

The Montague Reporter

YEAR 19 – NO. 4

also serving Irving, Gill, Leverett and Wendell

\$1

EDITOR@MONTAGUEREPORTER.ORG

THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES

NOVEMBER 19, 2020

MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD

Town Hall Hopes to Avoid COVID Enforcement Fines

By JEFF SINGLETON

At a joint meeting of the Montague selectboard and board of health on Monday, town officials revisited the issue of compliance with the state’s new, more stringent orders and advisories for addressing the statewide spike in COVID-19 cases. The town has increased signage in several of the villages encouraging residents to wear masks in public, and hopes to enforce “stay-at-home” orders, limitations on gatherings, and more restricted business hours through “education,” not by imposing fines.

Board of health chair Al Cummings began the meeting by reviewing the state’s recent mandates and

advisories. These include a requirement that residents wear masks in public, even where social distancing is possible, and are advised to stay at home between 10 p.m. and 5 a.m., unless they are working or for such activities as grocery shopping and medical care.

Restaurants must cease serving food at 9:30 p.m., and there are similar restrictions on other commercial businesses. Indoor gatherings in private homes are limited to ten people, and outdoor gatherings to 25.

Cummings said that he had heard that hosts of a child’s birthday party “down east” attended by 30 people had been fined \$500. Selectboard member Chris Boutwell said he

see MONTAGUE page A7

Hydropower License Deadline Looms

By MIKE JACKSON

TURNERS FALLS – “This is our once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to make sure our voices are heard,” Kimberly Noake-MacPhee, a land use and natural resources program manager at the Franklin Regional Council of Governments, said as the federal relicensing of FirstLight Power’s hydroelectric facilities nears its final stage.

“It can’t be said with enough emphasis how important it is that the requirements of the license reflect the needs of the resource – the needs of the river – and the needs of the communities that the river passes through.”

On December 7 FirstLight, the owner of the Turners Falls dam, Cabot Station, and the Northfield Mountain pumped-storage generator, is expected to file its final application with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) to renew its license to use the Connecticut River to generate electricity.

But while a range of local stakeholders, including many environmentalists, are calling for a more restrictive license, FirstLight is making the case that Northfield Mountain in particular can help the state meet its climate-change goals and transition to a “decarbonized energy future” free of fossil fuels.



The dam at Turners Falls.

“We’re absolutely all in on that initiative,” Len Greene, FirstLight’s director of government affairs and communications, told the Reporter this week. “We as a company fully believe that the future is going to be decarbonized – we believe we have to do it.”

Last week the company announced a bundle of new contracts with 18 municipal electric utilities in

see HYDRO page A5

PROPER VENTILATION



ALISSA ALTERI SHEA PHOTO

Volunteers build one of six outdoor classroom spaces at Leverett Elementary School last Saturday. See page A8 for more!

Compost Cooperative Turns its Attention To Stable Housing For Worker-Owners

BY LILY REAVIS

FRANKLIN COUNTY – The Compost Cooperative, a nonprofit organization based in Greenfield, has worked for the past two years to divert food waste from landfills and provide jobs to individuals coming out of jail in western Massachusetts. Now, the co-op is expanding, with the goal of purchasing a multi-unit building to provide affordable housing to its employees and members.

The Cooperative is run by three co-worker-owners: Trendera Loftin, Wolf Valentin, and Revan Schendler, each of which have been impacted by the prison system in different ways. Through their individual experiences, the three have come together to form a “local economic infrastructure that is socially just, economically sustainable, and environmentally sound,” according to the business’s website.

Loftin, moved by the co-op’s dedication to social justice and environmental care, decided to move into a worker-owner position from a previous job in March. “I have been a part of the daydreaming of this business for a couple years, mostly because of a relationship with some of its members and my deep commitment to re-envisioning ways to support folks who have been impacted by poverty, addiction, mental health issues, disability among other forms of marginalization, which are often

see COOPERATIVE page A4



REVAN SCHENDLER PHOTO

Cooperative member-owner Trendera Loftin shovels compost.

Superior Court Judge Rules Against Wendell Forest Alliance

By JEFF SINGLETON

WENDELL – A long battle to challenge a logging project at a portion of Wendell State Forest appears to be coming to an end.

In a state Superior Court ruling dated on November 5, Associate Justice Richard Carey finally dismissed a lawsuit brought by the Wendell State Forest Alliance (WSFA) against a logging project in that forest that was completed just under a year ago. The WSFA opposed the project since its inception and brought a lawsuit in August 2019 naming officials at the state Department of

Conservation and Recreation (DCR).

The suit, which claimed that DCR violated a wide range of state laws and withheld information about the project’s impact, was opposed by the state Attorney General, who represented DCR.

The WSFA issued a strongly-worded press statement on Monday under the headline “Judge Rules That the Public Has No Say In Decisions Regarding Public Lands And Climate Impact.”

“This decision was a grave judicial failure to set precedent,” the group’s statement read. “Justice

see FOREST page A5

Eviction Backlog Grinds Through Housing Court

By SARAH ROBERTSON

FRANKLIN COUNTY – A dense backlog of eviction cases in the western Massachusetts court system could lead to long delays for newly filed cases.

“We haven’t scheduled any of the new cases,” Western Housing Court clerk-magistrate Michael Doherty told the Reporter this week. He added that at least 100 recently filed eviction cases have yet to be scheduled due to the backlog.

For six months between April and October, housing courts in Massachusetts shut down following an order by Governor Charlie Baker to halt all “non-essential” evictions.

The moratorium expired on October 17, and since then at least 69 “summary processes” have been filed in the Western Housing Court, the regional system that serves Franklin, Hampshire, Hampden, and Berkshire counties. The same judge, clerk magistrate, and housing specialist oversee all of the division’s cases, with all court activities currently taking place virtually over busy Zoom calls.

Many eviction cases now moving through the court began before the pandemic. According to court clerk Christina Thompson, there were about 800 eviction cases in the pipeline before the statewide shutdown.

Massachusetts, like much of the

see HOUSING page A4

ERVING SELECTBOARD

Blackout Hits Town-Run Plant; ERESO Changes Sludge Plan

By KATIE NOLAN

During Sunday night’s windstorm, electric power at the Erving inside wastewater treatment facility went out. The POTW#1 plant’s 45-year-old Caterpillar diesel generator turned on, and then burned out, filling the treatment facility building with smoke.

Treatment plant superintendent and selectboard member Peter Sanders said that as he drove to the plant to check the generator, he saw smoke pouring from the building, making it look as if it were on fire.

Firefighter and selectboard chair

Jacob Smith said there were no flames, just smoke. At the time of the call to the treatment plant, firefighters were already responding to downed trees on power lines. According to fire chief Philip Wonka, five firefighters responded around 11:30 p.m. and worked to vent smoke from the building for about 90 minutes.

As the main generator failed, a backup generator came online. Wonka said maintaining power at the treatment plant is critical to ensure that untreated sewage does not spill into the Millers River. Sanders reported that no spills occurred.

see ERVING page A6



No Newspaper Next Week (Gobble Gobble)

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The Montague Reporter

“The Voice of the Villages”

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Disorientation

Grosse Pointe, Michigan (population 5,421) is one of several tiny municipalities carved out of the side of Detroit (population 670,031) on the shoreline of Lake St. Clair. It is 93.2% White, and its median household income is \$100,688 a year, whereas Detroit is 82.7% Black and its median household income is \$31,283.

It’s a stark disparity, and it gets worse. Grosse Pointe is flanked by four similar little boroughs named Grosse Pointe Park, Grosse Pointe Farms, Grosse Pointe Shores, and Grosse Pointe Woods.

You probably already get the picture, just knowing a thing or two about our country. But still. From Wikipedia:

In 1960, it was revealed that realtors in suburban Grosse Pointe ranked prospective home buyers by using a point system with categories such as race, nationality, occupation, and “degree of swarthiness.” Southern Europeans, Jews, and Poles required higher rankings than Northwestern European people in order to move into the community, while Asians and Blacks were excluded from living in Grosse Pointe altogether....

The five Grosse Pointes form a school district, the Grosse Pointe Public School System, and they do not participate in school choice within Wayne County. The district’s schools are consistently rated among the very finest in the state.

Last month, in the midst of a heated race for the Grosse Pointe Board of Education, an ethics complaint was filed against a woman named Monica Palmer. Palmer is the founder of a PAC named Taxpayers for Grosse Pointe Schools, which gathered dark money under a 501(c)4 tax status and used it to fund candidates for the school board.

Palmer is also the chairperson of the Wayne County Board of Canvassers, which is responsible for certifying election results; the complaint, as outlined in an October 30 article in the *Detroit Free Press*, is that Palmer therefore had a conflict of interest as someone also backing candidates within the same election, and shielding donor names from public scrutiny.

That complaint has yet to be addressed, but it is certainly interesting background to what happened next. On Tuesday night, Palmer and her fellow Republican on the four-member Board of Canvassers, William Hartmann, refused to

certify the votes from one city in Wayne County: Detroit.

The pair cited marginal discrepancies in the vote tallies in some of Detroit’s precincts – reportedly totaling 357 out of a quarter million votes – for balking, despite discrepancies of similar proportion in other towns in the county. In the midst of a hot (and in some circles contested) national election, their action instantly catapulted them into the national limelight.

Responding to an intense public outcry, the pair caved in and certified the votes, though they are now attempting to reverse that decision, and have signed affidavits testifying that their Democratic colleagues on the Board bullied them into acquiescing.

“Wow!” our president Tweeted. “Michigan just refused to certify the election results! Having courage is a beautiful thing. The USA stands proud.”

Assuming Trump will eventually concede and leave office – his fellow party members are supposedly whispering to journalists that he is expected to give up sometime in December – the country will likely continue to be challenged by an extremely belligerent corps of his supporters.

It seems unlikely that a consensus reality will emerge on the other side anytime soon. A more traditional institutional order is reasserting itself day by day, but amid a constant haze of doubt; the fact that a number of near-monopoly social media platforms decided this month to begin openly refereeing truth-claims will take us years to fully wrap our heads around.

It’s no longer enough to assume that in the long run, material reality will simply prove itself.

In the Dakotas – now statistically the *global epicenter* of COVID-19 transmission – healthcare workers are reporting that patients who are convinced the virus is not real are dying from the disease it causes.

And here in Franklin County, don’t forget, there is a small but proud cluster of support for a US Senate candidate who asserts that the virus was developed to soften us up for the vaccine, which will be a tool of social control. He lost his primary, but in every one of our coverage towns, voters wrote him in on the general election ballots.

What are we going to do with these poor souls? How, and why, have so many joined their ranks?



Amy Chilton attracts the attention of a giant slug while painting colorful shapes onto a wall at the Nova Motorcycles shop on Second Street in Turners Falls.

CORRECTION

Last week’s article *Insects Downstream Wait on Dam Relicensing* (page A1) contained an error. Adult Puritan tiger beetles, we said, “hunt their prey at night, attacking smaller organisms with swift and powerful jaws.”

Our reporter misread the report! Puritan tiger beetles hunt mostly during the daytime, not at night, although research suggests they can also be active at night.

We apologize to our readers, particularly any smaller organisms who may have blithely ventured out in the daytime along sandy river banks, not anticipating the terror that quietly awaited them there.

GUEST EDITORIAL

By GREGORY BALSEWICZ

TURNERS FALLS – This coming Wednesday, November 25, marks the 185th anniversary of the birth of Andrew Carnegie. Carnegie, who emigrated to America when he was thirteen years old, was born in Dunfermline, Scotland. His industrious nature involved him in many business opportunities that eventually made him a very wealthy man.

The history of America’s Gilded Age is one of self-indulgent excess. While the robber barons of the time were building themselves “cottages” like those in Newport, Rhode Island and living like aristocrats, Carnegie strove to give back to the people who made his corporations profitable. In America alone he endowed 1,689 libraries.

His philanthropy wasn’t limited to public libraries. A firm believer in higher education, he helped the working man better himself through self-education. Carnegie Mellon University and the Carnegie Trust for the Universities of Scotland were founded to support this mission. Not only were public libraries also funded, but also the Carnegie Institution for Science, the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, the Carnegie Corporation of New York, and the Carnegie Hero Fund – and let’s not forget that acoustic jewel of a concert hall in New York City: Carnegie Hall.

The Turners Falls Carnegie Library is a tribute to this man and his generosity. It opened in 1906 on the corner of Seventh Street and Avenue A. This institution

Letter to the Editors

Congrats BMX Champs

“Putting Yourself Out There” by Shyanne & Savanna Cortis and their BMX triumphs and persistence in competing is fantastic! What commitment to a sport – in spite of the limited number of female riders.

welcoming and encouraging other young women to compete. Kudos to the Cortis’ parents for their support. The article was informative and well written, so kudos also to TFHS’s Journalism teachers.

I was impressed by these two committed BMX competitors –

Mary Feeney
Turners Falls

Carnegie’s Legacy Endures

was an important resource for residents and emigrant mill workers who lived in town. The Carnegie gift towards the building of the new library was \$13,500, with the town providing \$7,000 for the land purchase and other associated charges. From the Annual Report for the year ending January 3, 1908, it is noted that the library had 814 registered patrons.

114 years later, the library still provides not only books and periodicals for its patrons, but also DVDs and CDs. During operating hours it’s been quite a busy hub of social interaction, as the librarians have helped patrons navigate the modern technologies available for their use such as computers and copy machines. Weekly programs for children have also been offered, bringing new generations to the library.

Recently the pandemic had brought a state-mandated closure to all non-essential businesses. While many missed the C/W Mars interlibrary loan service and the vast Commonwealth Catalog, it gave the director and staff some time to think about safety measures once the green light was given to reopen.

For readers interested in learning more about Andrew Carnegie, here’s a link to his Wikipedia page: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andrew_Carnegie. Today’s titans of commercial exchange could not have a better model for themselves and their corporate decisions than that of Andrew Carnegie.

This Wednesday, let us say a few words of thanks for the man, his vision, and his generosity that helped build a better America for us all.

Published weekly on Thursdays.
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No paper fourth week of November,
or the Thursday closest to 12/25.*

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By NINA ROSSI

Remember, there will be **no newspaper next week** due to the holiday. We hope everyone has a safe Thanksgiving, and that you are able to connect in some way with the ones that you care about and who care for you, whether in person or at a distance.

Next week is when our special **Wrapping Paper Edition** is printed! We are excited to see all the beautiful designs manifested in newsprint, and eager to get them to you. Our online store should go live next week on montaguereporter.org and you may find them in stock at Food City, Red Fire North, Montague Village Store, Wendell Country Store, Leverett Village Coop, and Upinngil.

You may also buy them at our office at 177 Avenue A on the first three Saturdays after Thanksgiving from 9 a.m. to noon. Please have the exact change or a check, we cannot process cards here. The issue sells for \$5 apiece, with a special deal of five for \$20.

For a list of **food resources** and regular free meals in our county, including Thanksgiving meals, please visit this page: bit.ly/FCFoodResourcesList. There are lists of food pantries, meal distribution sites, meals-for-kids locations, and of course, some Thanksgiving resources for next Thursday, November 26, courtesy of Community Action and the Hunger Task Force.

The Communities That Care Coalition sends out a newsletter with lots of helpful information on available local services, and if you would like to have this land in your inbox periodically, please email ilana@frcog.org.

This Saturday, November 21 between the hours of 10 a.m. and 1:30

p.m., the Carnegie Library in Turners Falls is giving out **fairy house making kits** for children and teens. These take-and-make bags are filled with natural and recycled materials to complete the project. Call (413) 863-3214 with questions.

Also on Saturday, stop by the Great Falls Harvest Market at 109 Avenue A between noon and 3 p.m. to visit the **Free Food Table** for free produce, soup and applesauce courtesy of the Great Falls Apple Corps foragers. (See article, page B8.) If you have extra produce to donate, get in touch with the Corps at greatfallsapplecorps@gmail.com.

Governor Baker has **issued a new order** that requires all people in Massachusetts to wear face masks or cloth face covering in all public places. This includes anywhere, inside or outdoors, that is open to the public. The new order will also apply to situations where it is possible to be farther away than six feet from others, and when in carpools with members of more than one household. Parks, bike paths, etc. are all public places where you must wear a mask.

This Sunday, November 22 from 2 p.m. to 3:30 p.m., join Massachusetts Beat Poet Laureate **Paul Richmond** of Wendell and seven of Human Error Publishing's new authors as they read their work at a virtual event. Find a link on www.nature-culture.net.

Through next Wednesday, November 25, there is **free admission to the Wadsworth Athenaeum** Art Museum in Hartford, Connecticut. They have an excellent collection of art, from ancient to contemporary times, and are allowing visitors on a timed schedule. If you haven't been there before, this is a great way to spend two or three

hours. Visit their website to pick a time at my.thewadsworth.org

RiverCulture, the 14-year-old creative economy program for the Town of Montague, announces the holiday campaign **It Takes 5 Villages**. The campaign offers ten practical ways to support local business, with the RiverCulture website acting as a central source of information about in-person and online shopping.

Restaurants, shops, independent artists and craftspeople, nonprofits, as well as places to buy gourmet food items, specialty beverages, home goods, and beauty services will be listed at www.turnersfallsriverculture.org. The campaign has benefited from a generous donation by Northeast Solar Design.

If you have ever written a **letter to an inmate** through the Great Falls Books Through Bars organization, they may be holding on to return correspondence for you. Get in touch with them to see if your name is on the list of volunteers who have received a reply from someone on the inside: gfbooksthroughbars@riseup.net.

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Franklin County has put out the word that "big brothers" are especially needed right now. Even high school students can serve as mentors. Go to their website to see about getting involved: bbbs-fc.org.

Photographer Bill Rowley offers a demonstration of the equipment and techniques for setting up products to photograph, for selling online, in a free Zoom workshop called **Lighting for the Internet**. The event will take place on Saturday, December 5 at 2 p.m. through the Salmon Falls Gallery, where he currently has an exhibit called *Monochrome, Mon Amour*.

The information will be especially useful to artists who want to photograph their own work for internet sale or posting online. Rowley's own exhibit features pictures of growing things that look lit from within. It will be on view until December 31. For more information on the workshop or exhibit, visit SalmonFallsGallery.com or call (413) 625-9833.

You may purchase creative, **whimsical handmade ornaments** made by Cancer Connection volunteers at the Green River farmstand on 5 Conway Drive, Greenfield. All proceeds will benefit the Connection, which provides services to people with cancer and their families. They are in the middle of a capital campaign to raise \$250,000, with \$74,000 to go.

The Salmon Falls Gallery in Shelburne Falls announces a **fund-raising art show** for the Food Bank Farm. "Artists for Food: Small Works under \$100" features small works made by some of the regular artists at the gallery specifically for the fundraiser, with 25% of each sale donated to the Food Bank Farm.

Artists for Food can be seen through the end of the year at the gallery Thursday through Monday, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. and online at SalmonFallsGallery.com.

The LAVA Center presents an **online short play festival**, "Facing the Future: Climate Change Theater." In plays penned by 13 playwrights from three continents, characters ranging from cerulean warblers, insects, brown bull catfish, and fire to a wide age range of humans — plus a couple of time-traveling aliens — confront questions of our collective survival.

The plays are divided into two programs, which can be viewed Friday and Saturday, December 4 and 5, at 7:30 p.m. Each is followed by a post-performance talk-back session. The entire set can be viewed on demand for three days beginning Sunday, December 6, and a finale viewing of all the plays scheduled for 7 p.m. on Tuesday is followed by another talk-back.

The plays are written by Lindsay Adams, Sara Becker, Kay Bullard, Patricia Crosby, Colette Cullen, Stephen Fruchtman, Nina Gross, Jan Maher, Rex McGregor, Michael Nix, Candace Perry, Vanessa Query and Karen Shapiro Miller. Twenty-eight actors from as near as Greenfield and as far as Ireland and New Zealand bring it all to life via Zoom.

Send your local briefs to editor@montaguereporter.org.

Students Get Ready for Modified Hunger March

By IZZY VACHULA-CURTIS

TURNERS FALLS — Some of you may remember that last year, Turners Falls High School and Great Falls Middle School students participated in Monte's March, which is a 43-mile walk from downtown Springfield to downtown Greenfield to raise money and awareness for hunger and food insecurity.

We walked with Monte for eight miles, through Sunderland and Amherst, and ended up raising around \$4,000 for the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts.

These are such important issues, and especially this year, since COVID-19 has caused a lot of people to lose their jobs, and made food less accessible.

GFMS and TFHS students are once again participating in Monte's March to raise money for the Food Bank, but like everything else this year, the march looks a bit different. The team from our schools has



Simpler times: Reporter Izzy Vachula-Curtis (left) and fellow students Jill Reynolds, Isabel Garcia, and Dylan Burnett participated in the 2019 Monte's March.

created our own "Masked Montague Mini-March," which will take place next Tuesday, November 24. Around 25 students, and five

staff members, are participating. Jennifer Luciano, the seventh-grade Social Studies teacher at GFMS, and Jessica Vachula-Curtis, English

and Special Ed teacher at TFHS, have planned out an eight-mile route around Turners Falls.

We set a goal this year to raise \$5,000 for the Food Bank. For every dollar raised or donated, the Food Bank is now able to provide four meals for those in need, which is so incredible!

I'm super excited for the March — it's such an important event that benefits an amazing organization. If you would like to donate to my fundraising page, you can look up tinyurl.com/IVCMarch, or go to the Food Bank website at www.foodbankwma.org and donate directly to them.

Thank you so much to Ms. Luciano and Ms. Vachula-Curtis for organizing this. I hope everyone participating in either the Mini-March or Monte's March has a fantastic time!

Izzy Vachula-Curtis is a ninth grader at Turners Falls High School.

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HOUSING from page A1

country, was already experiencing a housing crisis prior to the pandemic, said Debra McLaughlin, coordinator of the Opioid Task Force. According to data analyzed by the Princeton Eviction Lab, an average of 43 people were evicted every day in Massachusetts in 2016.

"The lifting of the moratorium is having an impact in our rural region," McLaughlin said, "but people are coming together to address this need and trying to share resources and information that could be of help."

The Opioid Task Force, a coalition coordinated by the Franklin County Sheriff's Office, is holding a virtual meeting with housing specialists today, November 19, to discuss resources available to struggling renters, homeowners, and landlords. Sheriff Christopher Donelan, Mary Klaes of the Franklin County Justice Center, and managing director of Community Legal Aid Jennifer Dieringer will give their reports on the state of evictions in Franklin County so far.

A separate federal moratorium, ordered by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), is due to expire De-

cember 31. Tenants may defer eviction by filing an affidavit proving that they have sought government assistance to pay rent, and attempted to make partial payments.

"The CDC moratorium is challengeable," Doherty explained. "What we're finding is most tenants don't meet everything under the declaration, because they haven't made attempts to do a partial payment."

During the past month, the Sheriff's Office has served 40 initial notices to quit and 16 "summary processes summons and complaints," which invite tenants to appear in court. Two "notices of scheduled eviction" have been served in the county since the pandemic began. The first, which was issued during the moratorium, concerned a tenant who was not protected by the order due to a drug conviction.

The second stems from a case which entered the court in October 2019 and was mediated twice last winter. The Greenfield tenants agreed to leave or pay back rent, but stayed after the pandemic hit. An eviction was scheduled on November 10 for this Thursday, but on Wednesday morning, according to Doherty, the case was extended

to January 4 after the tenants filed a CDC affidavit.

McLaughlin said that local organizations including the Franklin Regional Council of Governments and local housing authorities are asking for more time to review eviction cases and help tenants sign up for rental assistance programs. It can take up to eight weeks to process an application, leaving tenants at risk of eviction with a long, anxious wait before they know whether assistance is coming their way.

"It's very complicated for people to amass all the different forms that they need to be considered for a variety of housing programs," McLaughlin added. "The waitlist can be very long."

A number of landlords who have filed to evict tenants in Franklin County own multiple multi-unit buildings. Leisure Woods Estates, a mobile home park in Orange, has sent 11 notices to quit to renters at their complex of over 152 home lots. Following a November 12 article in the *Montague Reporter*, the Orange mobile home park rent control board agreed to investigate the situation.

"I have been made aware of the evictions and in my capacity as a

member of the Rent Control Board, I have requested more information from Leisure Woods in order to determine if and how we can become involved in the process," Orange selectboard chair Ryan Mailloux told the *Reporter*. "My top priority lies in protecting the citizens of Orange and ensuring we, as a community, are always looking out for them and their best interests."

The town's mobile home park rent control bylaw, established at a special town meeting in 1986, does not require the board to review all potential evictions, but says it "may regulate evictions of tenants at mobile home parks," and "may issue orders which shall be defense to an action of summary process for possession." The residents of Leisure Woods are primarily elderly and low-income.

"When someone loses their home for any reason, it's so disruptive and traumatic," McLaughlin said. "We also know that there's been a chronic shortage of affordable housing anyways before the pandemic.... The challenge we're seeing is there's not enough supply to meet the demand, in terms of people's price points."



COOPERATIVE from page A1

the folks who end up getting incarcerated," Loftin said. "I think our country has developed a system that has criminalized being poor, being Black or brown, being somebody with mental health issues or disabilities. And so I feel really, really committed to coming up with alternative systems, because I don't believe that incarceration is the answer."

Soil to Grow In

The co-op works to divert food and natural waste from residential and business properties with a mission of environmental and racial justice. This is accomplished through three key actions. The first of these, which has been a constant since the organization was founded in 2018, is providing residential food scrap pick-up services. At this stage, two individuals who work for the co-op travel to homes throughout Greenfield, Gill, and Turners Falls once per week to collect compostable materials. These are brought to Martin's Farm in Greenfield, which produces large batches of mulch and compost for other local gardeners to purchase.

"Food scraps are a key material to what we collect, but we are able to divert waste from natural resources as well, so yard scraps, working with the dispensaries to compost their grow material," Loftin added.

The Compost Cooperative also partners with a number of businesses to help compost food and natural materials, which accounts for its second key action. Loftin explained that most of these businesses are "restaurants, dispensaries, and other institutions that have committed to diverting their food scraps or their compostable materials."

Among the businesses partnered with the co-op is the Franklin County House of Correction, which participates in the composting program and also provides opportunities for incarcerated individuals to become involved with the Compost Cooperative through a pre-release program. "There's a lot of us who have been impacted by incarceration," Loftin said. "There are currently three worker-owners, and all three of us have been impacted by incarceration."

Although having been impacted by incarceration is not a requirement for working with the Compost Cooperative, every member on the payroll has been. The three worker-owners are joined by ten "apprentices," who recently were released from jail or prison.

Space to Live In

The third action, which is also the newest and most large-scale project the co-op is currently working on, is a drive to secure safe and affordable housing for members and individuals in the process of re-entering the community after being incarcerated.

"We're very concerned that one of the biggest issues that folks face when coming out of jail or



Compost Cooperative worker-owners Wolf Valentin, Revan Schendler, and Tenda Loftin.

prison is not only access to living-wage, meaningful work, but is also access to safe and affordable housing," Loftin said. She added that homelessness can be a major roadblock for incarcerated people getting out of jail, as listing an address is required in order to be released from jail or prison.

After two years of providing one-on-one mentoring and assistance to recently-incarcerated employees, the worker-owners realized that many landlords would not rent to people with records, even with steady employment and character references. Since nine out of ten of the organization's apprentices – employees recently out of jail – have experienced homelessness or housing instability, they decided to solve the problem directly.

The worker-owners set out to secure a multi-unit building to use for employee housing in Greenfield in late August. Since the initiative was launched, however, the group has had difficulty finding a suitable property within their location and budget restrictions. For that reason, the organization has partnered with Easthampton's Oxbow Design Build and other local nonprofit organizations to explore the options of renovating or ethically building their own property.

Loftin hopes that the shift in focus will lead to "envisioning a larger movement of what would happen if one of the ways that cooperatives in the area showed their commitment, not only to cooperative structures and cooperative economics, but also to the benefits and successes of cooperative housing." By expanding their network and engaging with organizations across the Pioneer Valley, the Compost Cooperative believes they will better be able to meet the needs of their own employees and of other recently-incarcerated individuals.

In order to sustain their search for fair housing for members, the Compost Cooperative has set up a GoFundMe with a goal of raising \$400,000 by April 2021. As of Nov. 16, the fund had raised \$27,064.

Onward and Upward

By combining food waste diversion efforts with the other components of the co-op's actions, the worker-owners hope that they can create a larger movement around mutual cooperation in the Pioneer Valley.

The organization is still actively fundraising and looking to expand its network, both internally and externally, and currently hiring apprentice worker-owners who have experienced incarceration. The members hope to focus specifically on bringing women, LGBT individuals, and people of color into the business.

"Looking ahead one year from now, what I would love to see the Compost Cooperative doing is successfully providing residential and commercial pickup in Holyoke, but also onboarding one to two formerly-incarcerated Holyoke-based worker-owners," Loftin said. "And I would love to see the Compost Cooperative, in collaboration with other co-ops, having purchased a multi-unit building to house co-op members."

Whether that building comes into reality through purchase, renovation, or construction, the co-op is determined to make affordable and safe housing for previously incarcerated members a reality. The drive has already reached unprecedented levels through the company's expanding network of local co-ops, including new partners like Oxbow and Neighbor to Neighbor in Holyoke.

"It's really addressing some of those core issues: meaningful living-wage work which, without it, most folks can't stay out. And now, this housing component," Loftin said.

"I have been really drawn to this business because it is not only addressing those core issues, but it is also addressing the climate crisis that we're in. It's really working to divert nearly a million pounds of food scraps every year. And that is a beautiful thing to me."



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Carey could have chosen to expand legal interpretations of either ‘environmental damage’ or ‘personal harm’ and thereby bring the state’s court system into the age of Global Climate Emergency. ‘He declined to step beyond the outdated bounds of legal precedent,’ co-plaintiff Jim Thornley remarked.”

A spokesperson for DCR applauded the ruling in an email to the *Reporter*. “[T]he Commonwealth will continue its efforts to address climate change,” the statement said, “by significantly reducing greenhouse gas emissions, while also fostering healthy forests within the state parks system to increase resiliency and safeguard important habitat.”

The agency argued, as it has previously, that its forest management practices increase “forest resilience to climate change impacts” because “new growth is critical to ensure the forest survives for ages to come.”

The agency also defended its public input process, noting that such input included “a public comment period, a public meeting, and a public tour of the location of the project.”

Judge Carey’s November 5 ruling began by citing legal precedent to argue that the WSFA lawsuit was now “moot” because the logging project had already been completed. “Even where an agency action allegedly resulted in ‘irreparable’ damage to the environment, the plaintiff’s action nonetheless became moot once the action had been carried out,” he wrote.

Carey recalled that the Alliance had been aware of the DCR project in 2016, and filed a “notice of intent” to challenge it in October 2018, but “inexplicably” failed to file its suit until August 2019, “less than three months before the Project was completed.”

The judge went on to suggest that “although some future DCR project may be susceptible to challenge under [state law], the completed Project in this case no longer is.”

At the center of Carey’s ruling was the argument that WSFA did not have “standing” to bring suit against violations of statute because the courts have consistently ruled that “these [legal] requirements are owed to the public at large, not to the plaintiffs especially.” In another section of the ruling the judge stated that “although the statutes set forth a clear policy to preserve public lands and an administrative procedure for ensuring compliance with that policy, the Legislature did not see fit to provide a mechanism for private individuals to seek enforcement...”

Although the ruling focused on the Alliance’s lack of standing, in a number of cases Carey also rejected the substance of the plaintiff’s claims. For example, he accepted DCR’s argument that the agency did not withhold information on greenhouse gas impacts of the logging, because DCR was not required to measure those impacts. He

also rejected the WSFA’s claim that the agency had violated the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act because, he found, the Act did not apply to forest management.

The ruling strongly implied that the remedy sought by the Alliance lies with the legislature, and with a lobbying effort to change relevant statutes, including those which seemingly bar the kind of legal challenge the Alliance attempted.

Co-plaintiff Glen Ayers, although critical of the decision, appeared to partially endorse its basic premise. “It is a sad day for the Commonwealth when the courts determine that citizens have absolutely no rights under the law to protect our public lands,” he stated in the WSFA press release. “Obviously the laws must change.”

According to WSFA member Miriam Kurland, “Something is terribly wrong with our system when no authentic procedure is given for the public to be heard and considered.”

“We’re not done yet,” WSFA spokesperson Gia Neswald told the *Reporter*. “The judge pointed to the legislature, and implied we should ask them to fix it.” She said the WSFA might need to hire a lawyer or even ask the Attorney General’s office for assistance in fashioning legislation.

“It’s a tricky process,” she said. “But no agency decision should be unappealable.”

Anti-logging activists have also recently proposed legislation that would virtually eliminate logging on all state-owned lands. Last year a bill to prohibit logging in state forests was initiated by a number of legislators, including Rep. Susanah Whipps of Athol.

A substitute for this controversial bill, which was opposed by the Wendell selectboard and was not endorsed by legislature’s agriculture committee, would have established a commission to review state forest management policy. That bill eventually stalled in the joint committee on rules, and was eventually dropped by Whipps and others critics of logging, who said they felt the proposed commission would not include sufficient representation from climate scientists and environmentalists.

DCR spokesperson Troy Wall told the *Reporter* last summer that the agency will soon be undertaking a ten-year evaluation of its forest management policies. The most recent version of its “Management Criteria” for state parks and forests, which was the basis for the Wendell logging project, was published in 2012.

Wall told the *Reporter* DCR will hold “statewide listening sessions” in 2021 and 2022 on the criteria. This could prove to be a venue where the WSFA and its supporters will again make the case against all logging, though whether this is the group’s current direction is not clear.



HYDRO from page A1

Massachusetts, as well as two in Rhode Island and one in Vermont, totaling 200 million kilowatt-hours per year. The deal, brokered by Energy New England, was touted as a step toward meeting state targets for reduced emissions. “The new contract with FirstLight will further improve the munis’ carbon profile to an average of 34 percent below the state average,” the company’s announcement read.

In July FirstLight’s board of directors elected as chair Phil Giudice, a geologist and member of the Union of Concerned Scientists who served as Undersecretary of Energy during the Deval Patrick administration.

In a summer press release, Giudice touted Northfield Mountain – which stores energy from the New England power grid by pumping water from the river to a hilltop reservoir, and releases it by returning that water to the river – as a means to “accelerate our transition” away from fossil fuels by “harness[ing]... the gigawatts of offshore wind now under development.”

Paring the Mountain with offshore wind “is something we’ve been focusing on quite a bit over the last couple years with some of our interests on Beacon Hill,” said Greene.

“We are the largest hydropower company in Massachusetts, so we spend quite a bit of time trying to work with the policymakers to ensure that hydropower continues to be an important part of the climate-change initiative.”

A week later, the company also announced it had hired as CEO Alicia Barton, who also served in a number of environmental offices under the Patrick administration before leading two economic development agencies, the Massachusetts Clean Energy Center and the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority.

In her own announcement, Barton called Northfield Mountain “our region’s largest zero-emissions energy storage facility,” and “uniquely positioned to drive accelerated deployment of renewable energy and storage on the New England electric grid.”

“I have spent my entire career dedicated to fighting climate change and building a clean energy future,” Barton wrote.

Into the Arena

FirstLight is burnishing its environmentalist credentials at a pivotal moment. After its final application is submitted to FERC, the company must secure a “401 Water Quality Certification” – named after Section 401 of the Clean Water Act – from the state of Massachusetts.

“We’re trying to make sure that the state is aware of this relicensing, and what a big deal it is for the region,” said Andrea Donlon, a river steward at the Connecticut River Conservancy. “We’ve been looking at it as a real opportunity to get a better balance between impacts on the

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river system, and recreation, versus power generation. There is a need for the whole country to shift toward renewable power, but hydropower does have a lot of impact.”

In August seven members of the western Massachusetts legislative delegation, including senator Jo Comerford and representative Natalie Blais, sent a letter to the commissioner of the state DEP, the energy secretary, and the governor drawing attention to the relicensing.

“All communities south of the FirstLight hydropower operations will be affected in some measure,” the legislators wrote. “We respectfully request that the strongest set of operating conditions, mitigation obligations, investments in public recreation, and protections for the cultural, historic and archeological resources be negotiated in the pending relicensing...”

The delegation’s letter made a number of specific recommendations, including “Ecologically-based flows below Turners Falls Dam into the Connecticut River that support all native and migratory species,” and “Requirement for Northfield Mountain to use only renewable energy for its pumping requirements.”

Greene, FirstLight’s government affairs director, expressed some puzzlement at the latter request. “When you pump the upper pond full, you use power off of the grid,” he told the *Reporter*, “and whatever’s on the grid at that particular period of time is the electricity that you use.”

On October 21 Alicia Barton, the company’s new CEO, sent a letter in response. “Throughout the relicensing process FirstLight has sought to solicit and address the many and often competing uses and visions for the Connecticut River,” she wrote, “and we will continue to work towards a balanced solution for fish passage, flow regimes, and recreation improvements.”

Barton responded to the recommendation that Northfield Mountain be required to store only renewable energy by “future legislation that would enable... pairing” of pumped-storage hydropower with “large-scale renewables.”

The CEO also pointed the legislators to a section in the state’s pending climate bill, H.4933, calling for Massachusetts to undertake a feasibility study for “optimizing” energy storage on the grid and to examine existing “barriers” – and potential “incentives” – for storage facilities. The bill is currently pending reconciliation between the chambers.

Holding Stakes

According to Donlon, Barton has been “making the rounds, meeting individually with the stakeholders” in the relicensing process, including the Conservancy. “She definitely knows how to speak the language, and that can potentially be an asset,” Donlon said. “The last one I had absolutely no contact with.”

“[FRCOG has] been advocating for a comprehensive river management plan to be part of the new license,” said Noake-MacPhee. “We feel that in exchange for using the river, a public resource, to generate electricity – which we obviously need, but which is very profitable for the company – they have a responsibility to steward this public resource.”

“We have to keep in mind that this license is going to be valid for 30 to 50 years,” she added.

Noake-MacPhee said FRCOG is “focused on our communities’ concerns about recreation, access, and amenities – economic development opportunities related to outdoor recreation, and the local and regional economy in Franklin County.”

Greene told the *Reporter* that after FirstLight submits its final application, the company intends to restart settlement negotiations among the stakeholders, which have reportedly stalled and discontinued.

Once FERC reviews the application, suggests terms for a new license, and calls for an environmental impact statement, a new round of public comment begins and a one-year clock set for the state to issue its water quality certification.

“The process can obviously continue much longer than that, depending on whether or not we reach settlement with the stakeholders,” Greene said. “It still might be quite some time before there’s an actual final license submitted, but we’re hopeful that we can actually reach settlement before then.”

“If we don’t,” Greene added, “more often than not, there is litigation that happens with various pieces of the license that FERC issues.”

“The longer it takes to get a new license, the better it is economically for [FirstLight],” said Donlon. “The current license is about as good a deal as they’re going to be able to get.... When Northfield Mountain’s original license went in, the Clean Water Act hadn’t yet been signed, and there was no Endangered Species Act. There are a lot of laws now in place that we think will enable us to argue for a better deal for the river.”



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ERVING from page A1

“It ran 25 minutes twice a week for 45 years,” Sanders said of the failed generator at Monday night’s selectboard meeting. “Then when we lost power, boom! It’s fried.” A rented mobile generator was due to arrive on Tuesday as a temporary backup, while the town’s backup generator functions as the main generator. Sanders said the town will need to purchase a new generator.

Sludge Dryer Project

In an email received by town administrator Bryan Smith before Monday’s meeting, Erving Industries chief executive officer Morris Housen wrote that subsidiary ERSECO was “not interested in town funding” for the purchase and installation of sludge dryers at POTW#2, the wastewater treatment facility at Erving Center. He wrote that the timing of the state’s award of loan funds was “untenable.”

Casella Organics, which treats waste for land application and compost, hauls sludge from POTW#2, and will be requiring ERSECO to produce relatively dry, “Type I” sludge at the plant by 2021. However, loans from a state revolving loan fund will not be awarded until January, leaving little time for the company to purchase and install the dryers.

The town of Erving owns POTW#2, but it is operated by ERSECO, and primarily treats wastewater from Erving Industries. Housen approached the selectboard and finance committee in June asking the town to apply for a state-subsidized loan to pay for sludge-drying equipment and infrastructure. With dryers, POTW#2 would be able to produce marketable Type I sludge instead of the wetter Type II sludge it currently produces.

On October 3, a special town meeting vote authorized the town to apply for a \$17.4 million state-sub-

sidized loan, with the provision that it would be repaid by ERSECO. At that meeting, Housen said that ERSECO had scaled back its plan and could purchase the dryers for \$5 million, and that the town would need to borrow only \$5 million.

At Monday’s meeting, fin com member Debra Smith asked that the town rescind the authorization for the \$17.4 million debt at the next annual town meeting. Jacob Smith said the town would consult with counsel regarding ERSECO’s plans to buy, and retain ownership of, the sludge dryers and related infrastructure.

Sewer Force Main

Tighe & Bond vice president Peter Valinski and project engineer Joseph Popielarczyk presented an estimate of \$1.75 million for replacing the sewer force main on Arch Street. Force mains are pipelines that convey wastewater under pressure; one runs from a pump station

at Arch Street to POTW#1.

Valinski and Popielarczyk said that the main drivers for the cost were crossing Keyup Brook and crossing PanAm railroad tracks twice. The Keyup Brook crossing is proposed as a concrete casing below the depth of the stream. Horizontal directional drilling is proposed for one crossing beneath the tracks, and cured-in-place rehabilitation of the current pipeline for the second.

Bryan Smith said he was ready to start work on preparing easements for the project. Jacob Smith recommended that the town apply for a loan from the state revolving fund.

Drinking Water Line

Two new residences are proposed for properties on the right-of-way used by the town to access the water tower. Two residences are already present along this right of way, one of which receives water from the town system and one with an unused connection to the town water system. Bryan Smith said the town has received a request to upgrade the water line from the tower to serve the two proposed residences.

Sanders said that a 1-inch water line goes from the water tower to the existing residence at the furthest end of the right-of-way, but it will not be sufficient to supply two new residences. He estimated the cost of installing an adequate water line at approximately \$10,000.

Board members, who are also the water commissioners, said they would approve upgrading the water line if the property owners pay for the upgrade.

Sanders said he has contacted the state Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) with questions about installing a new water line, and the board decided to wait on making a decision until DEP responds.

Elected Official Stipends

The selectboard and fin com reviewed a draft plan for stipends for elected officials ranging from \$250 per year for the town moderator to \$4,500 for selectboard, with assessors at \$4,000, the tree warden at \$2,500, and other elected officials at \$1,000 per year.

At the November 2 meeting, fin com chair Benjamin Fellows had asked how these amounts had been arrived at. At this meeting, fin com and assessors committee member Daniel Hammock said the assessors’ compensation had been set to match the selectboard’s “about 30 years ago,” when the assessors had only a part-time assistant.

Hammock said assessors need to study to be knowledgeable about state regulations. “We’re not in this for the money,” he said. He recused himself as a fin com member and said he was speaking as an assessor.

Selectboard member William Bembury, saying the assessors do

“an excellent job” and have “always served the town well,” suggested putting a two-year cap on all stipends.

Fellows asked whether the money was a stipend or compensation for the amount of work done by a committee. He said he was not familiar with what assessors do, and that the “inequality between committees worries me.”

Debra Smith suggested freezing the committee member compensation “where it is,” and “evaluating three years down the road.”

Fellows said the town could use the three years to develop criteria to determine stipend amounts. The “frozen” current stipends would be \$4,067 for the selectboard, \$3,881 for assessors, \$1,403 for school committee members, and \$2,536.50 for the tree warden.

The board asked Bryan Smith to prepare a final draft of the compensation policy with the current stipend amounts, and said they would decide whether to adopt it at the next joint meeting with the fin com.

Other Business

Speaking now as a library trustee, Hammock asked the board to investigate the WiFi at the new library building. Hammock said WiFi does not work reliably throughout the building, or outside it. Jacob Smith said that the town would analyze its reach and try to resolve the question.

Bryan Smith said the town has made a second request to contractor Jack Goncalves and Sons for a proposal to fix deficiencies in the grading at the River, Warner, and Strachan street road and sidewalk project. He said costs for the work that was not accepted were separated out from Goncalves’s pay requisition.

The board voted to establish a patrol officer search committee consisting of Bembury, acting police chief Robert Holst, patrol officers James Loynd, Adam Paicos, and Amanda Flower, and two residents. Applications for the full-time position are due November 30, and the additional two members of the search committee will be appointed that night.

The board voted to establish a feasibility and building committee for the public works office and dry storage shed project, consisting of three town employees and two residents. The formation of a permanent feasibility and construction committee for the town will be discussed at the next selectboard meeting.

The board set the rate for the electric vehicle (EV) charging station at the library and the proposed stations at the municipal parking lot on Arch Street at \$0.25 per kilowatt hour, based on the rates that National Grid and Eversource charge the town plus an administrative charge. The rate will be evaluated once the stations are in operation.



Soon To Be More Than Just Friends Of The Wendell Meetinghouse

By JOSH HEINEMANN

After years of negotiations and consultations, the Friends of the Wendell Meetinghouse and the Wendell selectboard reached the same position on purchase and sale and land development agreements (LDA) for the meetinghouse at the November 12 selectboard meeting.

The land and the building will be transferred to the Friends, and the Friends will insure the building, and make payments in lieu of taxes (PILOT) to the town roughly half what normal property tax would be, starting in July 2022.

The Friends will also pay for connection to the town water and septic systems, and will make payments for using those systems. They will inform the town when large gatherings are scheduled at the meetinghouse – once gatherings are allowed at all – so the town can be prepared for parking, water, and septic use. On normal days, those three are expected to be minimal.

The closing date was penciled in for December 14. Friends board member Court Dorsey said, “That didn’t take too long, did it?”

A Reminder Heard

Former selectboard member Christine Heard also Zoomed into the current board’s November 12 meeting. During the time she stayed connected, Heard’s partner took cookies out of the oven and showed them to the computer screen, but not even one cookie could be passed around, and not even the aroma passed through the internet connection.

But Heard’s intention was not to show cookies. Heard wanted to keep the changing board aware of an agreement that was made during construction of the new library and town office building with abutter Francesco Compagnone, known in town as Apollo. Of the present selectboard, only chair Dan Keller was in office when the agreement was made.

Apollo’s property is just south of the library lot, and years before the construction started, a road crew worker told him where the property line was. Apollo used the land on his side of that line for a garden and for fruit trees.

The construction project called for a survey, and that survey showed that Apollo had been using a strip of town-owned land all that time. To give it up for the playground and library would mean his losing the work of years enriching the soil and tending trees. The town would gain a narrow strip of land for the playground.

After some back-and-forth negotiations, Apollo was granted a lease to that strip, under which he would pay nothing to the town for as long as he stayed the owner of the house and lot; if ownership of the lot changes hands, the surveyed boundary will become the lot line. Heard’s purpose for Zooming in was to keep the new selectboard and the new librarian – also present via Zoom – aware of that easily-forgotten agreement.

Various Wetherbies

Gretchen Smith is resigning from her position as town clerk on November 28. Four letters of interest in the position have been received in response to Smith’s resigna-



HEINEMANN PHOTO

After years hashing out legal details, the town seems to be on track to deeding the Wendell Meetinghouse over to the Friends.

tion, but two of the interested people dropped out.

Of the two remaining applicants, board members voted to appointed Anna Wetherby to fill the position of clerk until the May 2021 election. Wetherby has already worked in the clerk’s office and knows some of the responsibilities.

Cemetery commissioner Sylvia Wetherby connected and pointed out a seeming conflict of interest within the commission. A commissioner has maintained the town cemeteries, and been paid for that work – mostly mowing – out of the cemetery commission budget. Doing that work has the appearance of hiring oneself to do town work, without oversight.

Selectboard member Laurie DiDonato offered the possibility of giving that mowing to the contractor who mows the other town lands, but Wetherby said that mowing around gravestones and trees is a different kind of work, and not suited to the mowers the contractor uses. The town could create a new position, but town coordinator Nancy Aldrich said the finance committee is concerned about boards committing money without consulting them.

Wetherby said mowing will not be necessary through the winter, so there is no rush for a decision. The board agreed to postpone a decision at least until the next scheduled meeting on November 25.

Contracting Out

The town’s water system operator, and former custodian, Larry Ramsdell is seriously retiring, and replacement water operator Al McIntire’s training was interrupted by COVID restrictions, so he will not take over immediately. In the meantime, Housatonic Water Testing of Lee, Massachusetts is willing to submit the monthly reports that the state Department of Environmental Protection requires, for \$150 a month. Ramsdell was paid \$50 a month, and McIntire expects to get the same.

“Get Al ready as soon as possible,” said Keller.

The selectboard chose Detectoguard of Wells Street in Greenfield to take over the internet monitoring of town building alarm systems. Their installation fee is \$300, and the annual monitoring cost will be \$588.

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SUZEE'S THIRD STREET LAUNDRY

TURNERS FALLS

MONTAGUE from page A1

believed this occurred in the town of Cohasset.

Selectboard chair Rich Kuklewicz said Montague’s approach was to “work in the direction of educating folks, rather than fining – but if it was egregious, we might consider something different.”

Town administrator Steve Ellis said the stay-at-home order was an “advisory,” not a curfew as has been widely reported in the media, and “we are not actively enforcing it, nor is the state. It’s not an order in the same way as other orders you are describing.” Ellis said there were mechanisms for fines in other cases, but “it is our hope in Montague that we will have a level of cooperation that when there is an issue, education will be an effective response.”

Ellis said that “existing town practices” meet all the state’s new requirements for town buildings. “We sent a reminder out to everybody to be attentive,” he said.

At the previous week’s selectboard meeting, there had been uncertainty about whether the public had been informed about the new order requiring masks in public places, even outdoors. Cummings said he and public health director Daniel Wasiuk had placed signs announcing the order in Turners Falls, Millers Falls, and Montague Center. He said they ran out of signs, and are “waiting for more to come in so we can do Montague City and Lake Pleasant,” but that “we plastered stuff all over the place on Thursday.”

Kuklewicz asked if the signs were effective, to which Cummings replied, “If people are walking down the street by themselves, they don’t have the masks on.”

Kuklewicz asked if “that is not technically what they’re asking us to do now, is to wear them all the time in public?”

“That’s the impression I was under,” said Cummings. Kuklewicz thanked him for the update.

Ellis said he believed there were still eight active cases in Montague,

but that more may be “under investigation.” He said he expected to receive an update next Monday, “or sooner, if there were something alarming.”

Reviewing Policies

Ellis and the selectboard briefly reviewed an assessment of town personnel policies prepared by the Collins Center for Public Management at UMass. “It’s quite a document,” said Kuklewicz.

The consultants’ recommendations included expanding the job description of the executive assistant to include the role of “human resource coordinator,” while creating a new “assistant” position for the selectboard; centralizing all job recruitment and selection at the selectboard level; amending the bylaws to make the selectboard the appointing authority for all positions – this one was followed by a pregnant pause – and removing all personnel policies from the town bylaws, and making them the responsibility of the selectboard instead.

“As I share these, I’m not necessarily proposing these, in a budget year that is more complicated than most,”said Ellis.

“Our goal is that we make sure we do something with it,” said Kuklewicz. “It’s not just another report that sits there.”

Ellis said a “critical next step” would be to bring a proposal to town meeting on consolidating personnel policies. “This is something that Frank wanted to do from the early 2000s,” said Ellis, referring to former and recently deceased town administrator Frank Abbondanzio. “I would like to move us over the marker on this one.”

Ellis also reviewed a recent proposal for town insurance from the Massachusetts Interlocal Insurance Association, providing for no rate change for FY’22 and a 2.5% increase for FY’23. The policy covers the town’s general liability, but not workers’ compensation. The board approved the proposal.

Other Business

The selectboard authorized Kuklewicz to sign an \$8,400 grant agreement with the state Department of Environmental Protection under the Sustainable Materials Recovery Program. Ellis said funds under the program had previously been used to purchase recycling containers, a cardboard compacter, and a shed at the town transfer station.

The board approved a \$9,000 contract with PCA360, LLC to assess the condition of town libraries, using funds already approved by town meeting. Asked about the relationship between this and the \$50,000 project to assess all town buildings the board proposed the previous week for annual town meeting, Ellis explained that the library assessments could be done sooner, avoiding a more complex bidding process and uncertain grant funding.

Ellis was also asked if the entire building in Montague Center was considered a library, given that its second floor has been used by the parks and recreation department as a gym. Ellis said he believed that the top floor was “not accessible,” with no elevator and no ramps, and that he did not believe there is a “functional furnace in that space.”

Town librarian Linda Hickman confirmed that there was no working furnace on the second floor, which is used “only very occasionally by Parks and Rec.”

Ellis predicted that the assessments would raise “lots of important and intriguing questions to be considered.”

Under “topics not anticipated,” Ellis and the selectboard members praised the work performed by the town clerk’s office during the recent national election. “Our town clerk’s office ran a tremendous election process for us, [with] the highest turnout I believe we’ve ever had, under the most complex conditions we’ve ever had,” said Ellis.

The next selectboard meeting is scheduled for Monday, November 23.

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MONTAGUE PLANNING BOARD
NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING
AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH MEETING

The Montague Planning Board will hold a public hearing at 6:30 p.m. on Tuesday, November 24, 2020 to consider a special permit and site plan review application submitted by **Flower Power Growers, Inc.** pursuant to Montague Zoning Bylaw Sec. 8.10 and 5.2.8(b) to permit a 110,000 square foot marijuana cultivation and manufacturing establishment. Notice is also hereby given that a Community Outreach meeting will be held concurrently with the hearing.

The proposed greenhouse facility is located at **180 Industrial Blvd, Turners Falls, MA** and the property is identified as Assessors Map 17 Lot 58. The public are encouraged to ask questions and share comments. Application, plans describing the project, and project contact information is available at www.montague-ma.gov.

Hearing will be held remotely via ZOOM due to COVID emergency orders.
ZOOM Meeting ID: 974 9207 3758
Passcode: 292645 Dial-in: (646) 558 8656

Ron Sicard, Chair.

LOOKING BACK:
10 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

Here’s the way it was on November 18, 2010: News from the Montague Reporter’s archive.

Community Health Center Moving

Several major changes are in the offing for the Community Health Center of Franklin County (CHCFC). In the next half year, if all goes as planned, both the medical and the administrative sections of the health center will be leaving their quarters in a wing of the Farren Care Center on Montague City Road to move across the river to more spacious quarters in Cherry Rum Plaza in Greenfield.

A lease for the new location is on the verge of being signed, after which the Farren will be formally notified. Acting executive director Jim Worden said he understood that Home Care Corporation, a present tenant of the Farren, “has expressed interest in moving into some of our space.”

Disagreement Over Montague Tax Split


Montague selectboard member Chris Boutwell took a stand for residents over business and industry on Monday night, voting against the town assessors’ recommendation for a 1.34% shift to the Commercial, Industrial and Personal Property classes (CIP) for FY’11, an ever so slight decrease from the shift of 1.35% for FY’10.

Ultimately, the votes of selectboard chair Pat Allen and member Mark Fairbrother prevailed, and the assessors’ recommendation carried. According to Boutwell, that placed the burden of explaining the shift to residents on Allen and Fairbrother, and not on him.

Sk8 Park Rally

About 30 skaters and their allies gathered at the Brick House on Saturday afternoon for a march and rally at the proposed site of the permanent concrete skate park in Unity Park.

The park is planned for construction on the footprint of the former Williams Way, a side street the town of Montague discontinued and merged with Unity Park in June. Construction of the permanent skate park is dependent on the town receiving Community Development Block Grant funding for Unity Park improvements, but the skate park committee has been active with fundraising and organizing in the meantime. Saturday was a day to gather their forces, celebrate, and prepare for the work ahead.



NOTES FROM THE GILL-MONTAGUE REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

Schools Return to Fully-Remote

By MIKE JACKSON

GILL-MONTAGUE – “There has been an individual that has tested positive for COVID-19 in the Gill-Montague School District,” superintendent Brian Beck informed families, staff, and the regional school committee on Friday the 13th.

“The Massachusetts Department of Public Health provided immediate consult between district health leadership and an epidemiologist.... As a result of this medical consultation, all students participating in in-person learning return to remote learning for at least the week of November 16 through November 20.”

In this case, “all students” referred to a small cohort of 16 students who had been learning in person since October 22: two five-student groups at Sheffield Elementary, and two three-student groups at Turners Falls High School.

The district’s plan to add a second cohort of 25 specially selected students, and eventually all students whose families wish them to return for two days a week, was already delayed this month by slow progress improving ventilation and airflow in the buildings.

Facilities manager Heath Cummings attended the school committee’s meeting on November 10 to report on the work. “Several of the buildings – probably Sheffield and Gill, potentially Hillcrest – are going to be ready for complete retesting,” Cummings said, but he explained that a project to upgrade the building management system at the high school and middle school has delayed HVAC repairs at that building.

On a positive note, Cummings discussed the 150 air purifiers the district had installed in classrooms.

“It seems like it’s working out pretty well,” he said. “We’re part of an elite class that managed to get our hands on these things.”

Business manager Joanne Blier said the towns of Gill and Montague were able to provide 37 students with the means to join remote-learning clusters at Ja’Duke, the YMCA, and Nam’s Taekwondo in Greenfield. “We wish we were able to offer it to more students,” Blier said, “but we were happy to help those 37 families.”

The board approved the transfer of \$2,055.95 from third-grade student activities account to the fourth graders, who raised the funds last spring for a field trip that was postponed due to the pandemic. “What we would like to ask is that these funds follow this group of students,” Blier explained.

Blier was authorized to communicate the district’s working FY’21 budget with the state Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, which will officially take control if one is not approved by December. The town of Gill must first approve its assessment; its annual meeting, postponed since the spring, has been scheduled for Saturday, November 21.

The state, meanwhile, has still not approved its own budget. Blier said it appears likely that Chapter 70 aid will come in higher than expected. “Hopefully within the next month we’ll know what these numbers are for sure,” she told the committee.

Beck announced that food services director Heather Holmes has given notice that she is leaving the position effective November 20. “She’s really stepped up and done a great job getting this in order way back in March,” he said. “We’ve served a meal every day since the shutdown happened.”

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Making It Work

BY REPORTER STAFF

LEVERETT – Kindergarteners, first graders, and second graders have now returned to morning classes at Leverett Elementary School, with third and fourth graders expected back on December 7. Last Saturday, in an effort to expand options for in-person instruction, the school held a community work day to develop six outdoor classroom spaces on the school grounds.

“So far, so good,” reported first-grade teacher Alissa Alteri Shea, who helped organize the work day and shared these photos with our readers, of the students’ return. “It is not easy.”

A team of teachers posted a “wish list,” and the community came through. Wagner Wood donated a number of tree stumps, and volunteers rolled 23 down a hill to a clearing by a stream to create one classroom space. More stumps were arranged near a “circle of stones,” and volunteers spread mulch to create an outdoor classroom zone. Tarps transformed other spaces into a “fort” and “mini-tents.” Sunday’s windstorm took some of these down, Shea said, but a student’s grandfather returned on Monday to repair them.

“We are determined to make it work,” the teacher told the *Reporter*. “We have had to create brand new routines of mask wearing, hand washing and keeping distance that none of us are used to at school. All student supplies have to be stored individually, and movement in the classroom is restricted to maintain physical distance between kids, which is what inspired us to create these outdoor classrooms....”

The new outdoor spaces were put to use this week. First graders took blankets down to the clearing for snack time, explored the woods, and built fairy houses.


“It is a way to create more freedom for children to move, learn, and explore in a safe way outdoors, where the risk of contracting the virus is less,” Shea said. “It’s the best way I have found to bring joy and connection back to the young children in my first grade class.”



ALISSA ALTERI SHEA PHOTOS

Clockwise, from top left: The school’s greenhouse was converted into a space for first-graders to have story time and snack time, its beds covered with plywood to create work surfaces. Nina Eddy rakes mulch at the circle of stones. Twenty-three stumps provide seats in a clearing by the stream. An existing play structure is transformed into a fort in the time of COVID-19. Thanks to Alissa Alteri Shea for sharing this inspiring news with our readers!


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BOOK REVIEW

Noam Chomsky and Robert Pollin,
Climate Crisis and the Global Green New Deal (Verso, 2020)

By FERD WULKAN

MONTAGUE CENTER – Whether you are a climate activist or just vaguely concerned about the future of our planet, here is a short new book worth reading: *Climate Crisis and the Global Green New Deal* by Noam Chomsky and Robert Pollin. Chomsky is a brilliant historian and activist known for his incisive insights into domestic and international affairs. Pollin is a world-renowned UMass economist who has consulted with the US Department of Energy, the United Nations, and other international organizations.

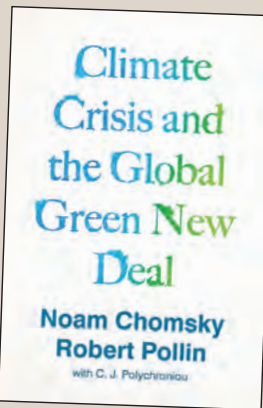
The main theme of the book is that while the scale of the transformation of our energy system that is needed to avoid global catastrophe is enormous, it is economically feasible. Pollin details what’s required: a \$2.6 trillion investment in clean energy and energy efficiency, worldwide, in the first year of a global green new deal, followed by \$4.5 trillion every year from 2024 to 2050, half of which would come from public funds and half from private sources.

This sounds like a lot, but it amounts to only 2.5% of gross domestic product annually for the next 30 years to decarbonize the US economy, and Chomsky compares it to the over 30% of GDP spent by the government to fight World War II.

The authors also show how this large investment would pay for itself over time through increased energy efficiency and reduced energy costs, as solar and wind power become as cheap or cheaper than fossil fuels and nuclear power. (The authors don’t address the controversy among environmentalists whether some nuclear power will be needed in the earlier years of the transition to clean renewables.) A short appendix helpfully lists both projected sources of the initial \$2.6 trillion, as well as what it would be spent on.

The first chapter, “The Nature of Climate Change,” is a clear and concise explanation of global warming and its impacts, a summary of the current scientific consensus, together with what is needed to save the human race from the looming catastrophe. The description of the irreversible nature of the catastrophe at the “tipping point” that comes with a global mean temperature increase of 4 degrees Celsius is truly apocalyptic.

The chapter touches on issues



such as agriculture, cattle farming, deforestation, power generation, and fossil fuel extraction – and why a purely market-driven approach is doomed to failure. If you still know anyone skeptical about the enormity of the crisis, just have them read the 37 pages in this chapter.

The next chapter explains in more detail the relationship between the climate crisis and capitalism. This includes interesting discussions of the inadequacy of a carbon tax, the fact that publicly-owned companies control 75% of oil and gas production (and 90% of known reserves), and the differing interests held by different parts of the capitalist class.

The roots of Republican denialism are clearly explained, starting with the well-known example of ExxonMobil’s scientists recognizing the impending disaster since the 1960s. But held equally culpable are the banks like JP Morgan Chase, the Koch brothers, and others whose quest for short-term profit shapes their actions more than any concerns about the future of the planet.

The final two chapters offer clear explanations and analysis of the proposed Green New Deal framework. They include a discussion of how to address the fact that poor countries have contributed little to global warming but are its chief victims, the importance of having some “shovel-ready” projects that can be initiated quickly, and the need for a full-employment economy to meet the moral and political necessity of a “just transition” that compensates and retrains workers in the industries that are being phased out.

While most environmentalists will welcome this analysis and will find just the right amount of data to support the urgency of tackling climate change through massive government funding, there are other equally important and compelling, but more controversial, arguments in the book.

While Chomsky and Pollin agree that massive government expenditures and interventions in the market economy are critical, Pollin writes that we will “need to bring big private capitalist firms into the mix, though they will have to be heavily regulated,” because public enterprises are unable to “mount a project at this scale, and with the speed that is required.”

see **CLIMATE** page B3

“Lift” Project Maps Leverett’s Stone Walls

By DONNA PETERSEN

LEVERETT—They’re everywhere, so common many of us don’t notice them as we drive down local roads or walk through the woods. They may run through your yard or delineate your property line. The “they” are the ubiquitous stone walls that are part of the New England landscape. They are a reminder of past land use and colonial settlement history. Each one tells a story.

In Leverett, stone walls will become a focus of the efforts to commemorate the town’s 250th anniversary in 2024. The Leverett Historical Commission has already begun what is called the Stone Wall Lift Project, an effort to map the town’s stone walls and clear the vegetation and detritus around some of them so they may be clearly seen. Two weeks ago, I attended a Zoom meeting led by Commission member Eva Gibavic that explained the effort to interested citizens, and later talked to Eva to learn more.

Eva said the idea for the project came about through two channels: Eva’s interest in stone wall mapping, and fellow resident Sara Robinson’s interest in “sprucing up” the visible stone walls. They hope that as people learn about the project and see these roadside early efforts by a “stone wall team of citizens – they will take an interest in the stone walls, their history, and why they are there while driving to the dump on Saturday,” Eva explained, adding that the Leverett Connects email list and word of mouth will also be recruiting methods.

Stone Wall Types

The slide show presentation illustrated the different kinds of stone walls that can be found. *Free-standing stone walls* are loosely stacked, and one can see through the spaces between stones. These were often put in place after a large tree was used as a boundary marker and the wall was made to define the whole boundary.

The next wall type was a *doublewall* – often filled in, and no real spaces through to the other side are visible. Then there is an extra wide *disposal wall* – much wider, with frost-thrown stones added.

There are also some walls built along ledge outcrops, using a natural feature and supplementing it with



Every stone wall in Leverett will soon be mapped.

stacked stones. Not technically a stone wall, but *stone bridges* can also be found.

And then there is the *town pound* – in Leverett, this somewhat circular stone wall was used to hold stray animals until the owners could bail out their cow or sheep or horse. The Leverett pound was built in 1822 and is very visible across from the Leverett Elementary School on Montague Road.

There are threats to stone walls from various sources. Eva explained that stones can be stolen; in fact, entire stone walls have been stolen in New England while landowners are away. Landowners can damage walls by making breaks or cuts, or “strip mining” them for other purposes. Leverett does have a stone wall bylaw, offering “Scenic Road Protection,” which requires a permit on any alteration.

see **STONE WALLS** page B5



WEST ALONG THE RIVER
LOOKING FOR MASHALISK
PART TWO

By DAVID BRULE

MATTAMPASH – *The world was closing in on Mashalisk, one of the remaining woman sachems of the Pocumtuck, and her son Wattawolunskin. In the mid-1660s, they were living on an island called Mattampash, at the mouth of the Sawmill River in Montague.*

The scene was set for Mashalisk and Wattawolunskin to become two more tragic Pocumtuck Tribal names to be caught up in a web of land grabs, religious zealotry, manipulations driven by settler greed, and inter-tribal warfare provoked by the English to divide and conquer.

Mashalisk was called a leader of one of the “old families” by Deerfield historian George Sheldon (1818-1916) in his *History of Deerfield*. The hereditary lands

over which she held stewardship ranged from modern-day Sunderland north to Montague, Deerfield, and Greenfield.

Two events, among many others were singularly about to change Pocumtuck destinies and that of Mashalisk.

The first involved Dedham.

To quote Sheldon: “The apostle John Eliot, being filled with zeal for the conversion of natives, learned their language, and devoted himself to their instruction in Christian doctrines.” Eliot determined that the only way to do that was to resettle Indians (mostly Nipmuc/k) in permanent settlements where they would learn English, lose their Indigenous lifestyles, and become good Christians.

In 1663, the General Court of Massachusetts ruled that 2,000

acres of land would be set apart for Eliot’s Indian “praying town” which would be located in Dedham. In exchange the Dedham proprietors would be compensated by being given 8,000 acres “12 or 14 miles from Hadley.”

The glaring problem, of course, was that the territory of the 8,000 acres in question – modern-day Deerfield – was inhabited by a population of Pocumtuck people likely numbering in the vicinity of 5,000 or more individuals.

“The colonial Government having thus taken two thousand acres from Dedham for the benefit of the Natick Indians and given in exchange eight thousand acres belonging to the Pocumtuck Indians...a committee was authorized to employ the Worshful Col. John Pynchon to

see **WEST ALONG** page B5



“SQUEAKERS”

Meet Squeakers! She is a talkative, affectionate and low-key kitty looking to be your one and only cat! She loves to be pet but isn’t such a fan of being held.

She has never lived with dogs, and though she did live with kids in her last home, she bonded more strongly to the adults in the home. She would like a patient family

willing to let her settle in and come around when she is ready.

Could she be your perfect companion? Contact adoption staff at springfield@dakinhumane.org and include your name and phone number. For more info, you can also call (413) 781-4000 or visit www.dakinhumane.org. Animals at Dakin are available only in Springfield currently.

Senior Center Activities NOVEMBER 23 THROUGH 27

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
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Wrapping Paper Edition Next Week!

By REPORTER STAFF

Our Wrapping Paper Issue will print during the week of Thanksgiving, and sell for \$5 a single set, or five for \$20. You can find it at many of the places you do your regular shopping: Food City, Red Fire North, the Montague Village Store, the Wendell Country Store, the Leverett Village Coop, Upinngil Farm Store – and possibly additional businesses in Greenfield and downtown Turners Falls. (Get in touch if you’d like to carry it!)

You will also be able to purchase this edition, as well as *Montague Reporter* t-shirts and mugs, on our website after Thanksgiving. We will ship items for a



fee to folks who live afar. If you are local, please come to our 177 Avenue A office to pick up your order (or make a purchase, with exact cash or check) on the following three Saturdays between 9 a.m. and noon: November 28, December 5, and December 12.

We hope you will help support us, and use our pages to wrap presents from local businesses this year! RiverCulture is presenting an initiative to boost sales in Montague called #ItTakesFiveVillages by creating an online shopping guide at www.turnersfallsriverculture.org. We are grateful for their additional support which has allowed us to provide stipends for the artists.



Sex Matters

a sex-positive health column

by STEPHANIE BAIRD

Let’s talk about lube! You know you are already thinking about how to get your turkey extra juicy come this Thanksgiving. So let’s dive into all things lube. It is ideal to have adequate or even generous lubrication for any kind of penetrative sexual activity below the belt.

Vaginas differ greatly, and every moment for every vagina is different. Factors include the time of day or month; your age, hormone levels and point in the menstrual cycle; whether or not you have reached a peri- or menopausal state; your daily stress toll, amount of dehydrating alcohol imbibed, whether you smoke, and how hydrated you are that day – the more hydrated, the better.

Remember, there is no direct correlation between lubrication, arousal, and interest in sex at any given moment. Some people may report copious lubrication at all sorts of times, yet not be interested in sexual activity in those moments (or any moments). Others may be as aroused as they may ever experience themselves, yet not secrete any lubrication at all.

For some reason there has been a slight divide or centering of “naturally” well-lubricated vaginas over vaginas that benefit from something extra. Even someone who every day of their adult life notes regular secretions and fluids may have an off-day for any of the above-mentioned reasons. It’s best if everyone simply chills about the state of the lubrication, instead recognizing that sometimes a helping hand is essential for pleasure.

What kinds of lubrication make the trip to the amusement park more fun and pleasurable, and leave no trace of irritation? Nowadays all kinds of lubes are available, from organic to paraben-free to plant oil-based to water-based, to stuff you can find around the kitchen. Sex educators generally favor water-based lubrications over oil-based as these are least likely to cause allergic reactions, infections, or to dehydrate. Also, they are safe to use with latex condoms and sex toys.

The website *Badvibes.org* has a wonderfully educational and informative section on lubrication. “Osmolality” refers to how concentrated the dissolved particles are per unit of water in a solution or serum. Osmolality is important, according to information presented on *Badvibes.org* because the “body’s natural mucus is constantly trying to maintain ho-

meostasis.” Osmolality is measured in milliosmoles per kilogram of solvent (mOsm/kg). Ideally you want an iso-osmotic lubricant around 285 to 295 mOsm/kg (it’s amazing scientists research this stuff!), where it has equal osmotic pressure – that is, where the lubricant has the same hydration level as the body. *Badvibes.org* notes that Good Clean Love and Sliquid Organics both hang around that “genital-friendly” ideal range.

PH levels are also helpful to consider when selecting lube, especially for the vagina. Vaginal pH ranges from 3.8 to 4.6, and often higher if post-menopausal. So again, look for lubes in that range so as not to disrupt the environment too much. Good Clean Love and Astroglide fall right in that sweet spot (although Astroglide has very high Osmolality, sort of cancelling out this nice pH benefit). Slippery Stuff Liquid and Sliquid Organics, at 6.8, might be more ideal for the post-menopausal vagina.

Humectants are another ingredient often added to lubricants as preservatives and to increase viscosity. Natural and or organic humectant alternatives that many may find non-irritating can include honey, shea butter, and jojoba oil. Many manufactured lubrications may contain petrochemicals such as propylene glycol, benzene, and benzoic acid. These can “dehydrate mucus and cause skin irritation, leaving mucous membranes more vulnerable to bacterial vaginosis or STIs” (*badvibes.org*). Most medical practitioners recommend avoiding lubricants that contain parabens, petroleum, glycerin, and sugars.

Some manufactured lubricants may contain microbicides to kill or reduce the infectivity of viruses or bacteria added as spermicides. While obviously helpful to kill unwanted sperm, frequent use may also irritate that fantastically self-regulating vaginal environment. (Remember, sperm themselves are chemically not welcome by the vagina – that is why seminal fluid contains a solution of immunosuppressants to neutralize and help sneak the sperm through.)

What if you have a hot, COVID-free date coming over and you don’t have time to order any of the above-mentioned products? You can look around your local coop or organic section at the grocery store, or maybe in your cupboard, to try these options: sweet almond oil (great for oral and anal sex, too),

virgin coconut oil (con: it can stain sheets), olive oil (con: it can clog pores – so wash off when done), and avocado oil (not as long-lasting as the aforementioned). Remember that any oil-based lubes should *not* be used with condoms if you want condoms to work their full magic of STI and pregnancy prevention.

Aloe vera is a water-based substance that can be used with condoms and may feel very soothing as well. Some lesser-known household lubes include ghee butter (great for moisturizing, but bad for condoms, and must be washed off right away to avoid it going rancid), and *nagaimo* (a type of slippery yam that is very popular in China, Japan, and Vietnam).

Lastly, room-temperature egg whites can be used in a pinch! Just have a bowl ready, and perhaps a liquid dropper so that they can be easily applied.

Avoid these household items at all costs: baby oil, petroleum jelly, and any kind of refined oil such as vegetable or canola oil. These may have unpleasant chemicals, and increase the risk of infections, stain sheets, and degrade condoms or sex toys.

As for anal penetration, lubrication is a *must*. The anus does not produce any natural lubrication, so to avoid tears, pain, infections, and so on, you must employ a lubricant. *Smittenkittenonline.com* has a great collection of lubricants recommended for anal play, most made by Sliquid (including an organic option). They also sell “Backdoor balm anal aftercare” by the Southern Butter company. I love the idea of engaging in sensuous tender aftercare utilizing a balm that contains healing nutrients such as calendula, plantain, chickweed, yarrow, and vitamin E.

As you gather your ingredients for juicify-ing your turkey, pick up a thing or two for your own nether regions after you wake up from the turkey coma. Succulent, luscious, and moist aren’t just lovely words for Thanksgiving dinner.

Note: I have no commercial agreements or affiliations with any of the products mentioned in this article.

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

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Multiplying Impacts

Assessing the economic value of GCC in the region



GREENFIELD
COMMUNITY
COLLEGE

What qualifies as a good investment? How do we know when our time, our focus, our energy, and our tax dollars are having a productive impact?

These are the questions Greenfield Community College sought to answer when they hired the labor market data company, EMSI, to analyze their economic impact on the region. Since 1962, GCC has been enhancing the workforce, providing local residents with easy access to higher education opportunities, and preparing students for highly-skilled, technical professions. Initiated in May as part of their multi-phase strategic planning process, the study was a way to quantify the significance and efficacy of these efforts across Franklin and Hampshire county.

“GCC and its surrounding businesses, organizations, and community members are part of

the college’s successful and visible leadership — leaders who are the community this college represents.”

“This community has always known that GCC makes a qualitative difference in terms of the intellectual and cultural vibrancy of the region and in terms of economic mobility. This comprehensive independent economic analysis quantifies our impact on Franklin and Hampshire counties” says GCC President Yves Salomon-Fernandez.

Representative Paul Mark echoes this statement: “GCC

“As the only college in the county, we play a much bigger role. In many ways, our impact includes the college’s successful and visible leadership — leaders who are the community this college represents.”

Robert Cohn, GCC Trustee

an ecosystem and our futures are inextricably linked,” explains GCC’s Director of Assessment Marie Breheny. “That is why it is so important that we look at regional data and listen to community voices as we plan for the future together.”

At a recent convening of the Honorary Committee for the college’s strategic plan — one that included local university and business partners, members of the legislature, and other supporters of the College — GCC’s President Yves Salomon-Fernandez unveiled EMSI’s findings, and presented their two-part analysis.

The first part — the *Economic Impact Analysis* — showed how GCC promotes economic growth in Hampshire and Franklin counties through its direct expenditures and the resulting expenditures of students and regional businesses.

Turns out, the impact is greater than what some would have imagined.

In FY 2018-19, GCC’s day-to-day operations added \$24.4 million in income to the Region — money represented by the college’s payroll; money spent by GCC and its employees on things such as gas, groceries, housing, facilities, and supplies; and a downward adjustment to account for local funding the college had received.

That same year, roughly 18% of students came from outside the region. Between these relocated students and the handful of in-region students who would have left the area if not for GCC, **student spending generated \$3.8 million in added income.**

Then, of course, there is the stunning impact of GCC alumni — students who enter the regional workforce each year with new knowledge and skills, resulting in higher earnings, new businesses, and increased productivity for the firms they are employed by. **In FY 2018-19, these alumni generated \$50.8 million in added income for the regional economy, bringing GCC’s total added income to the region in FY 2018-19’s up \$78.9M — an impact that supported 1,254 regional jobs.**

Though the numbers are striking, Trustee Robert Cohn reminds us that “the impact of GCC cannot be measured just by the \$79M. As the only college in the county, we play a much bigger role. In many ways, our impact includes

faculty and staff are involved in so many organizations across Franklin and Hampshire County — from the Chamber of Commerce to the tourism committee to the hospital.”

The second part of EMSI’s analysis — the *Investment Analysis* — shows the costs versus benefits for the school’s three primary stakeholders: students, Massachusetts taxpayers, and society.

In FY 2018-19, GCC’s students invested \$14.4 million. In return they receive higher earnings: **the average GCC associate degree graduate from FY 2018-19 will see annual earnings that are \$9,200 higher than a person with a high school diploma or equivalent working in Massachusetts, amounting to cumulative higher future earnings of \$62 million.** According to FY 2018-19 data, for every dollar students invest in GCC, they will see a cumulative return of \$4.30. This equals an average annual return of 21.1% — over double the 30-year average return of the stock market.

Overall, the social benefits of GCC represent a value of \$202.4 million, including \$199M in added income through students’ increased lifetime earnings and business output, as well as \$3.5 million in social savings related to health, crime, and income assistance in Massachusetts.

In FY 2018-19, people in Massachusetts invested \$33.9M in GCC, including all the college and student costs. According to the FY 2018-19 data, **for every dollar they invest, people in Massachusetts will receive \$6.00 in benefits for as long as GCC’s FY 2018-19 students remain employed in the state.**

“There is an extraordinary return on investment with education and yet, GCC’s numbers expand on this ROI many times over,” says Massachusetts Senator Jo Comerford. “These numbers are emblematic of the kind of opportunity available to the wider community when we make the right choice of resourcing an institution like GCC.”

In the broadest sense, the EMSI study shows that **GCC creates value from multiple perspectives: increasing consumer spending in the region; supplying a steady flow of qualified, trained**

IMPACTS CREATED
BY GCC IN FY 2018-19


\$24.4 million
Operations Spending Impact


\$3.8 million
Student Spending Impact


\$50.8 million
Alumni Impact


\$78.9 million
TOTAL IMPACT
- OR -
1,254
JOBS SUPPORTED

workers to the workforce; enriching the lives of students by raising their lifetime earnings and helping them achieve their individual potential; increasing tax receipts and reducing demand for government-supported social services; and creating a more prosperous economy through the improved lifestyles of students.

Given the unprecedented churn of our workforce over the past ten months, the EMSI study confirms that community college is the backbone of our future: somewhere people can go to get retrained to have jobs in a post-Covid world.

“The study just confirms what we all should know,” says Representative Mark, “That the school is vital to the overall health and development of our region. As a community college graduate myself, I truly recognize the role an associate’s degree can play in advancing your education and career. I’m lucky enough to have graduated with five different degrees from five different

colleges. I mean this sincerely, when I say the two greatest programs I went through were my associate’s degree and my law school education.”

Says Senator Comerford, “In the wake of COVID and the devastation it’s wrought in the commonwealth, Public Higher Education and the ladder to opportunity it creates becomes even more necessary. I am inspired and emboldened by the numbers and what they mean. This report speaks to the power of an institution like GCC to transform not just individual lives, but a region. It can lift up a Commonwealth.”

“The study just confirms...that the school is vital to the overall health and development of our region.

Paul Mark, State Rep



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WEST ALONG from page B1
acquire the Indian title in the eight thousand acres...” (Sheldon)

John Pynchon, son of the founder of Springfield William Pynchon, was a canny businessman, entrepreneur, military officer, and held a dominant role in the trade of beaver skins in the Connecticut River Valley. He then became the chief land agent and negotiator for the Court. In 1663, he set about doing so with all due speed.

What followed was a complicated, contradictory set of interlocking dubious treaties and “deeds,” often signed by Natives who gave away lands for which they actually had no claim, and often in exchange for sundry items like cloth coats, wampum, and beaver skins.

By 1667, Pynchon had collected questionable rights to lands in modern-day Deerfield, Greenfield, and Gill. These lands were oftentimes purchased sight unseen, with most “deeds” signed in Springfield. Even Sheldon notes that there were such discrepancies and contradictions in descriptions and points of compass that would indicate that the writer of the deeds had never visited the actual territory in question.

One defiant holdout, however, was Mashalisk.

It always gives pause to read the names of Pocumtuck individuals who held sway over this valley, some of whom had actually signed the transfers, others whose names should be known but for the fact that they were erased from our histories.

Onapequin, Massapetot, Weerewomanaag, Chickwallop, Nenessahalant, Nassacohee, Kiunks, Paquandalant, Assellaquompas, Awanash, are all individuals well-known here before whites controlled this valley, but unknown to the majority of those of us living here today.

By the same token, some of the place-names do persist and can still be recognized and identified by their Indian names: the Pocumtuck River (Deerfield); the Puckomeagan River (Green); the Sunsick hills (foothills of the Mohawk Trail). But what about other places with names like Nayyocossak, Tomholissick, Masquamcosick, Ussowwack, Wusquawwag?

We may well drive by these places every day and not realize they carry names given to them thousands of years ago. Such places could still answer to their ancient names, if we only knew them. They embody the true identity of our familiar yet forgotten landscape.

The second event that sealed the fate of Mashalisk occurred in 1665, just a few years after Pynchon began his cunning land deals to pry away from the Pocumtuck Tribe the coveted 8,000 acres already promised to the proprietors of Dedham.

Up through the 1660s the so-called Pocumtuck Confederation was a fiercely powerful tribe ranging from the Podunk and Tunxis lands around present-day Windsor, CT all the way to Deerfield. They were as powerful and feared as the Mohawk, but their most hated enemies were the Mohegans under the leader Uncas.

Nevertheless, the Mohawk were involved in an attack on the

Sokoki of Sokwakik (Northfield), close allies of the Pocumtuck. The two tribes struck a crippling blow in repelling the Mohawk when that Iroquoian force attacked the Sokoki fort in 1663.

Shortly after, seeking terms of peace, a diplomatic delegation of Mohawks arrived at the Pocumtuck fort in Deerfield, led by a Mohawk ambassador and prince, Saheda. What happened next is subject to interpretation and historical dispute. But there is no doubt that the Mohawk ambassador Saheda was assassinated inside the Pocumtuck fort.

This was, as it is now, an unacceptable breach of diplomacy and a violation of a period of truce.

What possessed the Pocumtuck to perpetrate such a vicious display of arrogance? Sheldon called the act “the pride which goeth before the fall.” Other modern-day scholars are not so sure.

Some historians have uncovered the fact that two of John Pynchon’s sub-traders, Thomas Clarke and David Walton, were present inside the fort when Saheda was assassinated. Could not such a dishonorable violation have been planned and perpetrated by Pynchon to help advance his project of emptying the valley of Pocumtucks?

For that is what occurred next. The Mohawks, incensed by Saheda’s murder, are reputed to have attacked and overwhelmed the Pocumtuck, apparently breaking their power forever. Some, however, like Nolumbeka Project historian Howard Clark, dispute that such an all-out attack ever really happened, but that a number of smaller raids and attacks by the Mohawk did take place over time. One of the victims would have apparently been Onapequen and his family. Contemporary archaeological investigations on the possible site of the fort near Woolman Hill have not found any convincing evidence that such a devastating attack occurred.

Be that as it may, one more obstacle was removed in Pynchon’s drive to consolidate the rights to the 8,000 acres as he was hired to do. The General Court was free to appoint Sachems, or chiefs, to rule over valley Natives. Soon these English-appointed sachems were selling large tracts of land to Pynchon. The infamous Chauk mentioned earlier was one of these “convenient dignitaries.”

The last holdout was Mashalisk. Her hereditary lands lay on both sides of the Great River. And she was not going to sell.

Stay tuned. In Part III we will conclude the known histories of Mashalisk and Wattawolunskin. The son fell into the clutches of John Pynchon, and we will relate how in purchasing her son’s freedom, the revenge of the Pocumtuck was assured by the woman sachem. She may well have transferred the legacy and burden of destructive greed imbedded in the petrified body of the Great Beaver over to Pynchon and “all his heirs and assignees forever.”

Please also join the Zoom presentation “Mashalisk and Frances Crowe” by Doug Harris of the Narragansett, on Sunday, November 29 at 2 p.m.



By **MISHEL IXCHEL**

TURNERS FALLS – We opened up our bubble sometime around late spring: little by little, we began to see dear friends of ours who live locally, and by the time summer hit, our little group was back in swing again. We more or less lived our lives as we had done pre-pandemic: playdates, picnics, carpooling, the works.

It felt safe to once again return to some normalcy – after all, in some ways we had to move on with our lives. Our logic went as follows: we couldn’t live in fear any longer, and our children needed each other.

Many argue that the consequences of 100% quarantining can actually be more harmful than living one’s life normally to some degree. We need each other; surely human interaction can’t be limited to a screen. As an adult I, like many others, could completely quarantine, but as a mom to a five-year-old boy, I knew I couldn’t keep him away from other children for too long.

And so, summer days were spent in the presence of our pod, and in some ways the virus felt dis-

Closing the Circle

tant, even though we all knew that was far from the truth. We made logic of our gatherings, and I did my best to pretend that we were in some way immune to it.

Until recently. As infections have been on the rise once again, this time it feels like the virus is getting closer and closer to home.

It started a couple of weeks ago, when I received a group text that read something like this: “Hey everyone, so-and-so (family member/friend) was recently in contact with someone who tested positive for COVID.” Within a matter of two weeks, these group texts began to come through more and more.

It made me snap out of it when I realized that our pod was far from immune; after all, everyone within it was exposing themselves to other family members and friends. And the grapevine seems to extend in every which way.

The word “virus” is now part of my child’s vocabulary, and wearing a mask is no longer a novelty, so when these texts started coming in from a few different directions, I knew I could no longer rely on the safety of the pod.

As is the case with many experiences, when my kid wants to do something or see someone, he begins by saying, “when the virus is over, we can...” I nod and agree

with him, because I do not have it in me to tell him that that day may never come. I do not want to dampen his ability to dream, to have big plans, and to visualize that which he most wants for himself. The last thing I want him to feel is as though he is in a waiting room of sorts, waiting for the day to come when he can feel the freedom he once felt.

Especially now that I’ve decided to limit our exposure to the people we are closest to.

If hunkering down and spending time with our close ones got us through winters past, I am left wondering what lies ahead for us in these coming months. Breaking bread, spending time in each other’s homes, cooking and letting the children run wild is now a thing of the past. In its stead, we are left with outdoor playdates, and making it non-negotiable with the children that masks are a must.

These outings, of course, will be fewer and farther in between as the weather gets colder.

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

STONE WALLS from page B1

Making the Map

The Zoom presentation showed the methods that will be used to map the stone walls.

The initial work will be done by citizens, who will take “beauty shots” at both ends of the wall in question, and then hopefully take photos on a phone that is enabled with Global Positioning System (GPS), which can then send the longitude and latitude information into ArcGIS. ArcGIS is Geographic Information System software used for mapping all kinds of things, from wetlands to land use to public health data.

An even more powerful – and expensive – way to find objects or past disturbances in the landscape is LIDAR, a technology that can see in a sort of 3-D way into the ground surface, and is used in numerous applications.

Fortunately, residents can take pictures, and Eva and the core team can do the technical mapping stuff!

It turns out Eva has had a lifelong interest in stones and rocks, and her mom had a love of history, so combining the two and growing up among stone walls, she has been doing stone wall mapping for a number of



“Free-standing” stone walls are often piled on trees.

years. She has worked with Native tribes in New York state and Rhode Island on Native stone structures. She has a small company called Ceremonial Landscape Research, LLC that can be called on to help find and identify sites and landscape artifacts.

I asked Eva about the clearing or cleaning up of visible stone walls, and the removal of vegetation that is covering or obscuring stone walls. Wildlife species use stone walls for hiding and overwintering and other things that wildlife do. She explained that she thought the limited amount of clearing would not be a problem for most wildlife.

So, after some effort by Leverett’s citizens and the Historical Commission, the 250th Leverett Anniversary will include maps and information about the town’s stone walls. They will be more visible along the road, and folks will be informed and reminded about history as revealed by the neatly and not-so-neatly stacked stone walls laid down by the farmers and residents of the past.

If you are interested, I have here a list of some books about stone structures in New England (stone saddles – look them up!), and also Native tribal stone structures.

This winter might be a great time to dive into the stone walls in books so you can enjoy and better understand them when spring comes!

Further Resources on Stone Walls

Books include:

- Tom Wessels, *Reading the Forested Landscape* (1997)
- Tom Wessels, *Forest Forensics; A Field Guide* (2010)
- Robert Thorson, *Stone by Stone: The Magnificent History in New England’s Stone Walls* (2002)
- Robert Thorson, *Exploring Stone Walls: A Field Guide to New England’s Stone Walls* (2005)
- Susan Allport, *Sermons in Stone: The Stone Walls of New England and New York* (1990)
- Curtiss Hoffman, *Stone Prayers: Native American Construction of the Eastern Seaboard* (2019)
- Markham Starr, *Ceremonial Stonework: The Enduring Native American Presence on the Land* (2016)
- James Mavor, Jr. and Byron E. Dix, *Manitou: The Sacred Landscape of New England’s Native Civilization* (1989)

Besides writing books on the topic, Robert Thorson has a portal to the University of Connecticut’s Stone Wall Initiative that has lots of relevant information.



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

edited by Christopher Sawyer-Lauçanno
Readers are invited to send poems to the
Montague Reporter at: 177 Avenue A
Turners Falls, MA 01376
or to: poetry@montaguereporter.org

November’s Featured Poet: RM Garcia

These Words

All these words will die with me
Spoken in a hollow past
Scratched into a memory faded
With all those other feats and fables
What a sweet slow tragedy
Those that once built empires
Wallow in filth and sloth
Fading embers of fires that once roared
Their souls in purgatory
Silent submission
To powers greater than the sum of us all
Willfully destroying
Any dreams held within

Admiralty Inlet

I can still see them
Sharp, angular fins cutting through Sound
Harlequin, supple, silent
Masters for time immeasurable in their hidden kingdom
And brown sleek figures
Supine and awkward in our element
Sleek and fast in theirs
Graceful and weightless in submerged forests
Then soaring sentinels
Steel eyes piercing and probing folds and ripples
Vigilant on lofty perches
Swift and taciturn in their sanguine pursuit
Round, dark doe eyes
Accepting benevolence but trust unearned
Bounding to dark sanctuaries
Their entire existence in peril
Green, grey, brown, and white
Looming like immense slumbering gods
Rising and shifting
Their final forms not yet known
And over all she towers
Steep and jagged, shrouded in ancient fog
Conflagrantly within, solid and enduring without
Crowning this sacred corner of earth

A Moment

As our shadows move across the floor
We all yearn for a moment
See it, feel it, taste it
A girl, a boy
A moment of pure joy
Of opulence or decadence
Of lust fulfilled
A summit reached
A wrong righted with righteous, poetic justice
An embrace
A voice
A moment lost forever, but played like a record
The groove worn deep
Fading away
A glimmering ember
It is so sadly sweet
Because a moment is all that we have

Skies

On mountaintops of twisted vines and reeking heat they watched the skies
Burying impossible, immense monoliths in their paths
Died miserable in the knowledge of the mysteries unsolved
On featureless expanses they found sentient bodies to guide them
Charted courses by eye into the unknown on roughhewn craft
By candle-light scratching quill on papyrus
Chiseling charts on sandstone and granite
Mounds of earth laid in cosmic symmetry
Enlightened, they carefully constructed mechanisms
Astrolabe, sextant, kamal, gnomon
Carved paths like spider webs to connect them
Huddled together laying maps on maps
Found their fascination common
Eons of study justified in its purpose
Mysteries unlocked that drove ancients mad
Yet still in this era where silence has died
Where humming clicking motors
Glaring lights and blaring noise
Guide us through our lives
We yet look to the skies
And ponder our place in this puzzle

A Warning

He lived in the shadows
In a fortress of detritus
Treasured possessions held close
Their precious values hidden to all
I approached and passed
A fleeting moment
He rose, shaking off filth
His form cloaked in rags
Legs bent and quivering
Eyes dull and lifeless
Yet burning fiercely like black coals
Sunken in an ancient visage
Folds and furrows, scarred and discolored
Arm raised, gnarled hand emerging from tatters
A single, crooked finger held out
A warning

Contributor Notes

We are very pleased this month to feature the work of RM Garcia. He tells us this about himself: “RM Garcia bounced around from California, Michigan, Mexico, made his name in Boston before settling into the sleepy little hamlet of Erving. He lives on a quaint homestead surrounded by sylvan splendor with his lovely, talented wife, two comely sons and plump, happy little dog. By day he keeps the wheels spinning at a fisheries research lab but his eyes are always on the sky and his heart in the woods and waters. His mother and father were great lovers of literature and poetry and kindled his interest in writing. His brother is an acclaimed poet and writer, and has always encouraged him to pursue this craft, but his inspiration to finally record his thoughts came from the final words he heard and read from dearly departed sister-in-law, Patricia Pruitt, at her last reading.”

ALEX ROTONDO PHOTO

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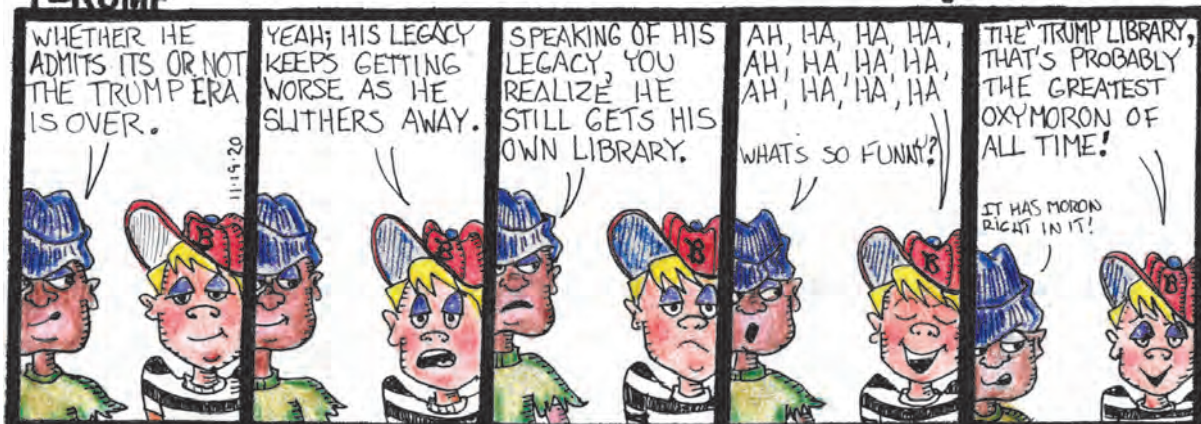
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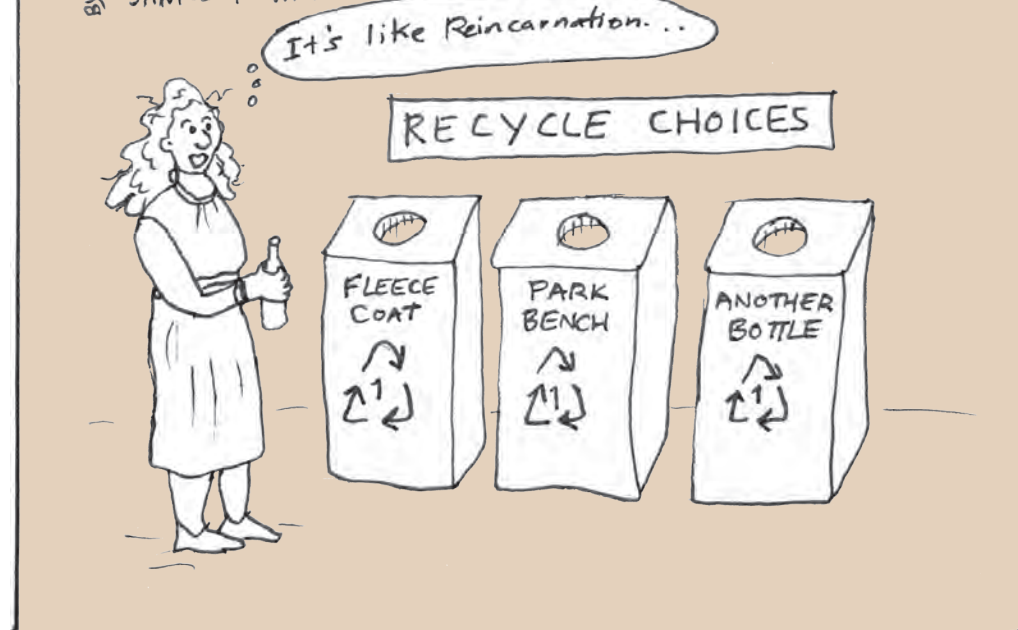
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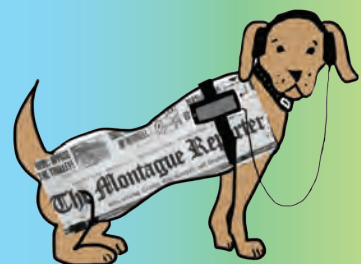
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GREAT FALLS APPLE COLUMN

By RACHEL LABRIE

TURNERS FALLS – Greetings, *Montague Reporter* community! The Great Falls Apple Corps wishes you well as we enter into the now ninth month of the pandemic – not that we need any more reminders. November has come, and with it the dreaded, longed for, possibly most important United States election ever. The tension in our country and the world has been palpable, with frantic and nervous energy running rampant.

However, kindness and fun can still be found in our community, and if there’s one thing the Great Falls Apple Corps is good at, it’s having fun. Well, at least our version of fun,

which usually includes plants and dirt. And this season, we’ve been having lots of fun.

This Saturday, November 21 marks our sixth **free food table**, located in front of Great Falls Harvest Market at 109 Avenue A. Annie Levine has been holding down the table for the last five Saturdays from noon to 3 p.m. with soup, applesauce, and produce. We have given away an immeasurable amount of applesauce, and we even have repeat customers because it’s so good! Not to mention the delicious soups cooked up by Chef Chris made from local, organic produce like butternut squash and kale, creamy leek and apple, and carrot ginger.

The free table has made for

great conversation with community members as people have been mystified with the idea of free food, and many people have had the chance to learn about vegetables they have never seen in a store or eaten before. Great Falls Market also has yummy to-go menu items and drinks available, so come on down and visit the free table this Saturday, November 21 from noon until 3 p.m.!

Each November we hold our **annual fall cleanup** at the Unity Park Community Garden (UPCG), and this year we decided to have two work days to allow for more participation and social distancing. The UPCG Fall Cleanup Part I was held on November 7 and it was the best work day at the UPCG we have had yet! A three-yard compost delivery had been sitting by the shed for weeks waiting to be distributed to the U-Pick beds, and thanks to a very helpful volunteer, more than half was distributed.

The edible hedge we began planting in the spring between the skate park and the garden was added to with plants from Humble Abode Nursery in Ashfield. The edible hedge now has honeyberry, mulberry, and beach plums.

We also began clearing an area next to the compost for a shady spot to hang out in the heat of the summer, and possibly for some woodland plantings. The UPCG looks better than ever, and with this top dressing of compost from Martin’s, it will be producing better than ever next year.

Our UPCG Fall Cleanup Part II happens this Saturday, November 21 from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. and we will be sifting the compost, wood chipping paths, and cleaning out the water tank. I, Rachel, will be at the garden for this time while Annie will be at the free food table downtown.



The edible hedge at the Unity Park Community Gardens.



Rachel Labrie planting an apple tree at the Church Lot.

Another exciting thing happened for us earlier this month at our Church Lot (the old St. Andrews Episcopal on L and Seventh streets). We planted our very first **apple trees!** We have been teasing ourselves that our name is the Great Falls APPLE Corps, but we have not yet planted an apple tree – though we have indeed harvested our fair share of apples in the past three years.

There are now Liberty and Rhode Island Greening babies in the ground at the Church Lot, along with more beach plums and mulberries. The Lot is really turning into quite the “food forest,” as our elderberries grow larger and our perennial herbs are taking hold, all growing underneath a delicious Sweet Cher-

ry tree that was already there when we started this project.

If you have extra produce you would like to donate to the Saturday Free Food Table, please email us or drop it off Saturday at the Great Falls Market at 11:30 a.m. Please tell anyone you know who may need or would appreciate some free, local food.

Thanksgiving is a complicated holiday, but in its essence it’s a day to celebrate the bounty of the harvest season, and to be grateful for what we have. I could not be more proud of the work we have done these past three years, and the Apple Corps gives many thanks to everyone who has supported us and helped us in any capacity. We are Grateful for Great Falls!

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