this even a role for the selectboard?” asked member Mike Nelson.

“If people petition this to go on the ballot, or on the town meeting floor,” said chair Rich Kuklewicz, “then it goes on town meeting, and it’s not for us to decide.”

Historical commission member Jeff Singleton explained that the group had voted to recommend the “broader public discussion” not be held until the springtime, given the town’s focus on the COVID pandemic and the selectboard-led public inquiry on the police department.

“We haven’t talked amongst ourselves as to what kind of process we would actually like to see for the broader discussion,” Singleton said. “There was strong feeling that the mascot debate kind of broke down and produced a lot of divisiveness, so we were thinking of trying to recommend a process for the bigger discussion that might try to avoid that.”

“I do agree that I think we [should] get through this police study first, and then move on to this possible village name change for the future,” said selectboard member Chris Boutwell.

“It’s better to focus on it and do it right the first time,” agreed Nelson.

Resident Ariel Elan pointed out that if the question were to go to

town meeting, the selectboard would be able to make a recommendation for or against a possible change. “I would love to see everyone wait, because I want to be a lot more informed about a lot more of this history,” she said. “I haven’t, regrettably, even kept up on what the battlefield study has already found out for us.”

Nelson made a motion to, “delegate to the [historical] commission to research the battle at Turners Falls, and to uncover historical meaning to the Turners Falls name and any other historical data they can regarding the name of Turners Falls, and the history of the name of the great falls in the indigenous languages, and prepare a statement of information for the board no later than June 30, 2021.”

The selectboard unanimously approved the motion.

Town administrator Steve Ellis shared that he did not feel the issue was “sort of being sandbagged by throwing it to committee.”

“We have developed some really deep relationships with tribal representatives,” Brule said. “It would be great to at some stage involve them.... One of the Wampanoag leaders said, of the battlefield advisory board discussions, that it was in her opinion really a template that she shares with other towns, as an example of towns and tribes being able to cooperate and collaborate.”

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# FACES & PLACES

Ed Gregory was there when demolition of the Keith Paper Company smokestack began. The historic paper mill, also known as the Strathmore complex, has been town-owned since 2010, and the crumbling smokestack is considered a safety hazard. Air Quality Experts, Inc. is handling the job. Bricks at the top were dislodged using an aerial drone.



## GRANTS from page A1

growing number of vendors. “It’s going to take a little time,” he said.

As pandemic lockdowns took effect, the Village Co-op saw an influx of customers trying to avoid big grocery stores.

“Initially we saw a tremendous rush of support. People are still coming in, but I think people’s shopping habits have gone back to the way they used to be pre-COVID,” Rosenberg said. “It’s been wonderful to come from a place where we almost closed the doors six months ago to really being a fully functional grocery store again.”

In the same round of funding, Rainbow Harvest Farm received \$130,144 to purchase a mobile market truck, with refrigeration and other equipment necessary to bring fresh produce from the farm to places with limited access to healthy food.

“It’s basically going to be a farmers market on wheels,” said David Paysnick, owner and founder of the “urban farm” on Greenfield’s Con-

way Street. “I’ve recognized, in the time I’ve spent farming... that good organic food is often less accessible to people who might have the most significant health outcomes by eating a healthy diet.”

With the new truck, Paysnick plans on selling more food in areas underserved by grocery stores. He plans to make stops at low-income senior housing in Holyoke and continue selling at the Farmers’ Market at Forest Park in Springfield, among other locations. He hopes to have the truck up and running by the end of the harvest season.

“We are trying to find every way we can to help get produce into more communities that are having a harder time accessing it,” he said.

Paysnick started Rainbow Harvest Farm in 2009 after moving back to the area from California. He previously worked as a produce manager for Green Fields Market.

In addition to food grown at Rainbow Harvest, Paysnick says he hopes to sell staples from other

local businesses like bread, tortillas, milk and cheese. “A lot of it is going to be guided by what we find the need is in the community,” he said.

## Accepting Applications

In all, the state Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) will distribute \$36 million in food security grants across the Commonwealth. This second round of grant awards totaled \$3.3 million for farms and food distributors.

So far the EEA has reviewed 99 applications, with 60 accepted and 39 rejected, according to a spokesperson. Other area businesses that have received grant money include Apex Orchards in Shelburne, Black Sheep Deli and Queen’s Greens in Amherst, and Warner Farms in Sunderland.

Last month the first round of awardees received \$3 million statewide. These included \$44,327 for Clarkdale Fruit Farms to purchase a refrigerated delivery vehicle, and \$439,707 for the Pioneer Valley

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WEST ALONG THE RIVER  
INDIAN VOICES BACK  
ON THE RIVER

By DAVID BRULE

**PESKEOMPSKUT, AD 1000**  
– Tribal people converge on the campsites and villages at Peskeompskut as they have for thousands of years. Wampanoag, Nipmuc, and Massachusetts paddle down the Paguag (Millers River) from the regions of Mount Wachusett and beyond. Abenaki, Sokoki, and Pennacook stream down the Quonektakut from the north. Mohican arrive from the west, Narragansett from the southeast, extended families from the Pocumtuck Confederation of Woronoco, Norwotock, Nonotuck, Agawam move upriver to the falls.

The mighty Pocumtucks are omnipresent, having held stewardship over the falls for 10,000 years, many living in their permanent village on Wissatinnewag, overlooking pasksquamscott – “thundering falls fishing place.”

The paddlers shout greetings as they approach the meadow-like grounds along the Heal-all, a brook flowing through the village, where hundreds of wetus and wigwams dot the fertile shores above the roaring falls. More shouts of joy and yelping dogs return the greetings of those just arriving...

On May 19, 1676 the long history of peace, sanctuary, abundance and spiritual renewal was forever destroyed for Native people in this valley. The light and hearth fires were forever snuffed out, the echoes of joyous greetings and shouts of welcome from the villages of Peskeompskut forever silenced...

No more Native voices were raised in shouted greetings of welcome and joy at arriving at this destination.

That is, until this day of August 1, 2020.

We arrived paddling over the flooded village site, led by the Wampanoag crew in the mishoon, the first dug-out canoe to break the stillness of this long river’s reach in more than 300 years. The

sturdy craft, driven forward by four paddlers from the Aquinnah Wampanoag of Martha’s Vineyard, glided swiftly over the submerged hearthfires of thousands of years ago, just below us.

The “yah hway hoh-oway” call of Aquinnah boat master Jonathan Perry was echoed and responded to by 30 paddlers in a brilliant array of kayaks and canoes of all colors, spread out behind the dugout like so many water-striders and whirligigs skimming the still waters.

No Native voices had been heard on this site for 300 years, but this day, we all called out to awaken the slumbering spirits of those who had lived here for thousands of years. We called out to the reeds and rushes, the cattails, to redwings and snapping turtles, to eagle, redbill, osprey, and great blue heron. We called to busy masked raccoon along the shore, to the hills that sent back our voices like a long-forgotten memory. The living hills and waters, the quieted waterfalls in their plunge pools, all of the towering white pines and oaks who had not heard their language spoken in all these years awoke to familiar sounds of human beings calling to all the lost Indians, to now return to this place.

Members of the Nolumbeka Project had worked hard to develop an eight-month-long program of events to provide opportunities for all to hear again Indigenous Voices on the River in this highly symbolic year of 2020.

We had secured donations from local and regional businesses, foundations, and grants from 16 Local Cultural Councils from Bernardston and Northfield south to Springfield, agencies supported by the Mass Cultural Council.

2020 has marked 400 years since the establishment of the English on the Massachusetts coast at Plymouth. We had wanted to celebrate the presence of River Valley Indians in spite of all the disease, repression, and

see WEST ALONG page B4



This white pine trunk would take some work.

By KAREN GUILLETTE

**TURNERS FALLS** – The concrete gets pretty hot on a typical summer day at the Unity Skatepark, but the majority of youth at the park are chillin. In this strange summer of COVID, skateboarding is one of the only free, accessible, outdoor physical activities available for youth. Every day, at almost any hour, people of all ages, from 6 to 40, can be seen rolling around on its concrete hills and valleys on skateboards, BMX bikes, and scooters.

As I watered my garden beds in the community gardens next door to the skatepark, I noticed all the activity, and became interested in learning more about what was going on there. I did a bit of research online and had lots of conversations with skaters, some parents, and even a grandparent or two. What I’ve learned has made me appreciate the skatepark on many levels.

It Takes a Village

Way back in 1997 several passionate and courageous 13- and 14-year-old skateboarders in town delivered a proposal for a wooden skatepark to town officials. The first skatepark was built and opened in 2001, but there were problems over the next seven years, starting with damaged wooden surfaces.

As a result, in 2008, it was decided that a concrete skatepark was needed. That decision precipitated an absolutely incredible and lengthy process of creative fundraising, advocacy, and true grit on the part of skaters, their families, town officials, local businesses, and the community at large. In May 2014 the heroic fundraising activities were supplemented with a \$272,000 PARC grant that enabled the town to begin building the \$390,650 concrete skatepark.

In June 2016, nearly 20 years from the original vision of the three young skateboarders, Unity Skatepark was opened to the public. The occasion was a happy one, but also had its sad aspects, as several of the youth who had been involved in the process early on had died tragically in the ensuing years. An engraved plaque and three black skateboards have been placed in front of the park as a memorial to them.



ADAM CHRISTOPHER PHOTOGRAPHY

Dallas Willor catches air at a 2017 event at the park.

From the beginning the skatepark was envisioned as a healthy alternative recreational choice for youth and young adults – according to the Unity Skatepark page on Facebook, “a place for the youth of Turners Falls to hang out, mentor one another, and physically challenge themselves in a way that appeals to them.” The goal was to have a park “that could be ridden as a whole by advanced skaters, while at the same time providing individual elements that can be used as stepping stones by beginners.”

Renowned skatepark designer Brad Slide was selected to design it, and as a result, the town has a park that is loved and highly regarded by skaters from near and far. The layout is fun and challenging for riders of all ages, disciplines, and skill levels. In addition to skateboarding, BMX bikes and scooters are also allowed in the park.

see SKATEPARK page B5

THE AUTHORS’ CORNER: BRANDON MULL

By IZZY VACHULA-CURTIS

**TURNERS FALLS** – Happy, happy August! Today’s article is definitely my favorite article I’ve ever written!

So, as some of you might know, my favorite books of all time are the *Fablehaven* and *Dragonwatch* books written by Brandon Mull, who is also my favorite author. I’ve been trying to get an interview with Brandon Mull for a while, because I love his books so much! I’ve reached out through email a lot, but I didn’t get a response.

A week or two ago, I found his Instagram, and sent him a message asking to do an interview. I didn’t really expect a response. Then, a couple days after I sent the message, he responded saying sure! I was so excited, and I was pretty much crying when he responded.

I’ve already reviewed *Fablehaven* and *Dragonwatch* in an article around two years ago (November 15, 2018). Looking back on that

article, I didn’t do the best job explaining what the books are about, so today I’m going to be reviewing both series, and then interviewing Brandon Mull. Enjoy!

The *Fablehaven* series is about two kids, Kendra and Seth Sorenson. While their parents are on a 17-day cruise, Kendra and Seth have to stay with their grandparents, who they barely know. When Kendra and Seth first get to their Grandma and Grandpa Sorenson’s house, they initially find it boring, since it’s in the middle of nowhere, and there’s no electronics.

What Kendra and Seth don’t know is that their Grandpa Sorenson is the caretaker of a magical preserve called Fablehaven. Sanctuaries like Fablehaven have been hidden around the world to keep magical creatures from becoming endangered, or even extinct.

Grandpa Sorenson explains that Kendra and Seth have to stay out of the woods, and not go into the



IZZY VC PHOTO

Our correspondent finally tracked down her favorite author ever.

barn, to prevent them from unwittingly discovering what Fablehaven is. But after a couple days of staying at their grandparents’, curiosity gets the better of them. Kendra and Seth find out the truth about where they are staying, and end up having to help prevent *Fablehaven*

see AUTHORS page B5



# Pet of the Week



CHRISTOPHER CARMODY COLLAGE

## “MONTY”

“My story is a little different from some of the other stray kitties who come in to the shelter. Usually when I see a nice human I just turn on the charm, and it’s food and pets for days! This time, though, a nice lady found me on her porch after I had been left in a crate, and brought me in so I could find a nice home. It was a tough experience, so it can take me a little time to trust again, but once I do I think we

can be great friends.”

If you are interested in giving this wayward working barn cat a new start in life, call Dakin! Animals at Dakin are available for adoption by appointment only, and only at Springfield currently. Call (413) 781-4000, or see [www.dakin-humane.org](http://www.dakin-humane.org), for more information.



# When Single Parenting Is Just Too Much

By MISCHEL IXCHEL

**TURNERS FALLS** – The rain is coming down hard. Pounding on all the surfaces, creating a humid cacophony on this summer night. And me? I get to write this column without a child in tow, disrupting my thoughts every few minutes with a new need or want. Like an old-fashioned writer, one with all the time in the world to write, I get to fuse these words together while listening to the rain.

This rain couldn’t have come at a better time: between stressing out about money, crawling my way out of a breakup, doing some deep inner work, single-parenting four days in a row, and resurrecting a business, this rain is heaven-sent.

Negative ions are odorless, tasteless, and invisible molecules that we inhale in abundance when it rains. Once they reach our bloodstream, some believe, negative ions produce biochemical reactions that increase levels of the mood chemical serotonin, helping to alleviate depression, relieve stress, and boost our daytime energy.

And believe you me, I’m taking big deep, rainy breaths. I feel like in the large scheme of things, I’ll take all the support I can get.

Navigating quarantine and pandemic life as a single parent has tried me in many if not all ways. Unable to rely on external childcare, I can feel the toll that this lack of support has taken on my system. More often than not, I feel drained.

Here’s one of the biggest triggers that stems from all of this: the pesky thought that if I had a partner or husband, this load wouldn’t be

as heavy to carry. When I’m physically, mentally, and emotionally depleted, it feels almost impossible to show up for my child. When all I want to do is hide in my apartment with the curtains drawn and my phone on airplane mode, it feels excruciating and impossible to muster up the energy and patience needed in order to lovingly care for a young child.

When I feel like I’ve given all I had to give while sleep deprived – thanks to our new puppy – and yet still more is required of me, it’s then that resentment kicks in. *If only I had a partner*, I murmur to myself, *all of this would be so much easier*.

I voiced these concerns to a friend recently, sobbing and feeling awful for myself. Just about all of my mama friends are married or partnered up in committed relationships. I generally don’t mind going against the grain, but because I believe that life would be so much better in partnership, I find myself yearning for it with all my being.

My friend held my hand and heard me out. When I was done, she lovingly smiled at me and said, “Oh honey, having another person there doesn’t always make it easier. Often, it makes it harder. Many times, you have both people feeling depleted, underslept, the works. And that just throws more fuel to the fire.”

Those words felt like a gentle slap in the face. A kind wake-up call, as the light shone brightly on the truth of this statement. While I may not be as yearning of a partnership as I was even days ago, this change in outlook doesn’t exactly help my cause. At the end of the



day, the exhaustion is there.

However, all does not feel dim. My friend also added, “That’s what boundaries are for. My kid knows that in the morning, I need some time for myself, so I send him off to play and entertain himself. And when I’m too exhausted to cater to every one of his needs, I let it be known. It doesn’t help them to grow up thinking of us as martyrs.”

And the more I thought about it, the more I saw her point. Children, little boys in particular, cannot grow up and associate women as beings who can and should meet all their needs on the spot. Instead, it can only help our cause if we raise them to witness us saying no in order to tend to ourselves and our self-care.

In essence, we are modeling healthy boundaries, and when we lose our cool, we also model for them how to own it.

‘Cause that’s the thing: when I’m exhausted, the chances of snapping at my child are high. And while I am practicing to not let myself get there, when I do, I show my child that I am human, that I make mistakes, that I react, and that I come around and apologize.

All of this brings some clarity, but I am still very much trying to figure out how to navigate single parenting in these times.

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

## Senior Center Activities AUGUST 24 TO SEPTEMBER 4

### 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 Betters 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-betters@erv-ing-ma.gov](mailto:paula-betters@erv-ing-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 Senior Health Rides program is also suspended until advisories change. For more information, 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

### DISPATCHES FROM THE FARMERS MARKET

## Entire Market Will Soon Have HIP

**TURNERS FALLS** – The Great Falls Farmers Market has some exciting news to share: the market has been approved as a Healthy Incentives Program (HIP) vendor. HIP is a program that allows for SNAP customers to purchase a household-specific amount of local produce – fresh, frozen, or dried – for free. For more information on HIP, you can visit the state website here: [www.mass.gov/service-details/healthy-incentives-program-hip-for-clients](http://www.mass.gov/service-details/healthy-incentives-program-hip-for-clients).

What does it mean to have the market be a HIP vendor? It means the market manager can now process HIP for all vendors at the market. This will greatly increase access to the program for both customers and vendors, and hopefully will enable the market to attract more farmers in the future.

Although the market has been approved to run HIP, the details are still being worked out, and the new HIP system is expected to be up and running by September. Stay tuned for updates!

The second exciting announcement is that the Great Falls Farmers Market has received a grant from the New England Grassroots Environment Fund (NEGEF) in the amount of \$2,275. This grant will cover a majority of the operational costs for the season. NEGEF-funded programs are “designed to energize and nurture long term civic engagement in local initiatives that create and maintain healthy, just, safe and environmentally sustainable communities.” Market manager Annie Levine states, “We are grateful that they are supporting our mission to distribute fresh food to our neighbors here in Turners Falls and the town of Montague.”

Interested in vending, or have any questions? Reach out via email at [greatfallsfarmersmarkettturners@gmail.com](mailto:greatfallsfarmersmarkettturners@gmail.com), or message them on social media.



ANNIE LEVINE PHOTO

*Once the system is set up, all HIP-eligible items at the market, like this box of vine-ripened tomatoes from Fallen Oak Farm, will be able to be purchased using HIP benefits.*

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# CALL FOR ARTISTS

By REPORTER STAFF

People have probably been wrapping up presents in the very attractive pages of our eye-catching little newspaper for many years. This year, we’re going to make those packages look even cooler by inviting **seven local artists** to design pages to be used exclusively as recyclable and unique wrapping paper!

One entire “edition” of our paper will be devoted to the Wrapping Paper Issue, printed on Thanksgiving week. Each artist will be given the space of two full adjacent pages for their design, measuring approximately 20 by 22 inches. You may design in full color, black and white, or fifty shades of (G-rated) grey.

Tattoo artists, comic illustrators, graffiti specialists, painters, street sketchers, kids, photographers, geometry nerds, type designers – all are encouraged to send us ideas for a wrapping paper!

The seven artists we choose to help us produce this special edition will even get a **\$200 stipend for their completed work**, on top of the fame and good karma that will result from participating. RiverCul-

ture has generously offered to help sponsor the project. Plus, we’ll kick in with five free copies for each designer’s personal use.

And yes, we will be selling this limited-edition Wrapping Paper Issue as a fundraiser for the *Montague Reporter*. It will be in stores and online at the special price of \$5 each, or five for \$20. Totally recyclable and compostable, original and local designs... what could be better?

Artists, please send your contact information and a proposal for a unique wrapping paper design, along with up to three samples of finished work that represents your style (.jpegs please), to [features@montaguereporter.org](mailto:features@montaguereporter.org) with “Wrap” in the subject line. Proposals are due by September 1, and selected artists will be contacted on Friday, September 4. You will then have the months of September and October to get your design ready for us.

For more information about the project, please contact features editor Nina Rossi at (413) 834-8800 or the above email address. And if you are a shop or business owner who would like to sell copies of the Wrapping Paper Issue, please get in touch!

## CONCERT REVIEW

# Kip and Ripley Dresser

By MELISSA WLOSTOSKI

**GREENFIELD** – I once went to 4 North Street in Montague Center, where there is a church called the First Congregational, for a jazz festival. I decided to go there again for a concert that was happening at 6 p.m. on July 29, part of a Summer Concert Series they have been doing.

The audience was seated on the grass across the street from the church, so they could enjoy the concert without of any the concerns that are going around. Also, they were a fair distance from each other.

Kip and Ripley Dresser were playing. Kip played his guitar first. He played very well, and I enjoyed it very much. On the flier it was promised we would hear Old Time Country music, and that’s what we got. The guitar playing sounded like that, and Kip’s singing definitely sounded like a country song.

Ripley is his daughter, and at one point she joined in when he was singing a song. Her singing was all right! The crowd certainly seemed to enjoy them performing their first song together. She also sang the beginning of the next song with him, and I think she sang it better than

she did the first one. At least, that is the way it sounded to me.

At one point the duo sang a song together with a third individual, a female named Dawn. The three of them seemed reasonably in sync with each other.

Of all the voices that I heard, I liked Kip’s the best. With his singing, it really did sound like I was hearing a country song. It appeared the audience reasonably enjoyed their performance, regardless of who was singing the songs at times.

Ripley sang one song solo while Kip accompanied her on the guitar. In fact, I think that song was what she sang the best. The audience’s clapping made it seem like they didn’t disagree with me. Ripley and Kip sang nicely in sync with each other.

Since social gatherings have been limited, I have had an itch to go out and do an article connected to one, and have wondered how likely it will be that I can do that. When I found a flier for the concert series this church was doing, it seemed like I had found a way to satisfy that.

It was a good concert, and a worthwhile trip to have made.

## Montague Community Television News

# We’ll Edit Your Videos!

By MICHAEL SMITH

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

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

staff editors, or you can try it at home!

Residents of Montague can find MCTV on Channel 17, and the MCTV Vimeo page is available online. Email [hannahbrookman@gmail.com](mailto:hannahbrookman@gmail.com) for editing assistance or filmmaking questions.

Something going on you think others would like to see? If you get in touch, we can show you how easy it is to use a camera and capture the moment. Contact us at (413) 863-9200 or [infomontaguetv@gmail.com](mailto:infomontaguetv@gmail.com) between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., Monday through Friday. We’d love to work with you!

## HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MONTAGUE POLICE LOG

# Big Boots; UFO in Millers; Beer Shoplifter; Party Snitch; Island Rescue; Destroyed Plants

**Monday, 8/3**

11:35 a.m. Caller would like an officer to explain why they can’t get the trains that park in Lake Pleasant to move, or at least run quieter. Advised to contact the railroad company/railroad police about the issue.

1:21 p.m. Party states that while biking down Millers Falls Road, someone threw a firecracker out a car window at him and it blew up near him. He was not injured, just scared by it.

10:45 p.m. Caller would like an officer to tell his partner to leave the area, he keeps ringing his buzzer and won’t stop. He believes he took \$40 out of his wallet this morning and is using drugs again. Unable to locate.

**Tuesday, 8/4**

4:51 a.m. Caller states there are people trying to get into the house. He opened the door and asked them to identify themselves, but they would not. States there is one person walking around in big boots. Officer checked area, nothing found. Spoke to reporting party, who said he had heard voices, but never saw anything.

3:55 p.m. Driver reporting he hit part of the Turners Falls-Gill Bridge with his tractor trailer truck. Damage to bridge and trailer; Gill PD to be taking report.

4:47 p.m. Report of a telephone pole smoking on Greenfield Road.

5:07 p.m. Large tree down on wires on Turners Falls Road. Eversource notified.

*[Six reports of trees down on roads and wires between 6 and 10 p.m.]*

10:48 p.m. Woman yelling loudly at no one at F.L. Roberts station.

**Wednesday, 8/5**

2:19 a.m. Report of something hovering over Millers Falls town center with green and red flashing lights. Caller believes it is too big to be a drone.

11:40 a.m. Caller would like an officer to observe a snake in his yard. Does not want to call EPO, but was provided with the number to call them.

4:15 p.m. Tree on wires at Chestnut Hill Road, road closed.

5:10 p.m. Report of a goose with a fishing lure stuck in its side and fishing line wrapped around its foot near the community garden at Unity Park. Environmental police notified. Goose went into the water, does not want to come back on land. Environmental police will attempt boat rescue tomorrow.

5:23 p.m. Request for an officer to remove what was described as “three heroin addicts” near Country Creemee.

5:42 p.m. Erratic operator on Montague City Road; red car with TN plates. Second call about this vehicle; officer to be on the lookout.

7:20 p.m. Arrested a 20-year-old Greenfield man for operating a motor vehicle on a suspended license.

7:29 p.m. Customer causing a disturbance at Avenue A liquor store. His fourth visit that day; was shut off by employee, but stated he would not leave unless police showed up. Advised not to return that day.

**Thursday, 8/6**

3:19 p.m. Phone fraud reported. Caller states that an unemployment claim was made in her name that she did not file.

5:11 p.m. Raccoon stuck in a dumpster on K Street. TFFD advised.

7:16 p.m. Multiple 911 hang-up calls with loud arguing heard in the background. Caller located, told the officer it was accidental, and just regular conversation at a BBQ.

8:58 p.m. Male in white tank top out of vehicle and yelling and screaming at other cars on Center Street. Officer advised.

10:50 p.m. Report about harassing texts to caller’s daughter stating she should kill herself. Caller spoke to the sender’s mother, but was unsuccessful in getting texts to stop. Advised to file a complaint in court.

**Friday, 8/7**

8:56 a.m. Two cases of vandalism to vehicles on Seventh Street. Cars keyed.

10:48 a.m. Hit and run accident reported at Food City. Follow up with store surveillance camera footage.

1 p.m. Caller at Sunrise Terrace requests to have it put on record that someone stole a grey metal chair off her porch sometime in the last couple weeks.

4:53 p.m. Report of a telephone pole leaning on Millers Falls Road near the cemetery. Officer advises pole is leaning more than it was previously. Eversource advised.

**Saturday, 8/8**

10:11 a.m. Report of shoplifting at Food City. Three beers taken; subject found, he returned two beers but had already drunk one. Charged with shoplifting by asportation.

11:25 a.m. Bird with injured wing at caller’s home on Mineral Road. ACO was called yesterday, but has not replied yet, and caller wants to know what to do.

1:33 p.m. Caller from L Street reports a man walked into his house claiming to be a census

taker. He had a shoulder bag with a census sticker and a clipboard, but the caller has seen this man all over town for years and does not believe he is taking the census. Advised to call back if he shows up again.

11:29 p.m. 911 call from H Street; caller says a man and a woman are arguing and she can hear the man repeatedly saying “OK, then shoot me.” Could not locate.

**Sunday, 8/9**

6:31 p.m. COVID safety hazard reported on Millers Falls Road. Caller states there are 35 cars parked along the curb at the location, and they are concerned about the number of people due to COVID. Advised that this is a board of health matter. Officer sent to verify, and counted 15 cars.

6:45 p.m. Caller states the driver behind him at the Greenfield Savings Bank ATM was nodding out, then went to Cumberland Farms, where she hit a barrier pole. Officer located female driver, who admitted being tired but did not show signs of impairment.

10:32 p.m. Report of a lime green BMX bike with skulls on the seat stolen from caller’s property on Turners Falls Road.

**Monday, 8/10**

8:29 p.m. Caller states his friend is stuck on Peskeomskut Island with his dog and is unable to make it back to shore due to water being released. Caller doesn’t think his friend has much time to be rescued. TFFD notified; Northfield Mountain to stop release, close dams. Male party rescued.

**Tuesday, 8/11**

10:22 a.m. Deer with injured leg from motor vehicle collision on Route 63. Reporting party left the scene; officer dispatched deer, DPW notified.

9:25 p.m. Farren Care employee requests assistance with removing an employee who is refusing to leave and threatening other employees. Female party has no weapons and has not yet assaulted anybody. Gone on arrival. Officer gathering more information.

**Wednesday, 8/12**

9:34 a.m. Report of a female screaming and having a breakdown at Avenue A and Third Street. Appears to be screaming in general, and at two young children on bikes. Could not locate.

8:40 p.m. Attempted burglary reported on North Leverett Road. Slider opened, but the reporting party went downstairs before entry was gained. Thought that burglar was attempting to steal Amazon boxes visible

through slider.

**Thursday, 8/13**

10:05 a.m. Phone scam reported by caller. Someone claimed to be her grandchild. Advised to block the calls and reactivate her number on the Do Not Call list.

11:07 a.m. Caller received several scam calls from an 800 number. Advised.

11:23 a.m. An incident of animal abuse was reported from North Leverett Road. Plate number run from the involved truck, information given to ACO.

11:55 a.m. Garden fencing dispute on Third Street. Advised of options.

10:12 p.m. Walk-in party states she is being scammed by the Department of the Treasury.

**Friday, 8/14**

12:43 p.m. Report of a syringe on Pleasant Street. Officer disposed of it.

12:46 p.m. Motor vehicle accident with property damage at Avenue A and Third Street. Vehicles towed, no major injuries.

2:19 p.m. Walk-in reports fraudulent charges on his credit/debit card.

**Saturday, 8/15**

12:07 a.m. Loud noise, possible gunshot, reported on East Main Street in Millers Falls. Unable to locate. Second caller said it may have been a firework.

4:02 a.m. Male walking up and down Unity Street yelling and screaming wearing black shorts and no shirt. Unable to locate.

10:08 a.m. Report of an aggressive, white German shepherd loose on Federal Street. Officer checked, could not locate.

2:46 p.m. Caller would like to speak to an officer about a male party who is “pimping out” young girls. Office called and left the message.

6:33 p.m. Masonic Avenue caller states a family member came over and destroyed \$12,000 worth of plants. Report taken.

**Sunday, 8/16**

8:17 a.m. Caller states someone put a large firework in his mailbox and blew it up on Mormon Hollow Road.

4:03 p.m. Caller reports that a motorhome parked on the wrong side of the road near K Street and Eighth Street has been running and has an unregistered plate. He believes people are living in it and states it is causing a disturbance. Officer finds the motor home is not registered, and advised owners it will be towed tomorrow if it is still in that location.

4:56 p.m. Loose hen reported on Rastallis Street.

10:18 p.m. Report of a motorcycle “doing loops” at 80 mph on Millers Falls Road. Officer could not locate.

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MONIQUE BRULE PHOTOS

More work was done at the Turners Falls Airport during the year.

WEST ALONG from page B1

sadness those intervening 400 years of colonialism had wrought on northeastern Indigenous populations.

We had planned events honoring the persistence of tribes along this great long river, from the Nulhegan and Cowassuck Abenaki near the headwaters, the Elnu Abenaki in southern Vermont, the Sokwakik Abenaki in Northfield, the Nipmuck Nation and the Chaubunagungamaug Band of Nipmuc Indians of the central valley, the tribes at Poquonock and down to the Nehantic Indian Tribe at the mouth of the Quonektakut.

But in 2020 that was not to be.

At least, we did manage to save this *mishoon* launch and joyful paddle that took us from Barton Cove in Gill, upriver through the Narrows and up as far as the stretch of river called the Horse-race and back. A few of the *River-Stories2020* events had taken place online, but that got old, fast. Indigenous participants needed to feel in person the human interaction, facial expressions, body language, story-telling warmth. As did we all.

Thus, many events have been postponed for one year. But in spite of all, the Aquinnah boat-building crew finished the *mishoon* on the banks of our river in time for the August 1 date.

The idea of building a *mishoon* began in 2018 over coffee at the Second Street Bakery on Fourth Street. That’s when Jonathan Perry of the Aquinnah Wampanoag suggested using *mishoon* building as the focal point of the 2019 Pocumtuck Homelands Festival organized annually by the Nolumbe-

ka Project, Inc. Kate Albrecht and I, both board members of Nolumbeka, jumped at the idea.

Jonathan had long been building dugouts, beginning his apprenticeship at Plimouth Plantation years ago. Hoping to harvest a local white pine to fashion a dugout big enough to hold a crew of four or five, we began the search for a really big tree.

We got busy finding funding for the project, and by 2019, the Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts and the Babson 2020 Foundation of the Peace Development Fund provided us with substantial amounts to buy the log and pay the crew. So we had the crew and the money, now to find a tree.

We located the log we wanted at Bear Hill Sawmill in Belcher-town. The *mishoon* tree had likely begun its life one hundred and ten years earlier somewhere in Nipmuck country near the Quabbin. For whatever reason, this taller-than-90-foot white pine had been harvested a year before. When we first saw it at the sawmill, it was an 18-foot giant, with a diameter of 46 inches. It likely weighed about 8,000 pounds.

Somehow, this massive tree trunk was going to be whittled down to a craft measuring 16 feet, weighing 4 or 5 hundred pounds, and capable of powering through the waters of the Connecticut River.

The star attraction of the August 2019 festival at Unity Park, the crew of Wampanoag, Narragansett, and Abenaki began the burn, which lasted three days and three nights. By then it was one-third done. It was destined to be stored and safeguarded by Bryan Camden, manager of the Turners Falls airport.

The Indigenous crew would work on finishing the craft as time allowed during the winter and spring. Then the epidemic broke out.

By June 2020, we were inching towards a window in the outbreak, and Jonathan brought in his crew of cousins to finish burning and hewing with axes and adzes – occasionally compromising traditional methods by using modern equipment, like a Stihl chainsaw!

We were ready on time to launch the *mishoon* out over the flooded fields of Barton Cove, under a burning sun. The Connecticut River Conservancy had taken care of the logistics of lining up 30 paddlers to accompany the maiden voyage. This had been no easy task, given the shifting orders coming from the Governor’s office concerning public events and social distancing.

In spite of all, we were out on the open river in no time. The Wampanoag crew of Jared James, Andrew DeVito, Leah Hopkins Perry, Jonathan Perry himself, and 3-year old son Tristan became the first Native Americans to ply the great Quonektakut in a dugout in more than 300 years.

Our procession led up through the red rocks of the Narrows, a little more than one-half-hour paddle away. I felt a strong personal pride, and no small twinge of the heart, as we glided triumphantly past my boyhood haunts along the shore of the Narrows and the curving bank of the river. I had grown up just a few hundred yards away up on Carlisle Avenue, and the red rocks had been my sanctuary and teacher all during my younger years. And now, I had helped bring this *mishoon* procession together. I thanked the rocks, river, trees for what I had learned there. Secretly, I felt pretty good.

I guided the entire flotilla to the broad sandy beach upriver just beyond the Narrows. Everyone hopped out of canoes, kayaks, dugout to stretch legs and begin telling the stories. Joe Graveline and I shared some of our knowledge about this place on the river, but Jonathan and his crew were the voices that were to be heard.

Stories were spun telling of the spiritual and mythical past of this place, how *mishoons* were so crucial to Natives, plying both fresh and salt waters all over the Northeast. Particularly more sturdy and durable than birch bark canoes, the dugout was the workhorse of

the Tribes, capable of bouncing off rocks in rapids, carrying heavy loads of goods, both during portages and trading voyages.

Jonathan also recounted the terrible plagues that had decimated more than 90 percent of Indigenous populations, depriving them of the means to protect their people, their homes, their homelands. Thoughts of this current plague gave us all pause, and some insight into those terrible times the Tribes had faced.

Leah spoke for the Indigenous women of times past and future. We reflected on the fact that women formed the backbone of the tribe, both in carrying forth deep knowledge of the agriculture they had developed, and in how most families maintained their identities through clan relationships under the authority of tribal women.

Meanwhile Tristan, the youngest person there, joyfully tramped in the cold spring waters flowing over the beach sands, ran in circles,

jumped with both feet on a sand castle, broke into joyful giggles.

We headed back upriver, swung around just before entering the straightaway known to locals as the Horserace, and began our float back downstream with the current.

We entered the shallow waters of the Cove once more. The crew and all of us whooped, echoing the call-and-response tradition. Power boats leaving the marina signaled us with horns and waved salutations, astonished and vaguely aware that something historic was going on.

We had shared in welcoming back Native voices to the river. We affirmed the Native presence, persistent and renewed, in this fateful year of 2020.

We had succeeded in calling up the lost spirits of this place, rising up after a long sleep.

Visit David’s journal at [riverstoriesdavidbrule.com](http://riverstoriesdavidbrule.com).



Preparing to launch the mishoon on August 1.

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

# This September: Volunteers Get Dirty for Cleaner Rivers!

**FRANKLIN COUNTY** – Each fall, thousands of volunteers of all ages and abilities clean the Connecticut River and its tributaries on foot or by boat. Volunteers remove trash along rivers, streams, parks, boat launches, trails and more.

Registration is now open for the Connecticut River Conservancy’s (CRC) Source to Sea Cleanup. This annual event, now in its 24<sup>th</sup> year, has grown into one of the largest river cleanups in the country. Source to Sea is coordinated by CRC in all four states of the 410-mile Connecticut River basin.

This year’s Cleanup continues throughout September, rather than the typical two-day event, for better social distancing. CRC invites volunteers to safely continue the tradition of getting dirty for cleaner rivers this September. For more information, safety guidelines, or to register, visit [www.ctriver.org/cleanup](http://www.ctriver.org/cleanup).

“The Source to Sea Cleanup strengthens community while cleaning up our rivers and streams. It’s an opportunity for you to make



MIKE JACKSON PHOTO

a difference,” says CRC executive director Andrew Fisk. “When people help clean their rivers, they make lasting connections with each other and with their rivers.”

“We’re excited to work with volunteers to tackle trash, even during the pandemic. We’ve redesigned the event to keep everyone as safe as possible while still making a difference for cleaner rivers,” says CRC cleanup coordinator Stacey Lennard.

In 2019, more than 3,600 volunteers hauled nearly 67 tons of trash from the riv-

erbanks and waterways. Volunteers remove everything from recyclable bottles and cans, fishing equipment and food waste to tires, televisions, and refrigerators. To date, volunteers have removed more than 1,167 tons of trash from our rivers.

“There are lots of ways to get involved,” continues Lennard. “Volunteers can report a trash site in need of cleaning, organize and register your own local cleanup group, or be a #RiverWitness on social media. Join us to celebrate our collective efforts – together yet apart – at a virtual Source to Sea Shindig on September 30 to wrap up the Cleanup.”

New this year, CRC added #RiverWitness to help people connect with each other online through their shared concern for and appreciation of our rivers. Take a photo or video when you are at the river, participating in the Source to Sea Cleanup or enjoying time outside. Or make art inspired by river beauty or river pollution.

Share on social media, include #RiverWitness, and tag Connecticut River Conservancy.

If you’re not on social media, share images at [www.ctriver.org/riverwitness](http://www.ctriver.org/riverwitness). Your images will be added to an online mosaic photo display and video, and select images will be used to call on decision-makers to enact solutions to keep trash out of our rivers.

If your group wants to get involved but needs a cleanup site, if you have questions, or if you know of a site in need of cleaning, contact Stacey Lennard at [cleanup@ctriver.org](mailto:cleanup@ctriver.org). Learn more about the event at [www.ctriver.org/cleanup](http://www.ctriver.org/cleanup).

Since 1952, CRC has been the voice for the Connecticut River watershed, from source to sea. They collaborate with partners across four states to protect and advocate for your rivers and educate and engage communities. They bring people together to prevent pollution, improve habitat, and promote enjoyment of your rivers and streams.

Healthy rivers support healthy economies. To learn more about CRC, or to make a contribution to help protect your rivers, visit [www.ctriver.org](http://www.ctriver.org).

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SKATEPARK from page B1

Benefits of Skateboarding

Although in the distant past skateboarding was considered an activity for punks and drop-outs, the sport has grown in popularity and respect in recent decades, and will be included in the Olympics for the first time in 2021.

This year a first-of-its-kind study of skateboarding culture was sponsored by the Tony Hawk Foundation. The *Beyond the Board* study reports that “skateboarding improves mental health, fosters community, and encourages diversity and resilience.”

I noticed from my first observation that there is a real feeling of camaraderie and friendliness among the skaters. I was told that the more experienced skaters often serve as mentors of newer ones, especially those that they feel are serious about skating. The mom of a 12-year-old boy who has been skating since he was three noted that the older skateboarders are very kind and gentle, and also very encouraging, to her son.

On my numerous visits to the park after watering my garden, I talked to any skateboarder who seemed willing to change his or her intense focus from skating to chatting. Among them, Barry Scott, Wally Fitzpatrick, Jon Ryan, and Dallas Willor – all experienced, skilled skaters and frequent denizens of the park – had a lot to say about how skaters think and feel about the sport, as well as the benefits of skateboarding.

According to Jon, it is not only the most accessible thing you can do to entertain yourself, but can be an escape from stress and boredom, a way to channel anger and frustration by moving the body. For Jon, a great deal of passion is involved as well. As he noted, life without skateboarding would have far less meaning.

These guys, and other skateboarders as well, believe it is both a sport and an art. To them the skateboard park is a canvas that you can express your creativity on. It is also an environment, they told me, in which you can learn how to deal with fear and frustration, how to fall safely and get up and try again, how to be problem solvers, how to make a commitment and be disciplined.

The *Beyond the Board* study also found that skateboarding culture helps improve communication skills. This seems true from my experience. I was told by a num-

ber of different skateboarders that they feel they can share with each other about issues going on in their lives. They feel surrounded, they said, by good people they can be honest with.

I even heard two skaters sharing dream stories, and attempting to analyze what was going on in the dreams. A good deal of philosophizing seems to go on as well.

What About Diversity?

On any day at Unity Skatepark there is a predominance of guys on skateboards, BMXs, and scooters. They range in age from 8 or 9 to 40 years old. Most are white, but they stressed to me that they have friends of color they skate with, and that they feel strongly that they want the park to feel welcoming to all. As they pointed out, a passion for the sport is what unites skaters across all differences.

As for gender diversity, I did occasionally see young women skateboarders. Apparently more girls and young women have taken up skateboarding in recent years. I met and talked with two young women who had recently graduated from high school and were soon to be college students. They told me that they had just started skating within the past year or so, and realized that “to be good at skateboarding you need to work on repetition, to build skills and deal with fears... there is lots of discipline involved.”

Two young women in their early 20s from Northfield and Easthampton I spoke with, said that they like this skatepark better than all the others in the area because everyone here is so welcoming, friendly, and supportive. They’ve only been skating for a year or so and at first they felt a bit intimidated. As one pointed out, it’s no different than how many women feel in any predominantly male environment.

I also spoke with a dad who brought his two young daughters to the park with their scooters. He said he wanted them to learn how to gain confidence and be more fearless! Way to go, dad. I think we’re going to need more skate parks in the future!

How Safe Is It?

If you get a chance to watch a skateboarder perched on a skateboard at the edge of steep slope, facing downwards, you will marvel – as I have – at the bravado it takes to throw your body headfirst down that slope... and that’s only

AUTHORS from page B1

from being destroyed.

*Fablehaven* is a series of five books. After that there is a series called *Dragonwatch*, also written by Brandon Mull, about Kendra and Seth’s adventures at another magical preserve. This one holds dragons.

These books are so amazing! They’re so exciting to read, and the plots are super fun, with lots of unexpected twists and turns. Over quarantine, I’ve been rereading all of both series to prepare for the next *Dragonwatch* book, which is coming out in October! I definitely recommend these books to fans of *Harry Potter*, *Percy Jackson*, and fantasy books.

Now, I’m going to be interviewing Brandon Mull.

**Izzy V-C:** *Are there any plans to make the Fablehaven series into a movie? If so, can you say anything about it? And if not, who would be your dream cast?*

**Brandon Mull:** There are plans to make a *Fablehaven* movie. A team of filmmakers is working on it. Time will tell if they get the job done. I think eventually somebody will figure it out.

I don’t have a dream cast, because I picture the characters too specifically in my mind to match them to actors. Hopefully a talented casting director can figure that out.

**IVC:** *After you finish the Dragonwatch series, are you planning on making any more books with the Fablehaven characters?*

**BM:** I have no plans for the *Fablehaven* characters beyond *Dragonwatch* 5. But that could always change if I get the right idea...

**IVC:** *Where did you, or do you, get your inspiration for Fablehaven and Dragonwatch?*

**BM:** I get my inspiration from my favorite books and movies, by noticing details in my life, and by letting my mind wander.

**IVC:** *For readers who have grown up reading your books, are you planning on writing any books similar to Fablehaven and Dragonwatch that are for young adult audiences?*



Throwback: Two years ago, with a shorter stack of books!

**BM:** I have some ideas that match that description, and hope to write them someday.

**IVC:** *What kind of books did you like to read when you were little, and what books do you like to read now?*

**BM:** My favorites were fantasies like *Narnia* and *Lord of the Rings*, and I still love fantasies best, though I have found great stories in many different categories.

**IVC:** *Do you believe in any of the magical creatures that you include in your books?*

**BM:** While I’m writing the stories, I believe in them very much. They feel extremely real to me.

Thank you so much, Brandon Mull, for answering these questions!

Again, the next *Dragonwatch* book is coming out this October, if readers are interested. I hope you enjoyed this article, and I’ll see you again soon!



the beginning of the ride! There’re grinds, ollies, nollies, kick flips, heel flips and other gravity-defying tricks that follow.

Now imagine three or four advanced skaters ripping around the slopes of the park at a serious speed, while skillfully avoiding other skateboarders and youth on BMX bikes and scooters. It’s quite an amazing scene. My first thought was... *yikes*, there must be some serious injuries in an activity like this!

A little bit of online research I did indicates otherwise. Apparently skateboarding is well behind football, basketball, and cycling when it comes to serious head injuries and broken bones. Most injuries from skateboarding are cuts, scrapes, and bruises, and they occur primarily among those just learning the sport.

Most skateboarders I talked to made little of any injuries received, including sprained ankles and wrists, a bloody elbow, and a variety of cuts and scrapes. One young woman had her first serious fall, injuring her arm a bit. She said it made her feel that she had earned her keep, and that she was now truly part of the scene.

I asked Alana, Jon’s girlfriend, what it was like having a boyfriend deeply involved in the sport. She noted that they had made a number of visits to the emergency room, and at times she wishes he had a hobby not likely to result in cuts and bruises. However, because it is such an important part of his life and gives him such great pleasure, she’s made her peace with it!

Although scooters are allowed at the park, according to several of the advanced skaters I spoke with, some of the younger children on scooters seem oblivious to skatepark etiquette, and therefore sometimes present a safety hazard. A large sign out front explains the rules: watch the flow, wait your turn, don’t cut anyone off, and always look before you start a “run” – but some young children either don’t understand or don’t pay attention to these rules. One older skater suggests that it would be helpful if parents spend time helping their young children better understand the rules, and how to handle scooter basics, before bringing them to the skatepark.

I wondered if there should be certain times that different skill levels of skaters are able to have the park to themselves. “This is a public park, designed for everyone to enjoy,” Barry Scott, an advanced and longtime skateboarder who was instrumental in creating the park, explained to me. “A schedule would

not work without a paid monitor... and it would be annoying for people who want to come to the park whenever they have the opportunity.”

A Gill grandmother of two boys, 10 and 12, said she was glad there was no schedule, as it would have made it more difficult to bring them as often as she did. The concerns that she mentioned had nothing to do with safety. As she pointed out, in this time of COVID there are few or no opportunities for team sports. She wanted to “get the boys away from the computers and get exercise, build skills.”

On the first day there, she said, they were welcomed by the older skaters, which she appreciated. She thinks it’s a great resource... the best thing Turners Falls has created for kids.

Problem-Solving Skills

I admire the sport and the skateboarders themselves, but the last thing I would ever do at this point is get on a skateboard. I was nonetheless the recipient of their camaraderie and kindness.

When I entered the parking lot one afternoon in a hurry to water my garden beds, my right front tire hit the curb, resulting in a flat. I sat there for a moment feeling frustrated and a bit embarrassed.

Suddenly Wally, Jon, and Dallas were at my side, letting me know that I was not the first or only person this had happened to! Before I could call Triple A, they set to work on my flat. Their generosity, problem-solving skills, and true grit were on display as they worked successfully for 45 minutes to get the old lug nuts off and the spare on.

Like I said, I have come to appreciate the skatepark on many levels!



ALANA BERNHEIM PHOTO

Left to right: Wally Fitzpatrick, Jon Ryan, and Dallas Willor helped our correspondent out with a flat tire.

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

– William Carlos Williams

edited by Christopher Sawyer-Lauçanno  
Readers are invited to send poems to the  
*Montague Reporter* at: 177 Avenue A  
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# August Poetry Page

## The Bellows

Beneath the veneer of control by glare  
Sits a little, old man  
Rocking in his chair,  
Shuddering like dead grass in a breeze  
As it tosses his last wisp of grey hair.  
He begins his speech of phantom expertise  
While bobbing and weaving on the porch  
Of a big white house, only he can see.  
He sputters and babbles about great things  
He did, so he believes.  
Who once fanned flames, reduced to a wheeze,  
The mindless bellows of dull, sagging skin  
Leans toward irrelevance as faculties leave  
And the nurse, wipes drool from his chin.

– Jake Brown  
*Spokane, Wa*

## Silence

Please be quiet.  
Please stop talking to me  
I yell as I cover my ears to drown you out  
as I hope and pray for you to give me  
the silence I crave.

I can still hear you in my head  
in my thoughts as I scream  
and shout attempting to drown you out

I scream and scream till my lungs  
beg for mercy and air.  
I collapse on my bed wanting to end it all  
As I look around my room  
and nothing is there

that’s when it hits me  
your poisonous voice that tortures me  
is not in my house but in my head

I walk to my father’s room and reach  
for his handgun to finally end it all  
to finally get the silence I crave forever  
I put the gun to my head and smile

it’s finally over... as I pull the trigger  
and enter a realm of utter silence.

– Luis Manuel Delgado  
*Turners Falls*

## The Road

There is no way  
of telling who is who. Or who is you.  
Still, you recognized the mouth  
& eyes, as only you could.

It was not hard for you to understand  
where she came from  
as she handed you the letter.  
Her swaying like salt in the sea.

It was the old man who wrote the letter.  
Though it is true you could not yet  
decipher the words. An alphabet you  
still couldn’t begin to remember.

But when was that, how long had it taken  
you to arrive? You can trust the road  
is all you could hear from the wind  
coming out of her mouth,  
or was it her hands?

You are the road is all you can remember.

– John High  
*Brooklyn, NY*

## Happy Birthday (for Stephanie)

You sparkle with eternal youth,  
And gracefully transcend despair.  
Your mordant humor  
lifts amiable spirits,  
and slices poisoned minds –  
jeweled knife through rancid butter,  
still fragrant as delight.  
The world became a better place  
for having you in it,  
and it smiled when you were born;  
a broad, bright, swaddling grin  
which never eroded,  
even after years of betrayals,  
and disappointments,  
and jaded souls  
seeking to extinguish  
your irrepressible innocence.  
Your light remains boundless,  
radiant candles  
in sweet frosting.  
Happy birthday to you.


– Kevin Smith  
*Turners Falls*

## Contributors’ Notes

Kevin Smith, tuba player and frequent Poetry Page contributor, lives in Turners Falls with his wonderful and inspirational girlfriend, Stephanie.  
John High is the author of more than a dozen books of poems and several volumes of translations of Russian poetry. His latest book is *Without Dragons Even the Emperor Would Be Lonely: Ensos, Parables & Koans* (Berkeley, Wet Cement Press 2020).  
Luis Manuel Delgado, 24 years old, lives in Turners Falls. Luis describes his work and life this way: “I love to write poetry. Most of my stuff is dark due to having a not so pleasant past when I was a child and poetry has always made it better. At first I did rap – my worst idea – but then someone showed me poetry, and it turned out I had a natural talent for it.”  
Originally from western Massachusetts, Jake Brown is a painter of landscapes, a songwriter, and a poet.

ALEXANDER ROTONDO PHOTO

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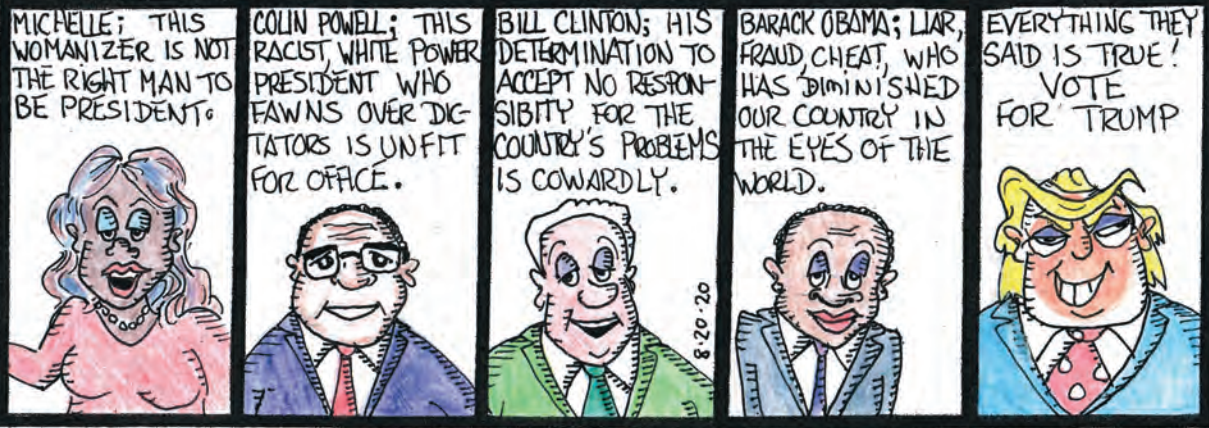


# COMICS and PUZZLE

JOEL PAXTON ILLUSTRATION

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by denis f. bordeaux



## OVER THE HILL

Carolyn Clark



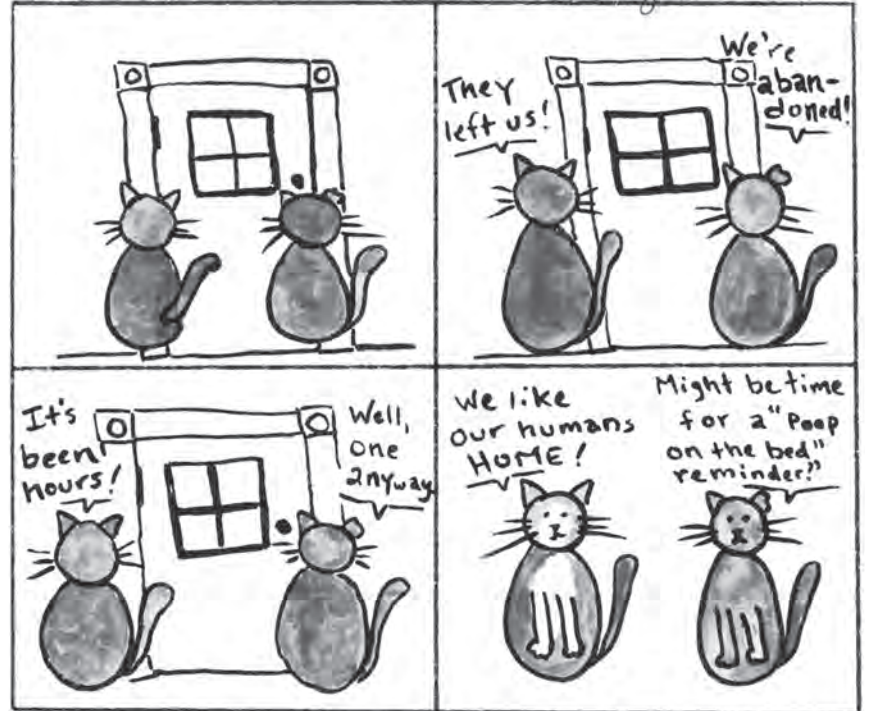
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# GREAT FALLS APPLE COLUMN

By CRYSTAL PERKINS

**MILLERS FALLS** – Salutations! August is here already, a time for reaping the benefits of hard work in our gardens and enjoying the bounty that nature has to offer us. One of nature’s greatest gifts to us at this time of year is the elderberry, from the elder plant: *Sambucus nigra*, *S. canadensis*, and *S. americana*.

Elder has been used for medicinal purposes throughout the ages, but it also has been used as food and for dyes. While most parts of the plant can be used medicinally, the berries are about to ripen and become available for harvest and use.

The berries need to be cooked, and made into a tincture or a standard infusion, before ingesting. Fresh berries include some three milligrams of cyanide per 100 grams, and if one ingests undercooked berries, leaves, bark, or roots, it could cause nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea. Make sure you prepare them properly. I suggest making a tincture, and there is a useful recipe at the end of the article.

Elderberries are rich in vitamins A and C, fiber, phenolic acids, flavonols, and anthocyanins. Historically they have been used to protect against seasonal colds and as an immune booster. Elderberry has been shown to reduce the level of fat in the blood and can decrease cholesterol as well as reducing the risk of heart disease because of its high level of anthocyanins. Anthocyanins have also been shown to inhibit gastrointestinal cancers when ingested as a dietary supplement.

In these trying times, boosting our immunity can be a game changer, especially with cold and flu season on the way. The polyphenols found in elderberry have been found to support immune system defense by increasing your white blood cell count, and inhibiting the early stages of infection by blocking key viral proteins responsible for both the viral attachment and entry of the flu virus.

The juice from berries has also been found to improve symptoms of bronchitis and sinusitis, and slow the growth of harmful bacteria such as *Helicobacter pylori*. One study even found that the elderberry may have some antidepressant properties. This plant does it all!

While it sounds like a super medicine, elderberry works best when used in a preventative manner. It won’t do much if you’re already sick, but it can do much to prevent you from getting sick and boost your immune system in countless ways, so get your hands on some today.

When hunting for wild elderberries it’s important to know that they like moist soils best and prefer full sun. It’s also noteworthy to say that birds adore them and finding them in the wild may become a race between you and the wildlife. When cultivating them in your



Elderberries.

own garden, it may prove useful to cover them with cloth or cages so animals can’t access these amazing berries, because they will go quick.

Once the berries have been acquired, the possibilities are endless: you can make jams, juices, wines, pies, and so much more. So get out there and enjoy the wonder berry of the woods!

### Tincture with Vodka

Fill a jar 1/2 full with fresh, washed elderberries (or 1/4 full with dried elderberries). Pour vodka over the berries, filling the jar to within one inch of the top. Put a lid on the jar and place in a dark cabinet for four to six weeks. Give it a shake every now and then.

When done infusing, strain the berries from the vodka and pour the tincture into a clean jar with a tight lid. Store out of direct sunlight, and use dark glass bottles if not stored in a dark cabinet.

### Tincture with Glycerin

The benefit of using glycerin is that it is alcohol-free, more suitable for children or adults who avoid alcohol.

For fresh elderberries, fill the jar 2/3 full with fresh washed elderberries. Give the elderberries a slight crush with the back of a wooden spoon, and then pour glycerin over the muddled berries to within one inch of the top. Put a lid on the jar and place in a dark cabinet for four to six weeks, giving it a shake every day if possible.

When done infusing, strain the berries and store the glycerite in a clean bottle. Again, store out of direct sunlight, use dark bottles if not stored in a dark cabinet.

## MOVIE REVIEW

# The Tax Collector (2020)

By SEAMUS TURNER-GLENNON

**CHARLEMONT** – “Where does one even begin with a movie that’s so deeply incompetent that it practically defies criticism?” asks critic Brian Tallerico at the very start of his *RogerEbert.com* review of David Ayer’s *The Tax Collector*, before launching into a review which, ironically enough, could have the same question asked of itself.

Now, I may be picking at low-hanging fruit. His review is of the quality one could expect of a website founded by the king of the hack critics himself, and I don’t have any particular vendetta against Tallerico himself – that is to say, I don’t think his poor writing makes him a bad person who’s wronged me on a personal level in some convoluted way. But I think the review in question is indicative of a truth the mainstream critical reception of David Ayer films tends to re-expose each time he releases a new one: the pseudo-intellectual, posturing nature of the establishment critical consensus.

There’s an almost comically hypocritical nature to a whole layer of critics who condemn nearly any good-looking film they dislike as “vapid,” “empty,” or “style over substance,” while praising these same qualities in the work of directors like Terrence Malick or Hayao Miyazaki; who refuse to praise any genre filmmaking unless it has an A24 logo slapped on it; who are invited to prestigious film festivals more as publicity agents than as critics there to truly speak their minds.

Were one to look simply at the plot, characters, acting, etc. present in *The Tax Collector* it may come off as “empty,” or “dumb” or whatnot. But to attempt to examine those aspects of the film is inherently antithetical to the nature of the film. In fact, *The Tax Collector*

feels like a direct rejection of the traditional tropes or aspects associated with a specific sort of crime action-thriller which David Ayer has come to be identified with (see: 2001’s *Training Day*).

I may admittedly be overreacting, but I wouldn’t say it if these tendencies were not so transparently cynical, so blatantly a modern attempt to rework dull critical conventions which the “auteurist” critics rallied against in the 1950s and ‘60s.

In *The Tax Collector*, moments of tension quickly descend into ultra-violent fight sequences, seemingly without any true logic behind them. These scenes are scattered throughout long sequences of gang meetings, threats, and scenes of our two principal characters simply driving around – a tool Ayers seems fond of using.

A climactic moment in which our two leads – David (Bobby Soto) and Creeper (Shia LaBeouf), two enforcers who work as “tax collectors” for Mexican organized crime in LA – rally up their gang members to take down a rival (Conejo, played by rapper Conejo) is suddenly cut short by an attack from Conejo’s gang, an ultra-violent group who operate more as urban terrorists than a gang. This scene, which in any other film would play out as a fairly straightforward method for the advancement of the rising action, here descends instead into senseless, bloody, nihilistic violence before it even has a chance to close.

And that’s what works about *The Tax Collector*. It’s riddled with sequences like this one, which emphasize how such a situation (if one accepts certain absurdities inherent to the plot) would play out in real life. And sure, this could be viewed as a flaw in the film – but as far as I’m concerned, Ayers is a lot smarter than that.

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