

The Montague Reporter

YEAR 19 – NO. 6

also serving Erving, Gill, Leverett and Wendell

\$1

EDITOR@MONTAGUEREPORTER.ORG

THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES

DECEMBER 10, 2020

Housing Bill Stalled As Court Cases Accumulate

By SARAH ROBERTSON

SPRINGFIELD – “We are just asking for a worsening crisis,” said Joel Feldman, an eviction defense attorney for the firm Heisler, Feldman & McCormick, “to think the court system is going to resolve what is essentially a natural disaster.”

Feldman’s firm, on behalf of the housing advocacy organization Springfield No One Leaves and the Homes for All Massachusetts Coalition, helped draft the language of the now-expired statewide eviction moratorium as well as a pending emergency relief bill.

“There was always going to be a need for a phase two housing bill, because the moratorium was temporary,” Feldman explained. “[It] was never meant to be a solution for the pandemic.”

H.5018, “An Act to guarantee housing stability during the COVID-19 emergency and recovery,” has 87 co-sponsors and is currently sitting in the House see **HOUSING** page A5

GILL SELECTBOARD Officials See Opportunity In FirstLight Relicensing

By JERRI HIGGINS

On Monday night, the Gill selectboard discussed issues related to FirstLight Power’s amended application filing with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) last week. Sewer rate increase options, a \$548 bill to pay Gill’s share of an assessment of the Turners Falls High School building, and the extension of the Mount Hermon Road closure through June 1 were also among the night’s agenda items.

FirstLight filed its amended final license applications (AFLAs) last Friday for the Northfield Mountain pumped-storage project and the Cabot Station/Turners Falls project. According to town administrator Ray Purington, these licenses “have been in the works for 10 – maybe 11 years,” and would allow FirstLight to operate for 30 to 50 more years. The company has asked for a 50-year license.

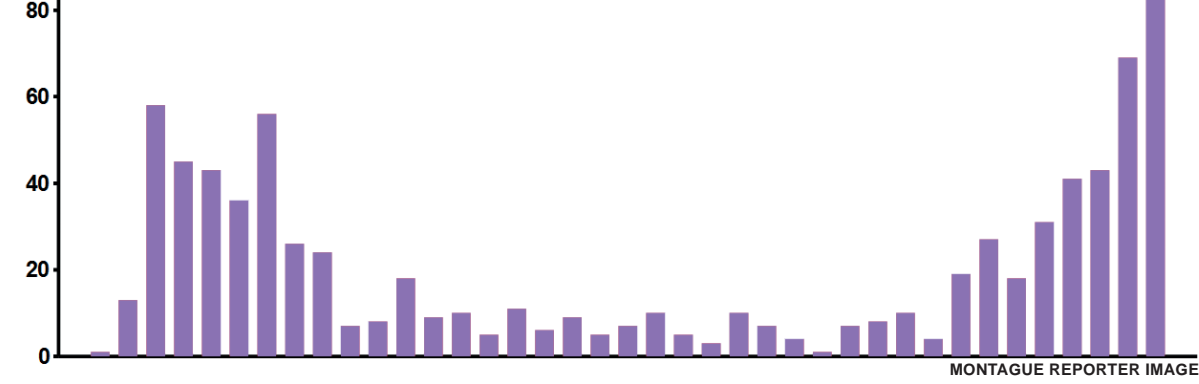
“That was a little bit staggering when I saw that in the press release,” said Purington. “In 50 years, I will be lucky if I am still alive... It really drove home for me that this license renewal is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.”

For Gill and other affected towns, that opportunity will be to act as “intervenor” after FERC reviews FirstLight’s application, and the commenting period begins.

“The longer this process goes, the more beneficial it is to FirstLight,” said selectboard member

see **GILL** page A4

Virus Spreads Throughout Franklin County



Confirmed positive cases of COVID-19 per week in Franklin County since March 11. The rightmost bar represents an incomplete week; the final number will be higher. The Department of Public Health publishes weekly data each Thursday afternoon. As of Wednesday, Montague public health director Daniel Wasiuk confirmed that cases in Montague had more than tripled over the previous week. Greenfield interim health director Jennifer Hoffman confirmed 68 cases and counting, up from 20 the previous week in her city. “People really, really, really need to wear their masks,” Hoffman told us.

By MIKE JACKSON

FRANKLIN COUNTY – The coronavirus epidemic continues to rage out of control across the United States and in eastern Massachusetts, and after a reprieve in the warm months, our own county is now the site of a dramatic increase in transmission. Governor Charlie Baker announced on Monday a return to lower limits on gathering sizes, but the order seems to have come too late to keep the virus at bay: case counts are doubling, tripling, and reaching into the remaining hill towns in the wake of the Thanksgiving holiday.

“The numbers I see are coming in so fast,” said Randy Crochier, regional health director at the Frank-

lin Regional Council of Governments, which provides services to 15 of the county’s towns. “Wear a mask, social distance, and wash your hands.”

On paper, the county appears to be suffering a more widespread outbreak of COVID-19 than it did last spring – though a direct comparison is impossible to make, as there is much more widespread access to testing now than there was in April. Still, the data appears to show an exponential increase in the virus’s spread through our local population.

Official town-by-town counts of cumulative positive cases are released by the state Department of Public Health each Thursday; as of the time this issue see **SPREADS** page A6

A Word With the Public Health Director

By MIKE JACKSON

MONTAGUE – Daniel Wasiuk has been the town’s director of public health for about a year and a half now, and he sure is in it now. We were lucky enough to catch up with him on Wednesday to find out what this whole thing looks like from his end. (The transcript has been abridged and edited for clarity.)

MR: We seem to be at a turning point here.

DW: Certainly. We’re in a very fluid time. A lot of changes have taken place in a matter of just a couple days; this whole week will be a change in direction.

As you know, we’ve regressed from Phase III, Step 2 to Step 1, signed off by the governor.... In-

formation is being sent down to us, and we’re actively keeping abreast of the situation. I was just meeting with Cheryl Volpe, our town nurse. It appears she’s going to need more hours.

MR: Is the flu season also hitting us?

DW: It is, but the numbers seem to be fairly normal. Cheryl has met with the school nurses, and they’re setting up flu clinics – students are mandated to get their flu vaccinations this year. She’s going to start with staff, and students and their parents are going to get it done themselves.

She’s also doing a bit with town employees, ranging from the wastewater treatment plant to fire department personnel and town



Daniel Wasiuk.

hall employees...

MR: What else besides COVID takes up your time these days?

DW: These days COVID has the majority, but on the public health front, we’ve been busy with Title V see **HEALTH** page A6

Hydro Company Submits Final Application

By REPORTER STAFF

TURNERS FALLS – Last Friday FirstLight Power, which owns the dam, power canal, and two hydroelectricity generating plants at Turners Falls as well as the Northfield Mountain pumped-storage facility a few miles upstream, filed an amended final application with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) to

renew its licenses to operate both projects.

The long-awaited filing, which the public can review at northfieldrelicensing.com, comprises 1,385 pages of documentation supporting a request for 50-year licenses for the projects, as well as proposals to reduce their environmental impact on the Connecticut River. FirstLight offers to generate 11.3% less energy at Turners Falls than it has been, by diverting less water into the canal, and to make investments supporting upstream fish passage and downstream paddling.

The company calculates the “net investment” in the Turners project at \$37.4 million, and states that its total revenue in 2019 was valued at \$18.1 million. The “net investment” at Northfield Mountain is estimated at \$768 million, and its total revenue in 2019 was \$158 million.

Notably, FirstLight is proposing to overhaul fish passage infrastructure at Turners Falls. The fish ladder at Cabot Station that permits spawning shad to visit the power canal would be eliminated, and the ladder at the Turners Falls dam replaced with a fish elevator similar to the one in use at the Holyoke dam.

An “executive summary” also released Friday by the

see **HYDRO** page A4



Below the dam at Turners Falls.

LEVERETT SELECTBOARD Health Board Shoots Down Winter Town Meeting Plan

By GEORGE BRACE

At Tuesday’s Leverett selectboard meeting, chair Julie Shively read an order from the town board of health prohibiting a special town meeting to hold an election in early January. Their order referenced a state order issued the same day by Governor Baker, which rolled back the state’s reopening plan to “Phase 3, Step 1,” limiting outdoor gatherings to no more than 50 people.

The board said it determined that the meeting was “not critical for the continued operation of the town,” and that rising infection rates posed a potential for the rapid spread of the virus, in citing its legal authority to prohibit the meeting.

The announcement was met with relief from many, especially among town officials, who had been overwhelmingly opposed to holding a special town meeting in January to fill a vacant selectboard seat. The seat will come up for election again at the next regular town meeting, normally held in April.

Leverett’s election procedures require that candidates for selectboard announce their candidacy on the floor of town meeting, where they can speak and be questioned,

see **LEVERETT** page A5

MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD Police Review Groups Report On Progress; No Red Flags

By JEFF SINGLETON

The two Montague committees charged with reviewing the policies of the town’s police department reported on the progress to the selectboard on Monday night. The committees were a product of the Black Lives Matter protests nationwide last spring, one of which drew over 400 people to a rally at Montague town hall on June 14.

The day before the rally, an annual town meeting narrowly voted to level-fund the police budget, which was a \$45,582 cut from the budget recommended by the finance committee. Two weeks later the selectboard voted to establish the two review committees, one of which would focus on “equity and the use of force” and the other to focus on the police department’s “community engagement.”

After a lengthy process to recruit members and training sessions to establish operating norms, the committees began meeting in late September. Selectboard members Rich Kuklewicz and Michael Nelson serve on the equity and community engagement groups respectively, and Ariel Elan and Chris Pinardi have emerged as their “facilitators.”

Pinardi’s report focused on a survey the community engagement group has sent out asking residents’ experiences with the police department. He said the committee had received 424 responses to the survey, including 42 from a see **MONTAGUE** page A7

This Is Really All Just A Side Project Of Our Podcast

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Protection

Last spring, amid the initial, largely regionalized surge in the COVID-19 pandemic and efforts to encourage staying at home, federal legislators pulled together a haphazardly multi-pronged stimulus strategy that pumped cash into the Main Street economy in three key ways: an across-the-board one-time \$1,200 cash payment to most adults; a \$600/week boost to all workers collecting unemployment; and the "Payroll Protection Program" (PPP), which paid employers to keep paying the staff they didn't lay off.

Partisan conflict, compounded by the bad accident of a presidential election this pandemic year, ensured that these efforts were not repeated, though we keep hearing a new round is just around the corner. The quarantine attempts fell short, thanks in no small part to political sabotage, and here we are, nine months later, a dangerous throbbing red map from the Atlantic to the Pacific, waiting patiently for Inauguration Day while the ICUs hit capacity.

Without a new round of PPP, we have had time to pick apart the first one. With \$523 billion being shoveled through the Small Business Association and local banks via "forgivable loans," the program was inevitably messy. Even in its earliest days, a slew of giant, well-capitalized firms reflexively grabbed cash from the cauldron and were publicly shamed into returning it.

Earlier this month, a number of news and public-interest organizations won a major court case to force the release of the program data, which is now available for download; ProPublica has even provided a search portal for loans of over \$150,000.

We have begun to review the 933 PPP loans provided to businesses in Franklin County. Nothing pops out as obviously fraudulent or uncouth — most of the loans, after all, were administered by local banks with local knowledge — but the data provide a rare, possibly unprecedented, look at a cross-section of the county's private sector:

- The jobs "protected" number 11,245, though it should be noted that not all of them actually belong to Franklin County residents, or even people who commute here for work — some of the largest businesses, such as All States Asphalt of Sunderland (\$6.9 million), are multi-state outfits head-

quartered here.

- Of the \$93 million, half — \$46.5 million — went to just 36 companies, or 4% of recipients. "More than half of the money from the Treasury Department's coronavirus emergency fund for small businesses went to just 5 percent of the recipients," the *Washington Post* writes, so we're right in line with the rest of the country.

- Half of the employees who benefited from the program worked for the largest 55 companies.

- Over half (\$52.9 million) went to businesses in Greenfield and Deerfield. No big surprise there.

- The data is a little patchy: 61 companies listed that their loan had protected either "0" jobs or left the field blank. Celtic, Citizens, TD, and UMass Five Colleges FCU appear to be responsible for the majority of these errors, which account for \$1.7 million.

- 188 of the loans protected exactly *one* job. These ranged from \$1,000 (for a business categorized under "Fiber, Yarn, and Thread Mills") all the way up to \$26,173, for someone offering "Other Management Consulting Services." We know what you're thinking: that's a lot of consulting. We looked the guy up and learned he describes himself as a "change agent."

- In fact, quite a number of these single-worker firms appear to be consultants, lawyers, real estate agents, and the like. Four firms (populations 4, 2, 2, and 2) sold "Investment Advice." We have no reason to allege any malfeasance, but it does raise the question: At what point is a single-member LLC facing quarantine-related revenue loss really a small business, and at what point are they actually a gig worker who might have chosen the somewhat lower, but still generous, Pandemic Unemployment Assistance portal instead?

There's no way of knowing how representative of our county's economy these 933 firms are, but their diversity is fascinating: from Plate Work Manufacturing to Museums; from Home Health Care Services to Other Vegetable (Except Potato) And Melon Farming. If you have some time on your hands, take a little skim through the data; you'll find something there of interest.

After all, this program infused more money into Franklin County than the direct-payment "stimulus checks" we were sent. And if the feds fund another round, you'll certainly know how to get some!



With a rake and rain boots, Montague DPW worker Bryan Reardon clears oak leaves and other debris from the storm drains along Avenue A after the November 30 rainstorm that saw extensive flooding along the Ave.

Letter to the Editors

Regarding Comcast Rate Hikes

Sadly, we're stuck with Comcast. They now serve almost 99% of the town, and it's not realistic to over-ly that with a competitive service.

What you can do is monitor your Comcast bill, regularly. I just did that, and although I never see more than 120 Mbps as download speed, and most often less, I'm being charged for a plan with "up to 200 Mbps." This plan is \$30 a month higher than a plan that charges for what I actually get.

I never ordered the higher speed plan. It just slipped in there, somehow.

They also change plans frequently, and there are attractive savings. But be careful of the duration of any offer. Prices can rise after the introductory pricing expires.

Rob Steinberg, Chair
Montague Broadband Committee

GUEST EDITORIAL

By **PETER D'ERRICO**

LEVERETT — I have been asked numerous times what I think about the demand for a Special Town Meeting in Leverett. I take this opportunity of a column in the *Montague Reporter* to respond.

I consider the call for a Special Meeting to be a hysterical reaction to the vacancy created on the Selectboard by my resignation. An overwrought, panicked action out of all proportion to the reality of the situation.

Had I thought my resignation would cripple the Selectboard, I would have stayed. The Board has not been crippled. The two remaining members are quite capable of handling the business that comes before the Board until the regular election already in place for the next Annual Town Meeting in the Spring.

The specter of a "deadlock" is just that, a specter. Should the two members disagree on an issue, I trust they have the intelligence and competence to resolve it. On many issues that come before the Selectboard, the members have the au-

thority and the opportunity to collaborate with other Town boards, including the powerful Board of Health, the Finance Committee, Planning Board, and Zoning Board, to name just a few sources of assistance in addressing an issue and arriving at a decision.

In short, there is no urgency to fill the vacancy I left on the Selectboard before the next Annual Town Meeting.

Ironically, the only "emergency" in the situation is the one that would be caused by holding a Town Meeting in winter under public health restrictions related to the pandemic. I suspect that many signers of the petition calling for the meeting did not fully consider the practical implications of the call.

One final note: I am most disturbed by the implicit attack on Town Meeting itself exemplified by suggestions to conduct an election outside the regular structure of the Leverett Town Meeting. Suggestions to hold a "virtual" vote, a "drive-by" vote, or any other method that departs from direct nominations and elections on the floor of

an open Town Meeting threaten one of the oldest forms of direct democracy in the Commonwealth (and thereby likely the United States).

Leverett has maintained its commitment to the original form of Town Meeting — open to any registered voter, with nominations and elections of Town officials from the floor of the meeting. This mode of Town Meeting allows Leverett to avoid the rancor and confusion that typically attend "campaigns" for office (witness nearby as well as distant examples). We have no "campaigns."

I consider an open Town Meeting, with elections from the floor, as a touchstone of democracy. It provides the forum for diverse views and experiences to interact face-to-face in search of the common ground necessary to maintain a cohesive community. Were Leverett facing an actual political emergency requiring extraordinary, immediate action, I might entertain a discussion of alternatives. We are not in that situation.

Peter d'Errico is a resident of Leverett who served until recently on the Leverett Selectboard.

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By NINA ROSSI

The Montague Reporter **Wrapping Paper Issue** has been selling well at our various outlets: Upingil Farm Store, Red Fire North, Food City, Buckingham Rabbits Vintage, Wendell Country Store, Leverett Coop, Montague Village Store, and Green Fields Market. You may also order online for pick-up or mail order at our website, www.montaguereporter.org.

This Saturday we will be selling them once again at our 177 Avenue A office between 9 a.m. and noon. Come by and pick up a few more and help support us – all profits from this printing will go towards keeping this local news outlet alive!

The Brattleboro Museum & Art Center (BMAC) will host an **artist talk with Andy Yoder** about his installation, *Overboard*, this Thursday, December 10, at 7 p.m. via Zoom and Facebook Live. The installation consists of 240 hand-made replicas of Nike Air Jordans, inspired by the Great Sneaker Spill of 1990, in which five shipping containers went overboard and over 61,000 sneakers were lost at sea.

All of Yoder's replicas are made from recycled packaging or promotional materials, some of which are from local venues in Brattleboro, and all the sneakers are for sale, with proceeds split between the artist and BMAC. For more information, visit www.brattleboromuseum.org.

MassHire Career Center has announced another **online job fair** on Friday, December 11, from 1 to 3:30 p.m. Multiple agencies are hiring for the following positions: intake workers, case managers, paralegals, attorneys, program case coordinators, operations administrators, data administrators, and counselors.

To register, send an email to Penni and Marija at bizteam@masshirecareers.org including your first and last name, your MassHire JobSeeker ID number, and your phone number. If you do not have a JobSeeker ID, become a member at jobquest.dcs.eol.mass.gov/jobquest/Register/.

"The show must go on": the **Pioneer Valley Symphony** celebrates a full virtual season with its decades-old Holiday Concert tradition. Although happening on Zoom this year, the concert will still feature the work of all the ensembles as well as opportunities to sing and play along to festive music.

The Holiday Concert, set for Saturday, December 12 at 7 p.m., features recorded compilations from the PVS Orchestra, Youth Orchestra, and Virtual Choir. Tickets can be purchased online at the PVS website, pvsoc.org.

Complimentary access to PVS events is also available through a partnership with over 30 regional libraries; readers are encouraged to ask their local library about free access to these events.

See Santa this Saturday between 10 and 11:30 a.m. thanks to the Erving Recreation Commission, who have arranged for the jolly fellow to stop by the Senior/Community Center at 1 Care Drive in Erving.

Children may bring their letters to Santa in person, and get a special holiday treat in return, all from the safety of your car.

The New Salem library wants folks to know that singer-storyteller Mary Jo Maichack is appearing as **Mother Goose** in a virtual, Vimeo recording to be launched Monday, December 14 and be available for four weeks. Mother Goose is a delightful show of songs, movement,

small puppets and rhymes celebrating the classic nursery rhymes in a participatory, gentle style.

The interactive family program is especially recommended for children ages six and under, but all ages will find it entertaining and humorous.

Maichack, with 30 years' experience as a full-time professional, has won two national awards for her storytelling recordings. She sings, plays ukulele, and tells stories and rhymes in a dynamic style.

"I love to invite my audiences to help co-create the show," said Maichack, "and it's great to see kids feel proud as they dance and sing and act and chant, or just take part in listening with the audience, even if just now, I have to imagine them."

Silverthorne Theater Company announces **Holiday Tales for Winter Evenings**, a series of evenings full of song, music and spoken word scheduled for December 18, 19, and 20 starting at 7 p.m. on the Silverthorne YouTube channel.

Each evening will feature a different menu of pieces: holiday stories and songs for children; reflections on the season for adults; and traditional favorites for the whole family. The full schedule for each evening will be posted on silverthornetheater.org.

Selections include *A Child's Christmas in Wales*, *The Grinch that Stole Christmas*, *A Visit from Saint Nicholas*, *Chanukah in Santa Monica*, *The Snowy Day*, and many more. The full schedule will be posted by December 15. For further information, email silverthornetheater@gmail.com or call (413) 768-7514.

The Authors and Artists Festival announces a **workshop on Nature Photography** with Marty Espinola on Saturday, December 19 from 3 to 5 p.m. Marty will cover the basics of exposure and the relationship between aperture, shutter speed, and ISO. Review basic composition by looking at sample photos, and learn some techniques for producing images that reflect the visual experience that touched you when you took the photo.

Register at authorsandartists-festival.wordpress.com, or email martyesp1@yahoo.com for more information.

festival.wordpress.com, or email martyesp1@yahoo.com for more information.

Gift bags full of local edibles are being offered through the Community Involved in Sustaining Agriculture (CISA). A partnership between Atlas Farm and Clarkdale Fruit Farm has resulted in tote bags brimming with local foods such as goat cheese, maple syrup, chai masala mix, sriracha, oatcakes, jam, basil vinegar, BBQ sauce, apples, etc. Plus, the tote bag is decorated by a local artist!

You may order a small (\$60) or large (\$110) bag of goodies from CISA online at www.buylocalfood.org until December 13 at 5 p.m. The bags can be picked up Saturday, December 19 at various locations around the Valley.

The Connecticut River Conservancy has produced a video about **hydropower and river erosion** on the Connecticut River banks in Franklin County. The video is available here: www.youtube.com/watch?v=eZzT4FDGvZw.

An Army Corps of Engineers report, conducted but not released before the last dam relicensing 50 years ago, concludes that the fluctuation of water levels in the river, which are unnaturally severe due to the hydro facilities, increases erosion. This 15-minute video shows the banks eroding, along with a series of interviews with landowners and engineers.

The CRC emphasizes the importance of the public making their voices heard on this topic, as five Connecticut River hydroelectric facilities are currently receiving new operating licenses that will last 30 to 50 years. CRC river stewards are available to update your local selectboard or conservation commission on the relicensing process, and CRC's concerns about the river. Contact Kathy at kurfjer@ctriver.org or Andrea at adonlon@ctriver.org.

Learn more about the Connecticut River Conservancy, and how you can get involved, at www.ctriver.org.

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GUEST EDITORIAL

Town Should Assess its Own Mess

By HANK SILVER

TURNERS FALLS – The town of Montague has recently completed a \$5 million building to house the Department of Public Works. As a result, the old highway garage is being offered for sale through the town's Request For Proposal (RFP) process. Some RFPs are issued to garner bids for town infrastructure projects, but Montague also has a program to solicit proposals for adaptive re-use of defunct buildings that end up in the town's possession for one reason or another.

The former DPW building is being sold for the low-ball price of \$50,000, well below its assessed market value. However, the town appears to be playing a shell game with would-be buyers.

Due to its history as a garage and high likelihood of subsoil contaminants, an environmental assessment was undertaken by the town. This "Phase One" assessment noted some areas of concern, and recommended a Phase Two soil analysis. The town balked at the \$32,500 price tag a proper analysis would entail, and decided to offer the structure "as is." In essence, trying to pass a potential municipal brownfield on to a private citizen.

In mid-November a group of interested local business owners gathered at the former DPW and toured the humble cinderblock structure. The subject of potential contaminants drew more questions than any other topic. It appears that the

town would be happy to make a sale contingent on a Phase Two analysis, provided it was paid for by the prospective buyer.

Stating a low sticker price up front and then asking a buyer to sink additional costs – in this case, 65% of the asking price – is a fairly classic bait-and-switch. Why wouldn't the town foot the bill for the analysis itself, and merely add the cost to the final purchase price? Are they afraid of what they will find? How is it possible that all of the millions earmarked for the shiny, new DPW (which came in under budget) did not include any funds for cleanup the town should undertake as a matter of course?

Why would the town of Montague shirk its environmental responsibility, its stewardship of the land, and foist its problems onto the local entrepreneurs they are claiming to encourage with the RFP?

The RFP program is meant to encourage local businesses, community organizations, cultural groups, etc. by granting worthy petitioners the opportunity to buy a building at below market rate. In theory, it is a fantastic "leg up" to small, local businesses – granting them entree to resources that are out of reach for many in this area.

Unfortunately, the town, fearful of being saddled with another Strathmore Mill debacle, has made a series of notably poor decisions in awarding past RFPs. By avoiding a comprehensive environmental study and sweeping their mess

under the bed, the town is encouraging more of the rapacious behavior that has dogged historic industrial buildings and past RFPs in Montague.

The Railroad Salvage Annex building, famously sold through an RFP for \$1,000, has sat untouched by its owner for several years, in flagrant violation of the land development agreement signed by the town and buyer as a term of its acquisition. The former Housing Authority building was purchased for \$12,700 with the stated goal of creating a craft brewery and cider bar, despite having no possibility of water or sewer connection – and is currently being used as a convenient place to park dead vehicles and assorted salvage finds. (This was not a town-owned building, but according to a town official I spoke to, the sale was facilitated by the town.)

On paper, the town's RFP program is lofty and ambitious – an attempt to level the playing field and stimulate the local economy, while moving aging infrastructure off of the town's rolls. But the town seems incapable of fully buying in to its own mission. Time and again the town administrators appear to undermine the program's stated goals. In the past, they have erred by poorly vetting candidates.

This time, Montague needs to step up and clean up after itself.

Hank Silver is the owner of Ironwood Timberworks, Inc. He lives in Montague.

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Taxes and Rafters: Town Hall Reacts to Power Company's Plan

By JEFF SINGLETON

MONTAGUE – Town planner Walter Ramsey told the *Reporter* that he was in the process of preparing an analysis of FirstLight Power's response, in last week's relicensing application, to the town's proposals to enhance recreational facilities located on the Connecticut River.

The town's proposals were justified in the context of Turners Falls' transition from a manufacturing economy.

"Turners Falls is a dynamic, thriving community that has steadily revitalized over the last 20 years while the mills along the power canal have become obsolete," Ramsey wrote. "As the community continues to diversify from a traditional manufacturing-based economy, municipal plans aspire to re-establish the river and its natural features as the community's greatest resource."

The town's proposals include greater public access to the river – primarily for whitewater rafting – just below the dam, and at an exit point on Poplar Street in Montague City. They also include enhanced access to the Rock Dam area at Cabot Woods below the Patch neighborhood, improvements near Unity Park including a boat access ramp, and enhancements at Cabot Camp including boat access to the Millers River and a "plan to reconstitute pro-

GILL from page A1

John Ward, "because they are operating completely unimpeded during this process – not just slightly impeded, like they will be after the process is finished."

"The problem with a 50-year license," said board member Greg Snedeker, "is that once you lock in the system, it is very hard to change it."

Snedeker clarified that he was criticizing the process rather than the energy source. "We have to get energy from somewhere, and there are far worse sources of energy," he said.

Ward responded that the Northfield Mountain project is a storage, or overage facility, not a production facility, and Gill does not gain any energy from it. "It was designed and built in the 1970s for the build-out of nuclear power plants," Ward argued, "and they know they can become obsolete with new power – and with the demise of nuclear – this is their lifeline. I wish more people realized that."

While the FirstLight AFLA proposes new recreational facilities in Northfield and Turners Falls, and improvements in "fish passage and spawning habitat," Purington said he was struck that "there are no proposed additional [riverbank] erosion remediation measures."

With a sardonic laugh, which he then apologized for, Snedeker said that as someone who lives by the river, FirstLight's raising and lowering of the river water "cannot be divorced from riverbank erosion," as the company has argued in the past.

"To blame [riverbank erosion] mostly on boat wakes is ignoring the process," said Snedeker. "When they lower the water down to its lowest level and let things dry out all day, that inevitably has an impact on the low- and high-water mark, in terms of erosion."

ductive use of the historic building."

FirstLight's application focuses almost entirely on two of those requests: enhancing access below the dam and at Poplar Street. Ramsey praised these elements, but noted that proposals for Cabot Woods, Unity Park, and Cabot Camp were almost entirely overlooked. He also said he was in the process of evaluating the potential costs to the town of expanded whitewater rafting, including the need for safety monitoring and parking.

FirstLight has proposed to schedule eight "whitewater releases" each year at the Turners Falls dam for rafting and other forms of recreational boating between the first of July and the end of October. The company would create a website that "predicts discharge rates" for rafting during those months, but would not post the rates in April through June, in an effort to help protect the endangered shortnose sturgeon.

The company is also filing a "Draft Historic Management Plan" with state and federal agencies about the status of historical structures and archaeological sites within the two project areas. Ramsey said that although that report will not be made public to protect the sites, members of local historical commissions may be allowed to view it.

One important, but highly technical, question about FirstLight's

Increased Sewer Rates

Purington offered the selectboard several scenarios for the new sewer rates that the board will vote on at their next meeting, and recommended that the town adopt a 3.5% increase for FY'21. Maintenance costs and Montague's 2% sewer rate increase, "including what is charged to Gill, is driving the rate increase," he said.

The other options were changing nothing, matching Montague's 2% increase, or instituting a 6.7% increase.

"We have had two quarters' worth of bills [from Montague] without having a retroactive rate increase," said Purington. "In what we are paying out, we are covering all of the higher costs in FY'21." His recommendation would recoup those higher costs within FY'21 – plus "a contingency for non-payments" over the next four billing cycles.

"Across this county, and across much larger areas, people are having a hard time," said selectboard chair Randy Crochier. "Montague tends to accept septic waste from Gill quite readily, and I think part of it is because of our sewer district."

Crochier explained that septic tank pumpers "are having a hard time finding places to bring their septic," saying that the pumpers are bringing local septic waste as far as Springfield and Palmer, and even out of state. "People are paying astronomical prices because of that," he said.

Crochier said that a regional anaerobic digester that Greenfield was considering building "fell apart because of the way the laws are in Massachusetts."

"Our infrastructure in this country is rated at a D+," said Snedeker. "We had invoiced amounts of \$73,000 back in FY'13, and now we are at \$178,000.... By not funding these larger infrastructure projects,

the federal government just pushes a tax from the ground up on people who really cannot afford it – and tend to get hit the hardest."

"If I sound a little cynical on this," he said, "it is because I am a little bit cynical."

Building Conditions

A \$548 share for Gill's portion of a \$7,500 cost to the Gill-Montague regional school district was approved. The bill was for a building condition assessment of Great Falls Middle School and Turners Falls High School.

The funds will come from Gill's building maintenance account. Purington responded that the town has \$11,500 in the building maintenance account, "with six and a half months of the fiscal year left."

Purington told the board a proposed assessment of the Gill Elementary School building, which would also cost about \$7,500, "got put on the back burner" when COVID-19 hit, and "hasn't been lifted off."

Snedeker said he was concerned that taxpayers' money allocated toward capital improvement projects "is just sitting there," while also acknowledging that Gill does not know what its next budget, or the state's budgets, will be.

"We are almost at the point of having to start on capital improvements for next year," he said. "We have not been in this position before. Should we wait for the next round of capital requests and review it again for this next year, or should we try to address it?"

Purington warned against spending another \$7,500 from the building maintenance account.

"If we were having this discussion in April or early May, I would likely make a different recommendation," he said, "but it scares me to spend down that building maintenance account that far, this early."

The selectboard tabled the topic for future discussion.

Other Business

Northfield Mount Hermon school was approved for an extension of the Mount Hermon Road closure until June 1, 2021.

Mary McEneaney, the school's chief operating officer, told the selectboard that NMH was requesting the continued road closure be extended due to local and country-wide increases in COVID-19. The school has installed swinging gates at the end of the road to allow for emergency vehicles to pass, she said, and will keep the road cleared of snow and ice.

Deputy fire chief William Kimball updated the selectboard on his department's new digitized truck check and gear tracking software. "It is proving to be a great success," he said. Kimball told the board that the fire department has received 10 total alerts through the system so far, which were "immediately sent to the appropriate people, whether it was vehicle maintenance, gear maintenance, or just a general alert."

Car dealer license renewals for 2021 were approved for A-J Cycle Shop, Atlantic Wholesale, Doug's Auto Body, Riverside Radiator, Tek Cycle, and Town Line Auto Repair.

Full liquor license renewals were approved for the Turners Falls Schuetzen Verein (with Crochier recused for the discussion and vote), the Gill Tavern, and the Spirit Shoppe. A beer and wine license was renewed for The Mill gas station and convenience store. The Wagon Wheel restaurant is not renewing its beer and wine license.

The agricultural commission is once again offering their GILL-BILLY t-shirts for a \$15 donation. Interested customers can contact the Gill town hall for details.



HYDRO

from page A1
loss of \$107.2 million over the course of 50 years by the 11.3% reduction in river water use at Turners Falls. The generation over the same period would presumably earn \$841.2 million. \$86 million would be invested in project improvements, of which \$78.1 million would be focused on fish passage.

The company also offers to spend \$45.2 million at Northfield Mountain, chiefly for a \$42.5 million "barrier net" meant to dissuade shad and eels from involving themselves in its operation.

On Wednesday, advocates from the Connecticut River Conservancy criticized the proposal in a press conference. "We have some very significant concerns about this process, and about how the applications can be improved as we move into the next steps," said executive director Andy Fisk.

Fisk said he worried that the company's recent move to split the two licenses up under separate subsidiaries was intended to "insulate

reduced revenues for Montague, but "not necessarily," because "so many factors" are involved in calculating the properties' value.

"That's why I hire a smart guy to do that," Tonelli said, referring to Mr. George Sancoucy, a consultant whose specialty is in appraising utilities.

FirstLight's appraisal has been the subject of intense litigation in recent years. Last year the company and the town reached a settlement

revenue" from Northfield Mountain in order to "insulate obligations" at Turners Falls.

"FirstLight continues to downplay the amount of revenue they make, and have highlighted their expected losses in generation and the costs to build the enhancements," said river steward Andrea Donlon. Still, she said, "many of the elements are real improvements over what the current license allows."

"The only time these improvements are made is when a license application comes up," Fisk said.

After FERC reviews the application, the state of Massachusetts must review the impact of the proposed plan and issue a "water quality" certification. The process will be open to public comment during 2021.

Last month, a FirstLight spokesperson indicated to the *Reporter* that the company intends to restart settlement talks among federally recognized stakeholders to the process, in the hopes of reaching an agreement while avoiding litigation.



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LEVERETT from page A1

after which the vote is taken. Due to town rules, absentee voting is not allowed, which raised additional concerns about safety and fairness.

"The wolf is at the door," board of health chair Michael Behr said in explaining the decision. "The risk is substantial." He also cited strains on the area's contact-tracing network due to the recent uptick in the spread of the virus, saying the last contact trace in Leverett used all three tracers available, and the state system was also strained. "We don't want to lose control of it," said Behr.

Resident Eva Gibavic said she had been upset about the potential meeting, and expressed gratitude to both boards for their "wisdom" in opposing and canceling the meeting. She also said she was pleased that more than 200 people had signed the petition calling for the election, and hoped they all show up at town meeting.

Jed Proujansky, one of two candidates who has publicly announced interest in the seat, also said he was glad the special election had been canceled, citing health risks for residents.

Resident Josh Nugent, who was involved in organizing the petition, said he was speaking for himself in saying he was disappointed, but wanted to make clear he respected the decision. He said that at the time the petition was created, organizers had not expected COVID-19 to be as significant an issue as it has become, and he believed in organizers' plans to make it safe.

Nugent also noted he is a Ph.D. student studying biostatistics at the UMass Amherst School of Public Health, and has worked with local health boards on contact-tracing projects, along with a host of other experience in the field. He said to his knowledge, there were no studies that showed outdoor, masked gatherings are dangerous, but that the subject was complicated, and if the board of health disagrees, he understood it.

Another resident involved in organizing the petition, Aaron Buford, said the decision brought the town back to the subject of accessibility, along with the related issue of connectivity. Buford referenced discussions brought up in prior meetings, of potential problems with some residents having more access

to information than others. Buford said he knows there are financial implications in improving accessibility, but felt it was something that needed to be addressed.

Resident Dan Fields spoke on a related concern: that the short run-up to the election, and manner in which information was disseminated, had resulted in potential candidates not having sufficient time or notice to give careful consideration to candidacy, which is a major commitment.

Selectboard member Tom Hankinson commented he had heard from multiple other people that multiple residents didn't fully understand the pragmatic details of holding the election, and were confused. He expressed agreement with the call for easier access.

The selectboard also cancelled their December 22 meeting, which was to take place remotely. Shively said she wanted to give town administrator Marjorie McGinnis and town clerk and elections official Lisa Stratford a full holiday week off. She added that if something came up, a meeting could be rescheduled.

Other Business

Insurance advisory committee member Bill Stewart pointed out some issues to look at as the board continues considering swapping health insurance carriers for town employees. Stewart said there were unanswered questions regarding potential differences in the possibility of changes in copays and rate increases over time between the two providers under consideration: the Massachusetts Interlocal Insurance Association, and the Hampshire County Group Insurance Trust.

McGinnis said his concerns made sense, and that she would research them further and report back.

Police chief Scott Minckler asked the board to approve the purchase of police body cameras with grant money. He said there was support for the idea among officers and members of the public, and he was looking to buy eight cameras and laptop.

Shively said she didn't see a problem herself, but some people might be put off by the idea. "I would really like the populace to weigh in on this," she said.

Nugent, a member of the town's social justice committee, said he

had been meeting with Minckler and members of the police subcommittee on data reporting and general transparency, and said the discussions had been productive. Again, speaking for himself though, he said he does research on these issues, and they too are complicated. He suggested those interested read several articles or studies on the subject to be better informed.

Shively urged residents to weigh in on the Leverett Police Facebook page. It was also suggested residents email the selectboard at selectboard@leverett.ma.us or email the chief. Shively also said that she was a little sensitive about the new joint-policing relationship with Wendell, and wanted to be sure to hear from Wendell residents also. She said the board would revisit the subject in a month, but wants the deliberation and decision to be really open.

The board said they would sign a letter supporting the town of Montague's request for state aid in speeding up the repair or replacement of the North Leverett Road bridge.

Hankinson said he had spoken with residents about a dangerous Depot Road intersection, and will be meeting with the chief of police and highway superintendent to come up with ideas to improve the situation.

**HOUSING** from page A1

Committee on Rules. If enacted, it would prevent evictions for COVID-19-related non-payment for one year, enable homeowners to defer their mortgage payments, and establish a relief fund for small landlords.

"It's unclear what the prospects are for this bill," Feldman said. "Our legislators have been great – they have been advocating really hard to try to come up with a solution."

Protection may come sooner in the form of the fiscal year 2021 budget bill. Legislators have tacked some emergency measures for out-of-work renters and homeowners affected by COVID-19 onto the bill.

"This budget was filled with compassion in the midst of a global pandemic," state representative Natalie Blais told the *Reporter*. "In it, we not only codified more protections for those facing evictions, but we also expanded funding to those organizations providing direct support to those facing these challenging situations."

The state budget itself, still awaiting the governor's signature or veto, includes the usual several hundred million dollars to various housing and rental assistance programs, with notable increases to some programs, including a \$50 million increase to the Residential Assistance for Families in Transition (RAFT). But this year's bill would also require landlords to help their tenants access rental assistance through these programs, or risk losing their eviction cases in court. In its current form, the bill would also protect anyone with a pending RAFT application from being evicted.

"If you applied for rental assistance during your application, the case is supposed to get stopped," said Feldman. "You can't be physically evicted during the time the application is pending."

The bill also requires notices to quit – initial pre-eviction warnings served by a local sheriff's office – to clarify for recipients that they are not being forced to leave immediately, and to offer them information about rent relief and legal resources.

Scott Parker, director of the Franklin County Sheriff's Office civil process division, said his office was already providing information about rental assistance programs alongside the notices they served. "We're trying to get the tenant more engaged," he said. "There are programs out there – do your research. Show up to court."

"I am proud of the tangible steps we have taken to help protect those experiencing homelessness in our communities," Blais said. "I remain hopeful that Governor Baker will sign this budget soon so that these critically needed funds can quickly be disbursed to help those most in need."

A federal eviction moratorium is due to expire on December 31. Defendants in cases filed since the Massachusetts moratorium expired are expected to begin appearing in court again on January 4.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
FEDERAL ENERGY REGULATORY COMMISSION
TURNERS FALLS HYDROELECTRIC PROJECT (FERC NO. 1889)
NORTHFIELD MOUNTAIN PUMPED-STORAGE PROJECT (FERC NO. 2485)
PUBLIC NOTICE

FirstLight MA Hydro LLC, owner of the **Turners Falls Hydroelectric Project** (Turners Falls Project, FERC No. 1889), and Northfield Mountain LLC, owner of the **Northfield Mountain Pumped-Storage Project** (Northfield Mountain Project, FERC No. 2485) filed with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) on December 4, 2020, Amended Final License Applications (AFLA) for each Project. In this notice, FirstLight MA Hydro LLC and Northfield Mountain LLC are collectively referred to as FirstLight. FirstLight is located at 111 South Bedford Street, Suite 103, Burlington, MA 01803.

The **Turners Falls Hydroelectric Project** is located on the Connecticut River and consists of two hydroelectric facilities, Cabot Station and Station No. 1. The **Northfield Mountain Pumped-Storage Project** uses water impounded by the Turners Falls Dam (Connecticut River) for its pumped-storage operations. Each Project is located in Franklin County in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

FirstLight is pursuing new licenses for each Project in accordance with FERC's Integrated Licensing Process (ILP). The current licenses for each Project expired on April 30, 2018, and each are operating under annual licenses issued by FERC.

The AFLA describes each Project's facilities and operations, summarizes the results of resource studies and assesses the potential effects of the proposed action on environmental, cultural, recreational and socioeconomic resources. FirstLight has proposed several protection, mitigation and enhancement (PM&E) measures in its AFLA related to aquatic habitat, fish passage, recreation resources, terrestrial resources, two federally-endangered species and cultural resources. FirstLight's proposal in the AFLA reflects careful consideration of various power and non-power values of each Project, the diverse interest of stakeholders, and the results of over 40 scientific studies.

FirstLight is making public portions of the AFLA available to resource agencies, Indian tribes, local governments, non-governmental organizations, and members of the public. Electronic copies of the AFLA will be available on FirstLight's public relicensing website at www.northfielddrelicensing.com/Pages/default.aspx, or via FERC's online e-Library at elibrary.ferc.gov/eLibrary/search by entering P-1889 or P-2485 into the "Enter Docket Number" box. The AFLA can also be viewed during normal business hours at the Carnegie Public Library at 201 Avenue A, Turners Falls, MA 01376 (available starting on 12/14). In addition, paper copies of the AFLA can be reproduced at a cost of \$0.10/page, plus postage (both prepaid), by contacting Justin Trudell at 111 South Bedford Street, Suite 103, Burlington, MA 01803 or at (781) 653-4247. Upon acceptance of the AFLA for filing, FERC will publish subsequent notices soliciting public participation. Any questions regarding this notice or the AFLA can be directed to Justin Trudell at the contact information provided above.

Historically, most housing court defendants end up representing themselves, according to Feldman: only about 7% get a lawyer, while the majority of landlords do have legal representation. Now, with a wave of housing court cases approaching, Feldman estimates closer to 1% percent of defendants will have lawyers.

"The actuality of the court process is most people don't know their rights," Feldman said. "Without a lawyer, it's very difficult to navigate this process – it moves super fast. If one side has a lawyer and the other doesn't, it's obviously not just."

Since the statewide eviction moratorium ended on October 17, at least 480 new eviction cases have been opened in Franklin, Hampshire, Hampden, and Berkshire counties, according to documents reviewed by the *Reporter*. The Franklin County Sheriff's Office served 26 housing court summonses to 35 individuals last month, an unusually high number, according to Parker.

"If the solution is that everyone is safe and everyone is housed, that is not going to happen in court," Feldman said. "There is no legal defense because you lost your job because of COVID. Is that what we, as a society, want? If someone lost their job and can't pay rent, they should be evicted for that?"

Among the landlords bringing their tenants to court are multi-property owners such as Paul Viens, partners Frank Lallo and Peter Fondini, Federal Management Co., Inc., and Jordi Herold, co-founder of the Iron Horse Music Hall who bought three of Greenfield's Bank Row buildings in 2009.

Jody James, owner of Northfield Food Mart and Mim's Market, sent two tenants notices to quit in November, adding to two others sent in October. The Greenfield and Montague public housing authorities each served two of their tenants with notices to quit in November.

Unlike an initial notice to quit, submitting a summary process summons and bringing the case to court is not a necessary step for a person to qualify for housing assistance programs.

An elderly housing community in Orange, King Pine RHF Partners, sent a court summons to one resident at the end of November. Eleven renters who received initial notices to quit last month from Leisure Woods Estates, a mobile home park also located in Orange, have yet to receive any summonses.

The town of Orange has a mobile home rent control board, designed to protect the parks' mostly elderly and low-income residents, but repeated attempts by the *Reporter* to reach members of the board for comment have gone unanswered.

"There's an opportunity here to say, well, what's wrong with this process to begin with?" Feldman said. "Is a system where someone has no lawyer and is getting evicted and doesn't know their rights, is that how we want this to be?"

**NOTES FROM THE ERVING SELECTBOARD****Budget Season Starts!!**

By KATIE NOLAN

In a GoToWebinar meeting on Monday, the Erving selectboard and finance committee started their review of town department budget requests for FY'22. Monday's focus was on administrative functions, including the selectboard and administrative offices, town accountant, treasurer, town clerk, and insurance and liability.

Most of the budget requests were level-funded, with the exception of annual pay increases in accordance with the town's step-and-grade salary system. However, the selectboard asked for an increase of \$35,000 for legal fees, based on legal expenses in prior years.

In addition, the planning board asked for a \$1,500 increase in its consulting line item, and the information technology and support re-

quest was for a \$10,000 increase for computer/software upgrades. The town clerk asked for a reduction of approximately \$4,000 in election expenses, because fewer elections are scheduled in FY'22.

The board and the fin com will review the draft budget further; no recommendations were made or votes were taken at this meeting. At their December 14 joint meeting, the two boards will review the public works and public safety department requests.

The board appointed Michael Gordon, Mariah Kurtz, Glenn McCrory, and Peter Sanders to the public works feasibility committee. This committee will review the four responses to the town's request for proposals to construct a public works dry storage shed and office space. The board is still seeking a fifth member for the committee.

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HEALTH from page A1

septic systems, housing-slash-nuisances – in the last couple weeks we've seen a spike in nuisances, mostly rubbish and trash accumulations and improper storage of furniture on public ways, concentrated in Turners Falls...

People have been moving, and the contents are being left on the sidewalk: old furniture, couches. I also think people have had time to clean, if they have not been working or they're cooped up and work remotely, and they assume the town still has some kind of service to pick up old furniture. Or they're leaving these contents out on the sidewalks with the belief that somebody will pick up and reuse them, but in most cases that doesn't bear any fruit, and it just degrades in the environment and causes a nuisance.

MR: My roommate did get a pretty good coffee table this week.

DW: I've seen some nice items come and go! Along with those that just sit out and absorb the rain. The intention may be good....

In conjunction with writing correction orders for these items to be removed, I've been serving the owners of the properties with a \$50 fine. I've seen compliance achieved much more quickly that way.... We do everything by mail, with certified copies. We usually give them 48 hours...

MR: Okay, I want to get into COVID. Last week's figures were significantly up across the county. What are we seeing this week in Montague?

DW: Well, what I have for the fall case count, which is October 1 through December 5, is 50 cases.

MR: And I was seeing 29 based on what DPH published on the 3rd.

DW: We use the MAVEN numbers, which are much more accurate, in the sense that they're better dated – by the time that information goes into what you're seeing, there's a lag time. Eventually it will connect or catch up, but the accuracy there is not real-world.

The total positive cases from March 1 to December 5 is 80.

MR: So the bottom line here is that the caseload has already tripled, from last week.

DW: Sure.

MR: What are the big vectors here for community transmission?

DW: It's the same: it's the opportunities to improve with social distancing, and across the board, the theory is that the increase in numbers have been associated with the gatherings that have taken place. It could be very much attributable to the Thanksgiving holiday, and certainly before that – as the weather got colder, people got inside. I believe those two aspects were the catalysts.

The information put out by states and federal governments indicates that many people were traveling – via airlines or automobiles. Obviously, that was a detriment to the prevention and mitigation efforts that were in place. It is what it is. I've had to just deal with it.

Will numbers increase because of that? Certainly. Hopefully not exponentially, but let's just say the Montague board of health is expecting higher numbers to come forth in the next two weeks.

MR: What does the statewide contact-tracing program look like?

DW: They are assisting Cheryl

as much as they can. With the numbers across Massachusetts, they have been inundated with contact tracing, and they're behind across the board, and trying to hire more assistants to alleviate the pressures on local boards of health.

Here in town, we've been very assertive, and productive, with getting contact-tracing efforts done in a timely fashion. Cheryl has been doing a great job, but because of her limited hours and the numbers compounding, we'll be looking for more assistance from the CTC....

Only time will tell. Right now we have a good grip on it, but things may change rapidly in the next two weeks. The way it's been going, I would definitely hypothesize that the numbers will rise until we get measures in place for the vaccine.

The state is also looking at implementing COVID-19 testing locations: Amherst, Greenfield, and Pittsfield were identified. More testing, which is a very good thing, will lead to more numbers....

The CTC will prioritize case investigation and contact tracing: whether it's a cluster, the number of people, location: all of these variables need to be analyzed much more now, but we're ready for the challenge.

MR: I know our understanding of the virus is that it tends to clump up in clusters, or superspreader, events – has that borne out locally?

DW: Not super-clusters. By definition, an "outbreak" is two or more people, and we've seen that more in residential homes; the spread has happened within families.

MR: What have been the successes and challenges in your enforcement in businesses so far?

DW: The big success is with operators, managers: their willingness and ability to accept our enforcement procedures, which entail more education. I have to commend a lot of these businesses for their ability to assimilate this information and take it seriously, and implement these measures within their practices.

These businesses are really taking this pandemic seriously. I've seen that across the board. We've predominantly visited retail restaurants; their ability to self-enforce, to get the information across to their employees, and to stand in compliance with the sector-specific guidelines has been done very well in town.

The challenges stem from these orders handed down from the state changing, a lot. There's a need to add or reduce requisites pertaining to mask use, hygiene, or social distancing measures. Keeping everybody abreast of that has been a challenge....

We've been receiving, constantly, questions from businesses and the public. We're triaging calls: whether they pertain to disease surveillance and contact tracing, or just the general public asking questions about the updates that have been handed down.

MR: Do people call in trying to get you to enforce gathering limitations?

DW: They have not. What we've had is, when entities set forth or stage events, they've proactively sent us their action plans and prevention control plans for our review and approval. There was an influx during October, with Halloween.

What we did also get around that time frame, and around Thanksgiving, was calls reporting that an event at a private residence already took place with a number of people that exceeded the limitations.

MR: You're not handing down fines. Is that something you would reconsider if the figures get a lot worse?

DW: That is something I would reconsider, but I would have to speak directly with the board of health members to verify which direction we would like to take. We have been more focused on the educational aspect, and cooperation.

MR: Since the order came out last month that we should be wearing masks in public, even where social distancing is possible, is there an action plan to get higher compliance with that in town?

DW: I have to say I think the compliance levels have been very good. There's been isolated issues, concerns that have been brought forth from businesses, but the compliance level is very good for a town this size.

Will that be enforced more? I think there will be more visits to businesses, to reiterate the requirements, and look again at the educational aspect of it and reiterate the parameters of these orders. But I don't foresee any actions such as fines instituted for non-compliance with mask use.

MR: That answer is focusing on businesses, but am I correct that people should be wearing masks when they're walking down the sidewalk on Avenue A?

DW: That's correct. On public ways, yes.

MR: Is there any action plan to try to increase compliance there, even through education?

DW: I've heard feedback from the signage that we posted, and the general public just being more aware of it, that the compliance levels have increased significantly since this pandemic started. I believe that aspect, the public way, is a topic the board of health will be addressing – will it warrant fines? That is something the board of health members would likely have to vote on.

MR: Do you ever just take a walk down the Avenue and encourage people to put them on?

DW: A number of times, when I've been visiting businesses. But during the course of my visits to locations, I've seen many more people wearing masks – maybe not properly, but the intention has been there. I see people taking them off prematurely at times. I've brought that to people's attention, but in a non-demeaning way, not being too directly strict with overly enforcing it.

It's very hard – I don't want to sound abrasive or overly direct; people may be turned off by that.

MR: Understood. It seems like it's about 50% out there – [this morning] I saw seven with, seven without.

DW: I see much more without, I have to say, on the trail paralleling the river. It was much more prevalent when it was warmer. But, as the new order came down, I've seen improvement.

Human nature is hard – it's a whole new way of life for people. But I see more intent with it, I really do. I saw it much more lacking in the early fall, late summer.

I would agree with you, there's still an opportunity to improve, across the board. It's something the board of health wants to focus more on, and take the avenue of education.

MR: Does the town have a stock of masks you can give out? That

SPREADS from page A1

goes to press, the latest batch was released December 3. In the preceding week, cases were logged in a record-setting 16 Franklin County towns. Over the course of November, the county's weekly case count climbed from 31 to 41 to 43 to 69.

Public health officials who are involved in tracking cases and tracing contacts, however, have access to a more up-to-the-minute database, the Massachusetts Virtual Epidemiologic Network (MAVEN). Crochier said that since last Thursday, the county's overall total in cumulative cases has risen from 674 to 798. The new weekly figure, therefore, will be at least 124 – and possibly much higher.

"Greenfield has definitely seen a jump in the numbers as well," Jennifer Hoffman, the city's interim health director, told the Reporter. Hoffman's current count of 362 cumulative cases is 68 above last Thursday's DPH figure, which means the rate of positive cases there has more than tripled over the previous week's level of 20.

"I think everyone is suspecting this is all from the Thanksgiving weekend – large gatherings indoors," Hoffman said. "People really, really, really need to wear their masks. They need to socially distance, and stay six feet away even when they're wearing a mask."

"There are many cases everywhere this week," regional public health nurse Lisa White said, re-

would be the nice way...

DW: Boxes of masks we've purchased with the CARES Act money, I remember them being \$3 or \$4 a box, and now they're up to \$22 a box for the same product. Is that a deterrent for residents? I'm sure it is!

We've been receiving more masks, but our intent is to disburse them first to our departments: the fire department, DPW, library, and town hall. We are open to the public, and we have to take measures to prevent transmission between employees.

MR: There's only one place people downtown can do laundry that's walking distance, and it's an enclosed space, on Third Street. Has the board of health been looking at the laundromat, and are you trying to do anything to enforce any modicum of mask-wearing within that room?

DW: We have not made a visit there, nor have we had the opportunity, because we have not received any complaints about mask use. We haven't been proactive in getting to that location. Many times we've been more reactive when complaints have been received.

If there's an opportunity for that location to improve, we would certainly address it – any resident can call us and let us know about its status, or make an official complaint.

MR: I heard the town's getting a cooler for vaccines?

DW: We just received one from the Franklin Regional Council of Governments, specifically made for vaccines. Will it be able to accommodate the temperature requirements for the COVID-19 vaccine? That's very questionable – I've heard it will require a cooler that works off liquid nitrogen. But we're going to hook the cooler up to our backup generator, and use it in conjunction with the one the nurse uses in her office for vaccine storage...

MR: Is the state starting to talk

fusing to confirm any rumors of a cluster of cases stemming from a Thanksgiving week gathering in a southern Franklin County town. "I am not able to speak to numbers particularly... We have a staff of people who are working very hard to stay on top of all of our notifications, and to be in touch with all the people who test positive."

White said that "misinformation" about how and for how long to quarantine after a potential exposure may be leading residents who are not themselves experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 to nevertheless spread the virus.

"You may feel totally fine, but testing negative does not mean you are not incubating the virus," White said. "As we've seen, for some people, having the virus is a minor deal.... It's important that people who are exposed are to remain in their homes."

Amid a statewide viral surge, Massachusetts is pushing to expand testing, and this week major initiatives have been announced at UMass-Amherst and in Greenfield.

Tests will be available, on demand and at no cost, on the Greenfield Community College campus next Tuesday, December 15 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. and Wednesday, December 16 from 1 to 6 p.m. They are available without a medical referral and to those without symptoms. Pre-registration is required at tinyurl.com/y6etuajc.

to you about distribution?

DW: We are signing a COVID-19 Vaccine Agreement with the state, saying we have the capacity and the willingness to accept this vaccine, and the availability to dispense it properly: we can house it, and we can administer it in an appropriate clinical fashion through the town nurse and the board of health. That paperwork is on its way to the state.

When decisions are made, that will be handled by the emergency management team and the board of health, and an action plan will be instituted.... We are ready to get this thing started.

We did an assessment of how traffic flow might work, and what areas or buildings we may be able to use. One location is going to be the airport.

MR: Cool!

DW: It's going to be unprecedented – the high school is usually the site for things [like this], but taking into account that we might have a lot of people turning out for this one, the airport looks like a more logical site. If this is enacted, it would be a regional site in agreement with Erving, Gill, and Wendell....

I'm hearing different things: it may be available next month, or by the time it gets down to dispensing to the public in that fashion, it may be March or April. Those decisions are out of our hands. But we have the plan together, we have the people together, and we're just waiting for the call.

MR: What are you going to do when this whole thing's over?

DW: Vacation! Not one week, two weeks! I want to travel.

It's certainly been a challenge, a whirlwind. We've held steadfast, but just in the last three weeks it's really ramped up. I don't foresee that slowing down, really, until we make it past the vaccine dispensing.

But God willing, we'll get there! We're doing pretty good.

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MONTAGUE from page A1

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The committee is planning to meet with police chief Chris Williams next week, Pinardi said, but the only item on the agenda so far involved “sanctuary cities, and how the police department interacts with that.” He said the committee would tabulate the data from its surveys and present a report to the selectboard “sometime after the first of the year.”

Elan reported that the equity committee had primarily been concerned with evaluating the policies of the police department and collecting data on the use of force and traffic stops. The committee had also interviewed both Williams and lieutenant Chris Bonnett, who is in charge of collecting the data, and had posted an “extensive archive of documents” to the town website.

Elan said the committee was “impressed with the approach of the police department.” “It seems that, in the general field of policing, it would be considered progressive,” she said. But Elan also suggested the committee needs to look more closely at “where the rubber meets the road.”

“It is difficult to actually be a group that is looking for problems,” she said. “But that is the work we’ve been assigned. We need to emphasize that even if problems are few, we need to surface them.”

Elan then complained that the equity committee “had not been given access to the raw data from the community engagement survey,” and asked the selectboard if they felt her committee should “have our lenses out for people who said very clearly they may have had a problem.”

Pinardi responded that he had never been contacted by Elan to request that her committee be sent the surveys. “I’ve never said no, and I don’t see any reason why they shouldn’t have access to them,” he said.

Elan said she had not intended to suggest that the information had been withheld, but since it “did not flow” automatically, she decided to bring the issue up.

Pinardi said the survey results would be “public documents,” and added that between 20 and 25 respondents had requested a “follow-up call” to discuss their responses in person. Nelson and Kuklewicz suggested that a member from each committee could interview them.

Kuklewicz said it had been a

good discussion, and recommended putting the topic on the agenda again in January to “wrap up” or “refocus” the committees.

Host Community

The board discussed, and approved, a host community agreement with Greenhouse Cannabis Group, which is seeking to locate an office for its pot delivery business in downtown Millers Falls. No cannabis or delivery vehicles would be located on or near the premises.

Under the agreement, the company promises to make \$15,000 in annual contributions to local charities, pay the town a “community impact fee” increasing from 1% to 5% of gross sales over a five-year period, and donate no less than 150 hours of volunteer labor “to support community development and/or community improvement projects.”

The board also agreed to endorse a letter of support for the firm to the state Cannabis Control Commission, which must now approve a license.

Virus Spreading

The Selectboard heard a report from public health director Daniel Wasiuk on the latest local data on COVID-19 infections. Wasiuk said that over the two weeks ending on December 5 there were a total of 25 “confirmed cases,” with 17 coming in the latter week. He also said the “fall case count” from October 1 to December 5 was 50 cases, and that the total number of cases since March 1 has been 80.

Wasiuk told the board that the town’s emergency management team had met earlier that day and town nurse Cheryl Volpe had reported an additional nine cases “in the past two days.”

Asked why the town did not simply use the town-by-town data posted every Thursday on the state public health website, Wasiuk said the data the town nurse takes off the Massachusetts Virtual Epidemiologic Network (MAVEN) is more up to date.

“It’s an opportunity to signal to the community just how seriously everyone needs to take the very well-communicated precautions,” said town administrator Steve Ellis about the MAVEN data.

Recreation Modified

The board heard a report from parks and recreation director Jon

Dobosz about potential youth winter sports programs, including swimming and basketball. Dobosz had sent the board several proposals that included pandemic protocols and potential starting dates near the first day of 2021. But at Monday’s meeting, Dobosz said he was delaying a final decision on beginning dates after talking with Wasiuk. He indicated he was now considering starting the programs in late January or later.

The parks and rec department will be “branching off” and starting its own “very colorful and dynamic website,” according to Dobosz. He said the plan is to “launch” the site this week.

Dobosz also announced that the annual new year’s day Sawmill River Run will be a “virtual run” in which contestants will have four days to complete the 10 kilometers “of their choice” and report back to the department. The race will take place between from December 31 to January 3, and “all participants will receive a medal.”

Power Shift

Ellis announced that FirstLight Power company has submitted its final application to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission for a new license. The process which led to this application, which involved proposals from a wide range of “stakeholders” including Montague, began approximately ten years ago.

The Turners Falls dam, the power canal, and two hydropower stations along the canal, as well as the Connecticut River below and above the dam, are the main components of one of the projects under consideration.

Ellis said he and town planner Walter Ramsey had quickly reviewed the executive summary of the proposal, which will be on next week’s selectboard agenda. He said the “ecological accommodations” in the proposal could potentially reduce the company’s revenue from hydro generation by 10% over a 50-year period. He has requested the town’s assessor to “begin to help us think through what financial consequences that may hold for Montague.” FirstLight is the largest taxpayer in Montague.

Storm Pay

Public works superintendent Tom Bergeron came before the board with a request he be paid an hourly rate for certain “storm

events” and other emergency work like sewer back-ups into residences.

Bergeron now receives “comp time,” time off on salary, for this work but, he said, he often exceeds the hourly limit or does not realistically take the time off. He requested that he be paid an hourly rate of \$35, the same as his rate for plowing snow.

All board members expressed sympathy for Bergeron’s situation, but expressed concern that other department heads may want the same arrangement once a precedent is set. “With no disrespect to Tom,” Nelson said, “I wonder what kind of can of worms this could open.”

Kuklewicz expressed a similar sentiment, noting that the “plowing is a pretty straightforward decision because you’re doing a task that your entire crew is doing.”

The board delayed a decision on the issue until early January.

Other Business

The board also delayed a decision on appointing a new member of the airport commission following the resignation of longtime member Peter Golrick. The one-week delay is intended to allow time for more applicants to apply.

The board extended the timeline for the demolition of the former Strathmore Mill smokestack until December 31.

It also approved a reserve fund transfer of \$6,000 to fund new town hall “COVID entry screeners.”

Ellis announced that the town would be able to fund a complete inventory of its culverts by the Franklin Regional Council of Governments. The work will be reimbursed by the state under its “Community Compact” program.

The next selectboard meeting will be held December 14.



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

Here’s the way it was on December 2, 2010: News from the Montague Reporter’s archive.

Zen Peacemakers Closing Up Shop

Zen Peacemakers, an organization that blends Buddhism and activism, which moved its world headquarters to Montague in 2003, is shedding its extraordinary 34-acre property – the storied Montague Farm on Ripley Road – and seeking to move to a more affordable location in the area.

The news about the active and seemingly solid organization closing shop has stunned people locally, and in the extensive Peacemakers community. Co-founded by Roshi Bernie Glassman in 1994, Zen Peacemakers is dedicated to applying Buddhist practice to compassionate care and social change through prison meditation programs, street witness with the homeless, pilgrimages to Auschwitz, peace circles in international war zones, and the like.

The news emerged from communication between staff and participants in several programs headquartered at the property, and was confirmed in recent days by members of the Peacemakers board and staff.

An email sent in mid-November, signed by the seven stewards of the Montague Farm Zendo – the center’s worshiping community – said more: that the property itself “has been financially burdensome and unsustainable for the organization.”

The programs aren’t necessarily tied to the physical facility, though. This week, in an email, Steve Kanji Ruhl, Zen Peacemaker’s director, offered words of reassurance. “We’ll be continuing the programs – including our innovative and popular [Montague Farm] Café, which serves free, healthy meals to local people in need – in other Franklin County venues.”

Skate Park Committee Bringing Down Cost

The Great Falls Skate Park will cost more to build than proponents had once hoped, but the skate park committee is working hard to bring the final price tag down.

At a hearing Thursday, December 2, a dozen skate park committee members and supporters met with the Montague parks and recreation commission to go over plans and cost estimates for the proposed 7,300 square foot concrete skate park to be built on the former Williams Way, a one block side street abutting Unity Park.

In 2009 special town meeting voters approved a motion to abandon Williams Way to make room for a permanent skate park, and the selectboard approved spending \$17,500 on design plans for the park out of program income funds. On the second of two public design hearings, the final plans were unveiled on July 29, 2010.

But the price tag, originally ballparked at about \$350,000, had grown to almost half a million dollars, due in large part to the difficulty of dealing with the high water table at Unity Park.

Berkshire Design architect Peter Wells was sent back to the drawing board to try to reduce those costs, if possible, without sacrificing the overall design.

On December 2, he reported back. By removing a few retaining walls and mounding up fill on the side slopes instead, Wells estimated the price could drop to between \$440,000 and \$462,000.

Skate park committee spokesperson Bryan Dolan said he believes the town can shave an extra \$27,336 off those estimates by subtracting site work features like bleachers, trees, and benches, reducing the amount of paved walkways, and other cost-saving adjustments. If the committee can find a contractor to donate fill and trucking, it could save an additional \$15,000, Dolan said.

FACES & PLACES



Left to right: Jay Messier, Rebecca Brennan, Liz Piotrowski, Laura Medeiros, Crystal Harvey, Dani Rouse, and Hannab Ward prepare to clean headstones at the East Mineral Road cemetery.

MONTAGUE – Cemetery commission member Jeri Moran, who submitted this photo, writes:

“As part of their commitment to the town of Montague, volunteers from 253 Pharmacy spent time this fall cleaning the publicly-owned cemeteries in the five villages. Armed with water and brushes, they cleaned decades of lichens and mold off century-old gravestones, many of which couldn’t even be read until they did their work.

“We are so grateful to them for all their hard work, which they did with such a positive attitude. They were

able to complete three of the seven cemeteries before the cemetery commission decided to shut down the process for the winter. We hope that they will be able to help us in 2021; they were great!

“We also are looking for any other community volunteers who might like to clean headstones and, in the process, find out more about the people who lived in our town. Some of the graves actually tell stories about the people - who got killed in the Civil War, who drowned in the Millers River, who got thrown from their horse... “Interested? Contact judithcemetry@gmail.com!”

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Get Yours Before They're Gone!

By REPORTER STAFF

Our Wrapping Paper Edition is here, and it's great! This is our big fundraiser in this pandemic year, so stock up with these awesome full-page spreads by seven local artists: Lahri Bond, Hannah Brookman, Emma Kohlmann, Cecely Ogren, Steve Schmidt, Jeanne Weintraub, and Peter Zierlein.



You could easily get five!

The editions sell for \$5 a single set, and five for \$20. You can find them at a number of places you might 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 Buckingham Rabbits Vintage.

You can also order this edition – as well as *Montague Reporter* t-shirts in special remaining sizes – on our website, www.montaguereporter.org. 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 to make a purchase with exact cash or check) this Saturday, **December 12**, between 9 a.m. and noon.

We hope you will help support us, and use our pages to wrap presents from local businesses this year! We are grateful to RiverCulture for a grant which allowed us to provide stipends to the artists.

(See their ad on this page for more information on RiverCulture's seasonal campaign.)

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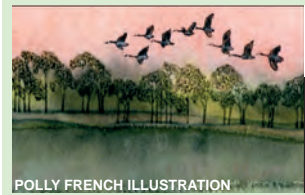
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**WEST ALONG THE RIVER
THE DARKLING THRUSH
AT CHRISTMASTIDE**

By DAVID BRULE

THE FLAT, ERVINGSIDE – One late afternoon on a December day counting down to Christmas, I needed to get out of the house. Away from the computer, away from constantly breaking news, away from the drumbeat of epidemic updates. Not that in the house, I didn't want to listen to something else like all-day Christmas carols on the Keene, NH station or help out the cook by scoffing down a day's supply of cookies. It's just that I needed to get down into the woods along the river.

Down here, I've got a place sort of forgotten by time, forgotten by design. The Old Pasture, purchased by great-grandfather Judah and his thrifty Scots wife Lizzie Moir back in 1882, has turned into woodlands since the floods of 1936 and 1938 ruined the pasture grazing lands.

Down here in the Pasture, it's easy to get in touch with the Old Ones, the air is fresh, and in the gathering early dusk of December, it's quiet. Besides, in December, most of those in the family who have gone before years ago are closer to us than ever, closer than during the rest of the year. You just have to be open to that, and in the right place.

So I drift down to my woods along the river near dusk, bowsaw in hand, heading for a great oak that fell in a summer windstorm about five years ago. Last time I checked, it had seasoned well, and many of the limbs were good for sectioning up, to bring back to the house, then to be cut yet once again but this time into cookstove lengths ready to burn. From the lower pasture to the Glenwood C woodstove in less than an hour.

I pass a towering wolf tree, the old patriarch oak that I call the Grandfather Tree because it has clearly been here for at least the last one hundred and eighty years. It stood strong and survived as the flood waters of '36 and '38 rose steadily up its trunk eight feet or

more. Those waters did subside, likely never to come back for another 500 years or so. And the old oak is still here.

Judah himself would have stridden past this wolf tree on his way to the spring or to bring the cows back in to the barn. He might have, like me, gone further down along the river to bring in some firewood. In fact, just when we moved back here in the 1970s I did find a moldering half cord of wood left there, and never brought up to the house. Maybe it was Judah or Grandfather Abe who had forgotten about it, neatly stacked, back when they switched from wood to coal.

*... When Frost was spectre-gray
And Winter... made desolate
The weakening eye of the day
And all mankind that haunted night
Had sought their household fires...
At once a voice arose...*

Far to the edge of the pasture's boundary, I found my fallen-down old oak, lying on the earth now for five summers and five winters, yet solid as, well, oak. No decay, but bone dry. Perfect.

My Swedish bowsaw, with its new blade, was thrust forward and drawn back in a steady rhythm, fine saw dust drifting down onto the light coating of yesterday's snow. I like sawing by hand, especially out here alone in the woods. It's safer, and I can stop, pause whenever I feel like it, and listen to my west-flowing river, or catch the call of the cardinal or chickadee, once a screech owl.

But this time during one of my pauses, I caught a glimpse of movement a few yards away, within a holly-like barberry bush loaded with red berries. Those barberries are considered invasive, but I've found that a number of birds do make good use of those berries, invasive or no.

I had seen before, in the darkening December woods, a perky see **WEST ALONG** page B4



Hermit thrush (*Catharus guttatus*).

Above: Rob Skelton, of Montague's Stonework, with part of a wall he recently finished for Peter Zummo and Stephanie Woodard on top of Richardson Road in North Leverett. "Happy to have work right now," says Rob.

**Wendell's Historic Meetinghouse
Passes On To Friends**

By LILY REAVIS

WENDELL – "There is a human need to gather physically and not virtually," said Chris Queen, the campaign director for the Friends of the Wendell Meetinghouse. "A place where the town comes together to water its collective spirit."

For Wendell, that place will soon be found once again in the town's Meetinghouse. This month, the Wendell selectboard has agreed to transfer the ownership of the building to the Friends of the Wendell Meetinghouse, following a years-long drive for restoration. The group purchased the property in 2002, but the ownership transfer was delayed until December 14 of this year due to various legal town processes. During that time, the Friends grew as a non-profit organization and a group with the collective goal of bringing the community together within Wendell.

Known for its collective left-leaning political views and quirky eclectic attitude, the town is in need of a historical location open to "human creativity and deep reflection," according to the Friends' vision for the property.

Amelia Sawyer, a board member for the Friends, became involved with the project five years ago.



A procedural logjam has cleared, and the mid-19th-century building will soon be officially in the hands of a nonprofit formed by its stewards twenty years ago.

Living in town for eleven years, Amelia and her husband Garrett passed the Meetinghouse building nearly every day without knowing its purpose. It wasn't until one Old Home Day that the Sawyers were able to tour the building. From that moment on, Sawyer knew she wanted to help restore the property as a community gathering area.

"The building was opened up and we were able to go into it for the first time and see what a beautiful, special place it is," she said. Her background interest in history

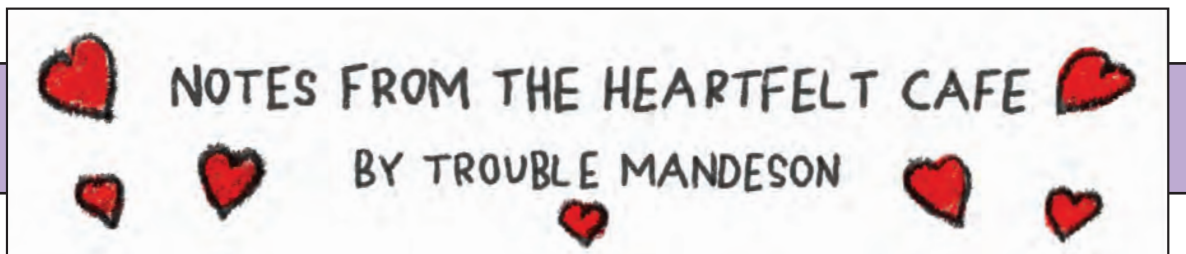
pushed Sawyer to investigate the building further, which led her to pursue a board seat with the Friends.

"For me to see that there was something special and unique with such a past, that was less than a mile from my house, was kind of amazing," Sawyer said.

Spiritual Gathering

The first Meetinghouse was built in 1783, just two years after Wendell was incorporated as a town; it was rebuilt in 1846. While the

see **WENDELL** page B5



GREENFIELD – I'm lying in bed at 1:30 a.m. and I can't sleep, even after counting cabbages hurling themselves over a fence. It must've been that second nap. COVID-19 has changed my life in ways I never expected, and being mostly homebound often includes a late morning nap, followed by an early afternoon nap – which brings me to counting heads of cabbages in my head for an hour now, because I can't sleep after all that napping. When I finally acknowledge that I am wide awake and denial is no longer an option, I head downstairs to rummage in the fridge for a late-night snack.

That's when I notice that the big jar of sauerkraut is all but empty. I was, as you recall, only just counting cabbages, and I remembered that I used the last of it to make Grandma Sadie's Hungarian Sweet and Sour Stuffed Cabbage Rolls last week, a delicious mélange of savory, sweet, and tart flavors with spiced rice and beef cocooned inside cooked cabbage leaves slicked with thick, rich tomato paste. The rolls are then mounded up with sauerkraut, diced tomatoes, and finally, a sprinkling of sugar over the top "to add sweetness to life," as Grandma Sadie would say.

Here in New England, where there is a large Polish population, this dish is known as *golumpki* or *golabki*, meaning "little pigeons."

I remind myself to remind myself later, after I've



Cabbage rolls topped with sauerkraut and diced tomatoes, ready for the oven.

caught up on my sleep, to make another batch of sauerkraut. I'll use the green and purple cabbage I've had in my vegetable drawer for weeks... or has it been months?

It's hard to tell, as one day blends into the next, but one thing hasn't changed: those darn cabbage heads last forever. One has only to peel off the offending brown and moldering outside leaves on a cabbage head unearthed from the furthest reaches of the vegetable drawer to find fresh new layers of crinkled crunch hidden just underneath. It truly is a wonder.

see **HEARTFELT** page B8

Pet of the Week



CHRISTOPHER CARMODY COLLAGE

“TULLY”

Are you looking for an “in your pocket” kind of dog who wants to be your one and only? Meet Tully! Tully lived with an older person who sadly passed away, so he’s used to a quiet life. He is very nervous of other animals, so he must be your only pet, and cannot go to a home with children. He is crate trained and house trained.

He is also very nervous of new people, but once he trusts you, he is very cuddly and may have a

hard time being left alone. He is a high-energy dog who will need both exercise and training to help build his confidence.

If you’re looking for a quiet and steadfast companion, inquire about Tully! Animals at Dakin are available only in Springfield currently. Contact adoption staff at springfield@dakinhumane.org and include your name and phone number. For more information, call (413) 781-4000 or visit www.dakinhumane.org.

WINTER LIBRARY UPDATE

By JERI MORAN

FRANKLIN COUNTY – In the initial months of COVID-19 shutdowns, our local libraries were forced to close. Since then, they have come up with different solutions to try and give their pa-

trons ongoing access to materials and services.

For several months now, people have been able to order materials through the online catalog and then collect them outside the libraries’ doors, called “curbside pickup.” This still continues. Folks

who need help ordering materials can call their libraries and the staff will order things for you. Going to your library’s website will give you more information as well.

Below are some specifics from our libraries on more things that are happening:

MONTAGUE PUBLIC LIBRARIES

(413) 863-3214 / montaguepubliclibraries.org

Curbside Pick-Up Hours. *Carnegie Library:* Mondays through Wednesdays, 10 a.m. to 7:30 p.m.; Thursdays and Fridays, 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.; Saturdays 10 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. *Montague Center Library:* Mondays and Wednesdays, 2 to 7 p.m. *Millers Falls Library:* Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2 to 7 p.m.

Returns after hours go in the outside book boxes. Not accepting book donations at this time.

Carnegie Library is open by appointment on Tuesdays from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. and Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Call (413) 863-3214 to schedule a 30-minute appointment for browsing and computer use. For more details, call or stop by on open days. Use the ramp entrance behind the library or visit the website.

Saturday, December 12: Take-and-Make Craft Bag, Carnegie Library. Children are invited to take a craft bag to make something to give as a gift. Pick up a bag at Curbside Pick-Up, behind the library, while supplies last. Please take one bag per child and avoid touching the other bags. Happy Holidays! 10 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

January 11 to February 20: Winter Reading Program – Chill Out & Read. For all ages. Children, teens, and adults can read to earn prizes, attend great programs via Zoom, and more. Signup begins January 11 and can be done online at montaguepubliclibraries.org, or by picking up a Winter Reading packet at Curbside Pick-Up. More details coming soon on the Libraries’ website. Attend the following Winter Reading Zoom events by emailing arovatti-leonard@cwmmars.org for the link.

Events listed below, and more to come, including a “de-cluttering” event for adults:

Friday, January 15: Wild Tales with the Southern Vermont Natural History Museum. Take a literary journey around the world as our very own Storytelling Naturalist shares tales of animals and magic from around the world. With each story, a live animal will visit to bring a natural history piece to the myth and legends! 6:30 p.m.

Friday, January 29: Who Lives Where? With the Center For Aquatic Sciences. An animal’s home is called its habitat, and habitats vary from place to place. In this program, students will meet four live animals – horseshoe crab, pine snake, screech owl, and diamond back terrapin – and learn about the adaptations that help them to survive in their surroundings. 6:30 p.m.

Friday, February 5: No Strings Marionettes Presents “The Snowmaiden.” Mythical figures, animals, and humans from one of Russia’s most beloved folk tales populate this production. 6:30 p.m.

Tuesday, February 16: Folktales of Asia with Motoko. Motoko will tell a humorous Japanese tale about sumo wrestling, a myth to celebrate the Chinese New Year, and a wisdom tale from Old Korea. At the end, she will demonstrate a simple origami activity and answer questions from audience members. 3 p.m.

WENDELL FREE LIBRARY

See www.wendellmass.us/index.php/wendell-free-library.html or call (978) 544-3559 for information, hours, and activities.

LEVERETT LIBRARY

See leverettlibrary.org or phone (413) 548-9220 for information, hours, and activities.

ERVING PUBLIC LIBRARY

(413) 423-3348 / library@erving-ma.org

Service Hours. Librarians are standing by to help Sundays through Thursdays, 1 to 7 p.m. Contactless curbside pickup is available. Closed Fridays and Saturdays. Can’t make it during our service hours? We can put your items in a secure locker and you can pick up items 24/7!

Appointments. Erving Public Library’s beautiful new building has been open for appointments since October 1! Call or email for browsing or computer use appointments, available on Thursdays and Sundays between 2 and 5:30 p.m.

We offer various virtual events and **Take & Make kits** for all ages. Visit us [@ervinglibrary](https://www.facebook.com/ervinglibrary) on Facebook to see what is happening. You don’t need a Facebook account to view our page!

eNewsletter. Sign up to receive our digital newsletter! Delivered each week to your inbox, it contains the items newly added to our collection, and news & events! Visit wowbrary.org.

Libraries in the Woods. Erving Public Library is a proud member of a group of local libraries that collaborate to bring our towns a community read each spring, and programming throughout the year. Find Libraries in the Woods on Facebook [@librariesinthewoods](https://www.facebook.com/librariesinthewoods).

DICKINSON LIBRARY, NORTHFIELD

(413) 498-2455 / northfieldpubliclibrary.org

Curbside Pickup Hours. Tuesdays through Saturdays. Call for a time to pick up any items you may have ordered.

Open by Appointment. Tuesdays 2 to 8 p.m., Fridays 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Call for appointment.

Drop In Hours. Wednesdays, 2 to 6 p.m. The library is open for a limited number of people.

Take and Make crafts can be found on our front steps once a month.

Monday December 14: Virtual Celebration of Animation. Award-winning author and pop-culture historian Martin Gitlin hosts this fun and enlightening presentation for all ages based on his book, *Celebration of Animation: The 100 Greatest Cartoon Characters in Television History*. He will show funny cartoon snippets of characters from the past century, play trivia with patrons, discuss the criteria he used to rank the best of the best, and speak about their impact on American pop culture. Adults, teens, kids... this program is fun for everyone! Marty will have autographed and personalized copies of his book available for online purchase after the virtual event. Email dmemlib@gmail.com to register. 7 p.m.

Starting in January: Virtual Preschool Story Hour. Second and fourth Fridays at 4:30 p.m. The storytellers are *Julie Stepanek*, second Fridays, and *RuthAnn Paulson*, fourth Fridays. Sponsored by the Pioneer Valley Family Connections.

SLATE MEMORIAL LIBRARY, GILL

Town website indicates it is closed. Call (413) 863-2591 for more information.

Senior Center Activities

DECEMBER 14 THROUGH 18

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 Better 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-bettters@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 November 30; 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

Green Fields Market: Senior hours from 8 to 9 a.m. Monday-Saturday and 10 to 11 a.m. on Sunday. Curbside pickup available. Order by 8 p.m.; order ready for pickup between 1 and 5 the following day. Delivery also available. (413) 773-9567

McCusker’s Market: Curbside pickup only 10 to 11 a.m. Order between 12 and 1 p.m. for pickup the following day. Email pickup@franklincommunity.coop (413) 625-2548

Stop and Shop: Senior hours from 6 to 8 a.m. (413) 774-6096

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Funds Available For Senior Home Repair

MONTAGUE and GILL— The Gill Montague Council on Aging is offering \$100 to \$300 grants to Montague and Gill homeowners over age 60 to support home repairs which will improve safety and accessibility within their homes. Some examples are installation of grab bars, changing door knobs to door handles, repair to electrical systems, plumbing repairs, and railing installation.

The goal of this program is to help make the repairs and improvements necessary to allow seniors to remain safely in their own homes as long as they wish.

The homeowner is responsible for getting an estimate, supervising and approving the work, and paying the contractor for the total amount less the amount of the grant. The contractor must then invoice the Gill Mon-

tagne Council on Aging for the grant amount and must include a copy of the detailed total invoice with the homeowner payment indicated.

The Council on Aging is unable to make recommendations of service providers but the homeowner is strongly urged to check references and preference should be given to contractors who are licensed and insured. The Council bears no responsibility for the quality or timeliness of the repair. It is the homeowner's responsibility to hire and monitor the work as accomplished.

The homeowner is also strongly urged to observe and require all COVID-19 safety protocols.

Funds are provided by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Elder Affairs.

Please call (413) 863-9357 for further information or to apply.

SCENE REPORT

Light Up The Fairgrounds



By MELISSA WLOSTOSKI

GREENFIELD – It seems that people connected to the Franklin County Fairgrounds in Greenfield want to make having holiday events at the place a regular thing. The first one was called the Roundhouse Pumpkin Walk. The second is a bunch of Christmas lighting displays at the Fairgrounds, named Light Up The Fairgrounds. It started on the weekend of November 27 and goes every weekend until December 13.

Light Up The Fairgrounds is literally a drive-through event that has cash prizes involved. Some radio stations behind it are WHAI, The Outlaw, and Bear Country 95.3 FM. I learned through Bear Country's website that voting will help decide who gets the cash prizes. I decided to go myself to see the lights on November 29.

Before going I saw a sneak peek photo on their Facebook page of a very good lighting display, a bus covered in lights. I thought it was very cool-looking. I found it to be even more so when I got closer, taking photos with my phone while we were driving through. On top of all the lights, there were Christmas Elf figures inside, so it made the bus seem like a Christmas Elves' bus!

Some of these displays were way better than others – the bus being one, a lighting display with a John Deere Tractor covered in lights, and one that I believe was a scene with mostly yellow lights. My votes for the cash prizes would be the bus one and the John Deere tractor one. Some others would be what I would call "nicely done," too.

This event also made nice use

of those Christmas figures, people used as decorations like Santa and Mrs. Claus. They were there behind a sled with a reindeer. It looked nice. As for the displays, there was a Christmas on the Farm one by Ciesluk Farm, "National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation," which featured what you might think, a rainbow of light coming out of a bank I think, and one that was clearly from the Franklin County Animal Shelter, which had the outline of paws in blue lights.

Two of them apparently had to do with the Poet's Seat Tower. I mentioned that John Deere one and the bus one were my votes for winners of the cash prizes. I can't see anyone not agreeing with me – more or less – with my choices for the prizes. Also, like the Macy's Thanksgiving Parade, Santa was greeting us at the end. I got a picture of that to prove it.

My only complaint is it was over too quickly, because I found a large number of things I wanted to take snapshots of. If this is going to go on for a second year, then people have reasons for that to happen, because these displays were worthwhile to see. Tons of people seem to have shown up.

I have been to the Festival of Trees, which is held by the Franklin County Rotary Club, twice, and I even won one of the trees that was being given away one time. Similar to how the trees are done for the Festival, businesses and people in Greenfield did the lights that way. That is a winning formula for something like this, and should ensure that there is a second annual Light Up The Fairgrounds.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MONTAGUE POLICE LOG

Threats And Tantrums; Drug Bag; Orange Kitten; Smashed Windows; Slashed Tires; Slick Roadways

Monday, 11/30

8:10 a.m. Commercial burglar alarm at Silvio O. Conte Anadromous Fish Research Center showing fish passage area door. Cancelled en route per keyholder request.

12:38 p.m. Caller from Chestnut Hill Loop states that approximately ten minutes ago her son was threatened by an unknown male outside of their residence. Caller states the man threatened to kill her son and stated he knows who his family is. Described as 5' 9" male with no teeth wearing a semi-transparent trash bag and a baseball cap. Officers checked entire area; unable to locate.

3:54 p.m. Caller from Fifth Street states that a man threatened to beat him up while he was outside of F.L. Roberts. The man stated he was his neighbor and was sick of all the noise he was making. Advised of options.

11:04 p.m. Caller requesting officers to location; states male party is throwing all her stuff out of the apartment again. Some stuff is in hallway; will be fine for tonight; not going to get wet. Female has decided to stay for night.

Tuesday, 12/1

9:21 a.m. 911 abandoned call from Sheffield Elementary School. Issue with fax machine; no emergency.

9:24 a.m. Caller states that someone who owes him money is sending him messages that he is going to kill him and his family. Officer advised caller of options.

11:07 a.m. Report of resident-to-resident assault at Farren Care Center. No police response needed.

1:15 p.m. Store owner reporting that an employee found a bag of drugs on the floor in front of the cash register at Connecticut River Liquor and Wine. Item retrieved.

2:07 p.m. Walk-in reporting that three dehumidifier units were dropped off at a job site on Old Sunderland Road and have been stolen. Report taken.

3:55 p.m. 911 caller reporting fight between two females in the Food City parking lot. Caller states one female is inside her vehicle and the other has made entry into the vehicle and is assaulting her. Officer responding to Davis Street to attempt contact with involved party who has left the scene. Victim declined medical attention. Summons issued.

Wednesday, 12/2

2:22 a.m. A 56-year-old Westfield man was arrested and charged with assault and battery on a family/household member; resisting arrest; and disorderly conduct.

12 p.m. Caller states that a person who was just visiting her home stole her wallet. Caller called back to say that the involved party did not take her wallet; she must have lost it on the streets last night.

6:50 p.m. A 56-year-old Turners Falls man was arrested on a probation warrant.

Thursday, 12/3

6:43 a.m. Caller from Turners Falls Road states that a car hit a deer in front of the house with damage to the vehicle. Officer fired two shots from 22 in car 4 to put deer down. Vehicle able to drive away under its own power. Hunter in area took the deer.

8:36 a.m. Caller reports that she was rear-ended on the Greenfield side of the General Pierce Bridge; unknown injuries, but she has two kids in the car and advised they were hit pretty hard. Caller standing in front of other vehicle; states he is trying to flee because he does not have a license. Conferred with Greenfield PD.

9:17 a.m. Two calls reporting accident on the hill on Third Street. Operator's mother, on scene, advised that vehicle struck a sign and is off the road; confirmed no injuries/smoke/fluids or airbag deployment. Tow requested. Report taken.

4:05 p.m. Caller from Unity Street states that an orange kitten has been on her property for two hours now and isn't showing any signs of knowing its whereabouts. Animal control officer states he will pick up the cat in the morning if the caller is willing to care for it overnight. Caller advised.

11:29 p.m. Three calls reporting a disturbance involving a male and female yelling and screaming in the area of Second Street. Officers report all verbal, nothing physical. Peace restored.

Friday, 12/4

3:55 a.m. Caller states

that while on her way to work she was stopped at a red light and the driver of a tractor-trailer unit in front of her got out of his truck and was yelling at her about tailgating and driving too close. Caller states he was hitting her car and then when the light turned green he was yelling at her to go around trying to get her to hit him. Shelburne Control contacted as incident occurred in Gill.

2:03 p.m. Caller from Federal Street complaining of party operating a Bobcat and at times being in the middle of Route 63. Caller advises he was driving through and there was almost an accident. Referred to an officer.

2:40 p.m. Caller from East Main Street reporting theft of several packages. Advised of options.

4:15 p.m. Caller requesting extra patrols in Great Falls Discovery Center parking lot; they have found an abundance of used needles in the past few weeks. Referred to an officer.

4:35 p.m. Caller from South Lyman Street reports that three times today a white Jeep with New York plates came onto his property, took pictures of his house, and attempted to gain access to his service truck. Area checked; unable to locate. Will continue to check area throughout night.

5:24 p.m. Caller from Central Street requesting assistance with a rabbit that has been on the property for two days and is acting very strange. Rabbit is not foaming at the mouth or acting aggressively but is believed to be sick. Caller has animal contained at this time. Officer reports animal is injured, not sick. Caller provided with contact information for wildlife rehabilitation center.

Saturday, 12/5

12:19 a.m. Caller reports a party making threats via Facebook regarding a posting on Facebook,

threatening to come to the caller's residence and smash her vehicle windows. Caller reports party possibly showed up to another involved party's residence and did same. Investigated.

12:33 a.m. Caller from Walnut Street walked outside his residence and noticed a group of people near his vehicle. All parties got into a dark-colored truck and took off. Caller discovered three of his vehicle windows smashed. Caller called back to advise he is getting information from a friend that a party Greenfield PD is currently out with is the party who smashed his windows. A 19-year-old Colrain man was arrested and charged with malicious destruction of property worth over \$1,200.

12:49 a.m. Caller from Newton Street reports a male with no shirt just slashed her vehicle tires and took off toward the woods by the train tracks. Caller's roommate provided name of party. Investigated.

12:42 p.m. Officer advises that roads are getting slick in Montague Center. DPW advised.

1:08 p.m. First of three reports of vehicles off road into poles and guardrails. No serious injuries.

Sunday, 12/6

12:12 p.m. Report of attempted breaking and entering into several vehicles in apartment building parking lot on Central Street. Officers checked area; unable to locate.

4:05 p.m. Caller states that he believes a few men with dogs were illegally hunting on a Sunday in the Plains. Referred to an officer.

4:36 p.m. Caller states that a sign outside of 253 Farmacy has a bright light facing oncoming traffic making it look like a headlight coming at you traveling from east to west. Officer determined light not to be a hazard.

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If you have an idea for a video, please get in touch!

MCTV is seeking new Board Members for the Treasurer position and more.

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WEST ALONG from page B1

winter wren, thumb size, darting in and out of blown-down tree roots or bramble tangle. This bird was larger, however, with a warm buffy-colored back, set off by a distinctive russet tail. This was a lingering hermit thrush quietly getting his supper of berries before the increasing dark of an afternoon that will lead up in a few days to the Solstice.

The author Thomas Hardy (1840–1928) took a break from writing *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* and *Far From the Madding Crowd*, to write of *The Darkling Thrush* back in the 1870s:

... At once a voice arose among
The bleak twigs overhead
In a full-hearted evening song
An aged thrush, frail, gaunt, and small
In blast-beruffled plume
Had chosen thus to fling his soul
Upon the growing gloom...

Now of course Thomas Hardy had his Romanticism School obligations to cause him to describe his thrush in such gloomy terms during a dark December in Old England, but I feel no such obligations. My hermit thrush in the Old Pasture had no sense of doom and gloom or impending despair and did not feel the bleakness of what Hardy described as “little cause for caroling.”

In fact my own thrush companion had nothing to say, and would not have cared to carol for me or anyone else; he was just foraging for his supper on a winter afternoon. Besides, come a May evening

in spring, he will sing so beautifully that he could put any English nightingale to shame!

I set my saw down to watch the thrush move closer as I kept still. His bright eyes figured me out then, but sensing no danger, he moved around a bit in the snow-covered leaves before vanishing with a flick of that russet tail.

In moments like these I look carefully around to see who else might be there, what other December spirits might be lingering close, not daring or able to touch.

I have the feeling that this Christmas thrush probably was carrying a message from some other world, maybe with a thank you for helping watch over these woods, for remembering those who came before, maybe for trying to keep Christmas in the old-fashioned way, in spite of all. Birds have been known to do that.

Then again, maybe he was just a lingering hermit thrush still up here in the north, facing winter.

But I tend to believe he was a messenger, reminding us that Christmas is where you find it, even in the form of a quick visit from a solitary thrush. Of course you can believe whatever you like, but I'm sticking with my understanding of this not-so-Darkling Thrush in spite of what Hardy says.

So thrush brought the message, and I'll pass it along. We wish you all the happiness of the Solstice and Christmas season, from those of us finding Joy and Peace down here in the darkening December woods along the river.

Sometimes Pleasant, Lake Pleasant: The Right Tools for the Job

By MURIEL E. RUSSELL

COLRAIN – According to a *100 Years Ago* article I kept, Sigmund Klaiber was out “trimming the shade trees, setting out saplings, and doing other spring work connected with the department” (*Turners Falls Reporter*, April 9, 1919). He was the Montague Tree Warden.

When I was a child, I lived in Lake Pleasant, and knew about two Mr. Klaibers. According to 1950s town records, Lyman Klaiber was the Tree Warden, and also the Moth Inspector. Frederick S. Klaiber was the dog officer.

That excerpt about Sigmund Klaiber brought back memories of an incident from my early childhood days, roaming around Lake Pleasant.

I don't recall exactly where I was when I encountered Mr. Klaiber – it was on the main road, past Saczawa's field – but I sat down to watch him with my dog, Prince, by my side. There was a large tree

lying on the ground, cut in long sections. Working alone, using tools which my bro-



NINA ROSSILLI ILLUSTRATION

er Jim later told me were called a *come-along* and a *peavey*, Mr. Klaiber managed to load sections of that large tree onto a trailer. I thought those logs outweighed Mr. Klaiber, by quite a lot.

I asked my brother Jim about that kind of work, because at age 16, he hefted logs through the saw rig at George Thurber's saw mill. I don't recall seeing logs unloaded from trucks, but the logs were carried along on a track toward the saw after being slid in place by a peavey.

Jim got off the school bus in Montague and we picked him up down by the riverside. Sometimes we were early, so I had time to investigate the area.

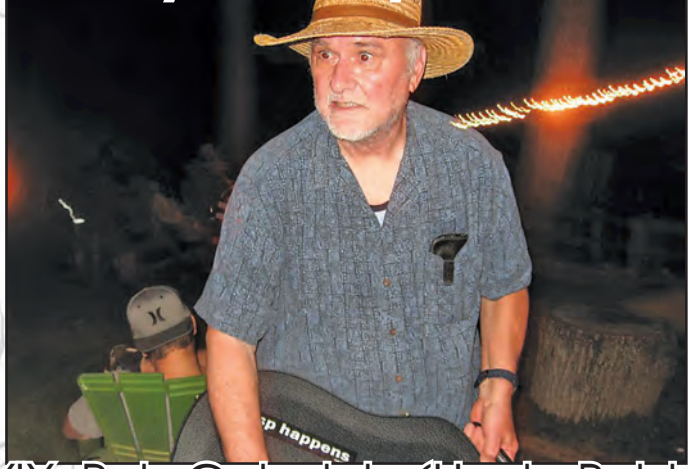
George Thurber's saw mill was below the Montague Book Mill, and there was an old house down there, too. Down at the bottom, near the mill, the road curved right along the Sawmill River, and went north to another old house, where the old road met Meadow Road. Standing there by the bridge, I could see the Rastallis' house, but that is another story.

So, paraphrasing what my brother Jim told me after I saw Mr. Klaiber doing that job: easy peasy. He said if you have the right tools for a job and know how to use the tools properly, often one man can do most jobs, and having more people can mess up the works. Log-jams? Not for Mr. Klaiber.

We moved from Lake Pleasant to Montague Center in 1955. Since then, I have split lots of firewood, but seldom seen loggers or tree wardens manhandling trees.

I think there is an art to that job, and hopefully today craftspeople use some of the dead wood from the roadside shade trees, planted by either Mr. Klaiber or his father Mr. Klaiber, to turn pieces of maple or cherry into works of art.

MONTV / MUSIK / MOUNTAIN



XXIX: Bob Gebelein (Uncle Bobby)

<<<<< ESP HAPPENS >>>>>

Interview by J. BURKETT

TURNERS FALLS – Bob Gebelein is known to some music folks for putting out a really great solo album in 1974 called *Uncle Bobby's Record*. It is hard to describe, but highly regarded by record collector types, and has great, unique songwriting and a real “loner” sound that some other loner types find comfort in. It's an interesting and innovative LP, especially since Gebelein was mostly coming from a coffeehouse folk background.

Ever since his record came out, Gebelein has decided to focus more on writing books and volunteering at a psychic research facility in North Carolina. His more recent books are also innovative and unique too, and he has won awards for some of them amongst the “New Age” community. MMM particularly recommends the *Re-Educating Myself* book.

From his website, *bobgebelein.com*: “The main focus of his adult life has been to create a new civilization, because of the threat of nuclear annihilation and other cultural problems. His methods were psychotherapy, withdrawal from

the culture, and dream analysis. He succeeded in his quest by discovering how ‘human nature’ itself can be changed.... Because he is writing from a new civilization, he can view the scientific establishment with some perspective, especially because he is not controlled by it.”

His books are available at Mystery Train Records in Amherst. His newest book, *Dirty Science*, is about how scientific methods have gone wrong.

MMM: Thanks so much for wanting to talk to me. Your record has meant so much to some of us!

BG: Well, it's great that you have discovered my music after all these years, and like it.

MMM: So, your record was self-released, right? Or did someone help put it out?

BG: In 1966, when I was playing and singing my songs at a coffeehouse in Provincetown, a fan of mine took me to his Uncle Alden, who was co-president of Columbia Records, with his own rave review. Alden actually loaned me a decent tape recorder, to make a passable

recording of “Civilized Blues” and “Backwards World,” and delivered the tape in person to Columbia Records, and of course they listened to it.

And what they told Alden is something like this: “These are good songs, but there are a lot of good songs. We have automated factories set up to produce 100,000 records at a time. If you can come to us with 100,000 people who want to buy this record, we would be happy to produce it.”

In 1973 my friend Ailene Wright (who did the portrait of me on the cover) discovered a recording studio in Rockland, Maine and I seized upon the opportunity to produce my own record. I might have sold many more records if I had them in 1966 when I was recording. But at least I got them recorded for posterity.

MMM: How did you come up with your songs?

BG: My motivation to write songs was incidental to my main purpose in life. I set out in 1955, at age 21, to design a new civilization – new values, beliefs, goals, standard of living, way of thinking, way of living – in response to the imminent threat of nuclear annihilation. I saw songs as a way of getting my ideas across. If Bob Dylan could do it, so could I. He couldn't sing any better than I could.

MMM: Wow... 1955! And your record didn't come out until 1974. You must have seen a lot of changes in those years.

BG: Times changed. There was an evening in late August 1966 at the coffeehouse when everyone suddenly was buzzing, “the man with the monkey has the drugs.” And there was a man with a monkey on his shoulder dispensing drugs. I sensed the sudden change in interest. “Folk

Music” was out instantly in the music business. People like Peter, Paul, and Mary were making fools of themselves, trying to switch over to rock music with drug-related themes. And electric guitars.

But it was illegal to play an electric guitar in Provincetown (anti-noise law). I had a junk electric guitar which couldn't be tuned the European way, so I tuned it Arab-style – E-E-B-E-B-B, the open fifths. I did some Arab-like numbers in 10/8 and 7/8 rhythms, and I had Arab friends that I played music with. I got rid of the electric guitar when I went to Nova Scotia and could keep only what would fit in a Volkswagen.

MMM: Did you stop playing folk-type songs then?

BG: The window when the culture was receptive to my “folk” songs closed in 1966. People talk about “the Sixties” and they mean the drug revolution, but the highest cultural achievements were actually recorded in the Sixties before drugs came along and swept it all away. Most of my songs were written 1964-66, and most of my public performing was done in those years.

MMM: So then you started writing your books?

BG: I made my greatest discoveries towards the creation of a new civilization in 1967, and wrote about my discoveries in 1969-70. The book was rejected by all but two people in 1970. The publishers wanted something that would appeal to the drug mentality – although they were not able to articulate that in words – because the drug mentality constituted a huge market, and the persons who did drugs in the Sixties still constitute a huge market, called the New Age.

I rewrote my book and published it myself in 1985, and sold 700 cop-

ies the hard way – one at a time. I am still fighting the New Age (millions) on one side and the academics (more millions) on the other, and me one person in the middle with ideas independent of either of those “camps.” This is my main thrust, to publicize my ideas, or at least communicate my ideas – or at least write them down – and they can be more accurately and completely expressed if I write them down in a prose form.

MMM: Do you have any plans to record another album?

BG: No, I am not actively promoting my music these days, and don't want to make that effort. You can think of me as “dead” in that respect. My music lives on, pressed in plastic. At this point in my life I am in another growth stage. “I'm a plunker, not a picker.”

Old Bear Records has reissued my record, not as a record, but as something you can download. Also, I have written a new book, *Dirty Science*, criticizing how the scientific establishment enforces their belief in a purely physical universe with character assassination and other unscientific methods.

MMM: The last time I saw you was at that concert we did together in that strange-shaped house. [The picture of Bob attached to this interview is from that concert.] Thanks again for playing! Did you have a good time?

BG: I enjoyed my opportunity to play in the zHome, although way out of practice. I now hardly play music at all.

MMM: And I hope you are surviving this strange year OK?

BG: I am staying to myself, going out once a week to do errands, surviving the virus, waiting for a vaccine.

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WENDELL from page B1

building was originally used as a church, it is now meant to serve as a “town living room,” open to artistic, spiritual, experimental, and celebratory events. For a town of just under 900 citizens, the Meetinghouse will serve as a community center and collective gathering space once it is reopened to the public.

Although Wendell has three locations used for gathering – the library, the senior center, and the town hall – none of them are focused on collective spirituality, which is what the Friends are hoping to accomplish through the restoration of the Meetinghouse.

“Wendell is a mecca for artists and activists, and has been for a long time,” Queen said. “We’re proud of that heritage.” For that reason, the Meetinghouse will be used as a spiritual gathering place which also hosts events, celebrations, classes, relaxed gatherings, and artistic endeavours.

Court Dorsey, president of the Friends of the Wendell Meetinghouse, explained that the building is larger than the town hall and senior center. “The space [of the Meetinghouse] is a little larger, wider, and the vibe of it will have a more reflective and celebratory air,” Dorsey said, “whereas the Town Hall – much as we love it – is where we have town meetings.”

On top of that, Wendell’s government-owned gathering places do not allow for any alcohol consumption on the premises, which limits the number of approved social events and weddings. When the Meetinghouse reopens, it will operate under rules set forth by the Friends that allow for alcohol during specific events.

“The idea that there could be this non-profit building that’s not owned by the town, that could still serve the town, seems really important and really appealing,” Sawyer said. “It’s also totally a town of people who really care about finding ways to come together.”

The Friends of the Wendell Meetinghouse plan to continue fundraising and making repairs to the building throughout the coming months. The goal is to open the Meetinghouse’s doors to community members in August 2021, during the town’s annual Old Home

Day event. The re-opening will also mark the building’s 175th birthday.

A Magical View

The Meetinghouse has been a communal gathering space since colonial times, and the Friends want to make sure it stays in that position. The town held ownership of the Meetinghouse property until the Friends purchased the building. According to Sawyer and Queen, the town selectboard has simply had its hands full with other buildings, which is why it was so important for the organization to purchase the building.

“With its radiant windows, tall ceilings, and flexible floor plan, the Wendell Meetinghouse offers an intimate setting for music, theater, dance, fitness, social gatherings, and celebrations of the mind, body, and spirit,” reads the group’s Renovation Project Goals for 2021.

So far, the Friends have installed a new roof on the Meetinghouse with the support of the Massachusetts Historical Commission. Jerry Barilla, the project’s volunteer manager, said that progress is currently being made to bring the building up to standards of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Aside from installing entrance ramps and egress doors, the Friends are also working to put up illuminated exit signs and fire extinguishers within the building.

Since the Friends intend for the Meetinghouse to be used by community members year-round, it is necessary that a new heating and cooling system be installed soon. The group plans to add new bathroom facilities to the building a year or two down the road. “Landscaping and improved entries on the front of the Meetinghouse will be the ‘crowning touch’ to restore this cherished building and return it to serve all of our neighbors,” Barilla said.

“The world looks rather magical out those old windows,” Queen said, nodding to the work already completed by the restoration committee. The group decided to contain hand-blown, wavy glass in the center of the panes, which creates a soft point of view on the town outside.

“Most communities miss the spiritual dimension of gathering

MOVIE REVIEW

Borat Subsequent Moviefilm (2020)

By SEAMUS TURNER-GLENNON

CHARLEMONT – To make a sequel to any movie – with the exception of those sequels planned from the inception of the original film – is to get into some pretty dangerous territory. That’s not to say that no sequels have ever been good (what sort of horror fan would I be if I thought that?), but it is to say that any attempt to follow up a well-received or successful film comes with unique challenges.

From cash-grabs (like *Caddyshack II*, whose own director Allan Arkush gives a 1/5 star rating on his *Letterboxd.com* account) to lifeless rehashes of their preceding films (such as *Death Wish II*, which really isn’t all that bad, I suppose) to those that simply run the risk of being panned by fans of the original for the sin of deviation from their tone (as in *The Lost World: Jurassic Park*, Spielberg’s second most underrated film after his *War of the Worlds* remake), sequels run through a seeming minefield of possible failings, or ways to accidentally piss off one’s own fanbase.

This is especially true for comedy sequels. It’s tough enough to write enough funny material on a single subject to carry a five-minute sketch – just ask the current SNL writing staff – let alone a feature-length motion picture. Suffice it to say that it’s awfully hard to mine enough humor for *two* of them.

It’s hard to even think of any comedy sequel that stands out as an example of this being done well. Will Ferrell and Adam McKay followed up their brilliant comedy *Anchorman* with the dull and uninspired *Anchorman 2: The Legend Continues*. Ben Stiller did the same with *Zoolander 2*, and we all know what those Austin Powers movies ended up becoming.

Well, here’s one to add to the opposite canon of Actually Good Comedy Sequels: *Borat Subsequent Moviefilm: Delivery of Prodigious Bribe to American Regime for Make Benefit Once Glorious Nation of Kazakhstan*. A follow-up to British comedian Sacha Baron Cohen’s now-classic 2006 mockumentary (slash real documentary?) *Borat: Cultural Learnings of America for Make Benefit Glorious Nation of Kazakhstan*, *Borat 2* is a sort of update on the Borat premise



for the contemporary age of COVID-19, the Trump presidency in America, and countless other issues.

The trap which *Borat 2* ran the greatest risk of falling into was becoming the exact opposite of the original. Instead of being a genuinely funny, often absurdist, and creative piece of comedy filmmaking, the sequel ran the risk of turning the Borat character into a gimmick: “Haha everyone, it’s Borat in 2020, he’s going to say ‘mah waiff,’ he’s going to make the *wawawee-wa* sound, but it’s in 2020,” and so on.

Thankfully, *Borat 2* manages to avoid that almost entirely, eschewing broad recognition for simply funny, well-crafted, solidly-written comedy. Sacha Baron Cohen might be at his most politically dull and proselytizing here, but he’s also funny enough that it really doesn’t matter, and he’s acutely aware of that fact. His odd, goofy “nowadays we listen to comedians and we laugh at politicians!” convictions are drowned out by his knack for joke-writing and his seeming lack of any ability to feel embarrassment in a public situation. It also helps that despite his politics, he doesn’t come off as a craven, hawkish ghoul in the same way that, say, a Bill Maher or a Samantha Bee does.

If there’s any part of the comedy in *Borat 2* that just doesn’t work, it’s because of the more insular nature of the writing. While *Borat* focused almost entirely on Borat’s interactions, real and fake, with ordinary American people, *Borat 2* devotes a higher portion of its runtime to the relationship between Borat and his teenage daughter Tutar, who he intends to gift as human tribute to several American politicians.

The dynamic unfolds over the course of their time together in the States looking for each of these men: first Vice President Mike Pence, and then former New York City mayor and current real-life Todd Solondz protagonist Rudy Giuliani. Their interactions feel secondary and dull in a way that the more “inside baseball” interactions between Baron Cohen and Ken Davitian in the first entry didn’t.

But *Borat 2* is a good comedy – really! It’s just that, at the end of the day, it’s mostly just good in areas where the first one was better.

places,” Queen said. “You enter a new kind of consciousness in the Meetinghouse, where you’re aware of relationships – and sound, silence, shadow, and color.”

This project does not come with a small price tag, and the Friends hope that community members will continue to pledge donations as construction moves forward. So far, over thirty households have

pledged \$40,000, according to Queen. The Friends estimate the final expenses will total \$500,000.

A Call For Involvement

With ownership successfully transferred to the Friends of the Wendell Meetinghouse, the group will solicit recommendations for use of the space from members of the community. While they are open to hosting religious meetings within the building, they are also hoping to open the doors to more alternative versions of community spiritual gatherings.

Queen said that the year of 2020 has made the need for a community gathering space in Wendell even more apparent. He hopes that, coming out of the COVID-19 pandemic in the next year or so, the Meetinghouse will be ready to host community members in collective spiritual meetings.

“All of us feel isolated in our homes,” Queen said. “I’m hoping this can be a sort of light at the end of the tunnel.”

Much of the inspiration for the Meetinghouse’s remodel came from another community-oriented church building: 19 Carter Street in Berlin, Massachusetts. The property, originally a Methodist church, was purchased by a non-profit organization in 2008. After undergoing a three-year-long remodel, “19 Carter” now operates as a town living room, filled with donated couches and family furniture, and used for all events deemed important by the townspeople of Berlin.

Similarly, the Friends of the Wendell Meetinghouse may solicit furniture donations from community members to fill the space. Other possibilities include an artifacts display room upstairs and a projection booth for theater in the round. The building’s purposes are still up to debate, and many of the space’s uses will come from the ideas of community members.

“What I’m most excited about is securing this resource for many future generations that can use it in the way that serves them best,” Sawyer said. “That’s what’s most exciting to me: imagining that the community will speak up for what they want it to do and it can be as open and ready to serve as possible, rather than holding one specific vision.”

To kick off the communal involvement under the Meetinghouse’s new ownership, the Friends are hosting an annual meeting over Zoom next Thursday, December 17 at 5 p.m. The meeting is open to community members from Wendell and surrounding towns, and will focus on group collaboration regarding the best uses for the space. On top of brainstorming with attendees, the Friends will also use the meeting to share restorative progress made on the property so far.

Participants can register online at tinyurl.com/FWMMMeeting or by email to meetinghouse@wendell-meetinghouse.org. The event is open to all residents of Wendell and neighboring communities.



Restoration work gradually continues in the meetinghouse’s great room. The Friends aim to have the building ready for public reopening in time for Old Home Day next August.

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Aquí se habla español

Esta es la página en español del periódico **The Montague Reporter**. Aquí podrán encontrar cuestiones acerca de la comunidad hispana, eventos de interés, curiosidades, y noticias en español. Si quiere participar o compartir alguna sugerencia, envíenos un correo electrónico a: spanish@montaguereporter.org



¡Póntela, pónsela! ... la mascarilla

Por **VICTORIA MAÍLLO DE AGUILERA**

TURNERS FALLS – Empiezo estas líneas mucho más esperanzada que el mes pasado a la hora del cierre de esta página. Hay muchísimo trabajo por delante, pero se empieza a ver la luz al final del túnel. Entre las primeras propuestas de nuestro entrante presidente electo, Joe Biden, está la de pedir a los estadounidenses el uso de la mascarilla durante sus primeros cien días de presidencia. Es curioso como el uso o no de la mascarilla, que debía ser un asunto de salud pública, casi de vida o muerte, se ha convertido en este país en una mera opción política, en alinearse con un partido u otro, sin tener en cuenta que puede salvar vidas.

Tratándose de la página en español y siendo esta lengua tan rica y variada en palabras para denominar el mismo objeto dependiendo del país, no puedo dejar de mencionar que la palabra *mascarilla*, que usamos en España, tiene otras acepciones como tapabocas, cubrebocas o barbijo en diferentes países de Latinoamérica.

Cuando empezó la crisis del COVID-19 allá por el mes de marzo no se sabía mucho acerca de la forma de contagio y transmisión del virus, ahora ya pasados algo más de nueve meses, sabemos que entre las causas de transmisión del virus están los llamados aerosoles. La primera prueba que tuvieron los científicos acerca de la transmisión a través de aerosoles se certificó en un gimnasio en Corea en el que un profesor de zumba enfermo contagió la enfermedad a 112 personas. En ese mismo gimnasio

había también una clase de pilates con un monitor igualmente enfermo que no contagió a nadie.

Estos datos son determinantes para saber que el virus se transmite en más fácilmente en espacios cerrados, con gente fumando o respirando intensamente, y con falta de ventilación. La mayoría de las investigaciones concluyen que hay veinte veces más probabilidades de contagiarse del virus en espacios cerrados, y la falta de ventilación ya que las partículas o aerosoles están en suspensión al no fluir la corriente de aire. Si alguien está infectado, aunque no muestre síntomas, expulsan estos aerosoles con pequeñas gotitas cuando respiran, tosen, cantan, gritan, hablan, hacen deporte, corren o estornudan.

La revista científica *Science* avala estas investigaciones y urge a los departamentos de salud a incentivar el uso de sistemas de ventilación y purificación de aire, actividades al aire libre, y el uso de mascarillas en todo momento, aunque la persona pueda mantener una distancia de dos metros. La revista también tiene en cuenta el tiempo que la persona infectada está en contacto con otra.

Hace unas semanas llamé mi atención un artículo del periódico español *El País* y que publicó así mismo en su edición en inglés. (Fuente: tinyurl.com/y6tmxfgv) El artículo publicado en la edición online tuvo miles de visitas. La simulación en forma de imágenes planteaba la transmisión del virus en tres diferentes escenarios: el salón de una casa, una clase y un bar. Señala también otros agentes en la transmisión como la ventilación, el tiempo



¡Póngasela!

po que dure la interacción y el uso de la mascarilla.

El primer escenario, el salón de una casa cualquiera con seis personas, una de ellas infectadas que pasan cuatro horas juntas sin usar mascarillas ni ventilación. En esta situación la persona infectada contagiaría a las otras cinco. En el caso de usar mascarillas el contagio sería solamente de cuatro personas. Si en el salón reducimos el tiempo, añadimos ventilación y usamos mascarillas solamente una persona se contagiaría.

Segundo escenario: un bar en el que se ha reducido el límite de personas y hay dieciocho personas en el interior, una de ellas infectada. En cuatro horas, y sin ninguna medida, se infectarían otras catorce personas. Si usasen mascarillas todo el tiempo de la interacción, ocho personas se contagiarían. En el mismo escenario, usando mascarillas, usando un buen sistema de ventilación, y reduciendo el tiempo de contacto a dos horas, solamente tendríamos un contagio.

Tercer escenario: una clase de una escuela o universidad con veinticuatro estudiantes. El profesor está enfermo, la duración de la clase es de dos horas y no usan

mascarillas. El contagio puede ser de doce personas. Si todos llevasen mascarillas, el contagio sería de cinco personas. En el caso de ventilar el aula, reducir el tiempo de la clase y usar mascarillas, el contagio es de una persona. Es importante señalar que si el infectado es el profesor hay más riesgo de contagio al ser la persona que más habla durante la clase.

El seis de noviembre el gobernador del estado de Massachusetts a través de una orden obliga a la población del estado a usar mascarilla en todos los lugares públicos, ya sean interiores o al aire libre, incluso aunque sea posible mantener la distancia social de dos metros (6 pies). La orden anima a que los niños de 2 a 5 años la usen, aunque

no es obligatoria para ellos. Están incluidos todas las personas que tengan un problema médico que les imposibilite usarla.

Franklin County no ha sufrido hasta el momento las cifras más altas de casos confirmados por el estado de Massachusetts que son 247.559 el 6 de diciembre. En cualquier caso, en la última semana y debido a las celebraciones del Día de Acción de Gracias, las autoridades sanitarias alertan del aumento de casos y de un posible colapso de los hospitales. En España, uno de los países de Europa que más ha sufrido la enfermedad, el gobierno aconseja no reunirse más de seis personas para celebrar las próximas fiestas de diciembre.

Caminando por el centro de Turners Falls encuentro cada día personas que no llevan su mascarilla o la llevan mal colocada. Es triste tener que usar las multas como sistema de coacción, pero sería necesario hacerlo para reforzar la orden del gobernador. El uso de mascarillas debería empezar por trabajadores públicos como policía, DPW, etc.

Usar la mascarilla puede salvar vidas: ¡Póngansela!

El programa DACA reinstaurado

Por **VICTORIA MAÍLLO DE AGUILERA**

El viernes 4 de diciembre llegó otra de las buenas noticias que ha traído este año que termina. Un juez federal ordenó a la administración Trump reinstaurar el programa DACA también conocido como los *Soñadores (Dreamers)*. La situación de las personas que pueden acogerse a este programa es todavía muy precaria, pero al menos es un revés para la administración del presidente Trump que lleva intentando acabar con este programa, que da un estatus legal a todos aquellos que entraron sin documentación en Estados Unidos cuando eran niños, desde que llegó al poder en 2016. Trump prometió en su programa electoral que acabaría con DACA.

Por su parte, el presidente electo,

Joe Biden, ha asegurado que protegerá el programa DACA creado durante su vicepresidencia de Obama.

Hay alrededor de 800.000 jóvenes que llegaron a los Estados Unidos antes de cumplir dieciséis años acompañando a sus padres o tutores, o incluso solos. La orden obliga al Departamento de Seguridad Nacional a recibir nuevas solicitudes al programa, con ello unos 300.000 nuevos aplicantes podrán acogerse al programa. Así mismo obliga a prolongar el visado de trabajo que la administración actual había recortado.

En cualquier caso, la situación de los *Soñadores* es todavía precaria. Biden prometió en su programa crear una legislación con estatus migratorio más estable, incluso con un camino a la naturalización de los jóvenes inmigrantes.



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• Montague les invita a com-

pletar una encuesta acerca del Departamento de Policía. La encuesta es anónima y ha sido realizada por un comité formado por ciudadanos de Montague. Los creadores de la encuesta tienen especial interés en saber de experiencias de jóvenes y adultos pertenecientes a minorías. Se puede completar en español o en inglés. Este es el link para la encuesta en español: bit.ly/2UrwAxn.

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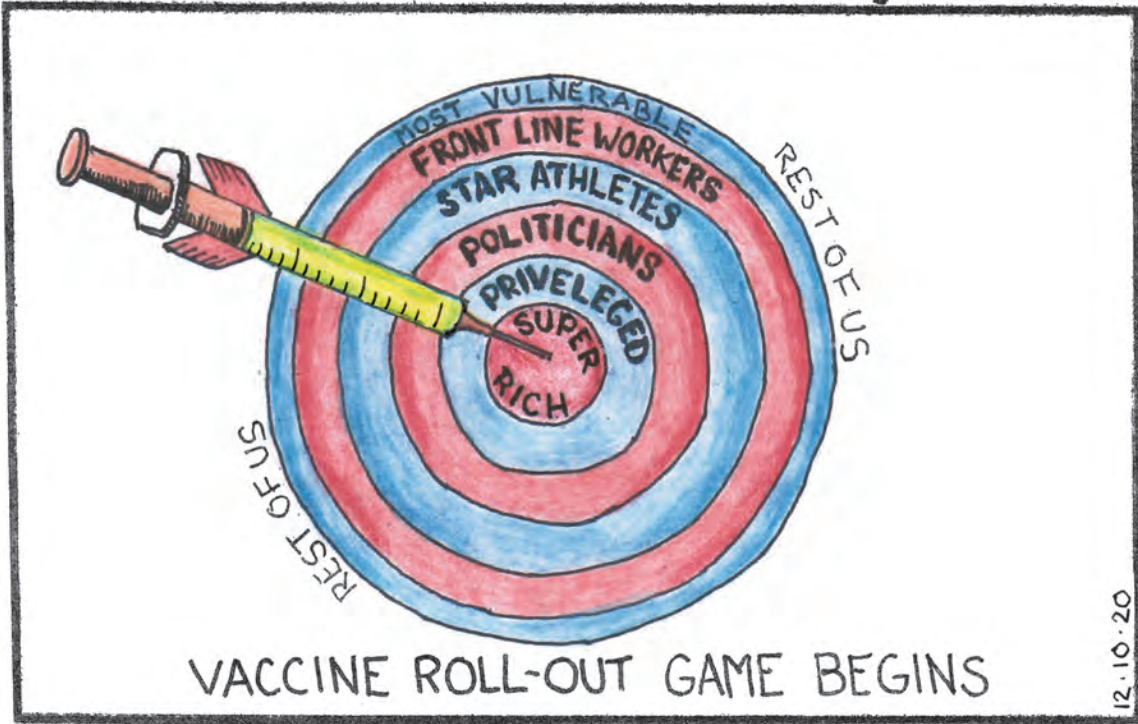
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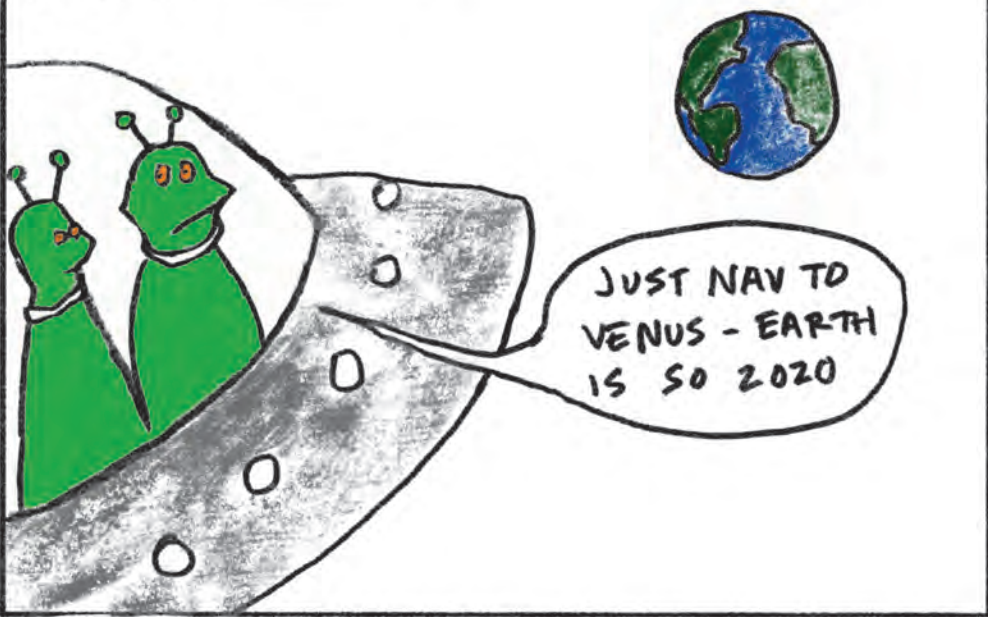


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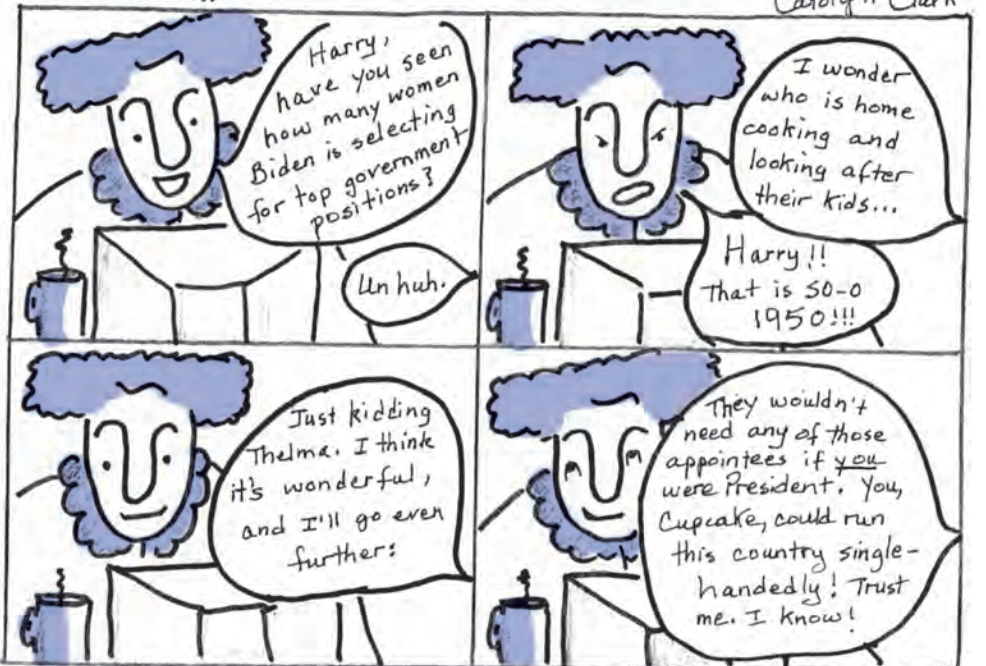
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OVER THE HILL

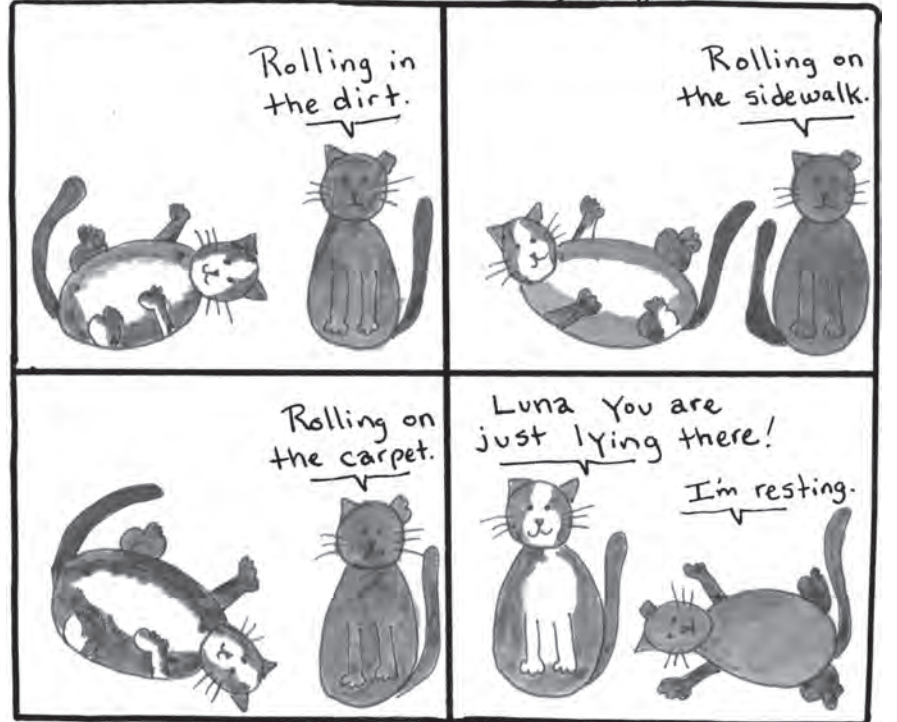
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HEARTFELT from page B1

Once fermented, it can live in the back of the refrigerator for literally years. I once made a green tomato-Napa cabbage kimchi that lasted eight years, becoming stronger and more intense over time.

Cabbage is quite a versatile veggie and is equally good eaten fermented, raw, or cooked. It is in the *Brassica* family along with kale, broccoli, and cauliflower. It is high in fiber, which is helpful with digestion, and contains lots of Vitamin C.

Many cultures eat fermented foods such as sauerkraut and kimchi regularly, and some scientists posit that a steady diet of it can enhance the nutritional value and digestibility of foods through the production of vitamins, antioxidants, and molecules that can lower blood pressure and inflammation in the body. Fermented foods contain live bacteria that influence the microbiota of our guts. There is, though, a downside to consuming brassicas, and that is the sulfurous compounds that can cause uncomfortable gas and bloating for some.

I think of cabbage as a very utilitarian vegetable. It can be sliced, grated, chopped, minced, julienned, or

cut in a *chiffonade*. It can be eaten right off of the head raw, sliced or grated into salads or coleslaws, or added to other vegetable dishes. I like to add a bit of purple cabbage to my salads for the color it adds to the palette. Brine and ferment it in salt to make sauerkraut or kimchi, or stir fry and sauté it until it's sweet and melty.

When my mom would put the big pot on to boil cabbage leaves for Grandma's rolls I would offer to help, not just because I loved the process of making the meatballs and rolling them in the leaves to lay neat little rows of bundles across tray after tray, but because my mother would also make me a bowl of the smallest, most tender inside leaves of the boiled cabbage, steaming hot and running with melted butter. It wasn't the taste as much as the sensation of heat, salt, and the silky, yet still oddly crinkled leaves, disappearing on my tongue like earthy green snowflakes.

Trouble Mandeson is a West Coast transplant who lives with wifey and cat in Greenfield. She is a talker, writer, artist and all around mensch. Find her at troublemandesoncopyediting.com for your grantwriting and copy-editing needs.



OUT OF THE PARK WINTER 2021

By JON DOBOSZ

UNITY PARK – Hello, and happy holidays, everyone! It's been a while since we've last touched base, and hope you're all doing well. Despite the craziness we're all dealing with, be sure to take time and enjoy this wonderful time of year. We're still plugging along down here at Unity Park and have a few programs up our sleeve for this winter, so be sure to take advantage of the opportunity.

As many of you know, we start off the New Year with our annual **Sawmill River 10k Run!** This year's event will be virtual, but hey, if we can't race in person, then let's make it a virtual reality! Being a virtual event, we're able to have folks participate within a range of days: Thursday, December 31, 2020 through Sunday, January 3, 2021. Runners will have four days to finish a 10k route of their choice, and submit their results by Monday, January 4. Results can either be submitted manually or through a fitness tracker account. The registration fee is \$15 per runner, and all participants will receive a medal. Proceeds benefit our Sponsor-A-Child Scholarship Program, so your participation is still critical.

We also plan on offering a **Youth Basketball Program** this winter. Youth Basketball will be held for a few weeks in January and February. It will include a K-2 Intro Program, Junior Team (Grades 3 and 4), and Senior Team (Grades 5 and 6). All levels are skill development programs, with no league games scheduled this season. Additionally, we are currently working on a plan to offer **Open Swim** this year.

There are a lot of guidelines we



need to work through to make this happen, but we hope to have a solid plan in place so we can do some swimming this winter. If we can make it work, we'll be sure to get the word out.

Please note that we have developed strict guidelines for all of our in-person programs. If you would like to receive this information, it is available upon inquiry. All participants will be given this information upon registration as well. Our wish is for you to be safe, and feel safe, while participating in our programs as we navigate through this challenging episode.

We also hope to be adding more programs as the winter progresses, so be sure to keep an eye out on our Facebook page and our **new website**. That's right, you read it correctly, we're in the process of developing our own, dedicated webpage. This will be a dynamic, one-stop-shop for all things MPRD. We hope to get the website up and running in the next couple of weeks, and will be sure to send out more information on the launch date.

That's about it for now. Enjoy the holidays, and we'll talk to you soon.

Jon Dobosz is the director of parks and recreation for the town of Montague.

HUNGARIAN SWEET AND SOUR CABBAGE ROLLS

Here is **Grandma Sadie's Hungarian Sweet and Sour Cabbage Rolls** for you to try on your own. This recipe makes about a dozen to a dozen and a half rolls, depending on the size of your meatballs:

One large head of green cabbage

Boil a large pot filled halfway with water. Wash and core the cabbage and drop it in the boiling water whole. With a set of tongs, gently tease off each outer leaf and let them continue to boil for several minutes until tender. Remove leaves as they cook, rinse in cold water, and set aside to drain.

- 1 lb. ground beef
- 1 cup cooked rice
- 1 yellow onion, minced
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- Salt and pepper
- A few dashes Worcestershire sauce

Mix meat, rice, onion, garlic,

and spices. Lay down a cabbage leaf with the stem facing away from you. Choose the most tender leaves and try not to use the tougher outside leaves if possible.

Roll a small football-shaped meatball and place in the center of the leaf at the end towards you.

Fold the leaf over once from the top, fold both sides in like a burrito, and roll over once more. With a small knife, slice off as much of the stem as you can and trim off the excess leaf.

Lay in rows inside a baking dish, tightly pushing each roll up against its neighbor.

When the rolls are complete, spread a can of tomato paste (or better yet, make your own) across the top of the rolls. Mound 1 to 2 cups of sauerkraut on top – I like a lot, so I put as much as I can fit in the dish, and again, making your own is recommended. Top that with one can of diced tomatoes, along with the juice.



A pinch of sugar will add the final touch to the tray of cabbage rolls.

Then, sprinkle a pinch of sugar across the top as a symbolic gesture towards sweetening life. The tomato paste is what really adds sweetness to the dish, but it feels rather special to do this.

Cover tightly with foil and bake for an hour at 350° until bubbling hot. Tastes great as reheated leftovers.

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