

The Montague Reporter

YEAR 18 – NO. 37

also serving Irving, Gill, Leverett and Wendell

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EDITOR@MONTAGUEREPORTER.ORG

THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES

AUGUST 6, 2020

Pan Am Trains Spew Diesel For Days At Lake Pleasant

By LISA McLOUGHLIN

LAKE PLEASANT – Pan Am Locomotive #7552, a type C40-8, and its companion engine #5946, a type B40-8, were bored. Attached to each other and a number of cars, they had nowhere to go, nothing to do, and were hanging around Lake Pleasant. This wouldn't have been a problem, except that the engines were running – for nearly three days. Their noise and fumes spread through the community until they finally rolled out around 7 a.m. Tuesday.

“An idling train makes our pleasant village a little less true to its name,” said Matt Atwood, president of the Lake Pleasant Village Association. “When you're on the Bluffs side of the village while a train is idling, you can constantly hear its rumble, its hiss and cracks and pops, its loud and regular engine-brake release.

“And that's not to mention the diesel fumes that spew out every minute that it sits: idling, wasting fuel, burning natural resources, polluting the neighborhood and its families and gardens – and its town-owned aquifer, Lake Pleasant.”

And it's not just this one train; these locomotives have friends. Lake Pleasant residents are keeping a record of trains idling within the past year: last December 14, *seven hours and 45 minutes*; December 22, *uncertain, but more than 30 minutes*; February 13, *four and a half hours*; March 14, *46 and a half hours*. This weekend's train set a recent record of at least 60 hours.

They've been through this before. In 2010, a series of exchanges

see **TRAINS** page A4

Blais: Rural Policy Office Staying Alive In Bond Bill

By JEFF SINGLETON

BOSTON – A proposal to create a state Office of Rural Policy, included in a broader economic development bond bill, has passed the Massachusetts house of representatives but was not included in the state senate's version of the bond bill. The two versions are now in the legislature's joint conference committee, which negotiates legislation that will be sent to the governor for his signature.

State representative Natalie Blais, whose First Franklin district includes Montague and Leverett, told the *Reporter* that the proposal for a rural policy office could still survive in the compromise bill that emerges from conference, due to strong support from state senators in the region.

Blais said such an office would help generate “sustained, proactive, attention to rural policy issues.” Many of these issues – and the proposal for a special state office – were discussed in a 2019 report issued by a statewide Rural Policy Advisory Commission, co-chaired by Linda Dunlavy of the Franklin Regional Council of Governments.

see **RURAL** page A6

WHAT COMES NEXT?



MIKE JACKSON PHOTO

The Class of 2020 Turners Falls High School graduation was held on Bourdeau Field on Friday, July 24. “I want to thank you for your perseverance and your resilience during the spring pandemic,” Michael Sullivan, who retired as superintendent in June, told the 49 graduating seniors sitting in the end zone. “You adjusted very well to the remote learning situation, and you made the best of having lost out on so many of the events that make the last semester of high school memorable and enjoyable. I am sorry for that.... Life has always been a messy and complex business.”

GILL-MONTAGUE REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE

Students, Families, Staff Face the Unknown

By MIKE JACKSON

GILL-MONTAGUE – School districts across the state and country are agonizing over plans to return to learning this fall amid an ongoing viral pandemic, but under two large white tents behind Sheffield Elementary School, a small group of students has been sampling a very rare treat: learning in person.

The 14 students are receiving literacy support – as well as breakfast and lunch – three mornings a week for a month, with Hillcrest reading specialist Laura Brown and Sheffield fifth-grade teacher Zachary Howes presiding.

“We have a nurse on hand, and she checks in with the students and the parents,” said director of teaching and learning Christine Limoges. “It's been a great opportunity for our district to do a dry run with all the CDC regulations. We're using the protocols for hand sanitizer, wearing of masks, and staying six feet apart.”

The program came together thanks to a last-minute grant, and the students were hand-picked for participation. Most summer learn-

ing in the district, including special education and high school credit recovery, has been happening remotely, but the “Summer Fun” program is allowing teachers and administrators to see a socially-distanced classroom in practice as they weigh different learning models for the 2020-21 school year.

“We're thinking of having each building have some tents that can be utilized for educational purposes outdoors,” Limoges said. “The look on their faces, to be back with their friends and their teachers, has been

priceless.”

But despite the obvious social, emotional, and pedagogical benefits of learning in person, the risks loom large. In Massachusetts, each district must determine its strategy going into September under guidelines set by the state Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). Districts are required to design plans that cover three scenarios – mostly in-person; fully remote; and a “hybrid” of the two – for state approval, public review, and final

see **GMRSD** page A8



ANNIE LEVINE PHOTO

Students in the Summer Fun program take on socially distanced arts and crafts.

Sacked Gazette Workers Win More Severance

By SARAH ROBERTSON

NORTHAMPTON – A small crowd gathered outside the *Daily Hampshire Gazette* office last week to mark the end of an era: the last day the 234-year-old newspaper would be printed locally. Parent company Newspapers of New England (NNE) announced last month that their printing press in Northampton was to be shut down, with all work outsourced to Gannett Company, Inc.

“After thoughtful analysis and deliberation, we have reached a decision to cease the in-house production of our newspapers and cease all commercial work,” publisher Michael Moses wrote in an email to staff.

The *Gazette's* headquarters for nearly 45 years, a

45,000 square foot building on Conz Street, is now listed for sale for \$4.2 million, the newspaper itself reported two days later.

Monday, July 27, was the last day of work for the 29 employees who lost their jobs to the closure, 24 of whom were members of the Pioneer Valley NewsGuild, a union that formed in late 2018. Though the NewsGuild tried to convince Newspapers of New England CEO Aaron Julien to reverse the decision through a petition and publicity campaign, the company showed no signs of changing its mind before the press's final day.

“We weren't able to win what we really wanted, which was to save these jobs and to keep the press here local,” reporter and union member Dusty Christensen

see **GAZETTE** page A5

MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD Spinner Park Reconstruction Hits a Snag

By JEFF SINGLETON

The Montague selectboard learned at its July 30 meeting that the project to reconstruct Spinner Park on Avenue A, which is funded by a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), has “hit a snag,” in the words Brian McHugh of the Franklin County Housing and Redevelopment Authority. The snag is a line of conduit containing electric wiring that runs under the park to the Powertown Apartments. The conduit is under the planned new location for the statue of a cotton spinner which gives the park its name.

The spinner, a replica of a nineteenth-century French *art nouveau* statue honoring female factory workers, used to sit at the front of the park, but was destined to be moved to the back under the new design. That decision was opposed by a number of downtown community activists who waged an unsuccessful campaign to leave the spinner, which is currently removed for restoration, in her former location.

see **MONTAGUE** page A6

LEVERETT SELECTBOARD Amherst Water Approved for Teawaddle Hill Neighborhood

By GEORGE BRACE

The Leverett selectboard announced on Tuesday that the Amherst town council had approved an agreement to extend Amherst's municipal water to Leverett houses along Teawaddle Road. When completed, the project will put an end to a years-long issue for residents who have been dealing with water contaminated by a closed and capped Leverett landfill.

All three members of the board remotely attended the Amherst town council meeting on Monday night, where the the extension was unanimously approved.

Residents on Teawaddle Road have been forced to use bottled water for cooking and drinking due to contaminants leaching into groundwater from the landfill, which was constructed in 1950, and closed and capped in 1993. Leverett does not have its own municipal water system, and residents rely on well water, which is susceptible to the leaching problem.

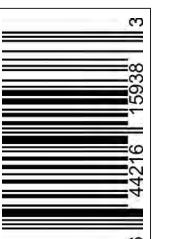
With the agreement in hand, the towns can move forward with the water line project, which will provide Amherst municipal water to additional Amherst residents as well as those on Teawaddle Road in Leverett. The new line will also provide fire protection for residents along its route.

The selectboard expressed gratitude to Amherst public works superintendent Guilford Mooring and

see **LEVERETT** page A7

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The Montague Reporter

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THE CRATER

Our hearts go out this week to the people of Beirut, where a cataclysmic explosion – apparently the result of industrial-scale negligence in materials safety, rather than an act of war, for once – left hundreds dead, thousands injured, and destroyed several hospitals and a strategic grain reserve in the middle of what was already a dual public health and food crisis.

We are going to press a day after this event, so we could be operating on faulty information. But the early returns indicate that workers welding a nearby warehouse door started a fire which set off a stash of fireworks, which in turn ignited nearly 3,000 tons of ammonium nitrate fertilizer the government had confiscated several years ago from a condemned ship owned by a bankrupt Russian businessman.

The takeaway might just be to not do that. Or it might be something grimmer, a reminder that in our advanced, highly armed and hyper-energized industrial global society, our safety and well-being depends every day on the proper functioning of a swarm of interlocking bureaucracies, which just might fail as said society strains and frays.

Wouldn't it be nice if the state of Massachusetts had the capacity to prevent someone from parking a train near your house for three days with the engine on? Sorry, suckers – railways came about in robber-baron times, and get to play by grandfathered-in robber-baron rules forever. The USA has never had a fantastically rational government; the division between federal, state, and municipal governments is often a nesting doll of accountability evaded.

Facing a universal challenge – this year, a newly evolved and highly transmissible virus – we are stuck with 50 different state gov-

ernment responses. The states have just enough power to tell people to go home, but no coherent framework for measuring risk and luring people back to business.

With education, it's even worse. Responsibility for teaching our youth rests at the municipal level, just as it did in the days of one-room schoolhouses and child labor in the farms and factories. Local control can be lovely, but we never developed a state or federal education system, because rich people tend to live in rich towns and tend to squeak and skitter away sideways when asked to help sponsor the uplift of poor kids.

Instead, we have a crazy quilt of grants and mandates, guidelines and statutes and formulas, charters and committees, class-action lawsuits and standardized tests. And as the nuclear family, cracked apart by multiple generations of wage stagnation and debt, piles its spent fuel rods by the brook out back, somehow it is local public school districts that have picked up the slack, our last-ditch provider of daycare, food, and therapeutic intervention.

What we have learned in six months about the COVID-19 virus is that it is exceptionally virulent in aerosolized form, that it attacks the lining of the blood vessels, complicates the organs, snuffs out the aging early. But the virus alone is not the 3,000 tons of fertilizer packed into a portside warehouse despite the pointed warnings of safety inspectors. It is merely the workers welding the nearby warehouse door.

And the sounds you are hearing now? Those are the fireworks: individual economic contracts failing in a chain reaction. Lost jobs and broken leases. The smoke of debt, the acrid fumes of stranded and idling engines.

No one is responsible for the potential energy this could unleash.

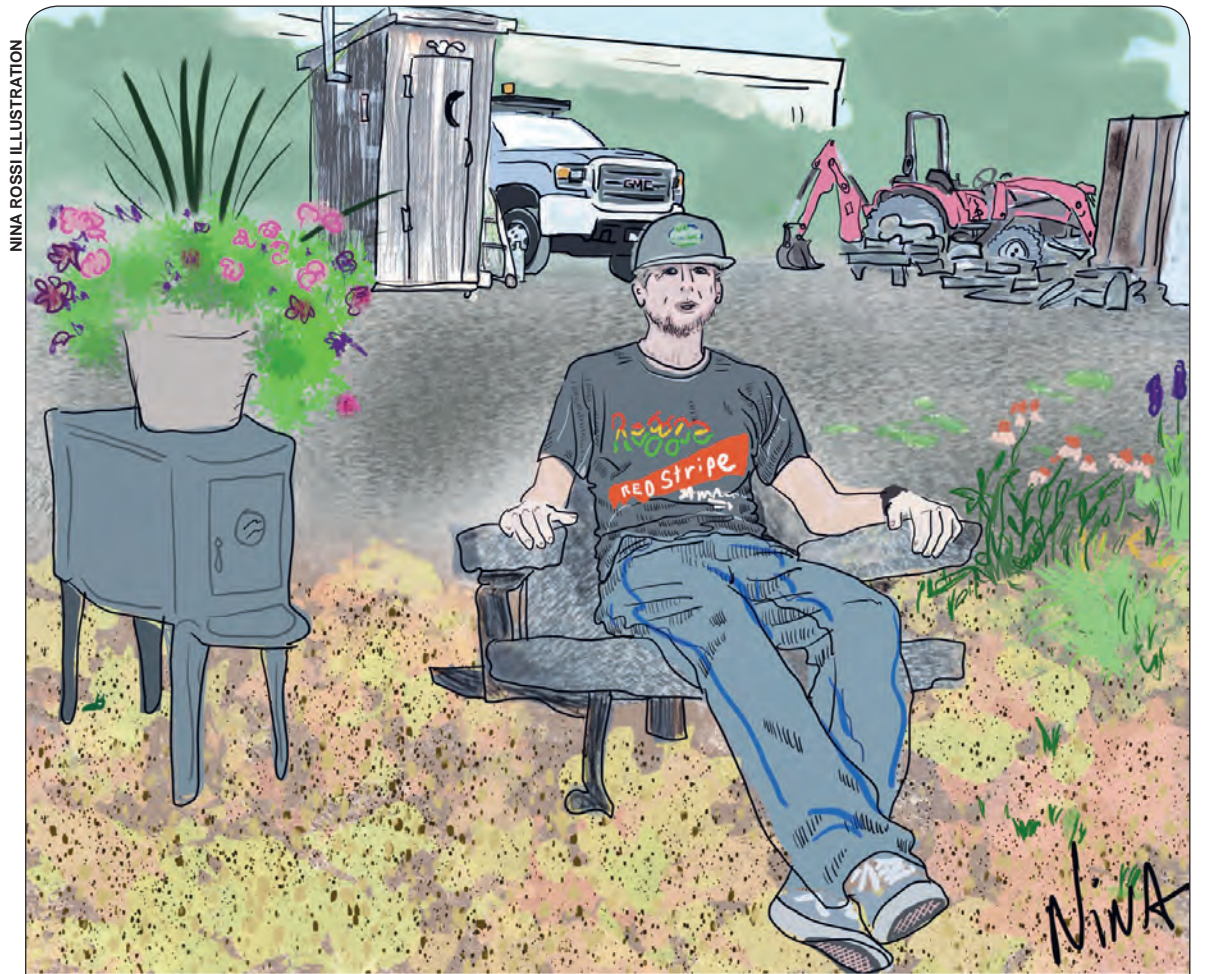
Correction

The headline we attached to an article in our previous edition about the work of Montague tree warden Mark Stevens and the town's tree committee (June 23, "Tree Plantings On Hold") was misleading and incorrect.

"Over 25 public shade trees were planted in Montague this Spring!" town planner Walter Ramsey told the *Reporter*. "You can find them at Sunrise Terrace Senior Apartments, Davis Street near the schools, Avenue A near 11th Street, and in Montague

Center. Plantings are expected to continue this Fall and we are just beginning to plan those plantings. The Town will do our best to accommodate all landowners that have requested public shade trees, and we appreciate your patience."

We apologize to everyone for the error, the result in part of the smallness of the space available for the headline and the lateness of the hour at which it was composed. The article described a relative slowdown in planting, rather than a stoppage or hold.



Mike Fleming sits in one of the stone and steel lawn chairs he made for his J Street yard. The property abuts the bike path in Turners Falls, and Fleming's stone walls, chairs, and creative plantings and other items have been attracting lots of admiring attention since he bought the property a year ago. Fleming has lots of plans for more decorative touches, and says the exposure has been very good for his landscaping design business.

GUEST EDITORIAL

Tenants Stand to Lose

By JOE KOPERA

MONTAGUE CENTER – The lead editorial in the last edition of this paper (July 23, "The Cataract") resonated with me deeply. I want to respond to it as a white Franklin County resident of nearly 20 years, with a stable local job, who has been facing the grim reality of being priced out of the area's housing market.

This area prides itself on maintaining an image of being liberal, tolerant, and inclusive. And yet tweets have been making the rounds on social media these past few months that can be paraphrased as "The type of racism that exists in New England is white people gentrifying a neighborhood and then putting up 'Black Lives Matter' signs on their lawns."

Conversations I've had over the past few years, and especially weeks, have revealed a contradiction in values among a broad community that is vocal about social justice issues while also seeming to welcome and encourage gentrification in Franklin County by affluent white folks from cities.

The cultural landscape and character of Franklin County owes much to the urban white flight and associated "back-to-the-land" grab of the 1960s and '70s, and again in the '80s and '90s. The latter is exemplified by communities like Montague Center and Leverett. Conversations with local realtors reveal the anticipation of a similar wave of newcomers now: affluent retirees from New York City, as well as folks from the MetroWest corridor who are being displaced from their own communities by well-heeled refugees from Boston.

A state representative even recently proposed that Massachusetts pay residents to move to Springfield if they teleworked or commuted to Boston, inspired by an exist-

ing program enacted by the state of Vermont.

As noted in the editorial, many are observing an acceleration of these trends as COVID-19 spurs nationwide white flight toward less dense (but under-serviced) rural communities. Most of us are seeing a dramatic spike in out-of-state plates gracing our area this summer. And if pandemic-related evictions and foreclosures begin this winter, there's speculation that the resulting land grab will be sudden and severe. It could dramatically change the makeup and economics of our communities; an alteration of its character tantamount to the 1960s, and not necessarily for the better.

I want to echo the editorial's sentiment that outsiders are great! They help stem the area's propensity towards social stagnation and homogeneity. The debate around the TFHS mascot in 2017 revealed an ugly streak of classic New England nativism and xenophobia among white area residents, manifesting in rhetoric of the "Real Montague" versus "The Newcomers."

Ironically, this sentiment seemed popular among people who themselves were newcomers in the 1970s through the 1990s, or their children. As I wrote in a letter to this paper at the time it's a dangerous sentiment that is a few short steps away from other, more violent, 'isms.

However, similar 'isms can still be at work under the guise of welcoming new people to the area. It just depends on the politics and prejudices of the people who control who gets to live here: landlords and real estate speculators.

If one looks at available rentals from this year's (very tight) housing market an immediate takeaway is that rents have far outpaced local wages. This has been a long-time trend: HUD's "fair market monthly rent" for Franklin County has increased by 68% over the past 15

years, from \$653 for a 2-bedroom apartment in 2005 to \$1,095 today. A quick look at available rentals on August 3 shows the majority of 2-bedrooms within 10 miles of Montague Center being at least \$1,200 per month, with many at \$1,600 or more. (One-bedrooms seem to have all but disappeared in Western Mass in the past five years, coincident with a notable increase in AirBnBs.)

Meanwhile, median home values in Franklin County have only risen 10% in the past decade, from about \$200,000 in 2010 to about \$220,000, according to *Zillow.com*. Property taxes, harder to compare, have fluctuated quite a bit over the past 15 years; Montague's are about 20% higher than in 2005, but 11% less than their peak in 2003, and have remained relatively stable for the last seven years.

Non-family household median income for Montague, however, has remained stagnant: from \$28,316 in 2010, rising only 6% to \$30,174 in 2018, according to US Census figures. If a person devotes the generally-prescribed 30% of their income to housing, they would need to make \$43,756 a year to afford a 2-bedroom apartment in Montague at HUD "fair market value"... \$12,763 above the median wage for the town. In 2018, almost a third of Montague's tenants were contributing more than 35% of their income toward rent.

Couple this with the most recent Census data for poverty: 23% of all families, and 37% of unmarried females, renting housing in Montague were living below federal poverty level in 2018. In May 2020, Montague also had a 17% formal unemployment rate as a result of COVID-19, which may increase as another shutdown looms.

So while rents, and therefore landlords' net income, have increased anywhere from 68% to 200% in the past 15 years, home

see GUEST ED page A3

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LARKIN-ROSSI ILLUSTRATION

Compiled by NINA ROSSI

The need to maintain social distancing while socializing, while also getting a change of scene, has boosted enthusiasm for activities like bicycling and boating.

Word has it that kayaks are impossible to find at stores right now, as well as bicycles, and if you have been able to actually get out on the river lately, you might have noticed that the Barton Cove canoe and kayak rentals are piled up on the shore over by the campground office on Route 2.

Although it looks like they are open for business, these rentals are sadly not available yet. But the **Barton Cove campground** has reopened as of July 18, operating at 50% capacity; reservations are taken only by phone at (413) 863-9300. For family groups of six or less; no large group sites are open.

Big Brothers Big Sisters is switching to virtual mentoring. They will match youth ages 6 to 12 with rising high school juniors and community college students to meet virtually for weekly mentoring sessions for one year. There is support from the BBBS case management team. They are currently enrolling volunteer mentors; find out more by visiting www.bbbs-fc.org.

MassHire Franklin Hampshire Career Center has a new program that helps job seekers gain **temporary employment at local food relief** worksites. After the temporary employment, MassHire will explore additional resources to help workers find permanent employment.

If you are interested, go to www.masshirefhcareers.org to read about the positions available. There are full- and part-time openings at a variety of locations, paying from \$15 to \$20 an hour. Contact the agency by email or phone if you are interested in applying and they will help you through the steps to establish eligibility and other details.

August 6 and 9 mark the **75th anniversary of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki**, resulting in the immediate deaths of between 129,000 and 226,000 people, with many thousands dying later from radiation exposure. Calls for disarmament and support for the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons will take place around the world.

In Western Mass several events call for a rapid phase-out of nuclear weapons, and redirecting funding for urgent social needs. On Thursday, August 6, at 7:30 p.m., there will be a gathering with speakers at Peskeomskut Park, Avenue A in Turners Falls,

followed by a walk to the Turners Falls-Gill Bridge with candles.

On Saturday there will be a presence at the weekly peace vigil on the Greenfield Town Common at 11 a.m., and on Sunday, activists will meet at the Easthampton library at 7 p.m. and walk to Nashawannuck Pond for a candlelit event. Please wear masks to these events, and maintain social distance.

The **Barbès in the Woods festival** in Montague Center is online this year as a Zoom house party featuring Underground System, Son Rompa Pera, Eric Banta, and Nickodemus. Promoters suggest getting a ticket to access the concert and inviting your COVID pod to party in whatever socially responsible manner you have managed to figure out during this time – deck, yard, or living room (get that 75-foot ethernet cable snaked through the doggie door) – and boogie down on Saturday, August 8 at 7 p.m.

Other concerts from Laudable Productions are livestreaming during August, as well as limited-seating outdoor shows at Valley View Farm. Find out more at www.millpond.live.

The David Ruggles Center in Florence announces the launch of a free-source **Interactive Curriculum that teaches abolitionist history** to middle and high school students. The curriculum introduces students to a group of inspiring activists who clustered in the abolitionist village that became Florence in the 1840s.

“Students work directly with our primary source materials organized around eleven striking figures who lived in Florence,” the center writes. “They create their own oral presentations based on what they find and teach one another the history where it happened at connected sites around the village... Young people find their own voices and gain perspectives on issues in our present-day lives.” Learn more at www.davidrugglescenter.org.

Friday night **Backlot Movies continue in Brattleboro** outside Epsilon Spires, with *Season of the Witch* (1972) on August 7 and *Tears of the Black Tiger* (2000) on August 14. Sit in a circle with up to four friends or family members at the limited-seating, outdoor venue. Reserve a spot at www.epsilonspires.org.

The Art Garden in Shelburne Falls is offering three Zoom conversations with Phyllis Labonowski. *Conversations to Explore Internalized White Supremacy in Predominantly White Communities* are described as “conversations for white people to develop stamina to engage with our whiteness and understand our role in both the creation of and the perpetuation of white supremacy.”

The one-hour conversations can be done individually, and start this Friday, August 7 at 6 p.m., followed by Monday August 10 and Tuesday August 25 at 10 a.m. You must reserve a space; subsidies are available for those who can't afford the \$25 fee. Email csartgarden@gmail.com for registration.

There are also free classes in the fall through the **Sojourner Truth School for Social Change Leadership** (www.truthschool.org).

Concerts at MASS MoCA in North Adams this weekend feature Yo La Tengo, who offer “a bogging range of stylistic turf, from crunching guitar to breezy cocktail

jazz, twanged-out country-rock to extended experiments in feedback and beyond.” Get out there for 8:30 p.m. on Friday or Saturday, August 7 and 8. This is a ticketed event, though the venue also has free concerts on Thursday evenings (for which you still need a reservation).

See Trish Crapo's review of the museum's current exhibits in her *ArtBeat* column in this week's *MoRe* section to further tempt you out that long and winding road.

Salmon Falls Gallery in Shelburne Falls announces a new exhibit, which can be seen virtually or in person: *Out of the Ashes: Cast or Blown Glass + Farm Implements*, by Robert DuGrenier. DuGrenier's work evolved from a sad event – the historic barn on his property burned to the ground in October 2015, and he used metal and cast-iron pieces left behind in the debris to create sculptures. Many of the pieces in *Out of the Ashes* appear to be encased in ice at first glance, but the sculpture is actually made with glass. On view until September 27, virtually 24/7, or at the gallery Thursdays through Sundays. See www.SalmonFallsGallery.com.

Distant Music is the final 2020 **Theater Thursday play** put on by Silverthorne Theater on Thursday, August 20. Written by Northampton playwright James McLindon and directed by Penney Hulten, this complex piece is set in January 2000. “On a snowy night in an Irish pub in Cambridge, Massachusetts, Connor, Maeve and Dev meet, each agonizing over an irrevocably life-changing decision. The three fight over religion and beer, whether truth exists at all, the differences between the Irish and Irish-Americans, the many failings (according to Dev) of the latter, and, finally, the capacity of stout to explain, metaphorically and metaphysically, most of life.”

The play has won numerous awards, and has been produced across the country. The free reading will be streamed live on the Silverthorne Theater Facebook page at 7 p.m. on August 20, and McLindon will join in for a live post-show talk.

You may get **ten free Norway Spruce or White Dogwood trees** by joining the Arbor Day Foundation before August 31. The six- to twelve-inch trees will be shipped to you at the right planting time for your area. Write to “Ten Free Norway Spruce” or “Ten Free Dogwood” at Arbor Day Foundation, 211 N 12th Street, Lincoln, NE 68508, and include a \$10 membership donation.

And finally, don't forget to check out our own **call for artists to design wrapping paper pages on Page B3**. We will be printing a special edition of this paper in late November that will consist of eight pull-out pages artfully designed for use as wrapping paper.

We're seeking proposals from artists, along with samples of artwork, by September 1. Send contact info, ideas, and sample .jpegs of finished work that represents your style, to features@montaguereporter.org. Put the word “Wrap” in the subject line. The project will help support our non-profit community newspaper, and each selected artist will receive a **\$200 stipend**, thanks to support from RiverCulture.

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GUEST ED from page A2

values and property taxes have remained stable. Given stagnant local wages, the town's high poverty level, and unprecedented levels of national unemployment, it's fair for tenants to ask where that profit is going: it's our labor and money funding it, after all.

It's also fair to question why market rent has gotten out of reach for most folks on a local income – especially the low-income workers who form the backbone of the service and arts economy so vaunted by local business associations and realtors.

Regardless of individual intent, the rental market is tailored to those earning larger incomes outside Franklin County. Wealth from NYC and Boston represents a lucrative opportunity for landlords and house flippers. Given that, becomes very important: on social media, I have seen landlords and contractors talk about flipping as “improving the neighborhood.”

The community has a right to ask *who* they're improving the neighborhood for, who ultimately profits, and who gets left out. Nevermind that the phrase is coded language for a host of -isms, none of them flattering.

This weekend I saw a local landlord openly ask on Facebook how they could legally restrict who could rent their property. It's also an open secret that rental units in and around Greenfield are deliberately being kept vacant for the return of well-heeled local boarding school parents.

While not redlining in name, this sentiment, and skyrocketing market rents, have the same effect. It tells us landlords' priorities, who

they want to move here – and who they want to leave. This is textbook gentrification.

What's most puzzling to me is the support these landlords and speculators, and gentrification in general, garner amongst the local liberal community that ostensibly rallies for social justice, including housing justice. Landlords have considerable political and economic power in the area; it's understandable from the perspective of playing politics. But it gets to the deeper question of why folks who seek to claim ownership over the term “progressive” would value landlords' and speculators' entitlements to profit over working-class people's human right to affordable housing.

I don't want to downplay the work involved in maintaining property. Tenants, though, do have a right to ask for receipts when, given the above numbers, landlords still claim they're barely breaking even.

We're the ones underwriting the payments of their principal, interest, and passive profit on their real-estate investments with our earned wages a level of privilege that many, if not most, of us under the age of 50 do not have access to without generational wealth.

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Joe Kopera lives in Montague, while he can still afford it.



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TRAINS from page A1

between the town of Montague and Pan Am resulted in the trains idling further on down the track. But the trains are back.

Under Massachusetts state law (310 CMR 7.11), train idling is limited to a half hour. "No person shall cause, suffer, allow, or permit the unnecessary foreseeable idling of a diesel locomotive for a continuous period of time longer than 30 minutes," the law reads.

The state law includes a loophole: the statute "shall not apply to diesel locomotives being serviced provided that idling is essential to the proper repair of said locomotive and that such idling does not cause or contribute to a condition of air pollution."

In 2010 the Massachusetts Bay Commuter Rail and the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority paid a \$225,000 fine for failing to adhere to the law, and promised to upgrade its equipment. But the law seems little enforced in Western Massachusetts.

Essential Idling?

Traditionally, diesel locomotives are left idling for a number of technical reasons. They are hard to restart in very cold temperatures, and because trains cool their engines using water without antifreeze, it can freeze if the engine is shut off. They also need to maintain air pressure for braking, and leaving the train on keeps the battery charged. In some cases, they are left on simply to provide heat or air conditioning to the crew.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), there are four types of technology that can reduce the reasons to keep a train idling. These include automatic engine shutdown, fuel-operated heaters, and auxiliary power units (APU), small engines "that can keep the locomotive's main engine warm, the batteries charged, and the brakes applied, and therefore allow

the main engine to be turned off without endangering the crew or the equipment." When in a yard, there is a further solution: a train can be plugged in to use electricity rather than its diesel engine.

In 2008 the EPA required "technology that reduces the amount of time a locomotive spends idling and applying tighter emission standards to new locomotives generally," and specifically, "idle reduction technology that will automatically shut locomotives down if they are left idling unnecessarily."

Most train engines remain in service for about 50 years, but they must be retrofitted with this technology when they are refurbished, which occurs about every 15 years. Theoretically, all locomotives should have these upgrades by about 2023.

In the meantime, the EPA's website suggests that residents dealing with the effects of idling trains first contact the local railroad facility, "and ask about its operating practices including the shutdown policy. If they are unable to help you, you might want to contact the corporate headquarters."

Offering Feedback

The Reporter contacted Pan Am Railways to ask about its policy. According to executive vice president Cynthia Scarano, residents can call dispatchers at (800) 555-9212, but they should only do that after three hours, since sometimes it takes time to re-crew a train.

Residents might also try contacting the town — ideally the board of health, which serves as the agent of the EPA. According to public health director Daniel Wasiuk, the board is only available during the normal hours of operation of town hall, Mondays through Thursdays, from 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

State law implies that other town departments should also be able to help: "Any police department, fire department, or board of

health official, acting within his or her jurisdictional area is hereby authorized by the Department to enforce, as provided for in M.G.L. c. III, § 142B, any regulation in which specific reference to 310 CMR 7.52 is cited."

"Us having much effect isn't usually the case," Montague Center fire chief David Hansen said. "We're always happy to pass along concerns to the train company."

A review of past police log records kept by the Reporter shows that residents have called the Montague police department to complain about idling trains at least 65 times since 2013.

"I've been here a long time, and I do not recall anyone here citing or ticketing an engineer or train company," police chief Chris Williams said. Williams, who became chief in 2018, was on the force in 2010, when residents of Lake Pleasant and Millers Falls petitioned the town to take action.

Former health director Gina McNeely contacted Pan Am at that time, attempting to enforce the state law because the trains were "causing an unhealthy air situation" in the villages. In response, attorneys for Pan Am told McNeely that the company does not consider itself under the jurisdiction of the state law.

"[I]t was essential to railroad operations to perform this necessary project in order to fulfill its interstate commerce obligations to its customers," Pan Am corporate counsel Robert Burns wrote in October 2010.

"Although we appreciate the regulatory provisions adopted by the Commonwealth attempting to regulate railroad activity, it is well settled law that the operations of railroads fall under the exclusive jurisdiction of the Interstate Commerce Commission Termination Act of 1995 (ICCTA) and the Federal Railway Safety Act (FRSA), both of which preempt all local and/or state laws/regulations seeking to govern railroad operations."

Federal Jurisdiction

"Historically, railroads have claimed preemption under federal law governing interstate commerce," MassDEP spokesperson Kathleen Fournier explained.

Fournier recommended that residents and local officials register their complaints with the Surface Transportation Board (STB), an independent federal agency. A form can be accessed by searching online for "Rail Customer and Public Assistance Request."


"'Railroad Idling Engines' can be specified as an issue of complaint from the dropdown menu," Fournier added. "Although STB does not have statutory authority to order railroads to take any specific action in these types of situations, STB does have an informal program within which they work on a resolution with the railroad."

Hansen, the Montague Center fire chief, said that in 2010 the company agreed to idle its trains further from Lake Pleasant after former US representative John Olver joined the conversation.

"We were mostly concerned with aquifers, and we asked them to park nearer to the river," Hansen recalled. "Other than call the rail company, there's nothing to do short term. Long term, [residents] should talk to their representative."

The local lines, which are also used by Amtrak, are being revitalized as part of the 2009 MassDOT Knowledge Corridor using \$83 million dollars from the federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of the same year, which funded "High Speed and Intercity Passenger Rail," as well as \$48 million in state bonds.

Pan Am, which employs about 750 people, runs trains through Montague on an exclusive freight license from MassDOT.

According to a June 30 article in the trade journal *Railway Age*, Pan Am is currently up for sale. 

NOTES FROM THE ERVING SELECTBOARD

Finishing Touches; Stipends; Town Logo

By KATIE NOLAN

Meeting for 3½ hours online via GoToMeeting on July 27, the Erving selectboard reviewed final construction details and changes for the new library building, considered how much the town's elected officials are paid, and discussed a third round of draft designs for a new town logo.

Nick Jablonski of P3, Inc., the owner's project manager for the library construction project, said that outstanding work at the new library building included the replacement of a section of concrete sidewalk that did not cure properly, the installation of weather stripping at the entrance, and the installation of temperature controls. After the latest change orders are completed, approximately \$5,000 will be left in the \$105,723 contingency fund.

Jablonski said that the lawn will be seeded in the fall. Building committee co-chair Jacquelyn Boyden said that Teresa Foster of Dry Brook Garden had prepared a landscape plan with native pollinator plants, and that planting will be done this fall by volunteers.

Official Compensation

The board decided that compensation for the tax collector, town clerk, and treasurer will be aligned with the town's recently adopted employee grade and step system.

For other boards and committees, finance committee member Debra Smith recommended setting the same dollar amount "even across all offices."

Reviewing compensation for committee members, selectboard member William Bembury said

there was "no rhyme or reason to any of it." He recommended Erving "keep it consistent with all boards and committees, and no COLAs," or cost of living adjustments. Later, he added, "This is not a paying position — this is not a job."

Fin com chair Benjamin Fellows said the positions and compensation should be re-evaluated every few years. Selectboard chair Jacob Smith said the board should develop a stipend policy.

Town administrator Bryan Smith agreed to draft a new compensation policy and present it at the next joint meeting of the selectboard and fin com on August 24.

He also pointed out that there were no job descriptions for several stipended positions — IT coordinator, IT support technician, emergency management director, assistant emergency management director, and backup water operator — and suggested that the town could perform an internal analysis of the positions and stipends. The board asked him to get more information for the next selectboard meeting.

Bryan Smith also reported that some employees have requested reimbursement for job-related educational expenses. The board decided to discuss the matter further at their August 24 meeting.

Other Business

The selectboard reviewed four draft designs for a town logo. The design that the board appreciated most featured the French King Bridge, the Millers River, rounded hills, and a sunrise.

Board members suggested ways to improve the design, and plan to review another round of

drafts at their August 10 meeting.

Bryan Smith said that the River, Warner, and Strachan Streets sidewalk project was scheduled to start on Monday, August 3.

The board reviewed draft language for the special state legislation that will change the name of Erving's "board of selectmen" to "select board." Bryan Smith will be sending the draft language to senator Jo Comerford and representative Susannah Whippis for introduction to the legislature.

The board appointed Elizabeth Bazler to the open space committee, and Theresa Dodge to the board of registrars.

The police department is buying a 2021 hybrid Ford Police Interceptor for \$37,740.75. The board declared the department's 2014 Dodge Charger as surplus.

Extra Meeting

At an extra meeting on Friday, July 31, the selectboard approved a \$5,000 Microenterprise Relief Loan to Artscape Landscape and Design to aid with COVID-19 losses. Assistant town planner Mariah Kurtz said that several other applications had been received.

The board reviewed a draft request for proposals from IT firms to switch the town's computer system from Office 365 to 365 Government and migrate its file server to a web-based server. The board decided to continue the discussion at a future meeting.

The board closed several FY'20 funds that were no longer needed, and carried others over to FY'21.

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GAZETTE from page A1

said to rallygoers. "It's a sad day, I think, for all of us."

Though the press is now closed, the NewsGuild succeeded in negotiating better severance packages for those laid off. Nine full-time and 20 part-time employees, none of whom had received hazard pay during the pandemic, lost their jobs in the outsourcing move. The company's initial offer limited severance to \$500 for each part-time worker, regardless of hours worked or years of employment.

"When we first started this, the company had offered a really shit severance offer for everybody impacted," Christensen said. "People who were considered essential just months ago, and came into the building risking infection to bring you all the news. Because of the pressure we were able to put on the company, we were able to get a far more just severance package for everybody."

The tentative terms of the new deal are one week's pay for each year of service, with a cap of 15 weeks, the *Gazette* reported, plus health and dental insurance through the remainder of 2020.

"It's going to be very hard for people to find jobs in other places," said Laila Hussein, a distribution employee whose job was lost to the layoffs. "If it was not for the union, really, I know they would have just said 'bye, you are out the door' and that's it."

NewsGuild members criticized

management for the timing of the layoffs, which came just as enhanced unemployment benefits through the CARES Act expired. They circulated a public petition calling for the reversal of the decision, and urged community members to write to the newspaper with their support for keeping a local press in operation.

"This fight is not over in terms of what the future of the *Gazette* is going to look like," said reporter and union council chair Bera Dunau. "This is also about keeping the focus here locally, and keeping local control."

Gannett, the nation's largest newspaper publisher by circulation, owns the *USA Today* network and publishes newspapers in 260 communities nationwide, including 10 daily and 75 weekly papers in Massachusetts. NNE's publications in western Massachusetts, including the *Daily Hampshire Gazette*, *Greenfield Recorder*, and *Athol Daily News*, will now be printed from Gannett's offset printing press in Auburn. (The *Montague Reporter*, printed since 2012 at the *Gazette*, is now printed by the *Springfield Republican*.)

"This is the second time we have outsourced jobs to Gannett," Dunau said. "I do dearly hope this is the last, but we need to make sure this is the last time."

In June 2018, four positions at the *Gazette*'s advertising design and graphics department were eliminat-



Former distribution employee Laila Hussein (at right, in floral print) told rally attendees that her job's hours had allowed her to take care of her son, and that after the NewsGuild organized she had seen positive changes in the workplace. "I worked here for three years, and I had never known about the Christmas party," she said. "We were not included until the union came."

ed and outsourced to the mass media company. NNE laid off another 13 employees last March citing a decrease in advertising revenue due to the pandemic. However, the latest decision to shut down the press was in the works before the pandemic and was an "economically motivated decision," according to the publisher.

"Content, particularly local news content, is the Company's core mission and the *Gazette* wants

to focus on this by redirecting capital, and reducing expenses and the expenditure of time and effort that does not further that core mission," Moses wrote to staff. "This is, without question, the business model that best positions us for the future, allowing us to continue the award winning coverage our readers require."

The *Gazette* reported on July 26 that the outsourcing would come

with "a significant cost savings." However, Moses told the *Montague Reporter* in December 2019 that the press was profitable.

"It is a healthy revenue stream for us, and it certainly helps us support other areas of the company as well," he said at that time.

An earlier version of this article appeared on *The Shoestring* (www.theshoestring.org).



NOTES FROM THE WENDELL SELECTBOARD

Alleged Junk; Mask Shirkers; Leaky Spillway; Land Grab

By JOSH HEINEMANN

The Zoom connection for the July 22 Wendell selectboard meeting was broken up several times as a thunderstorm passed through town, interrupting one person, then another, then blacking out altogether several times. The board took 2½ hours to deal with everything on their long agenda, and many issues were moved forward just a single step.

Among those was the situation at 131 Locke Village Road. Resident Andrew Hamilton agreed to remove two unregistered vehicles off his property within 60 days, and said that other vehicles share a farm plate. Selectboard chair Dan Keller told him farm plates are not meant to be shared by vehicles.

"I have been there several times," building inspector Phil Delorey said, "and I have seen no sign of farming at all."

Hamilton agreed to give a list of the vehicles registered with the farm plates "within a day or two." Town bylaws allow a fine of \$25 a day for each unregistered vehicle, but Hamilton's fine has been rescinded.

As Hamilton was signing out of the meeting, Keller said, "Conversation is always good."

At the recommendation of the board of health, the selectboard hired Charlie Konicki to talk with Hamilton about other ongoing issues, including campers that appear to be inhabited without an apparent source of water or method of waste disposal, and a large collection of things some people might call junk, covering most of the property and only partially hidden from the road by hanging tarps.

The idea was for Konicki to make two visits a month at first, then back off, and the cost may be comparable to legal fees the town is incurring in the situation.

Public Health

Wendell's WRATS attendants have been wearing masks since the COVID shutdown, and town policy calls for people to wear masks when they drop things off. Some people have resisted that simple courtesy towards the attendants and other citizens.

Selectboard member Budine said the CDC

has laminated signs about mask use, and highway commission chair Phil Delorey said he would get them posted at the WRATS.

Board of health chair Barbara Craddock said that technically, people at the WRATS are outside and generally more than six feet apart, but a mask is a small discomfort which may help contain the spread of the virus. She said she would encourage mask use on the town listserv.

The board of health recommended hiring town citizen and nurse Paul Wanta as Wendell's contact with FRCOG and the Massachusetts Virtual Epidemiological Network (MAVEN) for tracking COVID incidence in Wendell and surrounding towns. The board of health budget has money to pay him.

The problem of parking and crowding at Fiske Pond was discussed. Keller relayed that police chief Ed Chase does not want to ticket cars parked along the road unless there is a safety issue. Chase supported the idea of putting leaflets on the cars' windshields explaining the parking restrictions.

Craddock, selectboard member Laurie DiDonato, and conservation commission member Ruth Mazurka agreed to work together on that leaflet.

Leaking Dam

Ray DiDonato reported that the spillway of the 70-year-old dam that contains McAvoy's Pond is giving way. Under direction of consultant Dave Lenart, Geoff Richardson installed a temporary steel plate that reduced, but did not stop completely, the flow through the spillway.

To avoid a potential catastrophic release of sediment from the pond downstream as far as Lake Wyola, a permanent fix is needed. DiDonato contacted Whipps, Inc. of Athol for an estimate for a permanent spillway. Building a new spillway takes a three-week lead time and will be expensive.

As part owner of the dam, the town is partly responsible for that cost. Keller said the town does not have that much money readily available, but a special town meeting could authorize it.

DiDonato said the situation needs atten-

tion sooner.

Town coordinator Nancy Aldrich said the reserve fund has \$15,000, and the money could be replaced at the still-unscheduled special town meeting. The "maintenance of town properties" account could also contribute.

Meetinghouse Transfer

In order connect the Wendell Meetinghouse with town water and septic, the town must reissue a request for proposals (RFP) that the Friends of the Meetinghouse can respond to. Friends Jerry Barilla, Court Dorsey, and Chris Queen said they would respond promptly.

A town meeting vote may not authorize a sale of property of that value. The original plans for the town water and septic system included possible connections to the meetinghouse and private homes, but that idea was dropped due to expense and legal complications. Since the Friends plan to have a restored Meetinghouse available for public use, it might be simpler to connect.

Engineer Bob Leet, who has designed septic systems, cautioned that Meetinghouse use would add little or no flow, and then on occasion a large flow. He suggested adding a holding tank to moderate the flow into the town septic system.

Policing and Passwords

Barilla, a member of the police chief succession committee, was reviewing a potential contract between Wendell and Leverett police chief Scott Minckler, to put Wendell's police department under Minckler's supervision.

Complaints about speeders continue. The selectboard has the authority to post a speed limit as low as 25 mph, is ready to do so at the corner of Jennison and New Salem roads.

Citizen Alison Wight said that people are still parking near her house to use the town hall wifi, watching movies that she does not particularly want to listen to late at night. She said one person was abusive when she asked that he turn down his sound. Wight has asked repeatedly that the town hall wifi be shut off late at night.

Laurie DiDonato suggested making it

password protected, and giving the password to the police chief, as the police station and town hall share an internet connection. Since the town now offers wifi service at the office building, keeping public access at the town hall is redundant.

Other Business

Ray DiDonato said that a DCR survey of the state forest near Montague Road included 12 landlocked acres that Wendell considered part of the town forest. Pins are out already. Wendell could pay for its own survey, but Keller said the cost could be more than the land's value.

Fire chief Joe Cuneo asked the board to approve a \$25 reinspection fee for homeowners selling their property when first inspection of the furnace fails. The selectboard approved that second fee. Cuneo added that a pre-inspection can be had for free, and would show any shortcomings the seller needs to correct.

Erving proposed cooperation on a bicycle trail along Blue Heron Road near Wendell Depot. The proposal was first made 15 years ago, but a property owner would not let it cross his land; the same person still owns that property. Board members liked the idea, but do not want to commit town money now.

The board accepted a bid from Orange Oil of \$1.59 a gallon for heating oil and \$75 an hour for service calls. Phil Delorey said that the highway department had an issue with poor service from Orange Oil last year, and board members agreed that Aldrich should give them a call about that. Aldrich said that the owner died, and in the aftermath, service might have suffered.

Melissa Grader resigned from the conservation commission. The board promoted associate member Mary Thomas to a voting member.

Assessor Luke Doody resigned, and no one has stepped forward to take his place.

Board members discussed the potential Citizen of the Year. The honor is normally announced at Old Home Day, which will not happen this year. Aldrich added that the company that normally makes the plaque is no longer operating.

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RURAL from page A1

The legislative process on Beacon Hill has been complicated and slowed by the COVID-19 pandemic, and the house and senate were unable to complete their work by a required July 31 deadline. The economic bond bill, which funds numerous regional and local projects said to be justified by the COVID outbreak, and the FY'21 state budget itself have not yet been passed by the legislature.

Last week both houses voted to extend the mandated July 31 deadline for ending this session, potentially until the end of the calendar year. This may mean legislative activity will extend into the fall's election season.

The economic bond bill, whose price tag could be well over \$400 million, contains dedicated funding for a wide range of projects. These include funds for technology upgrades in response to the pandemic, enhancements to the New England Aquarium in Boston, a study of cell towers in Berkshire County, and a feasibility study for a meat

processing plant in that same county.

In Franklin County, \$500,000 would be earmarked for a SIMS lab at Greenfield Community College, and \$50,000 for several projects associated with local senior centers. There is also funding for a "healthy soils" program, and for tourism, which could assist various agencies in the region, according to Blais.

One of the more controversial parts of the bill – and one that has received much press coverage – would liberalize the criteria for on-line sports betting licenses.

The proposal for an Office of Rural Policy contained in the bond bill is the product of a 108-page plan issued by a special commission on rural policy in October of 2019. The plan includes sections on economic development, infrastructure – including bridges and broadband – education, land use, and governance. It calls for a "dedicated funding stream for water and sewer infrastructure," and policies to address the impact of climate change

on rural communities.


"Rural communities" are defined by the report – and in the proposal for a rural policy office – as those with a population density of under 500 people per square mile. The report claims that the 170 localities that meet this criteria comprise 59% of the state's land area, but only 13% of its population. It would include every Franklin County town except the city of Greenfield.

The proposed office would be located in the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development, and thus in theory under the control of the governor. But according to the language of the enabling amendment to the bond bill, the office would "not be under the control of the executive office and shall be an independent public entity not subject to the supervision and control of any other executive office, department, commission, board, bureau, agency, or political subdivision of the commonwealth."

Blais said she was unsure how common

this organizational arrangement is in state government.

The amendment defines the proposed office as "a research and policy clearinghouse for issues critical to the welfare and vitality of rural communities, including but not limited to, economic development, education, environment, health, housing, infrastructure, technology and transportation." It also states that the office "shall work in coordination with and under the direction of the rural policy advisory commission."

Natalie Blais told the *Reporter* that despite the failure of the senate to include the Office of Rural Policy in its version of the bond bill, the proposal is "not at all dead," in part because it has the "strong support" of senators Joanne Comerford and Adam Hinds, who represent towns in Western Massachusetts that include Franklin County. The proposal is also supported by representatives Paul Mark and Susannah Whipps, who represent Franklin County towns as well. 

MONTAGUE from page A1

"I hesitate to ask this question, but I'm going to," said selectboard member Mike Nelson. "Is there a method that would suggest that it would be a better idea to leave the statue in its former place?"

"That will be part of the discussion, I guess," responded McHugh, noting that the conduit problem also could impact new "benching" in the park. Town administrator Steve Ellis said that moving the statue at this point could create handicapped access problems which would require significant changes in the proposed design.

This *Reporter* toured the Spinner Park construction site on Monday, a week after the selectboard discussion. McHugh said that several on-site evaluations of the conduit location had been performed by officials from the power company Eversource and an engineer. McHugh said the offending conduit may have to be moved further to the rear of the new park, and the statue relocated closer to the front, but no final solution – or new design for that solution – has yet been proposed.

COVID Restrictions

Meeting jointly with the board of health, the selectboard heard an update on changes in local and state policy in response to the coronavirus pandemic. Health director Daniel Wasiuk reviewed the latest order by Governor Baker on travelers coming to Massachusetts from out of state. The order strengthens the existing policy of requiring visitors from most states to quarantine for two weeks. It does not apply to visitors from "low-risk" New England states, or to New York, New Jersey, or Hawaii.

Under the new order, all visitors must fill out a "Massachusetts travel form" as they enter the state, and could be subject to a fine of \$500 per day if they violate the order, which went into effect on August 1.

Wasiuk told the *Reporter* that the local health department was not being informed of visitors who reported they would be staying in Montague. He said that enforcement of the new order, "at this point, is up to the state, although that could change."

There are a number of exemptions to the requirements, including for people who come from the "low-risk" states, for those who have tested negative for COVID-19 within 72 hours prior to arrival, and for a variety of other categories including people who commute regularly or are involved with "critical infrastructure." A more detailed explanation of the policies can be found on the state website.



Though the project to renovate a downtown park has been thrown into disarray by an errant power conduit (see accompanying article), art presses forward. Reader and contributing photographer Ed Gregory writes: "My visit on Sunday, August 2, to the Spinner Park renovation project in Turners Falls, is a stop well worth anyone's time. The southern exposed fence reveals the creation of a group of eloquently creative women from the village." The *Pedestal Take Over Project* features 40 photographs of local women holding tools of their trade, or other personal symbols, while posing on the park's currently empty pedestal. The original Spinner statue, installed in 1985 in honor of the women who worked in the village's mills, has been removed while the park is being reconstructed. The project was made by Nina's Nook owner (and Montague Reporter features editor) Nina Rossi, with support from RiverCulture, and is intended to remain on the construction fencing along Fourth Street until the park renovation is completed in October – though that date is now in question!

Ellis said he had sent a memo to department heads stating that staff would need to comply with the order. "This, clearly, is a ramping up of previous orders that were not as clearly delineated," he said.

The selectboard voted to implement the state order in Montague.

Mike Nelson asked parks and recreation director Jon Dobosz to report on the implementation of the policy to sanitize playground structure in town parks. "It seems to be going well," Dobosz said. "It's being done every day. Sometimes we have people who have questions for our sanitizer person."

During his time on the agenda, Dobosz explained his proposal for a "carry in, carry out" trash policy. He said the policy would require visitors to take away all trash they generate at the park.

Initially the policy was not going to be applied to Unity Park in Turners Falls, he said, but there had recently been an increase in "illegal dumping" in the park's trash receptacles. The proposed policy involves removing most trash barrels to reduce incentives for dumping. Dobosz said the policy may have to be "tweaked," mentioning concerns expressed by users of the skate park.

Money Rules

Ellis and finance committee chair

Jen Audley updated the board on the project to review the town's financial policies. The project, funded by a state "community compact" grant, is a collaboration between the selectboard and fin com, assisted by consultants from the University of Massachusetts Collins Center.

Ellis said the current policies, last adopted in 2014, read like "a set of thoughtful operational guidelines," but are not "robust individual policies."

Audley presented an initial list of proposed policies developed by a committee that included her, Ellis, and Nelson. The list ranged from the general (financial forecasting, debt management and audit) to the specific (user fees, retained earnings in the sewer budget, the affordable regional school assessment).

Neither the selectboard nor the finance committee took a vote on the policy list.

Sludge Builds Up

Chelsea Little, superintendent of the water pollution control facility, came before the board to request that it approve a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Franklin County Solid Waste Management District for sludge disposal. The contract, for liquid sludge, is separate for the contract for the disposal of "solids," which the town

negotiates directly with another hauling company.

In recent years the Montague facility has not needed to pay for liquid sludge removal because its press has been able to reduce nearly all sludge to a solid state. Little presented a technical discussion as to why the facility needed to reduce the liquid composition of its product in the coming weeks.

"That's why we have you there," said selectboard chair Rich Kuklewicz. "We're not the experts, for sure." The board approved the MOU, with one abstention.

Little announced that she had been awarded a scholarship to attend trainings in public purchasing, also known as "procurement." She said that chief operator Kevin Boisnault, who officially retires at the end of July, will continue working on a part-time basis to help with the plant's "industrial pre-treatment process." The board endorsed a motion to hire him for up to 12 weeks, not to exceed 20 hours per week.

The board also appointed retiring administrative assistant Tina Tyler to assist in staff training during the next 8 weeks at 12 hours per week.

Other Business


The board appointed former building inspector David Jensen to serve as alternate building inspector,

and also as an alternate member of the zoning board of appeals.

A request to increase a part-time position at the treasurer's office from 25 to 35 hours was approved, as was a request to hire a part-time gardener to assist in maintaining the planters on Avenue A.

An easement on a piece of property between the public safety complex and the new public works facility on Turnpike Road was granted by the board to the Turners Falls Fire Department. "This one will make the folks on the zoning board of appeals happy," said Ellis, noting that the easement perhaps should have been granted when the public safety complex was built more than a decade ago.

Ellis reported on the work of the committee choosing the members of the two police review committees. Ellis said that 22 applications had been received for 14 seats, and that the screening committee had been unable to evaluate "so many thoughtful applicants" at one meeting. He said the screening committee would probably present its recommendations at the next selectboard meeting, which will be held Monday, August 10.

At the end of the meeting, the board went into an executive session to discuss the purchase of real property. 

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LEVERETT from page A1

town manager Paul Bockelman for their work in moving the project forward. Mooring will be the project engineer, which combines the new water line with a paving project in Amherst.

Joint Chief Scheme

Selectboard chair Julie Shively provided an update on a proposed joint policing contract with Wendell, which would allow Leverett police chief Scott Minckler to serve both towns. She said that Wendell will be putting information on the matter in their next newsletter, and is planning on scheduling a public forum.

Shively said she had learned that the towns of Blandford and Chester had entered into an agreement similar to the one Leverett and Wendell are considering. She spoke with the chief of police in Blandford, who said that having each town's public forum on the matter open to residents of both towns was helpful in sorting through the issues involved.

Non-Binding Justice

The board edited a message soliciting membership in the newly-formed social justice committee, scheduled to go out over the town's CodeRED system this Thursday. Board members wanted to clarify that the committee will not be making town policy, but reporting to the selectboard with information and recommendations, and that all are welcome to join the committee.

Board member Peter d'Errico said that he believed members of the committee understood its role, but he

wanted to make sure that observers who are not joining the committee understood it is not there to make policy, but to provide input on making policy.

"Policy is informed by all inputs," said d'Errico, emphasizing that the committee's recommendations will be an additional resource in decision-making, not a final word.

Other Business

Two dog hearings scheduled for the meeting were both postponed until the next meeting on August 18, due to only one of the parties involved being remotely present for the meeting. Shively and d'Errico commented generally that dog complaints are serious matters, and violations can potentially result in hefty fines or jail time.

The board approved a number of appointments to town positions. Cat Ford was appointed to the board of assessors, Barbara Tiner was appointed as warden for elections, Dana Tarr was appointed as clerk of elections, and the slate of full- and part-time police officers were reappointed.

The board approved a new, one-year, uniform service contract for the highway department, and the replacement of a defective piece of HVAC equipment at the fire station.

Board members pointed out that a petition on the agenda involving the use of the Slarrow Mill was in the purview of the ZBA and planning board, and took no action on the matter.

The board signed the warrant for the September 1 primary election.

**NOTES FROM THE GILL SELECTBOARD**

Voting Moves to Town Hall

By JERRI HIGGINS

Monday evening's Gill selectboard conference call meeting had a relatively light agenda, but included acceptance of the minutes from an urgent special meeting last Thursday, called solely in order to adjust the town's "one-twelfth" budget for August. Rounding out the call were a new, replacement, highway department hire, a changed voting venue, the Slate library reopening, and the declaration of surplus fire department equipment.

Gill has not yet held its annual town meeting, and no date has been set to hold one. Under state law, both the town and Gill-Montague school district are allowed to enact month-by-month budgets until they can pass them for the 2021 fiscal year.

The pressing July 30 selectboard meeting granted an increase to Gill's \$119,530 August budget that town administrator Ray Purington had recently filed with the state Department of Revenue.

"I quickly received a phone call informing me we didn't request enough," wrote Purington in an email update about the single-issue meeting.

Purington explained that any such monthly budget must, by law, equal at least one-twelfth the previous year's total - which should have been \$305,367.

"To get us up to the magic number," wrote Purington, "I added \$4,558 to pay for the Franklin County Tech's capital assessment, and another \$181,279 for the Gill Montague Regional School District's second-quarter assessment." The selectboard approved the increased budget.

Highway Do-Over

A vacancy filled several weeks ago had to be refilled. Purington told the board that the spouse of the highway department's recent hire is a traveling nurse, who was offered a position in Rhode Island, where they are relocating.

After re-advertising and interviewing for the Grade 5, Step A, Mechanic/Operator position, the

board approved hiring Chris Radzuik at \$20.81 per hour - contingent "on all the usual things," said selectboard chair Randy Crochier, to appreciative chuckling on the conference call. More selectboard levity came after Purington said that Radzuik would get remote training on operating the roadside arm mower, which was briefly imagined as a video game joystick operation, in which the sound effects for hitting curbs during the training might be amusing.

Radzuik, who lives in Erving, worked on the Bernardston highway department for seven years, and has other relevant work experience that makes him "really well qualified for our position," Purington said, "and I think he'll be a really good fit in the department."

Votes For Voting Venue

Town clerk Doreen Stevens' request to use the town hall in place of the fire station garage for the September primary and November presidential election was unanimously approved.

Working to meet an August 12 deadline to file paperwork with the state board of elections, Stevens said the change is necessary in order to accommodate using COVID-19 social distancing guidelines between voters and election workers, as well as minimizing contact entering or exiting the building.

Stevens said she has already received requests for "about 232 mail-in ballots" for the primary, which will help lighten in-person voting, but said the fire station garage cannot safely accommodate "more than three voters, plus my election workers, in that room at a time."

Having considered other locations, Stevens believes the town hall is the best solution. "The school could work," she said, "but I don't consider it safe to have elections going on, and kids in school, at the same time. I think we can make this work."

"In a way, the September primary will be like a soft opening," said Purington. "We get to at least work out any kinks before the November election, which will certainly have

a higher turnout than the primary."

"If anything presents itself that is difficult to deal with," added Crochier, "we will have time to address that. I anticipate it going fairly smoothly."

The Massachusetts board of elections will consider the location change permanent, but the selectboard could approve a return to voting at the fire station after the November election.

Library Opening

A request from Slate Memorial library to open this Saturday, August 8, was approved.

"I've worked with [library director] Jocelyn [Castro-Santos] on their re-opening," Crochier said, "and they've got it down. They are the third or fourth library I have worked with on their reopening plans, so I have no concerns."

Crochier said Castro-Santos and her staff decided to curtail some library hours, and will not be open on Wednesdays.

Surplus Gear

A late addition to Monday's agenda was selectboard approval of a fire department declaration of surplus equipment. Deputy chief William Kimball's letter to the selectboard explaining the outdated gear read like an entertaining children's counting book:

"15 pairs of rubber boots manufactured in 2002; 1 pair of rubber boots manufactured in 2003; 2 pairs of rubber boots manufactured in 2004; 14 Globe Turnout Gear Coats manufactured in 2003; 9 pairs of structural firefighting gloves manufactured in 2002..."

The gear list included 98 items that are outdated, deteriorated, or beyond their ten-year regulation use limit.

In a discussion about what happens to surplus gear, or whether the selectboard needs to find funds for replacing any of it, Purington said that none of the gear is currently in use, and that he did not get any gear purchase requests. Junior firefighters, he said, do use some of the outdated gear for training purposes only, and the rest will be disposed of.

**PUBLIC MEETING NOTICE
MONTAGUE CONSERVATION COMMISSION**

In accordance with the Mass. Wetlands Protection Act, M.G.L. Ch. 131, Sec. 40, the Montague Conservation Commission will review the following Request for Determination of Applicability **remotely at 6:30 p.m.** on Thursday August 13, 2020 due to the Covid-19 emergency: RDA #2020-04 filed by Ben Dryer to determine if the demolition of abandoned house is subject to the Wetlands Protection Act. The property location is 46 Dry Hill Road and is identified as Assessor's Map 45 Lot 28. An agenda and details about attending this meeting remotely are available at www.montague-ma.gov.

Mark Fairbrother, Chair

LOOKING BACK: 10 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

Here's the way it was August 5, 2010: News from the Montague Reporter's archive.

**Leverett Seeks to
Bill for Ravine Rescue**

The town of Leverett will seek to charge people for their rescues, following a twelve-hour effort to free a woman trapped in a cave in the Rattlesnake Gutter Conservation Area on July 19.

Leverett volunteer firefighter Stewart Olson said 45 fire and rescue personnel from Leverett, Amherst, and surrounding towns, including a technical rescue team from Hopkinton, worked to eventually free a 25-year-old woman who was visiting family from her home in the Northwest when she went with them to explore a cave in the deep glacial ravine in the conservation area.

While spelunking, Hirsch slipped down a narrow passage to a lower chamber Olson said firefighters had not even known existed. But she was unable to free herself, due to a number of "pinch points" in the vertical passage, Olsen said, so family members called for help.

Rescue teams were able to lower food, a blanket, special stone chisels, ear, eye and mouthprotection to Hirsch, who worked to free herself by chipping away at the granite in the narrow points to allow her to squeeze through. Hirsch remained in good spirits and emerged from the cave shortly after 1 a.m. on July 20.

Olson said the Leverett fire department spent \$277 at the Village Market food coop to feed the rescuers, along with \$208 for rope, and \$95 to \$126 apiece for the chisels, purchased at a late hour from Michael Mazur's Earthworks and from Patrice Luzi, a stonemason on Dudleyville Road, in addition to personnel costs.

On July 27, the Leverett selectboard said they would consult with town attorney Donna MacNicol to see what the relevant case law in Massachusetts might be, and whether the town is within its rights to bill Hirsch, and any other people in need of future rescuing.

**Unclear Which Police
Will Cover Gaps In Gill**

The Gill selectboard is concerned about whether state police will be available to cover calls that come in when there is no Gill police officer on duty.

The mutual aid agreements between the Gill, Northfield, Erving, and Bernardston allow for an officer in one town to call for backup from a neighboring town, but do not call for officers to cover calls from a neighboring town when no officer is on duty there.

On July 14, Gill police chief David Hastings announced that "due to budgetary constraints and staffing issues, the Gill police department will be relying on emergency coverage from the Massachusetts state police to cover the town of Gill, when no Gill officer is available."

But the state's director of dispatch services responded on July 23 that "the current contingency plan involving the towns of Gill, Erving, Bernardston, and Northfield covering one another when available will remain in place until further notice.... State police resources are also available as always to augment resources when necessary."

"I don't think anyone can presume another town will cover Gill when we don't have someone on," said selectboard member Ann Banash, citing liability as one concern, and the question of which town would pay for such service.

The selectboard called for a meeting with the four towns concerned to be set up "sooner rather than later" to clarify the issue.

**Biodiesel Plant
Opens in Greenfield**

A brass band and a biodiesel-fueled backhoe led the procession to the groundbreaking for the Northeast Biodiesel plant at the Greenfield industrial park on Tuesday, August 3.

"We are eager to start producing biodiesel. In a matter of weeks, you'll see a building come up at this site. By late January, biodiesel will be ready for delivery," said Christian Lagier, Northeast Biodiesel board member.

Within a year, Northeast Biodiesel plans to produce 1.75 million gallons of biodiesel from recycled vegetable oil, shipped to the plant from restaurant kitchens as far away as Montreal, Boston, and New York. Grease rendered from animal fat will also be part of the production mix.

Six months after production begins, the company will purchase a second processor and double output to 3.5 million gallons a year. There will be room to double plant capacity again, if market conditions allow, to 7 million gallons a year.



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GMRSD from page A1

school committee endorsement.

The Gill-Montague regional school committee will approve a plan at its August 11 meeting, and the district hopes to quickly survey families – to find how many would send their children to school “in person” after reading the details – before setting it in stone the next week.

Teachers will return on August 25, but the first day for students, wherever it will take place, has been pushed back from August 27 to Monday, September 14. DESE, under pressure from the Massachusetts Teachers Association (MTA), has reduced the mandatory school year from 180 to 170 days in order to give teachers a head start on planning.

The school committee approved the delayed start at its June 28 meeting, after superintendent Brian Beck said that teachers and administrators alike supported the idea. The new schedule will also add one day on the far end of the year, making the last day of school June 11, 2021.

Partial Hybrids

Area school districts are approaching the dilemma in different ways. DESE has stated that its “goal is the safe return of as many students as possible to in-person school settings,” mandating masks and distances of at least three feet between students and six feet between students and teachers. But even if a district opts to try a fully in-person learning model, a local outbreak of coronavirus may trigger a switch to remote learning.

Last Thursday the Greenfield school committee voted to give priority to what it called a “remote-plus” plan, with most learning taking place at home, but supplemented by in-person “pods” for targeted instruction.

On Tuesday, the Pioneer Valley regional committee said it favored a “phased” plan, in which students would begin classes remotely from September 16 to October 7, at which point the district would “reassess”

the state of the pandemic and decide whether to continue remotely or begin to “roll out” a hybrid model with in-person classes starting before Halloween.

At Gill-Montague, a special “pandemic response advisory committee” has spent the summer hashing out a draft with input from parents and staff, including the Gill-Montague Education Association, the district’s local union. Superintendent Beck sent an email to families on Monday explaining the direction the district is leaning.

“[W]e do not believe we can safely meet physical distancing requirements with all students and staff in the buildings at the same time,” Beck wrote. Instead, the administration and union are negotiating over a “partial return to in-person learning,” featuring “in-person instruction in smaller, socially distanced groups on a rotating basis, combined with a robust remote learning program on the days students are not scheduled to be physically in school.”

The hybrid plan would prioritize bringing groups of students with special educational needs into the buildings more frequently.

“We recognize that the circumstances of every family and staff member are different,” Beck added, “and that no plan ultimately will satisfy everyone in our community.”

Love of Learning

The Gill-Montague committee’s July 28 meeting, though still held via video conferencing, was the first since March to include a public comment session. Members held back laughter when an unmuted microphone broadcast a young child’s disclosure of a need to “go poopy,” but listened seriously as six parents and one teacher shared their concerns over the prospect of reopening school buildings.

“I think it’s too risky,” said Heather Norwood, explaining her decision to keep her son at home. “Sending anyone back to the school system, at least in the first six months of the

school year, is going to decimate our community.... I’m curious what kinds of plan the school is going to put in place for what happens if one teacher gets [coronavirus]. How are you going to do contact tracing? What’s going to happen if someone who works in the cafeteria gets it?”

Nicole Kelly also shared her anxiety about protecting an immune-compromised child. “We have been very diligent, as a family, during all these months to not expose ourselves.... I’m going to take that chance to expose him for one or two days a week, or whatever the schedule may be, if it’s hybrid? I’m not comfortable with that.”

Jennifer Morgan recommended that schools take students’ temperature each day. “Even during the [regular] school year, when our kids get sick, it’s because somebody was sent to school without a parent realizing that they were sick,” she said.

Nevertheless, she said, her son needs face-to-face instruction in math; even under a primarily remote model, she hoped that “certain kids... can at least have a teacher on the grounds that they can bring them to.”

“We feel ready for our kids to return to in-person learning,” said Colleen Sculley, a parent at Gill Elementary. “Our goals are for our family to be safe, and for our children’s mental health and love of learning to be retained over this next year.”

Sculley said that the available outdoor space at Gill “could also spark some really creative learning opportunities. I don’t know if similar opportunities exist at Sheffield or Hillcrest.”

Beck reported to the committee that 482 of the district’s 935 families had responded to a survey, and that of those, 52% hoped to send their children back to school, 11% would not, and the remaining 37% “said maybe.”

“We really don’t have any good data about what’s going to happen when schools open,” said Montague member Mike Langknecht.

“I want to make sure that if

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we’re offering things like outdoor learning and tents, they’re offered at all the schools,” member Jennifer Lively added.

Unprecedented Situation

In addition to approval by DESE, any learning plan approved by the school committee next week will have to be negotiated with the Gill-Montague Education Association (GMEA).

GMEA president Karl Dziura told the Reporter that the union and administration were “trying very hard to work collaboratively to navigate this very complex, difficult, and unprecedented situation.” He praised Beck for inviting union leaders to sit in on administration meetings on the plan.

In mid-July, the three largest statewide unions – the MTA, American Federation of Teachers, and Boston Teachers Union – brought a set of proposals to DESE that included requiring schools to evaluate and repair windows and ventilation systems “[a]s a condition of reopening,” as well as guaranteeing paid leave to any teachers who are in “at-risk categories or who have household members in at-risk categories” but are not allowed to teach remotely.

Last week, MTA president Merrie Najimy wrote to members that DESE had not agreed to “major

demands” including environmental health and safety assessments of all buildings and the cancellation of standardized tests.

“Many locals have stated that they require adherence to health and safety standards before members return,” Dziura said. “Coming to a final decision that’s going to carry us through a full school year, I think, is unrealistic – there is so much that is not known; there is so much that can change. If we discover a vaccine, or if there’s a cure, all this changes.”

The Gill-Montague school committee plans to approve a plan for submission to DESE at its next meeting on Tuesday, August 11. The meeting will begin with a public comment period, and the public may also submit statements to the school committee to be read aloud.

“What are the consequences if we, as a district decided to flout DESE’s rules for grading and assessment this year?” Montague member Haley Anderson asked during the committee’s July 28 meeting. “And also MCAS?”

Chair Jane Oakes agreed to add the topic to an upcoming agenda for discussion, as well as a suggestion from Langknecht that the district consider adding an extra year to the high school, as an educational “buffer zone” in case “things go further south.”



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AUGUST 6, 2020

Above: C/2020 F3, also known as Comet Neowise, passes over Leverett Pond on July 14.

ArtBeat by Trish Crapo
Feeding a Hunger at Mass MoCA

NORTH ADAMS – The first thing I saw when I came through the door was a train coming through a tunnel in the wall, each of its cars carrying a chunk of landscape – rectangular slabs of Arctic tundra, sandstone bluffs, strips of green or snow-covered forest, wetlands with quivering reeds. I laughed out loud, it seemed so wonderful. Perfectly placed at eye level, the model train cars carted their inexplicable cargo ‘round and ‘round. I didn’t even try to make sense of it, just watching it go by was enough. I couldn’t think when I’d last felt my heart lift like that. Pre-pandemic, no doubt.

The piece, “Moving Landscape” by Blane De St. Croix, is part of his larger exhibit on climate change, geopolitics, and the culture of places, titled *How to Move a Landscape*, on view right now at MASS MoCA in North Adams.

A couple of weeks ago, I would not have considered going into a museum, even one as large as MASS MoCA, where you could assume there was plenty of room for social distancing. But last week my husband, my niece, and I decided to brave a day trip. There were a lot of factors at play. The day we chose was forecast to be one of the hottest



GRAPHIC PHOTO

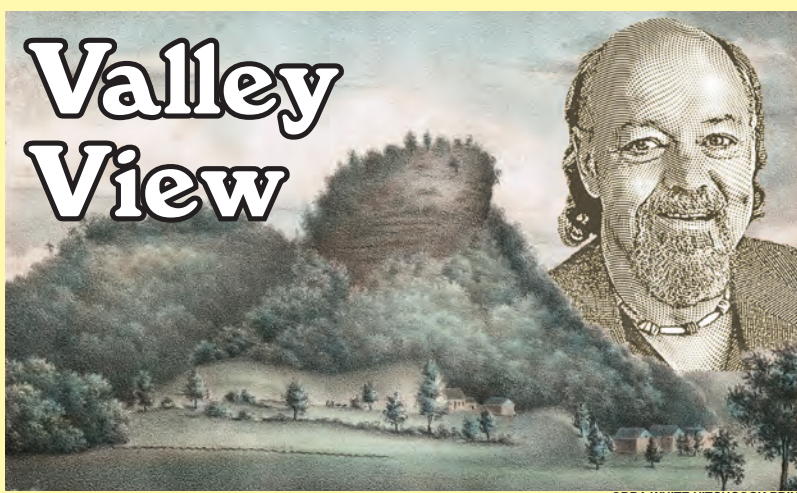
Sculptures by Blane De St. Croix dwarf visitors in a gallery at MASS MoCA in North Adams.

of summer, a Monday at the tail end of July, with temps expected to hit the high 90s. The hour-long drive, at times an annoyance, sounded great this time. We could wend our way along the Mohawk Trail in air-conditioned comfort. And wandering through the museum’s 40,000-some square feet of air-conditioned galleries seemed like more than just a good idea; it seemed likely the only

thing possible to do on this day.

Still, that same cool, indoor air worried me, too. What if the museum was crowded? I’d seen a story about it, and the nearby Clark Art Institute, in the *New York Times* only about a week before, and lamented that it might increase tourist traffic to our state. As we headed out, I was still cautious enough to say to my family

see ARTBEAT page B5



ORRA WHITE HITCHCOCK PRINT

By GARY SANDERSON

GREENFIELD – A venerable, solemn Phinehas Field is shown in the dignified portrait accompanying his online *Find A Grave* profile.

A man who volunteered for Civil War service after his 60th birthday, Field had, by the time of this formal portrait, served many years as deacon of the Charlemont Congregational Church and lived a distinguished, pious life. Phinehas Field had much to be proud of.

Born 1799 and raised in Northfield, he died at 85 in Charlemont in 1884. Undoubtedly an outspoken Lincolnian Republican, Field’s tall, mushroom-capped gravestone stands in East Charlemont’s Leavitt Cemetery, situated along the Mohawk Trail on the western skirt of Charlemont Academy.

It’s a fitting final resting place for the man who, in 1831, married Chloe Maxwell Leavitt, granddaughter of Charlemont’s conservative minister Rev. Jonathan Leavitt, whose palatial, Georgian-colonial home – The Manse – still stands along a discontinued dirt road 1.5 miles north of Field’s grave. (Rumor has it that Charlemont’s Revolutionary patriots were so determined to be rid of their pacifist minister that they made sure his property was set off with Heath in 1785. And there it stands today, along the border, in Heath.)

Not only was Chloe Maxwell Leavitt Field’s grandfather a minister. Her uncle was prestigious Greenfield lawyer, judge and state senator Jonathan Leavitt, whose sprawling Federal home still stands in downtown Greenfield. There it has for decades served as the Greenfield Public Library. Two of Jonathan Jr.’s brothers were also prominent Greenfield residents.

Though it could be said that Phinehas Field married well, that is not to suggest that he married up. No, he surely would have begged to differ with any such claim. Field came from his own proud New England heritage. Of royal Connecticut Valley cloth, the Fields have since the beginning been scattered up and down the fertile river basin.

Progenitor Zachariah Field is found among the 161 names cut in stone on the Hartford Founders Monument. An early arrival to Boston in 1629, he settled in

Dorchester before joining Rev. Thomas Hooker’s famous 1636 overland migration to Hartford, where he became an original proprietor (1639) after fighting in the Pequot War (1637). By 1659, the restless Field had removed to nascent Northampton. Then, in 1662, he moved a few miles north to infant Hatfield, where he died four years later.

According to genealogist Timothy Lester Jacobs of the Society of the Descendants of the Founders of Hartford, “Zachery” Field was engaged as a Northampton and Hatfield resident “in mercantile business, and had a large trade with the Indians.” A pioneer in the true sense of the word, he didn’t live long enough to see Hatfield split off from Hadley and gain township in 1670.

The pioneer flame burned just as brightly among Zachery Field’s descendants, among them many “Indian fighters” and ground-breakers for early towns, such as Deerfield, Northfield, and Sunderland. Zechariah’s son, Sgt. Samuel Field, survived the Falls Fight of May 19, 1676 only to be slain and scalped by Native Americans while working on his Hatfield farm 21 years later, on June 24, 1697.

Samuel represented the first of many Fields or Field spouses either killed or captured by Native groups, including many during the famous February 29, 1704 French and Indian sacking of Deerfield. It didn’t stop there. Members of the Field family were still fighting right up through February 1763, when the long string of French and Indian Wars finally came to an end with the signing of the Treaty of Paris.

Phinehas Field was no stranger to colonial tales of family valor. In fact, he wore it on his sleeve. When introduced to the Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association by founder and president George Sheldon at the group’s second annual meeting in 1871, Field stood to introduce himself by highlighting his ancestors’ military acumen.

His father, also Phinehas, was a Revolutionary soldier; his grandfather Moses had fought in the French and Indian War; his great-grandfather Ebenezer had been mistaken for an Indian, shot and killed by a Northfield sentry; see VALLEY VIEW page B4

Unearthing the Archives

By Charlotte Kohlmann

PART XIII: ARCHIVES OF COOKBOOKS

By CHARLOTTE KOHLMANN

HATFIELD – A 250-year-old farmhouse in Hatfield owned by Lisa Ekus sits on an old potato field and contains a cookbook collection larger than most institutional repositories. It houses 8,000

cookbooks stacked floor to ceiling, encasing every inch of shelf space like the crowded alleyways of an old bookstore.

I recently spoke with Lisa about her collection over the phone.

“I am still looking for more cookbooks. Every time I visit a lo-

cal bookstore, I bring a list of titles and chef author names with me,” said Ekus. “There are plenty of people that are getting their recipes online and bring their computer into the kitchen, but I like to cook from the physical page.”

Not only does Lisa Ekus enjoy the pleasures of cooking, but she has been a part of the culinary industry for over 40 years, and has negotiated over 400 cookbook deals with publishers as an agent working under her own name.

Ekus can peruse her library, pick up every other cookbook, and be able to tell you a story about the author or its recipes. She can provide little anecdotes that reveal a connection to someone she worked with or cooked for in her kitchen; or cuisine she studied full-heartedly.

“I have cooked my whole life, my parents always taught me that cooking was about the food itself, and see UNEARTHING page B5



Lisa Ekus in her Hatfield farmhouse, surrounded by her cookbook collection.

Pet of the Week



DAKIN HUMANE SOCIETY PHOTO

“TEGAN”

My name is Tegan and I love to go, go, go! I'm a super-high-energy, 1-year-old female black-mouth cur who needs a very active family who can offer me specific things to chew on, and help me learn about not chewing on everything else. I'm comfortable in my crate but need to burn energy when I'm out, and loud noises and new situations make me nervous.

I love other dogs, and games and

walks, but busy streets still make me nervous. Are you the one for me?

Animals at Dakin are available for adoption by appointment only, and only at Springfield currently. Call (413) 781-4000, or see www.dakinhumane.org, for more information about meeting me.



MOVIE REVIEW

Palm Springs (2020)

By SEAMUS TURNER-GLENNON

CHARLEMONT – Often, within the genre of “romantic comedies,” the “comedy” bit can feel as though it’s been forgotten in the film’s hasty efforts to get to the romantic aspects as soon as possible. There’s nothing inherently wrong with this, I suppose, but at a point one must wonder: what was the point, truly, in setting out to make a romantic comedy to begin with? The dull, lifeless films of director Lasse Hallstrom, many of which self-purport to be romantic comedies – yet manage to be less funny than those birthday cards with knockoff Far Side cartoons that the elderly send one another – are one example of this phenomenon.

Thankfully, though, there are exceptions to this trend, and 2020’s *Palm Springs* starring Cristin Milioti and Andy Samberg falls firmly into this latter category. Milioti and Samberg are both actors best known for their roles on popular sitcoms (*How I Met Your Mother* and *Brooklyn Nine-Nine*, respectively) from which they both gained semi-cult followings – Samberg especially, although he already had a fairly committed group of fans from his time on *Saturday Night Live*.

Both stars have a very particular on-camera presence

which they seem to inhabit: Samberg as the ultimately lovable slacker, Milioti as the sort of nervous-wreck-in-denial. These are parts they play here seemingly to such an extent that it’s sometimes hard not to view *Palm Springs* as something of an unintentional self-parody.

In spite of that, though, there’s something endearing about *Palm Springs* which makes it worth the watch: namely that it’s a romantic comedy which isn’t afraid to just be *funny*. None of the typical, lame ways rom-coms tend to attempt humor are present here; the film feels like the true sort of genre synthesis that the name would imply, as imposed to the hordes of rom-coms which seem to interpret the label as simply meaning “a romance film where not everything is 100% dead serious, all the time.”

The plot – which tells the story of our two leads, stuck in an infinite time loop à la *Groundhog Day* – is arguably a bit bog-standard, if only in regards to being a fairly simplistic rom-com plotline. But who cares? If anyone is walking into a rom-com saying “Surprise me! Shock me!” that person most likely ought to be committed.

And, in addition, despite some arguable plot holes, the time-traveling plotlines are handled fairly nicely in regards to some of the inherent internal contradictions of a time loop story. All these come together to make *Palm Springs* what it ultimately is: a cute, fun, funny, albeit clichéd romantic comedy that doesn’t overstay its welcome.



Sex Matters

a sex-positive health column

by STEPHANIE BAIRD

Dear Readers, I hope you are getting your sexual groove back during these potentially languid and restful summer days, despite Pandemic raging outside of our doors.

I recently returned from a week away to work on a book, *Integrating EMDR and Sexual Health*, for Springer Publishing. This was the first week I have spent alone since my spirited and energetic nine-and-a-half year-old was born. Once I got over the guilt of leaving the family behind (that took about 30 minutes), I relished every moment, holding gratitude for the privilege of this week.

I set my own writing pace and daily schedule, keeping a fairly daily routine of a morning bike ride, simple breakfast and tea, writing for a couple hours, a break for a quick lunch, another two-hour writing segment, a short nap on the couch or a walk around the grounds listening to birds and chickens nearby, dinner, a little more writing, then watching *Warrior Nun* or *Grace and Frankie* on Netflix.

It was comforting and affirming to notice my passion around this topic remained steady, and even increased, throughout this week, and to observe the connections my brain was making between the two subjects of EMDR (eye movement desensitization and reprocessing therapy) and sexual health. I also noticed that with nothing pressing on my sexual brakes – no interrupting family, no major meals to prepare, no huge pile of dishes, just my single mug and bowl to clean – my sexual accelerator felt free to groove, tingle, and hum along to the material I was writing about.

One thing that got me tingling was learning about different definitions of sexual health, including this one from the World Association for Sexual Health (WAS). This organization, comprised globally of sex-positive educators and activists, has been around for 40 years, and has the succinct motto of “sexual health and sexual rights are fundamental for well-being.” Their defi-

inition of sexual health is defined “as a state of physical, mental and social well-being in relation to sexuality that requires a positive and respectful approach to sexuality and sexual relations, as well as the possibility of having pleasant and safe sexual experiences, free from all coercion, discrimination and violence” (WHO, 2002).

WAS also promotes World Sexual Health Day (WSHD) annually. This year that day falls on September 4. While this column is coming out about a month early, it’s never too soon to prepare!

WSHD began ten years ago as a way to promote the mission of WAS. This year’s slogan is, fittingly, “Sexual Pleasure in times of COVID-19.” In their statement they specifically note that the pandemic can affect different groups disproportionately, with women and girls more at risk for intimate partner violence and sexual abuse during quarantine. Additionally, women are the largest group of health and care workers in the world, exposed to more health risk as frontline workers.

Despite these increased risks and dangers due to COVID-19, WAS emphasizes that sexual pleasure remains possible, and imperative.

In their own words: “This [pandemic] situation is also an opportunity to celebrate and promote sexual pleasure, to highlight the possibilities of accessing a pleasurable sexual life, free of coercion, motivating people to pursue positive outcomes from sexual activity, exploring their bodies and relationships. Confinement can help to explore new forms of sexual expression, or take back some of our preferred ones. It can also trigger a thoughtful inspection of the role that sexuality has in our lives. Even though (STI) transmission and inequality are important aspects of such a pandemic, *it is important to be aware and not fall into a hygienist discourse that pushes explicitly or implicitly people to live their sexual lives under fear and external pressure.*” (Italics are mine.)

WAS even explicitly asks the

reader: “How has confinement contributed to exploring your sexuality? What new forms of experiencing pleasure have you discovered?” WAS is my new best friend, as they took all my thoughts and feelings about sexual health and pleasure rights straight from my brain and put them on paper.

Lastly, WAS also impressed me with the fact that they not only have a Declaration of Sexual Rights with an emphasis on social justice, formulated in 2014, but they also formulated a Declaration of Sexual Pleasure at their last world conference in Mexico City in 2019, truly committed to moving civilization into a sex and pleasure-positive direction.

In this declaration they “recognize that: Sexual pleasure is the physical and/or psychological satisfaction and enjoyment derived from shared or solitary erotic experiences, including thoughts, fantasies, dreams, emotions, and feelings. Self-determination, consent, safety, privacy, confidence and the ability to communicate and negotiate sexual relations are key enabling factors for pleasure to contribute to sexual health and well-being.... The experience of human sexual pleasure is diverse and sexual rights ensure that pleasure is a positive experience for all concerned and not obtained by violating other people’s human rights and well-being” (WAS, 2019).

Amen!

So, how will you prepare for and celebrate sexual health (and pleasure) day in September? Perhaps it is time to purchase those erotic books, sex toys, or scented massage oils you’ve been eyeing online. Maybe you want to take a trip to a beach or watering hole so you can take in some lovely views – without being disrespectful, of course. Spread the word and talk over pleasure possibilities with friends and family! Or take a leap of the heart and ask someone you have a crush on for a Zoom date, or a physical distance hike. It could potentially lead to solo or shared sexual pleasure – just in time for September 4!

Senior Center Activities

AUGUST 10 THROUGH 21

GILL and MONTAGUE

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

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

ERVING

Erving Senior Center director Paula Betters writes 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@erving-ma.gov.

LEVERETT

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

WENDELL

Wendell senior activities have been canceled. The Wendell Senior Center is closed. The 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 (413) 625-2548

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

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Call for Artists for Our Wrapping Paper Issue!

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!

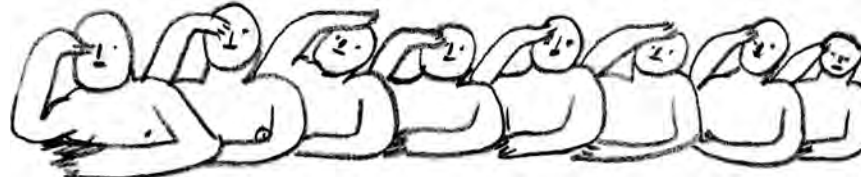
The seven artists we choose to help us produce this special edition will even get a **\$200 stipend for their completed work**, on top of the fame and good karma that will result from participating. RiverCul-

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 (.jpgs please), to 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!



TV REVIEW

DC's Stargirl (CW Network)

By MELISSA WLOSTOSKI

GREENFIELD – Before this year's TV series DC's Stargirl, I have seen two versions of Stargirl, the comic book character: one from the Superman prequel Smallville, and the other as part of an appearance of the Justice Society of America on Legends of Tomorrow.

The Smallville one is right on target, in terms of how they set up her deal in the show. Stargirl is a young teenager whose stepfather was a sidekick to Starman. She takes over for him through the passing of his Cosmic Staff.

The same happens in Stargirl, but according to one of the previews, the staff seems to have a mind of its own. Stargirl, named Courtney Whitmore, is played by Brec Bassinger. She and her family moves from California to Nebraska for a new job, and so the kids can be in a school without metal detectors. Most of the episode is about her adjusting to the move, but then she sort of stumbles first-hand upon the fact that the Cosmic Staff has a mind of its own. Its helps her – not exactly as planned – get back at some peers who were jerks.

I would like to state that while this move seems to be a fresh start for the family, her stepfather hasn't exactly left his past as a sidekick behind. He keeps a few mementos from his Justice Society of America days around. That is kind of how Courtney ends up finding the staff.

A rather juicy part of the episode

reveals that her little run-in with those jerks and the staff reveals that like her stepfather, she also hasn't exactly left the past behind. In fact, at the end of the episode, she has a fight with someone from her father's past, in which the staff helps out again. It's just another instance in which we learn how much this staff has a mind of its own.

I also should point out that the individual she fights with is well aware that the Staff is connected to Starman. This individual is a rather cool someone to have a run-in with. He reads minds and has telekinesis. He knows something has occurred with the staff, and contacts a former associate who was part of a group that he ran with. I believe this guy will be the person who has ice powers of some kind that Courtney will take on.

Another thing I gathered from the various previews of this show I have seen is that Stargirl will form a new, younger version of the Justice Society to help her out. This will be a very nice reason to keep watching the show, as we discover who she ends up recruiting when it comes to the people she meets. Her stepfather does help her out by creating a big robot. Its size and look is a very cool sight to see on screen.

Lastly, I heard they are going to show the premiere on the CW Network, and are somehow trying to work up a crossover episode of some kind with their TV series The Flash. It should be interesting to see what they come up with!

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MONTAGUE POLICE LOG

Rogue Bumps; Okay Tubers; Paper Bag Concern; Scooter Wipeout; "Drug Houses"; Watering Weeds

Monday, 7/20

8:56 a.m. Caller advising that yesterday she was at the wildlife area off North Street with her husband and child when a dog lunged at her son while he was eating a snack. Caller advises there were approximately 20 dogs in the area. Caller will also be contacting animal control officer. Advised caller to call PD back when incident is in progress should this happen again.

12:48 p.m. Caller reports that one of his car windows was broken sometime after 7 this morning in a parking lot behind an Avenue A building. Report taken.

2:16 p.m. Report of dirt speed bumps erected on Highland Avenue. DPW requests officer attempt to locate parties who put them out and have bumps removed. Caller advises residents have expressed wanting speed bumps in that area and believes they have taken matters into their own hands. Officer spoke with resident and advised them to clean up what was put in the road.

2:27 p.m. Report of lights malfunctioning on Greenfield side of General Pierce Bridge; MPD cruiser requested to assist with traffic on Turners Falls side.

2:42 p.m. Caller from DPW reporting hit-and-run damage to his take-home vehicle; body damage and paint transfer present. Report taken.

Tuesday, 7/21

12:52 p.m. Report of hit-and-run accident that occurred yesterday in the Food City parking lot. Advised of options.

Wednesday, 7/22

5:57 a.m. Caller reports that he saw a news story from Springfield about a male party walking around the city taking pictures of children. Caller states he saw this male party two weeks ago near the Shady Glen taking pictures and was concerned.

4:39 p.m. Report of kids attempting to swim in the Connecticut River by the White Bridge near the old Railroad Salvage. Caller unsure if it is legal/safe to be swimming there. Officer reports two parties on tubes; all conditions seem to be safe. Parties are just relaxing. Seems OK to be on the water at this time.

Thursday, 7/23

9:47 a.m. Report of a cow in the road in Deerfield. Conferred with Shelburne Control.

8:14 p.m. Report of unwanted male party on front porch on L Street. Unable to locate.

Friday, 7/24

7:28 a.m. 911 caller reporting that a man came up to her vehicle in front of her residence on Bridge Street and threatened to break

her windows multiple times. Caller does not recognize the man. Caller has left the immediate area; believes man is still at or near her residence. Area search negative; Erving PD and MPD will continue to be on lookout.

10:27 a.m. Party reported to detail officer that she was verbally assaulted by a male on a bicycle in front of Greenfield Savings Bank. Advised of options.

6:18 p.m. Caller requesting to speak with officer re: a male party who tried to provoke a fist fight with caller at his workplace today. Caller states this is an ongoing issue and would like to press charges. Advised of options.

8:14 p.m. Caller from Third Street requesting PD because his roommates are removing things from his rented room without his permission and are also threatening to beat him up if he does not leave. Officer reports situation has been mediated.

Saturday, 7/25

12:19 a.m. Caller states he was assaulted (hit across the back with a piece of wood) by a female party, so he ran away from the house; states he has it all on videotape. Later received call from involved

female stating she had also been assaulted and had a red and marked-up face. Both parties stated they did not need an ambulance at this time.

A 33-year-old Turners Falls woman was arrested and charged with assault with a dangerous weapon; domestic assault and battery; breaking and entering in the night time with intent to commit a felony; and threatening to commit a crime.

5:33 a.m. Caller from Fourth Street states that there is a spoon, white powder, and baggies on his step. Officer collected items and is bringing them to station to dispose of properly.

7:08 a.m. Caller reports that a female who was released from detox asked him for money, which he did not give her, so she took his laptop and jumped out of his moving vehicle on Central Street; suspects she is en route to a drug house in the area of Third and L Streets. Laptop retrieved by officer; owner will come to MPD later to pick it up.

8:54 a.m. Caller from airport requesting to speak with an officer about a male who was trespassing this morning and taking pictures of the security system. Caller advised party that he was trespassing, but party said that he intended to come back anyway. Advised of options.

9:29 a.m. Caller found a dead fawn on Water Department land. Referred caller to leave message for DPW so they can remove animal during business hours.

11:45 a.m. Caller reporting male party in Peskomskut Park with a paper bag next to him; did not see him drinking, but suspects he may have been. Party with a hat and a bike playing a guitar. Officer checked park; only party there has a paper bag, but no beer or open containers observed.

2:02 p.m. Shelburne Control received call to assist a boater in distress in an area off West Mineral Road. Boater has a leak in his boat and has standing water up to his ankles/knees; has a sump pump, but it can't keep up, and he is taking on more water. TFFD responding; Gill FD toned with boat to assist TFFD.

Sunday, 7/26

10:14 a.m. Caller from East Main Street reports that she is doing landscaping on the property and a female is harassing her and threatened her with a stick. Officer spoke with both parties. Situation mediated.

12:51 p.m. Report of teenage male riding a dirtbike without a helmet in Randall Wood Drive/Randall Road area. Previous complaint received for same party. Officer spoke with party and gave a last warning re: operating an unregistered and uninsured vehicle on a public way; advised of consequences of MPD responds for this again.

3:57 p.m. Caller from Five Eyed Fox states that she and another female employee are being stalked/harassed by a male party. Advised of options.

8:18 p.m. Multiple callers reporting car into pole on Turners Falls Road. Eversource responding for sheared pole. Vehicle towed. Both parties signed patient refusals. Citation issued.

9:40 p.m. Caller states that a male party on Lake Pleasant Road is intoxicated and refusing to leave. There is also an active probation warrant for him. Party left on a red scooter before officer's arrival. Another party reporting that a male on a scooter just wiped out by the Bridge of Names. A 55-year-old Lake Pleasant man was arrested on a probation warrant.

Monday, 7/27

7:19 a.m. Report of suspicious male on his phone walking between two drug houses on Griswold Street looking highly agitated; appears to be waiting for someone. Caller

advises male's behavior is making her nervous. Area search negative.

Tuesday, 7/28

10:24 a.m. Caller concerned about safety of dogs left outside for long periods of time in Lake Pleasant. Officer located two dogs in backyard. There is shade and water. Owner was not home, but upstairs neighbor said he would advise the owner that there was a complaint and that it may be too hot for the dogs to be left out.

Wednesday, 7/29

7:31 a.m. Caller from Millers Falls Road states that while on a morning jog, a very aggressive dog came running toward her from behind a home. The rope that the dog was attached to broke, and the dog came out of the yard and ran at her, causing her to jump into the road. The dog backed off after she yelled at it. No answer at door, but responding officer could see and hear a dog inside that appears to be behaving aggressively.

11:17 a.m. Caller states that a vehicle pulled into a driveway on Coolidge Avenue and a couple of men got out with a pry bar and opened the door to the house. Bank personnel checking on foreclosed property.

6:39 p.m. Report from Montague City Road of heavy black smoke in the sky coming in waves. Caller unsure of exact location but states it is coming from somewhere between the Farren Care Center and the bridge. TFFD investigated; smoke coming from a mattress being burned by a female party.

Thursday, 7/30

2:43 p.m. Report of male inside Family Dollar using a butane lighter that the store sells to light the corner of a box on fire. Caller advises party appears to be under the influence. Investigated.

Friday, 7/31

12:19 a.m. Caller states that a vehicle on Park Street has an alarm that keeps sounding; alarm sounds for approximately four minutes, shuts off, then starts again. Alarm was sounding upon officer's arrival, turned off, and started sounding again. Owner's phone number located; message left. Officer requesting second call to owner, who was unhelpful in giving information. Advised owner that vehicle will be towed if she doesn't respond; owner stated "You can't do that," and hung up the phone. Officer stated we will give owner a chance to get here; will be clearing area for now.

4:58 p.m. Loose dog observed running in

see MPD page B4

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MPD from page B3

K Street and Avenue A areas. Unable to make contact with party believed to be owner. Officer able to return dog to owner's residence.

Saturday, 8/1

11:06 a.m. Abandoned 911 call. Upon callback, spoke with a woman reporting that a female party had come towards her to attack her, so she sprayed the party with a garden hose. Caller advises she has had issues with this woman before but doesn't know her

name. Officer advised that caller sprayed the woman with the hose because she questioned why she was watering the weeds.

11:45 p.m. Caller from Fifth Street states that a male party just kicked in her back door and came into her apartment. When he saw she had friends over, he took off. Shelburne Control advised to be on lookout for involved male; probable cause for arrest. Summons issued for breaking and entering

in the nighttime with intent to commit a felony and malicious destruction of property under \$1200.

Sunday, 8/2

11:10 p.m. Caller from Erving states that her cousin took her car keys so she wouldn't drive home, but the cousin now won't give them back so she can roll up her windows and secure the vehicle for the night. Info passed to Shelburne Control.

**VALLEY VIEW from page B1**

and his previously mentioned second great-grandfather Samuel had fought in King Philip's War.

He failed to mention progenitor Zachariah Field's Pequot War service and, curiously, his own direct and peripheral family connections to Deerfield's infamous 1704 attack. You'd think his family's Deerfield misfortunes would have been front and center around the PVMA.

So, why should we be interested this man named Phineas Field? What's his claim to fame?

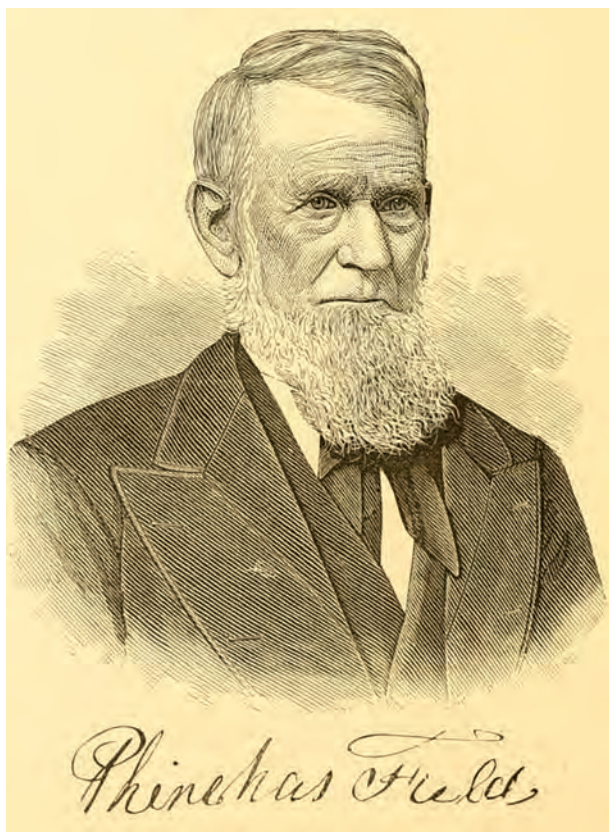
Well, it just so happens that Mr. Field is the man who brought to light the Native American Great Beaver Myth explaining the origin of Deerfield's Pocumtuck Range. President Sheldon had in the early days of his organization implored his "antiquarian" colleagues to record important local history by writing it down for posterity before it disappeared into thin air, never again to see the light of day. That was how the Beaver Myth was brought into white Connecticut Valley culture, introduced by Field in 1871 and published 19 years later in the PVMA *History and Proceedings*.

Here it is in full, as published by PVMA in 1890:

The Great Beaver,

Whose pond flowed over the whole basin north of Mt. Tom, made havoc among the fish and when these failed he would come ashore and devour Indians. A pow-wow was held and Hobomock raised, who came to their relief. With a great stake in hand, he waded the river until he found the beaver, and so hotly chased him that he sought to escape by digging into the ground. Hobomock saw his plan and his whereabouts, and with his great stake jammed the beaver's head off. The earth over the beaver's head we call Sugarloaf, the body lies just north of it.

So, there you have it, short and sweet as beaver-tail delicacy, and lacking much important detail – such as the composition of the landform beaver's body. Field identifies the head and nothing else, leaving the rest of the beaver's anatomy to the imagination, and, yes, there have been inconsistencies about the beaver's makeup ever since.



Phineas Field, in an engraving uploaded to Findagrave.com.

Though I have not seen it, Field's tale had likely found its way into the *Greenfield Gazette and Courier* before it was published by *History and Proceedings*. Why? Because PVMA founder George Sheldon was a prolific contributor to the Greenfield paper and also the smaller *Turners Falls Reporter*. In those local papers he tested out narrative of what was to become his acclaimed *History of Deerfield* in the years leading up to its 1895 publication.

It should come as no surprise that Sheldon ultimately embellished Field's vague beaver tale by the time it found its way into his *History of Deerfield*. Field's skeletal tale clearly needed a little meat on its bones.

The Deerfield antiquarian wrote that "Hobomok was offended" by the beaver's "depredations" and was "determined to kill it," not with a great stake but rather an "enormous oak" employed as a club. Dispatched by a blow to the neck, the giant beaver sank to the bottom of [Lake Hitchcock] and "turned to stone."

Sheldon was also more precise in describing the beaver carcass left for all to see. He wrote that the view from West Mountain displayed: "Wequamps the head, north of which the dent neck shows where fell the fatal stroke; North Sugarloaf the shoulders, rising to Pocumtuck Rock the back, whence it tapers off to the tail at Cheapside."

Not to be outdone, along came Montague historian Edward P. Pressey, who, 15 years later, with a different spelling for the transformer character, took his own stab at Field's and Sheldon's beaver tale in his *History of Montague*, published in 1910.

According to Pressey, the Great Beaver preyed upon fish and, when food became scarce, took to eating men of the river villages. "Hobmock, a benevolent spirit giant," was called upon to "relieve the stressed people, and that he did by chasing the troublesome beast "into the immense lake... and flinging great handfuls of dirt and rock" at it. Finally, the beast, overburdened with what had been throw upon it, sank in the middle of the lake, where "Hobmock dispatched the monster by a blow with his club on the back" of its neck, and "there he lies to this day. The upturned head covered with dirt is the sandstone cliff of Wequamps (Mt. Sugar Loaf) and the body is the northward range."

Notice how, unlike Sheldon, Pressey is vague in defining the mountainous beaver carcass – a wise move on his part. After Field's original story left the carcass totally open to the imagination, Sheldon exercised poetic license to provide an anatomically incorrect description. A beaver profile has but three components: a head, a body, and a flat tail. Sheldon's model is composed of four segments, with a head, two bodies, and a tail, no matter how you view it.

Pressey did, however, exercise poetic license of his own by introducing the concept of Hobomock bombarding the beaver with "handfuls of dirt and rock." That novel concept was most likely lifted from a Nova Scotia beaver myth published in Charles Godfrey Leland's *Algonquin Legends of New England* (1884). Godfrey relied mostly on an unpublished manuscript by Baptist missionary Silas Tertius Rand (1810-1889), who lived with and studied the Micmacs for 40 years and whose *Legends of the Micmac* was posthumously published in 1893.

A major problem with all three early historians' tales is that beavers are herbivores, and thus do not eat meat. None. Zero. Not men or mammals, fish or frogs, snakes or salamanders, ducks or geese. Nothing of the like. Beavers eat inner bark and twigs and leaves and roots. Plant food, not meat – a fact Native Americans would obviously have known. Still, there are other Native American myths that involve the killing of vicious or unruly beavers, so the man-eating twist was probably a colonial misinterpretation.

Something important to remember is that Field was not an anthropologist or ethnographer. He was a devout Christian, and very like a man who subscribed to the late 19th century, racist sentiment that "the only good Indian was a dead Indian." So, he wasn't recording the indigenous tale he heard in childhood out of cultural respect. Quite the contrary, he likely thought the whole concept was ridiculous, an example of primitive ignorance.

Oh my, how times change. Now Native American Literature – that is the study of oral history – is under a finely-tuned scholarly microscope.

Field, Sheldon, and Pressey were from another time and mindset, and their published work stood as the accepted Sugarloaf Beaver Myth until the turn of the 21st century. These days, a pair of scholars with Abenaki roots have come forward to put their own spin on what they call *The Great Beaver*. Finally, the tale viewed through an indigenous lens is being explored and developed.

In my next column, we'll take a look at how the Sugarloaf Beaver Myth has evolved since Marge Bruchac and Lisa Brooks have taken control of it. Now, they own it... and go to great lengths to protect it.

Stay tuned.

**HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE GILL POLICE LOG****Cars, Cows, Cops, Dogs, Cows****Wednesday, 7/1**

6:19 p.m. Caller advising he is *en route* to the French King Bridge to locate his wife, concerned about a suicide attempt. Subject located driving on French King Highway. Checked welfare.

Thursday, 7/2

9:04 a.m. Main Road caller reports loose cows in the area.

9:59 a.m. Main Road caller reports two steers in the roadway. Assisted owners.

4:51 p.m. Assisted Montague PD with an accident at the Turners Falls post office.

8:10 p.m. Report of suspicious activity at the French King rock. Checking on subjects.

Friday, 7/3

6:01 p.m. Assisted Montague PD responding to an incident on Randall Road.

Monday, 7/6

12:30 p.m. Report of vandalism along the Connecticut River. Referred to EPO.

Tuesday, 7/7

8:33 a.m. Loose cows reported near North Cross and Main roads.

Wednesday, 7/8

6:42 p.m. Caller from West Gill Road reported power line explosion with blue and red flames. Unable to locate. 6:47 p.m. Caller from West Gill Road reported a big blue and red flash from the high-tension lines. Eversource advised.

Thursday, 7/9

12:32 a.m. Caller from Bascom Road heard someone attempting to gain access to her residence by trying the front door. Building checked; no signs.

Friday, 7/10

8 a.m. Report of driver on French King Highway tailgating.

Sunday, 7/12

4:33 a.m. Report of a possible jumper on French King Bridge. Confirmed subject on cameras. Search initiated. Later located coming out of the woods, taken for evaluation.

3:44 p.m. Car vs. deer accident on Ben Hale Road. Minimal damage to the vehicle.

Monday, 7/13

9:58 a.m. Served a warrant on North Cross Road.

Tuesday, 7/14

11:34 a.m. Caller from Erving/Northfield reporting cannon-type sounds all night in the direction of the river.

12:24 p.m. Report of larceny on Hill Drive.

Wednesday, 7/15

2:17 p.m. Report of heavy smoke in the Peterson Way area. Spoke with resident burning residue out of an old barrel to bring to scrap. 3:22 p.m. Caller advises someone headed west on Route 2 into Gill is honking an air horn at passing vehicles.

Thursday, 7/16

6:34 p.m. Caller reports a male on the French King Highway wearing a Hawaiian shirt and walking a dog. Subject seemed intoxicated.

Friday, 7/17

6:35 p.m. Caller from West Gill Road reported a party with a motorcycle sitting in the middle of a driveway.

Saturday, 7/18

3:09 p.m. Caller reports people camping near Main Road cemetery.

Monday, 7/20

8:04 p.m. Loose dog

found and returned.

9:49 p.m. Officer requested on Chappell Drive for a disturbance.

Tuesday, 7/21

11:26 a.m. Officer can hear an alarm on Main Road. FD requested for burnt pot.

Wednesday, 7/22

9:20 p.m. Caller from Chappell Drive reports he has three drunken fools at his house, and they are about to start fighting.

Thursday, 7/23

1:27 p.m. Citizen reports young child unattended in Turners Falls. Notified Montague PD, who found the child in an alley.

8:37 p.m. Assisted with keys locked in vehicle.

Friday, 7/24

12:43 p.m. Checked at Main and West Gill roads for intentionally damaged roadway.

9:16 p.m. Report of a cow on Main Road.

9:35 p.m. Report of a cow on Main Road. Determined to be the same cow.

11:05 p.m. Officer checked on a party who stated he was walking along the French King Highway, fell and hit his head, and stopped to take a break. EMS refused.

Saturday, 7/25

1:04 a.m. Party lying on side of French King Highway determined to be taking a nap.

12:42 p.m. Caller reported they were transporting a family member to the hospital when the subject jumped out of the car. Party located; transport provided.

9:01 p.m. Fireworks reported on West Gill Road.

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ARTBEAT from page B1

(but mostly to myself), “Just remember, if it seems unsafe, we can just turn around and come home.”

COVID-19 Precautions

Somehow my niece and I, looking at the museum’s website on our phones, had both missed the important detail that advance, timed tickets are required for all visits. There is a provision for anyone unable



Top right: Inside Ad Minoliti’s exhibit, “Fantasias Modulares.” How do you know if you can trust a rabbit like that? Above: One of De St. Croix’s faux icebergs packed in a shipping crate.

to purchase online, so we were able to get tickets from the box office the day we went, but I wouldn’t advise depending on drop-in availability. Once you have a ticket, there’s no end time to it. Depending on your stamina, you could easily spend all day exploring the galleries and grounds.

The museum’s COVID Courtesy Code, which you agree to when you buy a ticket, requires masks and social distancing. QR codes on the wall provide touch-free access to materials on each exhibit; hand sanitizer stations are readily available; and common touch areas, such as handrails or door handles, are disinfected several times an hour, according to the museum’s website.

A staffer at the front door said visitor traffic lately was more like off-season traffic. If there were, say, 200 people in the museum, she pointed out, its huge size meant that you might see 20. I didn’t think to count, but everyone we encountered was respectful of the protocols, and it always felt easy to navigate around other groups.

Back to the Art...

In addition to that little train, which had an almost comical air, De St. Croix’s exhibit included monumental sculptures often made with recycled materials such as foam, polyester, and plastic. One piece, “Cold Front,” which resembled a sheer wall of ice which had video playing across it to evoke the passing of light, made use of plastic chips from 67,000 water bottles.

Another large piece, “Hollow Ground,” practically spilled out of one large gallery. Its pristine, glittering white surface resembled a sheet of permafrost, with rounded holes suggesting the thawing such sheets have undergone. In another room, faux but very re-

alistic icebergs were packed into crates. A research gallery showed the links between De St. Croix’s work and the work of climate scientists and activists, as well as preliminary sketches for some of the sculptures, lending a glimpse into the artist’s process.

De St. Croix’s work filled me with questions. Was he saying we could move a landscape, or not? Should we? Was it fallacy to think we could save anything from our warming environment?

In a small, glassed-in gallery you pass on your way out of De St. Croix’s exhibit was a curious exhibit, *Fantasias Modulares*, of brightly colored drawings, murals, and videos by Argentine artist Ad Minoliti. It was like walking into some very odd day care center at first, as the striking, bold colors had a childlike appeal, though the “characters,” some of them barely more than assemblages of geometric shapes, exuded a potentially darker mood.

A human-sized mannequin of a plush, pink cartoon-eyed rabbit struck me as something out of a nightmare. How did you know you could trust a rabbit like that? But for all its borderline creepiness, the exhibit had the effect of eating sherbet after a heavy meal – a palette cleanser of sorts.

There is so much art at MASS MoCA that I can’t even begin to describe a fraction of it here. Laurie Anderson’s strange and beautiful movies, Louise Bourgeois’ mysterious, untitled, white marble sculpture, and the three floors of Sol Lewitt murals are always amazements to see. The giant, hollow cement heads lying on the floor in Ledelle Moe’s exhibit, *When*, enticed me to climb inside them, a desire perfectly anticipated by a sign that told me not to.

I realized, as we explored the many galler-



ies, that, for me, the need to see art is not an idle lust but a legitimate hunger. And the attendant joy, wonder, or pondering that art invokes, is necessary nourishment. I found myself “full” long before we’d exhausted the museum’s offerings. I already know there are three shows I didn’t get to that I’d love to go back and see. Maybe on another hot day, or a rainy one, or some day when I just feel hungry.

MASS MoCA is located at 1040 Mass Moca Way, North Adams. Make reservations at (413) 662-2111 or massmoca.org. The museum is open every day except Tuesday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Tickets are \$20 for adults; \$18 for seniors and veterans; \$12 for students with ID; and \$8 for kids ages 6 to 16. Admission to the Kidspace gallery only, accessible through the lobby, is always free. Library pass tickets are accepted, though you must still make a reservation online.

**UNEARTHING** from page B1

the hospitality that comes with it,” she continued. “My friends would come over to my parents’ house [to eat], or if people would show up at our house at random, they would always have enough to eat.”

While she was an English major undergrad at Barnard University, Ekus first started collecting novels and other genres before dipping into cookbooks. “I have always been vanishing into other worlds,” she said. She entered the New York publishing scene after college in the late ‘70s, and it only made sense that her love of food would cause her to embark on a long career of cookbook publishing, editing, and agent representation.

“Cookbooks that interest me are the ones set in a cultural background, where I can learn about a time and place,” she said, “like Ronny Lundy’s 2016 title *Victuals: An Appalachian Journey, with Recipes*.” This book contains 80 recipes and profiles of people in the Mountain South. “Ones like these deepen my understanding of foodways, people, sourcing, and recipes,” she added. Or the family cookbook genre: “We do not necessarily need another recipe for ‘fill in the blank,’ but it really does speak to how a family recipe is unique, and how it is connected to a personal history,” said Ekus.

Ancient Recordings

To the right is a recipe, possibly for partridge, recorded on a Babylonian tablet from 1750 BC – some 4,000 years ago.

This is one of the oldest recipes transcribed from a Mesopotamian civilization that still exists today. It is written in cuneiform, the ancient writing system impressed onto clay tablets used in the area that is now modern-day Iraq, Syria, Turkey, Iran, and Kuwait.

It was most likely not shared

with ordinary society members the way modern day recipes are disseminated, but rather used to document what the upper class was eating, and what ingredients were sampled in their elite culinary encounters.

Early written recipes such as this Mesopotamian bird fireroast were transcribed to indicate what the high courts ingested. Over the centuries, only the upper class kings, religious clergy, and wealthy could be cooked for by servants who could read. The majority of the population developed recipes out of necessity, repeated them over and over, sharing them verbally or visually for generations.

Literacy’s rapid development meant these popular recipes, too, would be codified – at least for those allowed to read. Though the roots of cuisine are at least as old as agriculture, the publication of recipes has also been a recording of unequal

social and political power, and cookbooks tell us about more than food.

If one compiles a simple internet search for “game bird pie recipe” or “how to cook partridge breast filets” today, endless pages of recipes from homecook bloggers to professional chefs surface. Their ingredient lists also call for milk, garlic, leeks, onions, and flour, just like this 4,000-year-old recipe. With just a few clicks one can find a “Game Bird Pot Pie” by blogger Scott Ley-sath’s blog, called *The Sporting Chef*, which also features a curious “Dead Meat” section and other wild game recipes.

“The way information is digested has provided the biggest change in recipe sharing,” said Lisa Ekus. “A search can be performed to look up a recipe including one ingredient. The ability to access a recipe is the biggest change to the culinary industry; people can re-

search recipes at no cost. Therefore, the internet perpetuates a recipe, whether it is good or not.”

A Universal Bookshelf

The Internet Archive at *Archive.org*, a free digital library of cultural artifacts, includes a massive collection of over 10,000 cookbooks from the 16th century up to the present day. This database is called “Cookbooks and Home Economics,” and there one can flip through page-by-page scans of printed culinary matter from various special collections, including the Young Research Library at UCLA, the Bancroft Library at the University of California Berkeley, and the Prelinger Library of San Francisco.

The 1893 *World’s Fair Cookbook* by Jacob Landis; *The Common Sense Cookbook* by Lillian Masterman (1894); *Dainty Desserts for Dainty People* by Charles Knox (1915); these are just a few from the collection. One can find *Harrison’s Flavoring Extracts: Pure, Fresh And Strong*, written by Apollos W. Harrison in 1870, which discusses 18 varieties of food extracts like almond, rose, and lemon, and how to utilize them in recipes involving homemade confectionery, croquettes of rice, *charlotte russe*, and more.

One can also scan through *The Federation Cook Book: A Collection of Tested Recipes Contributed by the Colored Women of the State of California*, compiled by Bertha Turner (1910), which includes handwritten recipes for numerous salads including “Normandy salad, banana salad, and peach salad” all from a previous owner.

The oldest title in the collection, which also happens to be the world’s first printed cookbook that included illustrations, is Bartolomeo Scappi’s *Opera dell’arte del cucinare* (1570). He was one of the most famous chefs of the Italian Renaissance, cooking for Popes

Paul III and Julius III. This 900-page cookbook includes 1,000 recipes, with preparations for Bolognese sauce, pizza, and a declaration of Scappi’s deep appreciation for parmesan cheese.

Project Gutenberg (*gutenberg.org*) includes a “Cookbooks and Cooking (Bookshelf),” and at *guides.loc.gov/community-cookbooks* one can find an “inventory and portal to a set of community cookbooks digitized by the Library of Congress,” organized by time or by place and linking to the Internet Archive and the Hathi Trust Digital Library.

And there are colossal collections such as the David Walker Lupton African American Cookbook Collection at the University of Alabama, the Cookery & Food Collection at Michigan State University – as well as private collections such as Lisa Ekus’s.

Cooking During COVID

Self-isolation has caused an uptick in cooking – and cookbook reading. For those who never regularly picked up a kitchen implement before March, a simple comfort and joy is appreciated like never before.

The ways in which recipes have been written down for thousands of years have not been modified drastically over time. Cooking with most modern ingredients, and their usages from the experimental to more methodical, can be traced back to ancient techniques and tastes.

Cookbooks reveal much more than how to cook or season vegetables. They are historical documents, imparting the politics of specific times and places; microcosmic studies of society, race, class, gender, and agriculture. Reading cookbooks can connect us with the deeper story of food – with all its historic and current injustices – and help us think about how we want to shape its future.



GAME BIRD RECIPE FROM MESOPOTAMIA, 1750 BC

Remove the head and feet. Open the body and clean the birds, reserving the gizzards and the pluck. Split the gizzards and clean them. Next rinse the birds and flatten them. Prepare a pot and put birds, gizzards and pluck into it before placing it on the fire. Put the pot back on the fire. Rinse out a pot with freshwater. Place beaten milk into it and place it on the fire.

Take the pot (containing the birds) and drain it. Cut off the inedible parts, then salt the rest, and add them to the vessel with the milk, to which you must add some fat. Also add some rue, which has already been stripped and cleaned. When it has come to a boil, add minced leek, garlic, samidu and onion (but not too much onion).

Rinse crushed grain, then soften it in milk and add to it, as you kneed it, salt, *samidu*, leeks and garlic along with enough milk and oil so that a soft dough will result which you will expose to the heat of the fire for a moment. Then cut it into two pieces.

Take a platter large enough to hold the birds. Place the prepared dough on the bottom of the plate. Be careful that it hangs over the rim of the platter only a little. Place it on top of the oven to cook it.

On the dough which has already been seasoned, place the pieces of the birds as well as the gizzards and pluck. Cover it with the bread lid [which has meanwhile been baked] and send it to the table.

From the Yale University Babylonian Collection

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The Children's Page

Ms. Pickle's Big Day

Words and Pictures by Beverly Ketch

Ms. Pickle saved up for many years while renting an apartment with her housemate, Handsome Jan. She liked him, but sometimes he got on her nerves. That just provided more inspiration to sock away every extra cent to buy a house of her own! Finally, the big day came...



The house seemed so empty! But then along came her friends, Merriweather and Handsome Jan, with a housewarming gift.



Her friends were a big help with the furniture.



Handsome Jan noticed her old green hat. "Do you like it?" Ms. Pickle asked. "It's yours!"



Handsome Jan walked home in the hat.



Ms. Pickle settled down to read the newspaper.



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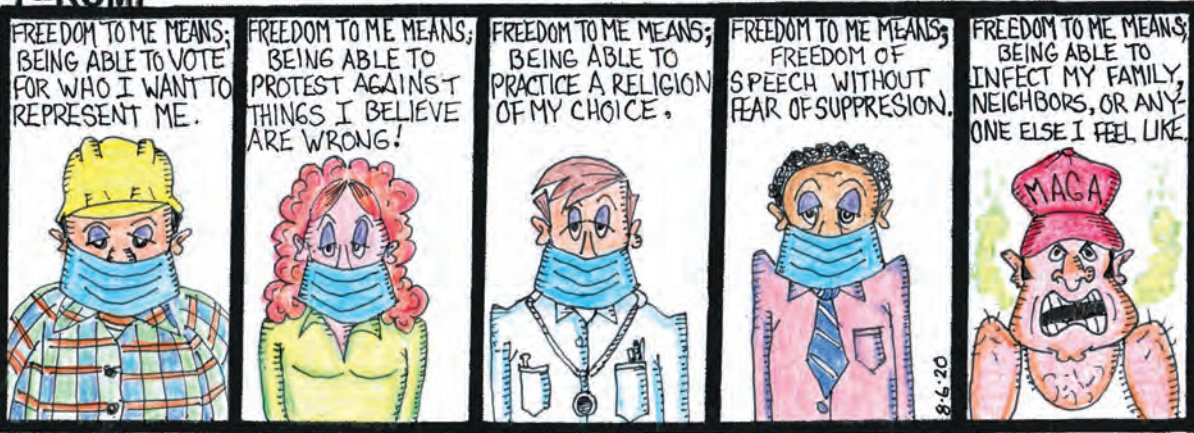
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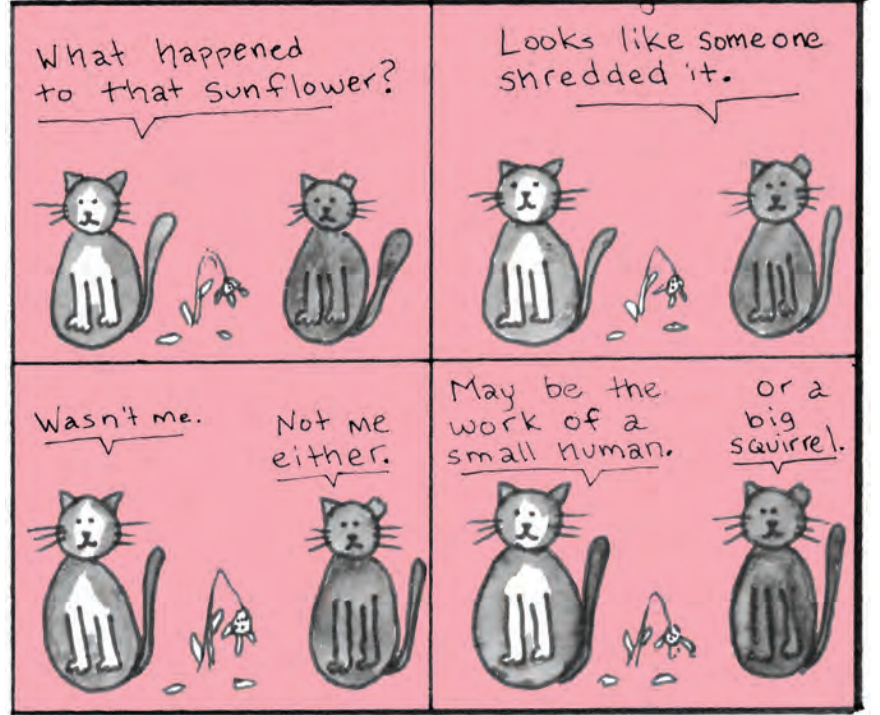
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THE GARDENER'S COMPANION

Summer Trials

By **LESLIE BROWN**

MONTAGUE CITY and WELLS, ME – Since the start of the pandemic, life has become very strange. We were invited to my niece's wedding online, and also wanted to spend time with Ken's brother on his eightieth birthday. We opted to celebrate the brother's birthday because we could spend time with him locally on his special day and could only participate in the wedding on my laptop. Apparently there will be a party next month that we can attend in Vermont to celebrate.

Our annual trip to Maine seemed unlikely, as the governor had initially closed the beaches, but that has now changed. We will need to have a COVID-19 test 72 hours before we travel and bring that report with us. Apparently there was a huge hue and cry over the beaches; Maine relies hugely on the tourist trade for income, especially on the coast.

Wells, Maine is not too far, especially compared to the Camden-Rockland area we often go to. We went to the Rhode Island coast last week with Ken's brother and found the small bit of public sand in Point Judith filled wall-to-wall with people. You could admire the boats and the water better from the second floor of the fish restaurant where we ate.

Wells is one of those seaside towns populated with the homes of working people, with other dwellings owned by seasonal travelers that are often rented to others. There is a large Hannaford's grocery. Shopping there in a normal summer season,

you can hear German, French, and English as well as the Canadians' version of French. It is unlikely to be anywhere near as crowded as we found Point Judith to be.

Our landlady in Wells is renting only to us this season. We rent a small apartment which has been converted from the original screened porch. She and her husband use the main house and also have a cottage in the north woods. According to her, we are easy tenants as we never need anything, so they can come and go as they please. They are also former teachers who give workshops around the state about teaching reading. She can rely on us to take good care of the apartment while they travel or sometimes bring their grandkids up for a few days at the beach.

We have some friends from Herkimer, New York who also come to Maine about the same time as we do, so we may see them as well. Otherwise, we will have lots of time to eat fresh fish, walk the beach, and read.

Somehow, even though we are retired, reading time can be limited while at home since there are always projects which need attention. As all homeowners are aware, there is much to do just to maintain a home, nevermind taking on any renovations. We have ordered new plastic panels to put a full roof on the pergola. When that comes in at the hardware store, we are likely to want to get going on putting that up instead of stashing it in the barn for some undetermined length of time (as it is so easy to do).

The function of vacation is doing just whatever you want whenever you want to. Sleep in if you like. Read a whole book or two. Write to



Last Saturday, the Wampanoag dugout mishoon carved during last summer's Pocumtuck Homelands Festival returned to Barton Cove for its official launch. From left to right, boat master Jonathan James Perry, Leah Perry, Andrew DeVito, and Jared James return after a two-hour trek upriver.

a friend. Walk and walk miles on the beach and around the village. Walk to get what you need and never take the car out of the yard unless you really need to. Watch the phases of the moon over the magic waters of the ocean as the tides rise and fall. The perfect cure-all for whatever may ail you.

Awaiting the Hurricane

We drive into Maine on a sparker of a day, the kind my mother called a "weather breeder." A hurricane is expected midweek with heavy rain on Tuesday or Wednesday, but no one seems concerned. There is something about vacation on the ocean miles away from home that distances anxiety and brings on a carefree, relaxed mood. It is better by far than any tranquilizer.

The ocean is calm and bright. In the midafternoon the tide is out and the sand endless. For whatever combination of reasons – expected weather, costs, fear of travel and, of course, the virus – the number of travelers is less than the usual sum-

mer. However, we did leave early on Saturday morning so the highways were as busy as ever.

After we pick up a few basics and head to our place for a light lunch, we walk across a vast sandy stretch above gentle surf. Other years we've heard French, Canadian, and German on the beach and in the stores, but all we hear this year is English – and the American form, at that. At night the moon is enormous, but the neighborhood quiets down by ten p.m. or so, and we catch a long night of sleep.

In the morning the skies are intermittently cloudy, but we are immeasurably happy to be in Maine and on the ocean, whatever the weather is or will be. We happily take our coffee and muffins to the benches above the beach and watch the endlessly beautiful sea.

We're really on vacation: fresh seafood for lunch, and farm veggies and corn for tonight. We are eating elegantly but well within reason. Later on we also make a stop at Reny's, our favorite Maine de-

partment store, where I find a large Maine coffee mug and a soft beige sleeveless top, all for under fifteen dollars even with the tax.

The air is heavier today and the ocean a bit gray and sullen, but so far no rain. Still, those in the know expect large amounts of rain and winds for the next few days.

But Monday turns out sunny and breezy. At this point it seems unlikely that the hurricane will make it to Maine, and instead will pull offshore.

We'll take it as it comes. We've read that weather forecasting hasn't changed much since WWII despite all the use of radar and all the other scientific gear. Mother Nature can still surprise us.

We prefer to believe we are not as much in charge as we like to think.

Some elements of surprise are not such a bad thing. It keeps us on our toes, and helps us to avoid sloppy assumptions that we know it all. Coping with surprise and change makes us stronger. And who could argue that being stronger and more thoughtful is a bad thing?

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