

The Montague Reporter

YEAR 19 – NO. 5

also serving Irving, Gill, Leverett and Wendell

\$1

EDITOR@MONTAGUEREPORTER.ORG

THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES

DECEMBER 3, 2020

MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD

State Closes Another Bridge



Pedestrians can still use the bridge, but not automobiles – including fire trucks.

By JEFF SINGLETON

Numerous important issues came before the Montague selectboard during the two meetings that bracketed the Thanksgiving holiday, but we will begin with the latest bridge crisis. Yet another important Montague bridge has been closed down by the state Department of Transportation (MassDOT).

This time it is the so-called “Bailey Bridge,” which spans the Turners Falls power canal near Power Street, and is one of only two bridges providing access to the Patch neighbor-

hood of that village as well as to the Conte Anadromous Fish Research Center to the south. Department of public works (DPW) superintendent Tom Bergeron announced at the board’s November 30 meeting that MassDOT had called him the previous Wednesday to tell him that the bridge needed to close due to “insufficient structure.”

Bergeron said the state had informed him that some of the plates that make up the metal deck of the bridge sat on “stringers” which were bent and probably had to be

see MONTAGUE page A7

GILL-MONTAGUE REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

High School Will Launch Healthcare Job Training Path

By MIKE JACKSON

GILL-MONTAGUE – Remote learning continues in the district’s schools, enrollment is dropping, and the earliest word on next year’s budget is grim. Negotiations with the teachers’ union over a return to school buildings have stalled, and are heading into formal mediation.

But there is positive news afoot, too: Gill-Montague has been selected for a rapid-diagnostic COVID-19 testing program, efforts are being made to allow for some careful winter sports in January, and Turners Falls High School is launching its Innovation Pathway program, which will provide select students with intensive workforce preparation in the healthcare field.

“We want to make ourselves

known as an innovative public school,” TFHS principal Joanne Menard told the *Reporter*. “We’re trying to build local talent, and keep local talent.... Not only is it to help students, but to help our community.”

Gill-Montague is the first district in Franklin County to be approved by the state for the Innovation Pathway program. The chosen field, healthcare and social assistance, is calculated to have the greatest need for skilled workers; the district is currently applying to set up a program in the field with the second-greatest need, advanced manufacturing.

Any of TFHS’s 42 current ninth graders may apply for the program, and the school will select five –

see GMRSD page A5

Planning Board Debates Odor, Approves Flower Power Permit

By JEFF SINGLETON

MONTAGUE – Pot dominated the agendas of two town Montague boards Thanksgiving week, as a cannabis company called Flower Power Growers Inc. seeks to establish a cannabis cultivation facility in the town industrial park. Virtually identical proposals, presented by Montague resident and Flower Power partner Josh Goldman, came before the selectboard and planning boards on successive nights.

The selectboard did not take a vote on the proposal, but will soon be negotiating a “host community agreement” as required under state law with the company. The planning board, whose meeting coincided with a required public input hearing, unanimously voted to issue a special permit for the primarily cultivation business.

At the beginning of the planning

board hearing, Goldman introduced his other two partners at Flower Power: Michael Cohen, founder of Lightlife Foods, which is now located right next to the proposed cannabis site, and John Stobierski, a Greenfield lawyer and former Franklin County Commissioner. Joining them were Ezra Parzybok, a consultant specializing in cannabis compliance and training, and Tony Wosnesky, CEO of SVE Engineering Inc., the company that developed the site plan.

The proposed facility, which would be located in the far northeast of the industrial park, would be constructed in three phases. Phase 1 would see a greenhouse and “head house” for manufacturing built on the east side of the property. Phases 2-A and 2-B would construct two larger greenhouses and another head house. The total greenhouse

see FLOWER page A6

Voo Shuts Down for Winter

By MIKE JACKSON

TURNERS FALLS – “If there were a demand for indoor dining, we would be staying open,” Chris Janke, co-owner of the Rendezvous bar and restaurant on Third Street, explains it. “If there were a weak demand, and we felt the conditions of the pandemic were improving significantly, then we would be encouraging our customers to have some demand.”

On November 25, the day before Thanksgiving, the Rendezvous staff grilled up the last Voo burgers with asparagus, chorizo, and cheddar, shook

and poured the last cocktails, and then closed the doors for a “hibernation” period planned to last until early March.

“People received layoff letters on Thanksgiving Day,” Janke says. “We had 11 or 12, and we’ll be down to one or two next week, and then down to zero.”

see WINTER page A2



Demand for both indoor and outdoor dining has flagged.

New Enterprises Pop Up

By KAREN GUILLETTE

TURNERS FALLS – Small businesses are the bedrock of the economy, but the conditions required by COVID-19 protocols have made it difficult for existing businesses to survive, and quite difficult for new ones to open. On an optimistic note, the US Cham-

ber of Commerce suggests that the disruption caused by the pandemic can result in people rethinking their entire lives and business plans, yielding new and exciting products and services for consumers.

We have evidence of this phenomenon here in town. Despite these difficult and uncertain times, a number of individuals have dared to follow their passion and are finding ways to implement their visions in Montague during the pandemic.

Two of the following business folk are new to entrepreneurship, and one is transforming and expanding an already-successful enterprise. All three are interested in connecting with and contributing to the Montague community and surrounding towns in a variety of ways.



Doug Honeycutt with refinished pieces at Reimagine Resale.

Reimagine Resale

It’s not often that the pandemic has been credited with bringing

see POP UP page A8

State Opts to Comply With Exit Renumbering

By DYLYN RUSSELL

FRANKLIN COUNTY - Across the state of Massachusetts, the exit numbers on highways will soon be changed to a mileage-based system to comply with a 2009 federal mandate. Massachusetts is among just three states that have not changed to the mandated system. New Hampshire and Delaware are the remaining two. The Commonwealth was at risk of losing federal funding if they did not comply with this demand.

In 2019, the state decided that because of this risk, they would comply with the federal mandate, and change the current sequential exit numbering system.

The state had plans to start the updates in the summer, but due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the start of the process was postponed until October. The proposed completion date is in Spring 2021. Road work and construction is primarily projected to be conducted during the overnight hours.

Although exit numbers will be



This exit from Route 91 to Route 2 at Greenfield will soon be named Exit 46.

changing, according to an advisory bulletin, “MassDOT will keep existing, ‘old’ exit number signs at key locations for a minimum of two years” for an easy statewide transition.

The practical purpose of a mileage-based exiting system is that as a driver, you can better understand the distances you are traveling. MassDOT Highway Administrator

see EXITS page A4

LEVERETT SELECTBOARD

Petitioners Insist On Winter Town Meeting

By GEORGE BRACE

At the November 24 Leverett selectboard meeting, sponsors of a petition calling for a special election to fill a vacant seat on the board denied requests from the board and town elections official to withdraw the petition, setting in motion a process requiring a special town meeting within 45 days.

After the unexpected resignation of board member Peter d’Errico on October 24, board chair Julie Shively, and member Tom Hankinson said they felt they could handle the responsibilities of the board until town meeting in April, when elections are normally held. They said if they encountered difficulty they would call for a special town meeting, but it wasn’t warranted on general principle due to the difficulties and dangers involved in the process, and the short time the new member would serve, which would be approximately two months.

Leverett’s bylaws require that candidates for the board announce their candidacy on the floor of town meeting, where a vote is then taken.

A group of residents, wanting to fill the seat sooner, have circulated a petition which gained more than the required 200 signatures needed to bind the town to calling the special town meeting and election. One of the organizers, Aaron Buford, described the group as diverse in age, race, and length of residency, and

see LEVERETT page A5

GILL SELECTBOARD

Gill Finally Holds Spring Town Meeting

By JERRI HIGGINS

The sun warmed those setting up the equipment in the Riverside municipal building field for Gill’s historic November 21 annual town meeting. Once the meeting was called to order, though, the sky seemed to contain all the day’s clouds and the weather turned cool and blustery – giving credence to the New Englandism about waiting a minute if you did not like the weather.

Meeting with the selectboard over several days in the lead-up to the meeting, Gill’s police, fire, and highway departments, fin com, and assessors had worked through their annual budgets and the other requests presented on the warrant.

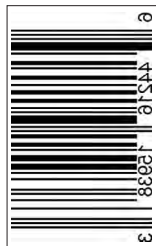
Town moderator Isaac Bingham opened the proceedings. “Typically, there is a finance committee recommendation that follows every article throughout the meeting,” he explained to the 35 or so chilly residents and the handful of local and regional officials gathered at the Riverside municipal building back

see GILL page A6

In Which We Get Sick Of This Whole COVID Thing

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The Montague Reporter

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About Face Computing

Founded by

Arthur Evans
Harry Brandt
David Detmold
August 2002

WINTER from page A1

Like all independent restaurants, the Rendezvous has had a bumpy ride this year. After an initial closure, the business was approved on April 11 for a forgivable loan under the federal Payroll Protection Program (PPP) – the 16th of what would ultimately be 76 food-service establishments in Franklin County to benefit from the program, according to data released on Tuesday by the Center for Public Integrity, which joined other organizations in suing for the public release of the information.

Janke and his partners received \$58,648 to spend on staff over an eight-week period in May and June. The restaurant initially reopened for takeout, rehiring most of its laid-off workers. (*Disclosure: this reporter rents an apartment from Mr. Janke.*)

“The really crazy-making part of the PPP was that the loan program changed as it was going,” Janke recalls. “Those who got the PPP on the early side kind of got bit in the ass – the initial rules were you had to spend it right away, and then they ended up extending it so that you could spend it within 13 weeks instead of eight weeks.”

“We certainly would have spent it differently,” he told the *Reporter*. “We might still be open had we been able to do that.”

On May 18, Janke approached the Montague selectboard with a request to borrow a section of the Third Street municipal parking lot for outdoor seating. The town responded with a survey of local eateries, and approved outdoor licenses for the Voo and three other businesses on June 8. Later that month, governor Charlie Baker announced that indoor dining would again be permitted.

The Rendezvous put up Plexiglas partitions and set up a checkpoint to perform temperature checks, quiz prospective customers on their recent travel, and record their contact information for follow-up in case of a positive COVID-19 case.

“We’re very lucky, fortunate, that we never got a call,” Janke says. This coincided with a period of very low community spread in Franklin County: between July 8 and September 30, not a single official case was recorded in the town of Montague.

The virus, however is back – the town’s official count rose by 21 during November – and with plummeting temperatures, the restaurant found it couldn’t lure customers to its outdoor seating, either.

“On a good week in the summer, our sales were down maybe 50% from 2019,” Janke reports.

“When it got cold, our sales were down by 80%.... We felt like our choice was either to try to force it through the winter, and maybe end up closing permanently, or to save what cash and energy we have and just close now, and look at how we can reopen.”

According to the newly released data, 934 businesses in Franklin County received money under the PPP, for a total of \$93.1 million. The jobs “protected,” if the approved applications were truthful, totaled 11,246 – a number equivalent to 43% of the total workforce employed in the county (as counted by the Bureau of Labor Statistics in March 2019). The average sum the federal government paid per worker, therefore, was \$8,282.

The county’s largest recipients were All States Asphalt of Sunderland (\$6,897,900 for 465 workers), Valley Medical Group of Greenfield (\$5,000,000 exactly, for 431), Pete’s Tire Barn of Orange (\$3,195,370 for 263), and Erving Industries (\$2,245,017 for 124).

Setting aside one- and two-person shops, the businesses that appear to have received the most per worker were Harvest Farm of Whately (\$109,717 among four workers), Mayhew Steel of Turners Falls (\$437,280 among 18), Realtime Software Corporation of Bernardston (\$92,192 among four), and Australis Aquaculture of Greenfield (\$287,113 among 14).

The sum given (or lent and then forgiven) to the Rendezvous accounted for 11 workers, and amounted to \$5,332 per worker.

As Congress debates stimulus packages that might include a new tranche of PPP funding, Janke says the Rendezvous will use the winter down time to rest and reorganize. “We’re revising the menu, working with the kitchen managers to get some menu changes in place, and we’ll be working with the graphic designer and getting ads,” he says. “We’re trying to put ourselves in a good spot for reopening.”

The dire situation – one study predicts COVID-19 could put 85% of independent restaurants out of business – “really gives an advantage to those who can hoard money during the pandemic, and emerge from it and buy up the assets that have been abandoned,” Janke argues.

“Anybody who’s got the wherewithal to put some money towards local businesses won’t regret it in a year,” he adds. “But I think the shape of Main Streets will look radically different. The more we can spend locally, the more local businesses we can hold onto.”



Ja'Duke Preschool teachers Tiffany (left) and Jisun (right) pause with a boy and his Goldfish crackers during snack time in the Purple Room, where a small group of 15- to 29-month-old toddlers play and learn during the week.

Letters to the Editors

Survey About Montague Police

As you may know, the town of Montague has established several working groups to assess the state of policing and to review police practices in our community. As part of that work, the Police Community Engagement Advisory Group is currently conducting a survey looking into the Montague Police Department’s relations with the community.

The survey is particularly in-

tended to receive feedback from people of color and young people in Montague and surrounding towns, but all interested parties are welcome to respond. You can find the survey at: bit.ly/38yJfH6

The survey is also available in Spanish at: bit.ly/2UrwAxx

Thanks very much!

Colin Mitchell
Montague

Stamp Activist

Ole Ben Franklin came to me in a daydream and said:

“The Post Office saved our democracy, and now our democracy will save the Post Office! Tell the people to get out there and buy some stamps!”

So, okay, you heard him folks! Invest in forever (stamps)!

Michael D. Joyce
Wendell

CORRECTIONS

In our November 19 edition (page A7, *Schools Return to Fully-Remote*) we wrote that the first cohort of students learning in person at Sheffield Elementary had been split into “two five-student groups.” Sheffield paraprofessional Jacinda Stone let us know they had actually been together in one group: four adults and ten children. We apologize for the error, which our reporter had heard in a meeting and repeated without verification.

On page B1 of the same issue, Ferd Wulkan wrote that Robert Pollin and Noam Chomsky’s recent book on the climate crisis didn’t “address the controversy... whether some nuclear power will be needed in the earlier years of the transition to clean renewables.”

“I was mistaken,” Wulkan confesses. “In fact, there are several pages (86-91) discussing this.” We apologize to our readers, as well as to Messrs. Pollin and Chomsky, for this oversight.

Working From Home May Get More Expensive

If you get your internet from Comcast, there’s some news you should be aware of. On January 1, 2021, Comcast will begin enforcing data caps all over the country, including here in Franklin County.

If you’re not lucky enough to live in Greenfield, where they have a municipal provider in GCET, Comcast may be your only option for high-speed internet. Comcast will charge you \$10 per 50 gigabytes if you go over their new cap, up to a maximum of \$100 per month, although they’re waiving the fee in January and February.

Comcast’s new data caps are set at 1.2 terabytes per month. That sounds like a lot, and Comcast is happy to tell you that it is. It’s over 500 hours of Netflix streaming!

But how does it work out in real life? Over the last six months, as two people working from home, our internet usage would have cost us an extra \$90 in overage fees.

When everyone’s budgets are

tight due to the pandemic and more people than ever are working and learning from home, Comcast has decided to squeeze Franklin County residents for even more money.

What can you do?

Contact your local representatives. Tell them that we need municipal internet in all of our towns. Cities as big as Greenfield and towns as small as Leverett and Charlemont have led the charge. It’s up to us to join them.

In Montague, the chance for a municipally-owned internet provider slipped through our fingers just four years ago, and Comcast has quickly taken the opportunity to make sure we pay for it.

Don’t let it happen again. Let your representatives know that your town needs competition to keep Comcast monopolies from taking advantage of us.

Alexandra McLarty
Montague Center

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By NINA ROSSI

A notice on the Montague town website says that the **overnight parking ban**, which usually begins on December 1, will be delayed until the first snow forecast. When it goes into effect, there will be no on-street parking between 1 a.m. and 5 a.m.

The town has available 35 winter parking permits which allow parking in designated areas on L, Prospect, and Ninth streets. Permits are available at town hall and online; applications and details may be found on www.montague-ma.gov. Free overnight parking is also available without a permit in seven designated municipal parking areas.

Wherever you park, you must follow the posted directions for moving your car for snow plowing, or you will be towed. The ban, once in effect, lasts until April 1.

Pioneer Valley Workers Center wants folks to know that on every first and third Thursday of the month there is **free food distribution** by the People's Food Pantry in front of La Mariposa Collectivo, 111 Avenue A in Turners Falls, from 2:30 to 4 p.m. Receive free groceries, prepared meals, PPE, and more. For more information, email pvwc.apoyo.mutuo@gmail.com.

The Franklin County Fairgrounds is the site of a new holiday event this year. The public is invited to come gawk by the carful at **34 holiday light displays** put together by community members, organizations, and businesses. See the show every Friday, Saturday, and Sunday night through Sunday, December 13.

For a minimum donation of \$5 per car you can drive into the fairground and witness the light extravaganza

starting at 5 p.m. with the last cars lining up at 9 p.m. Queueing will be via Laurel Street and wrap around the fairgrounds to the main entrance. Visitors can even vote for their favorite display through a ballot handed them upon entrance. Please bring a pen or pencil to fill it out.

This fundraiser will donate to the following nonprofits: Big Brothers Big Sisters of Franklin County, the Franklin County Sheriff's Office Regional Dog Shelter, and the Franklin County Fairgrounds.

DinoFest 2020 is coming to Greenfield this weekend on Saturday and Sunday, December 5 and 6. Their press release states that the DinoFest will "feature Piti Theater Youth Troupe's comic meditation on emerging fascism," titled *The Mayor of Greenpants: Dino Disaster*, at the Garden Theater in the morning, as well as the well-known Jurassic Road Show of paleontology and art on Zoom all day from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m..

On Sunday, check in on a Zoom at 2 p.m. with sea lamprey expert Ed Freidman, at 4 to catch Dino songs and stories with Kay Lyons, and wrap it up with a livestream of the Dino Disaster at 7 p.m. Register online and get the full schedule of events – it's all free! – at www.ptco.org/dino.

On Sunday, December 6 at 11 a.m. the Northfield Writers and Artists will host an online book reading and discussion of Joan Maloof's books about **old-growth forests**. She has written several on this topic.

Read and discuss with others, and then hop on to a live discussion at 12:30 p.m. that same day with Dr. Patrick Curry about **enchantment in modern life**. The author lives in Lon-

don and has written about enchantment, ethical ecology, the works of Tolkien, and other topics. Find out his scholarly perspective on keeping enchantment alive during this focused discussion. Register for both events at authorsandartistsfestival.wordpress.com.

A Common Good Investment Club will be launching soon for "people of ordinary means who'd like to invest in locally-owned companies and projects that advance the well being of everyone in their community – instead of in huge corporations that have little accountability and don't add anything to the local economy," according to Common Good executive director William Spademan.

Find out more at an online information session next Wednesday, December 9 at 7 p.m. All are welcome. To get a link, call (413) 628-1723 or email info@commongood.earth.

Next Monday, December 7, you can take your short play out of the drawer and share it with other playwrights at a Zoom meeting sponsored by the LAVA Center. This informal **playwriting sharing circle** is perfect for testing out an idea or just airing some material with an audience of fellow writers. The focus is on sharing rather than critiquing, but you are free to ask for feedback as desired. Email info@localaccess.org to join.

This is also the weekend when you may watch the LAVA Center's **Climate Change Theater** presentations online. This short play festival, called Facing the Future, features work by 13 playwrights from three continents. Check in on the program when it runs from December 4 through December 8 through the website www.localaccess.org.

The Shea Theater is presenting a special **Welcome Yule** virtual performance next weekend, December 11 and 12 at 7:30 p.m. and December 13 at 2 p.m. The program will be composed of some of the more entertaining performances from the

last 30 years, as well as some new versions of songs and poetry recorded by members safely at home. Tickets are suggested at \$10, but there is a sliding scale from \$5 to \$100, so give what you can afford. Get tickets on the www.sheatheater.org or www.welcomeyule.org.

Join a **Virtual Cookie Exchange** at the Greenfield Library on Thursday, December 17 at 7 p.m. To play, email your recipe and a photo of the cookie by Monday, December 14 librarian@greenfieldpubliclibrary.org; you will receive a Zoom link.

A nice gift for the teen in your life might be a five-month subscription to the Art Garden's **Art-In-A-Box series**. Each monthly box focuses on a theme and a medium, and holds tools, materials, and inspiration in the form of prompts or suggestions. December will be Printmaking, January will be Fiber Arts, February is Painting, and March is Drawing and Illustration. In addition, a collage and mixed-media box will always be available, or it can be used for the April box.

Some months are \$40, some are \$25, or the series of five can be had for \$150. The Art Garden will work with you to make this affordable if payment would be a hardship. Contact them at csartgarden@gmail.com by December 14 to sign up for your teen.

Massachusetts Jobs With Justice has put together a cookbook. *Stir the Pot: a Cookbook to Feed the Uprising* is a collection of recipes from local organizers, activists, and friends of the labor movement that might make a great gift for yourself or someone you know. It is available as a downloadable PDF or a physical print copy, printed at a unionized print shop in western Mass. The recipes are in both English and Spanish, too! To get your copy, just make a donation to Jobs With Justice at secure.actblue.com/donate/stirthepot.

Send your local briefs to editor@montaguereporter.org.

GUEST EDITORIAL

By ANDY TEW

LEVERETT – Recently, a longstanding member of the Leverett Select Board stepped down from his position. The question arose as to whether the Town should hold a special election to fill his seat prior to the April Town Meeting, or to leave it vacant for 6 months. For many in Leverett, the enthusiastic answer was to fill the seat as soon as possible. Over two hundred community members signed a petition to initiate a special election, which will be held in January. We already have one promising candidate who has stepped forward and I imagine others may emerge soon to throw their names in the ring.

I am excited that citizens in Leverett are so engaged, especially with the pandemic looming over our increasingly cold, dark days. The town will soon mobilize to hold this election using socially distant means, including, we hope, the potential for drive-by voting.

This is by no means an easy project to organize and I'm thankful to the town government officials who are making it a reality. It reflects the resilience of our community in the face of such a challenge.

At the November 24 Select Board meeting, our two current Select Board members voiced concern that holding a special election might disenfranchise those who wish to avoid COVID exposure, specifically those over 65. Certainly, none

of us wishes to increase our exposure and I'm glad our representatives are mindful of how such measures might impact different populations.

But we can do this – we have already had two town meetings during the pandemic, and another is scheduled for this spring. Further, residents 65 and over represent 31% of the people who signed the petition, which is almost exactly the same as the proportion of that cohort in our town's voting-age population. All ages have spoken and we are up for the challenge. A significant percentage of our population has gone the extra distance (providing signatures on actual paper! Heavens!) to show their support for a special election, signaling a clear mandate on the part of the people. In fact, more people signed the petition (225) than attend a typical town meeting (150 to 200).

Nonetheless, I'm glad a conversation about voting access has started. The specter of disenfranchisement and the potential for the exclusion of certain groups from Town Meeting reveals a structural flaw that must be addressed.

Many in Leverett have expressed disappointment in the lack of access to Town Meeting. These include: parents of young children, especially single parents; those without the economic means to take time off work; those who lack transportation; those who are not native English speakers; those who feel marginalized and uncomfortable attending due to their identity; and those with disabilities which might prevent

them from attending a large gathering that can span an entire day.

The proposed plan for the special election Town Meeting, which will emphasize brevity and potentially offer asynchronous voting, will actually make our democracy accessible for a large number of people who have previously been unable to participate. Brevity, clarity, and access matter: Leverett voters turn out for November ballot elections at a 60% to 90% rate, but only 10% to 20% attend a typical annual Town Meeting.


I value the process of engaging together as a community, even in-person and in large gatherings, to discuss ballot proposals, budgets, and priorities. I also value ensuring that everyone in our town has access to that process.

We are a forward-thinking town: One of the recent achievements of the Leverett Select Board was the successful negotiation and implementation of a community-wide fiber-optic network, one of only a few of its kind in the entire country. We have the skills and creativity to ensure that every community member can have their voice heard at this and every Town Meeting.

I look forward to Leverett residents continuing to engage in these important conversations about our democracy and working together to make this important goal a reality.

Andy Tew lives in Leverett.

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EXITS from page A1

Jonathan Gulliver has stated, “One of the reasons it was put in place to begin with is, especially for the trucking industry, if you’re on a long haul and you know you need to exit [at] say 125 and you’re currently at Exit 100, you know you have 25 more miles to go.”

With a proposed unity among the 50 states, drivers would have a general knowledge and understanding of interstate road systems while traveling beyond their home state. In addition, emergency first responders would be able to navigate the highways more easily, and therefore hopefully save more lives in critical conditions.

The project is estimated to cost \$2.8 million, and will be paid for through Federal Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) funds. HSIP funding carries a 90/10 split, which means that 90% of the project will be funded through federal funds and the remaining 10% will be funded through state highway funds.

MassDOT is putting forth a great effort to inform the public of these major transportation changes. On their dedicated website, they offer interactive maps, “Frequently Asked Questions,” timeline schedules, informative videos and opportunities to voice questions and comments. For additional information regarding the Massachusetts exit changes, you may visit www.NewMassExits.com.

Dylyn Russell is a junior studying journalism at Turners Falls High School.



Odds & Ends; Trainees & Deadlines; Unposted Zones

By JOSH HEINEMANN

Last Saturday Anna Wetherby, appointed by the selectboard on November 12, met retiring town clerk Gretchen Smith at the town office building to get keys and begin her tenure as town clerk. There was no ceremony. If after five months of training-by-doing Wetherby chooses to stay on as clerk, she will have to run for the position in May.

As is fitting on the eve of a holiday, the November 25 selectboard meeting was short:

Town coordinator Nancy Aldrich relayed a message of disapproval from the state Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) for a gap in the town’s water system reporting. Citizen Al McIntire is training to fill the vacancy left when Larry Ramsdell retired, but his training is not complete. The town hired Housatonic Water Basin Sampling and Testing of Lee Massachusetts to file the monthly reports until he has been trained.

The DEP, however, insists that McIntire have a six-month “probation” period, with Housatonic still

filing the reports and being paid \$150 a month.

As a member of the energy committee as well as the selectboard, Laurie DiDonato reported that so far the only estimate the town has received for installing a mini-split in the senior center was over \$7,000. Wendell has \$6,000 available in Green Communities grant money, so unless another bid comes in lower or the town adds \$1,000, a mini-split will have to wait.

Another option is window quilts for town buildings. They can be installed in increments and stopped when grant money runs out. Energy committee member Don Stone and citizen Jonathan von Ranson plan to take measurements of town building windows in preparation for that possibility.

The grant money must be spent before January 31 to make the town eligible for more grants through Green Communities. If it is not spent during FY’21, it will be lost.

The original estimate for insulating under the town hall is too old and was made with the assumption of 900 square feet for the main hall. Including the stage and kitchen

would make the total 1,200 square feet or more, and cost enough to require a bid process.

Town engineer Jim Slavas said the first step is getting rid of mold and preventing it from coming back by treatment with ozone or peroxide. Fogging with Concrobium might be something that assistant engineer Alistair MacMartin can do if he gets a break from working on the town internet system.

Aldrich will invite highway commission chair Phil Delorey to the next regular meeting, December 9, to discuss putting speed limit signs up through town and getting drivers used to the idea that enforcement will follow. West Street has been a problem area for speeding. Selectboard chair Dan Keller said the town approved seven speed zones on West Street in 1997, but they are not posted.

The finance committee had no objection to the cemetery commission’s request to create a new position for maintaining the town cemeteries, since pay would be taken from the cemetery commission’s budget and not added to the overall tax rate.

Aldrich said the neighbor is still

having issues with people using the town hall internet while parked by her house. After she complained to the board about people forcing her to listen to movies she has no interest in, the town hall WiFi was made password-protected from 7 p.m. to 7 a.m. The neighbor now is asking that the password protection be made all day.

Selectboard member Gillian Budine said that some people sit on the common to use that internet. DiDonato said the password can be given to appropriate people who want to or need to use the WiFi. Both the senior center WiFi and the library WiFi reach the town common, and people use the WiFi outside the office building as well.

Through early fall, Pru Smith and Rosie Heidkamp were conducting strength-training classes on the common, with participants separated appropriately. Now that colder weather is here they asked to use one of the town Zoom accounts to continue those classes remotely. The classes are sponsored by the library, and so Keller said it is consistent with town policy to allow them use of the Zoom account.

MARCH REPORTBACK

Seven Thousand Meals Per Mile

By IZZY VACHULA-CURTIS

TURNERS FALLS – Happy December! On November 24, twenty-nine students and five staff members from Turners Falls High School and Great Falls Middle School participated in the *Masked Montague Mini March*.

The mini-march was six and a half miles, and our route went around Turners Falls. We started at 10 a.m. from TFHS, and our first stop was Scotty’s, where Bobbi Rae Marguet donated donuts for us all to eat during our break. Then we went by Unity Park and through downtown.

We stopped at Peskeomskut Park, where Lesley Cogswell, Cassie Damkoehler, and Jen Cadrán (who are part of the “Friends of Great Falls Middle School and Turners Falls High School” as well as parents of marchers Jackson Cogswell, David and Ethan Damkoehler, and Robb Goff) provided fruits, granola bars and water for us.

From there we went to Thomas Memorial Golf Course, then up to Sheffield and Hillcrest Elementary Schools. Our last stop was at the Gill Montague Regional School District Central Offices, where Rachel Vachula (the pupil services administrative assistant, and my aunt!) donated homemade sugar cookies and Hershey’s Kisses to all the marchers.

All the marchers got to meet our new superintendent, Brian Beck, for the first time too, which

was really cool. The Central Office staff also donated food to us, which we were collecting as we walked so we could bring it to Our Lady of Peace Church for their food drive.

Finally, at around 1 p.m., we arrived back at the Turners Falls High School and Great Falls Middle School. Dave Argy from the Turners Falls Pizza House donated a personal pizza for each of the students who participated in the march.

The Masked Montague Mini March was so fun and exciting to be a part of! All the staff and students who participated seemed like they really enjoyed the event, and it was for an amazing cause. Our goal for this year was to make \$5,000 – we made \$4,000 last year – but we were a little unsure on whether or not we would reach our goal, since this year has been hard for a lot of families.

What is so incredible, though, is that we raised over \$10,000 for the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts! The Food Bank takes every dollar donated and turns it into four meals, so our school and community provided over 43,000 meals for people in our community.

Our top fundraiser again this year was 7th grader Jackson Cogswell, who raised \$1,280! Our next highest was 6th grader Robb Goff, who marched for his first time this year. Robb raised \$1,075. Our third top was Mr. Dan Carew, the sixth grade math teacher at Great Falls Middle School, who raised \$1,054!

I want to thank Officer Dan Miner and Captain Kyle Cogswell for staying with us the entire march. They transported food collectibles that were donated, drove behind our marchers to keep everyone safe, and blocked off the roads for us. In addition, the Montague Police Association presented us with a check for \$500 to the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts.

Brayden McCord, a sophomore at Turners Falls High School, said about the March: “It was very well put together. Everyone was socially distant, and yet everyone still had a great time.”

Anna Baskowski, who is also a sophomore, said, “It was really good to see some other people since we haven’t been in school since COVID-19. Seeing people come together for an important cause while still being safe was really special.”

“My favorite part of the march was being able to see all my friends again,” said Jackson Cogswell. “It was also fun to meet my new classmates, too. To be able to raise \$1,280 and beat my goal by \$280 was just a phenomenal feeling.



Robb Goff and Ethan Damkoehler participated in the Masked Montague Mini-March to raise funds for the Western Mass Food Bank.

Everyone who donated was so generous, and I am very fortunate to have such caring people in my life.”

Dylan Burnett, a junior at Turners Falls High School, said, “I feel it is so important during this time to give and help people. Doing Monte’s March and raising money really makes a difference for families in need. All we can do right now is be positive and help others, so I am so thankful I got to participate in the Montague Mini March!”

Thank you to everyone who donated, participated, and said hi to us on our march! It’s so incredible how many meals we provided for people in our community, especially during the pandemic, when it might be hard for people to access food easily.

Also on the topic of giving this season: the GMRSD is having its annual food drive. It starts November 30, and goes until December 17. GMRSD has set a goal that this year they want to collect 2,020 items for the year 2020. If you can, please go to either Sheffield Elementary School, Turners Falls High School and Great Falls Middle School, Hillcrest Elementary, or Gill Elementary, find the donation box at the school’s front door, and donate.

I hope everyone had an amazing Thanksgiving and start to December!

Izzy Vachula-Curtis is in ninth grade at Turners Falls High School.



PHOTOS COURTESY IZZY VILG

Left to right: Our correspondent, Dylan Burnett, and Anna Baskowski all participated in the Mini-March.

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LEVERETT from page A1

pointed to the difficulty in collecting 200 signatures during a pandemic as a sign of their teamwork and determination.

Buford cited a number of reasons the signatories wanted to see the election before April; he said it was possible there would be two new members on the three-member board after April elections, and people wanted to get someone up and running and learning the system “ASAP.”

Buford also noted that the board will be working on preparation for the town meeting warrant, and review of the budget, among other things, between now and April. He said multiple qualified people have expressed interest in the position, and added the need for the stability of a three-member board for tie-breaking, and in cases of illness or absence, as reasons for the special election.

Both sitting selectboard members and town clerk and election official Lisa Stratford spoke against the idea in a failed attempt to get the sponsors to withdraw the petition. Shively and Stratford were visibly distressed during the discussion.

“I am asking the petitioners to keep in mind the whole town,” said Shively. “This really, really is a big stressor for this town...in non-COVID times it wouldn’t be a big deal.” Shively said she had received emails from residents upset about the prospect of a special town meeting and election this winter during a pandemic, and from people upset with the lack of confidence that she and Hankinson can handle things until April.

Hankinson said he wanted it to be clear and on the record that the board and town election official were unanimously opposed to the idea. He read the board of health’s guidance that people avoid large gatherings over the holidays and in winter when possible, and joined with Shively and Stratford in pointing out the large elderly population,

estimated at “fully one-third” of Leverett’s roughly 1,600 voters, who will be particularly at risk.

Stratford said she also wanted it on record that she had met with petitioners and expressed her concerns about winter and COVID-19 in asking for the withdrawal of the petition. “My concerns about COVID, the weather, and the timing of this are serious,” she said.

Shively said she was also “alarmed” at the “serious disenfranchisement” of people in town who have “contributed year after year to making this town work as, really, a volunteer town, except for a few paid professionals.” She said annual town gets the highest turnout of residents and the most input, and that the advance notice allows for candidates to publicize their positions with statements in the town newsletter. Residents are also able to question candidates at the meeting, said Shively, which would be difficult at a meeting in winter following COVID protocols.

Petition organizers said that the 200 residents signing the petition included a proportionate number of seniors, and signers would be volunteering to help make the election safe and orderly.

Stratford countered that 200 of 1,600 is “not entirely representative of the town population,” and emphasized that there will be no mail-in voting, so residents would be forced to show up in person to vote. The issue closed with sponsors of the petition rejecting the request for withdrawal, setting the stage for a special town meeting and election within 45 days, or by January 8.

Other Business

Police chief Scott Minckler reported that the police department has received two grants, totaling approximately \$45,000, to be used to upgrade computer systems and patrol cars and purchase equipment, potentially including body cameras.

Town administrator Marjorie McGinnis said the only COVID-re-

lated item to report was an update to the town’s employee COVID-safety policy, required for compliance with updated state policies.

McGinnis reported on progress in changing the health insurer for town employees. She said she had learned that employees currently on Blue Cross Blue Shield will be able to switch over to the new provider without any paperwork. Shively suggested McGinnis pass the new information on to town employees for their input as the process continues.

Library trustees asked the board if they needed permission to place a five-by-seven-foot mural on the outside of the library, which is going to be gifted to the town for its upcoming 250th anniversary. The board said permission was not needed, but suggested that once they had a draft of the mural, they publicize it so residents can provide feedback.

The board authorized the borrowing of \$233,000 for the Teawadde Hill Road waterline project, as approved at town meeting in 2019.

Brianna Baker was appointed to the position of part-time firefighter. Baker lives in Leverett and currently works for the Amherst fire department as a temporary full-time firefighter.

The board was notified that the Federal Emergency Management Agency has approved the town’s hazard mitigation plan. With this approval, the board voted to formally adopt the plan.

The board signed retail package store and pourer’s licenses for the Leverett Village Co-op, pending appointment of new manager to fill a vacant line on the form.

Stratford reported that no deficiencies had been found in the transfer station inspection report, and that it had been filed with the Franklin Regional Council of Governments.

The board approved a resident’s offer to extend town hall public WiFi to the post office by contributing a booster and volunteering to install it.



Pupil services director Dianne Ellis reported that Gill-Montague is “seeing an uptick in families pursuing homeschool collectives or online homeschool curriculum programs,” amounting to 80 homeschoolers, nearly double last year’s number.

Superintendent Brian Beck told the committee the district is entering mediation with the Gill Montague Education Association over the terms of a return to in-person teaching. “The district and the Association have been meeting for several months,” Beck said. “At this point, we’ve not been able to reach an agreement.”

Athletic director Adam Graves joined the meeting to discuss a proposed winter sports season. Though winter sports usually begin after Thanksgiving, the regional athletic district has decided to delay the start to January 4. “Our kids are dying for sports,” Graves said.

Swim meets might happen virtually, with teams competing simultaneously at remote pools. No scrums will be permitted in hockey. Basketball players would no longer be allowed to “impede an offensive player from doing what they want to do,” and must stick to their own designated spots on the bench. “Having such a big gym is such a huge advantage to us,” Graves said.

The committee gave him the go-ahead by a vote of 6 to 0, with Heather Katsoulis of Montague abstaining.



NOTES FROM THE ERVING SELECTBOARD

Good Samaritans Praised; Police Consultants Hired

By KATIE NOLAN

The Erving selectboard discussed numerous ongoing issues, including police department hiring, grant-funded and other projects, and the town logo, at its November 23 and 30 meetings.

On November 23 board members William Bembury and Peter Sanders, acting police chief Robert Holst, and officer James Loynd honored the three bystanders who acted as Good Samaritans during an attempted suicide at the French King Bridge on November 1. Laura Duffy and Kyle Forrest were present at the remote meeting, while the third bystander, Jeremiah Gonzalez, was unable to attend.

Bembury read aloud a letter to Duffy, Forrest, and Gonzalez: “Your willingness, support, and caring heart for others assisted in the efforts of saving a life that day, and provided support for the Officer to know he wasn’t alone on the call.”

On November 1, when Loynd responded to the bridge, Duffy, Forrest and Gonzalez were already speaking with the man who appeared ready to jump into the river. According to Holst, after speaking with the bystanders, the man turned and faced the bridge; while they and Loynd continued to communicate with the man, he turned back to face the water. At that point, Loynd pulled the man back to safety, with the help of Duffy, Forrest and Gonzalez; once he was secure on the bridge, the three “stayed on the scene and continued to reassure the individual.” The man was subsequently taken to Baystate Franklin Medical Center.

“I sincerely thank you,” Loynd said to Duffy, Forrest, and the absent Gonzalez, his voice breaking with emotion. “That situation would not have resolved itself as successfully as it did if it wasn’t for you being there.”

Bembury said he could not express how grateful he was that Duffy, Forest and Gonzalez would “risk their lives to help someone else.”

“It’s a great thing you were there,” Sanders told them.

If you’re thinking about suicide, are worried about a friend or loved one, or would like emotional support, talk to someone now. The Suicide Prevention Lifeline is available 24/7 across the United States at 1 (800) 273-8255.

Police Department Hiring

The selectboard accepted a proposal from the Collins Center at UMass Boston to provide professional services for finding and hiring a new police chief, at a cost of \$12,000.

The other proposal, from Badge Quest, was for \$20,795. Bembury said he was impressed with the Badge Quest proposal, but the cost was “above what I believe we’re willing to pay.”

“The Collins Center has done well by us before,” said Sanders.

The board appointed former Northfield police chief Gary Sibilgia to the patrol officer search committee. The board plans to meet briefly on December 4 to appoint the final member of the committee. Bryan Smith said that the committee would have ten applications to

review for the patrol position. The board expects to hire a new police chief by February.

The board also approved selling a surplus 2014 Dodge Charger police cruiser to Warwick for \$3,000. The department has replaced the old cruiser with a 2021 Ford Explorer Interceptor hybrid.

Town Projects

Planning assistant Mariah Kurtz prepared a spreadsheet showing over 40 projects the town is working on or planning over the next two years, including redesigns of the Park Street playground and town hall, subdivision of the former International Paper Mill site, repairing culverts on Wheeler Street, constructing a public works dry storage building, and locating and constructing a new cemetery.

Each of these, especially the ones funded by grants, require oversight or reporting by either Kurtz or town administrator Bryan Smith. “We need to be realistic about how many projects we can take on,” he said.

The board discussed how to determine what the capacity of the two administrators was. Selectboard chair Jacob Smith wondered whether the town could outsource some of the administrative tasks, or ask the relevant department heads to manage projects.

Bembury suggested focusing on grant-funded projects that have deadlines, and putting discretionary projects on hold. The board and administrators plan to discuss the projects list further at a December 7 joint meeting with the fin com.

Bryan Smith reported that the library architect, general contractor, and owner’s project manager met November 17 to go over the punch list of unfinished details of the library construction. Ace Solar put in a connection to the solar panels so Eversource can put in a meter. Galaxy Integrated Technologies is working on outstanding issues with the building’s security and access system.

Other Business

Bryan Smith supervised a virtual coin toss to decide which of two contractors would be awarded the streetlight installation project. Both Coviello Electric and General Contracting of North Reading and Central Mass Signal of Northborough submitted sealed bids for the identical amount, \$8,700.

After the coin toss, the project was awarded to Central Mass Signal.

The board reviewed using the recently-designed town logo on town letterhead. They decided to remove the slogan, “A Great Place to Live,” from letterhead and business card uses, because words are unreadable in small applications. The board also asked for a change in the colored banner that formed a background to the logo on the letterhead.

The board plans to review the logo and letterhead design for a fourth and final time at a future meeting.

Town departments have submitted operating budget requests for FY’22. Bryan Smith said he would collate all of the information and provide either electronic or paper copies to selectboard and fin com members, who will hold their first joint FY’22 budget meeting on December 7.

GMRSD from page A1

“not based on past academic performance,” Menard explained.

The district has partnered with the MassHire Franklin Hampshire Career Center and Community Action Pioneer Valley to provide the students training and support that will include a semester-long workplace preparation course their junior year and, during their senior year, a 100-hour internship in the field.

The students’ coursework will be guided using an individualized tool known as My Career and Academic Plan (MyCAP), and they will also graduate with certifications in CPR, first aid, and occupational safety and health. “Whether they’re going on to college, wanting to start their own business, or going out in the job market,” Menard said, “they’re going to have a huge leg up on the other students they’re competing with.”

A \$30,000 grant supports the program’s implementation this year, originally intended to launch last spring but was delayed due to the pandemic. The district has committed to sending five cohorts of students through the program. It has also needed to beef up its overall program of study.

“That’s another bonus for us,” said director of teaching and learning Christine Limoges. “We’ve had three or four teachers complete the training to teach AP courses this year, so we’re building our founda-

tion as well... If we have to have an [AP] class with two kids in it, we’re going to do it.”

“We need to market ourselves, and get ourselves out there in a unique way,” Menard said. “We’re really trying to strengthen the program offerings here.”


The district should know by the end of the month whether it has been approved for the advanced manufacturing program as well.

As work on the FY’22 budget begins, the school committee heard some troubling news at its November 24 meeting from business manager Joanne Blier. “We’ve had a dramatic enrollment decline this year, and that’s going to cause problems with our Chapter 70 next year,” said Blier, referring to the main form of state funding to districts, though she added that the impact is difficult to predict since the pandemic has meant similar declines statewide.

Blier presented a chart of projected revenue that included only 0.4% growth in Chapter 70 funds, as well as a 0.9% growth in assessments to the towns of Gill and Montague – a figure reached from early conversations with Montague officials over what the town estimates will be its “affordable assessment.” Those typically grow at a 4% or 4.5% rate.

“So, that’s our goal,” Blier told the committee: “to put together a budget that we can support with these revenues.”

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FLOWER from page A1

capacity of the facility, when completed, would be just over 79,000 of cultivation space, and nearly 8,000 square feet of head house space.

Goldman said the manufacturing component of the business would be limited to extracting “botanical compounds.” “Think more of a lab than a big manufacturing facility,” he said.

The proposed project would include parking for all potential employees – as many as 60 – a short access entrance from Industrial Boulevard, and an elaborate drainage system to limit rainfall runoff from the property. Goldman portrayed the drainage system as capable of handling a “hundred-year storm.”

The property abuts a steep, cliff-like sand embankment, similar to embankments adjacent to Millers Falls Road which have required costly town stabilization projects by collapsing. Neither the selectboard nor planning board expressed concern about potential erosion behind the facility – perhaps because the Flower Power drainage system did not include a pipe carrying runoff down the embankment, as was present in the recent collapses.

At both meetings Goldman listed the benefits the facility would bring to the town, including approximately 60 new jobs and an increase in the commercial tax base. He also reviewed potential benefits in a host community agreement, which would include an “impact fee,” contributions to local charities and the town RiverCulture program, and volunteering for local organizations.

During the public discussion period of the hearing Leena Newcomb, who said her family had owned a “camp” on the bank of the Connecticut River for over 80 years, noted there were a total of eight camps along the river that would potentially be impacted by the project. She mentioned noise and light pollution, the latter from the parking lot.

Goldman said no activity on the site would produce “significant amounts of noise,” and Wosnesky said his company’s “photometric plan” showed that light from the facility would not cross the property line.

David Brule of the Montague historical commission said he was concerned that the early stages of the project might unearth indigenous or colonial era Euro-American artifacts. He said he would be in touch with town planner Walter Ramsey to discuss the issue. Ramsey said he would discuss the issue with Brule, but that “it would be unprecedented, in the industrial park, to have any archaeological monitoring.”

Much of the discussion at the November 24 public hearing focused on the potential odor generated by the facility, which might be experienced by youth and their families attending classes and performances at the Ja’Duke Center for the Performing Arts. The center is located on the opposite side of the Industrial Boulevard “loop” from the proposed Flower Power site.

During his presentation, Goldman described an odor control system composed of “internal scrubbers” designed to neutralize odors coming off the cannabis so there will be no “buildup” inside the building. If the scrubbers need to be turned off, particularly in the summer, the plan would be to employ a

“specialized botanical neutralizing agent” at ventilation exit points. He estimated that such a system had been “independently tested” to be 98.7% effective.

Kim Williams, co-owner of Ja’Duke who estimated that her school and theater had “400 families coming in and out a week,” said she would “love to have a plan in place” in case any noticeable odor emanated from the facility. “Who do we go to, and what are the plans for remedy?” she asked.

Ramsey said that Flower Power had a proposal to mitigate any odor, but a response by the town if that should fail was “to be discussed” by the planning board as a condition of the special permit. He said he had “some draft language” for the conditions.

“As someone who has four children of her own, and feels like a mama bear to most people who are entering our building,” Williams said, “I just wanted to enter our concern about the placement of it, in terms of being close to not only our school but the Franklin County Technical School.”

During the last 45 minutes of the meeting, Ramsey reviewed input from other town boards, including the health board and department of public works, as well as the Turners Falls Fire and Water departments. He then reviewed the detailed criteria to be included in the special permit. Concerning odor, Ramsey initially suggested a three-stage warning process, modeled after a cannabis special permit in Athol. This would have involved a written warning, followed by a “demand” that the company implement a solution, and finally a potential complaint to the state Cannabis Control Commission.

In the end, the board removed the “demand” phase of the process, on the grounds that it was not enforceable, and added the word “noxious” to describe the offensive odor. The board then approved the special permit.

The next step in the process is the negotiation of a host community agreement with the selectboard and then, if one is approved, on to the state Cannabis Control Commission for a license.

During the discussion of the special permit, planning board member Elizabeth Irving asked how two educational facilities came to be located in the industrial park. According to a 2018 report by the Franklin Regional Council of Governments, the Montague Airport Industrial Park was first developed “in the 1960s” and expanded in the 1990s with a grant from the US Department of Agriculture and local borrowing.

The Technical School website suggests that it opened in 1975, the date on the school’s cornerstone, according to selectboard and tech school committee member Rich Kuklewicz. He recalls that the road leading to what is now the industrial park was initially only a few hundred yards long, and that the tech school may have initially been built on airport property.

Ja’Duke, founded by Kim Williams’ father Nick Waynelovich, initially operated out of the Shea Theater and the Colle Opera House buildings in downtown Turners Falls. It moved to the industrial park in 2017, and recently expanded both its performance and educational space by constructing a new theater in 2019.



GILL from page A1

field. “But because of circumstances, the finance committee decided to vote on all the articles at one time to streamline the process.”

All fourteen articles on the warrant, excepting Article 8, passed unanimously.

Article 1 elected Edward Golembeski and Clifford Hatch as field drivers, and animal control officer Kyle Dragon as assistant field driver, all for one year. The selectboard was re-elected as the town’s “fence viewers, measurers of wood and bark, and surveyors of lumber, all for one year.” Asked by a resident if it was a customary practice to have the selectboard hold those positions, chair Randy Crochier said it had been “for as long as I can remember.”

The same article also authorized the selectboard to contract for road work using \$147,769 in state highway Chapter 90 funds, approved the treasurer to “borrow in anticipation of reimbursement,” as well as using the \$7,074 available through the Quintus Allen trust fund – a trust established in 1884 for education-related expenses in Gill, Colrain, Leyden, and Shelburne – toward the Gill elementary school.

Article 2 approved a new 20-year lease with the Gill-Montague regional school district for use of the elementary school land and buildings, and **Article 7** authorized \$1,785,887 for the district’s FY’21 operating budget, with \$9,735 toward debt service totaling \$1,795,622.

The \$151,860 increase in this year’s education assessment to Gill, with a \$767 debt service increase, was largely due to an additional eight Gill students enrolled in the district. Montague had a decrease of seven students.

“Both of the school assessments went up by almost 10%,” town administrator Ray Purington had explained at the November 16 fin com meeting. “It is one of those double-whammy years that usually we avoid, and only one will go up while the other one stays the same or changes slightly.”

Using \$30,500 of revolving funds toward various town operating costs was approved through **Article 3**. **Article 4** set and approved town salaries, which were level-funded from their FY’20 amounts; a 1.3% cost of living adjustment (COLA) totaling \$7,830 was approved through **Article 5**. The selectboard based the 1.3% figure on Social Security’s increase as of January 2021. The town’s personnel board, which usually makes COLA recommendations, has not met since the COVID-19 pandemic.

\$1,830,095 was approved for the town budget via the omnibus **Article 6**. \$1,656,595 will be raised through taxation or transfer, \$74,700 transferred from sewer use fees, and \$98,800 from FY’21’s estimated sewer receipts.

Asked by a resident why the omnibus budget contained substantial decreases this year when it had been level-funded in the past, Purington said he feels that Gill is fortunate that their state aid is level-funded this year, “but I do not think we are going to have such good luck for next year.” He added that the “financial cliff from COVID-19” will likely start showing up in fiscal year 2022.

“This was an attempt to start reining things in a bit, because we had some sizable increases that we needed to offset,” Purington said. He cited the education assessments in-

NOTES FROM THE GILL SELECTBOARD

No Chutes, No Ladders

By JERRI HIGGINS

A request from the memorial committee for use of the highway department’s bucket truck, the approval of two new fire department members, and a Northfield Mount Hermon donation to the town were on the Gill selectboard agenda last Monday, November 23.

Doug Smith, representing Gill’s memorial committee, was approved to put up and take down the memorial flags several times a year with the highway department bucket truck.

“I thought it would be a little easier than using my truck with a step ladder, and causing turmoil in the town,” Smith told the selectboard.

The selectboard asked Smith to report back to them the number of times the memorial committee would be using the bucket truck, with member John Ward wondering if the extra use of the truck would be charged out of the memorial committee’s budget – or charged from any other committee’s budget that might request such use in the future.

Chair Randy Crochier said it would be good for the board to “dig into this a little deeper” at a

future meeting.

Forester Menson of Greenfield and Brandon Ovitt, who currently works (and will continue working) for the Gill highway department, were approved to begin work for the fire department through June 30, 2021. Fire chief Gene Beaubien told the board that Ovitt would work only on daytime calls, and as long as it did not conflict with his highway department duties.

Crochier expressed his gratitude at not having to approve a monthly budget now that the annual town meeting was held, with Purington heartily agreeing.

Crochier, Ward, and their fellow board member Greg Snedeker shared appreciation for Purington’s work in compiling an annual budget “that fast, and most of the way by yourself,” said Crochier.

Purington told the selectboard that he had just received a \$50,000 donation from Northfield Mount Hermon in support of Gill’s emergency management services.

“As of right now,” said Purington, “they are intending this to be an annual gift for the next four years, of course subject to review and approval from their board of trustees.”



HIGGINS PHOTO

Article 8 was not voted on. The board of assessors had requested increasing the hours of the assessors’ clerk from the current 20 hours per week to 30, because the position requires more hours to complete the necessary work.

Assessors board member Tim Storrow asked the attendees to vote against passing over the article so the reasons behind the request could be fully heard.

Crochier responded that the selectboard had not been able to bring the matter to the personnel committee for a recommendation, and the selectboard, fin com, and board of assessors had deliberated through several meetings without coming to a decision on the issue.

“An increase from 20 to 30 hours may be the right number, or it might not be,” Crochier said. “I personally have not had a conversation with any of the assessors to determine how their numbers were come up with. Being able to do the due diligence ahead of time was not something I was able to do, so I could not support it.”

“Looking at other towns,” added Purington, “we had conflicting perceptions of what the hours should be.” Purington, who had held the clerk position himself in the past, said he did not doubt that it requires 30 hours, but also felt there

had not been enough time to fully examine the issue.

“The assessors respect the circumstances in which we all find ourselves with the pandemic,” replied Storrow. “We understand that it does take deliberation ... but I am not aware that the fin com has reached out to any board members in the last two years to understand what our budget issues or concerns were. By kicking the can down the road, we keep delaying these decisions.”

The article was passed over by a slim majority hand count vote of 19 ayes and 15 nays.

Article 9 was approved to transfer \$30,000 from the released overlay account for the cost of an appraisal, conducted every five years, of property owned by FirstLight, National Grid, the New England Power Company, and Eversource. \$5,000 will be added to the town audit account, and \$5,000 into the board of assessors’ revaluation account.

The voters also approved \$15,000 from unappropriated funds for building maintenance at the Slate Memorial library through **Article 10**, and another \$15,000 toward installation of air-source heat pumps at the town hall through **Article 11**.

“I want to give a shout out to the energy commission,” said selectboard member John Ward after the article was approved, “for yet another grant that they scored for the town that goes towards the heating system in the town hall.”

Article 12 was approved for \$13,738 into Gill’s other post-employment benefits fund, providing health insurance benefits for future town retirees.

Stabilization funds for energy (\$2,000), breathing apparatus and air packs for the fire department (\$15,000), and general stabilization (\$69,150) were approved through **Article 13**, and **Article 14** transferred \$60,000 from unappropriated funds to allow for for tax levy stabilization and tax rate reduction.



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SUZEE'S THIRD STREET LAUNDRY

TURNERS FALLS

MONTAGUE from page A1

replaced, along with the plates themselves. He went on to say that MassDOT had some extra plates “in their yard” that the agency was willing to give to the town, but that the contractor that fixes Bailey bridges may need to get under this one for repairs, which may require the lowering of water in the power canal.

The MassDOT official Bergeron discusses bridge issues with has a call into the company, but had not heard back as of the meeting. Bergeron said the water in the canal could perhaps be lowered soon by the FirstLight power company, which owns the canal and also uses the bridge.

For those interested in infrastructure, Bailey bridges were developed by a British Engineer named Tom Bailey for use during the Second World War. They were light and easily assembled, but strong enough to carry tanks. A Bailey bridge was featured in the 1977 war film *A Bridge Too Far*. Since the war, Bailey bridges have been widely used, partly because they can be moved and recycled.

The Sixth Street Bailey bridge was apparently obtained from MassDOT – Bergeron was unsure whether it had been purchased or donated – approximately 30 years ago as a “temporary” structure while the adjacent bridge across the canal was under repair. But those repairs were never completed, so the Bailey bridge became the main “Sixth Street bridge.”

The town now has two more closed bridges across the canal, next to one another, and only one point of access to the Patch: the Eleventh Street bridge. According to Bergeron, this bridge will not bear the weight of the Turners Falls Fire Department ladder truck. Town administrator Steve Ellis said that the Eleventh Street bridge had recently been downgraded by the state from a level “six” to a “five.” “When you get below a ‘four,’ that’s when you’re in real trouble” selectboard chair Rich Kuklewicz explained.

Bergeron said he had asked his MassDOT contact if the agency had any extra Bailey bridges “in their yard” they could give to the town. “He just gave me a funny look and did not answer the question,” Bergeron said.

Airport Urgency

The main topic of interest at the selectboard’s previous meeting on November 23 was a proposal by airport manager Brian Camden to purchase the property and buildings of a company called Pioneer Aviation, located adjacent to the airport itself.

Pioneer provides fuel for planes using the airport, flight training, and fueling and maintenance facilities. The property includes three lots, one of which is potentially open for development. Camden has expressed concern that if the property is sold to a non-aviation company, the airport as a whole will not longer be viable.

Camden said that the airport

commission, appointed by the selectboard, will lease the facility to its current management team and will use the revenues to pay for utilities, insurance, and “deferred maintenance.” He presented a spread sheet to the selectboard and finance committee showing that the revenues would be sufficient to pay added costs and eliminate the local tax share of the airport budget.

The selectboard and health director Daniel Wasiuk discussed plans for emergency dispensing sites when a COVID-19 vaccine becomes available.

As far as the purchase itself is concerned, Camden said that 90% of the cost would come from the Federal Aviation Administration, 5% from the state, and 5% from local sources. The purchase price is “not to exceed \$1.5 million,” he told the board.

Local borrowing would also be needed to cover the federal and state shares, which would be reimbursed to the town incrementally over a “six- to eight-year period.” The town’s share of the borrowing is included in the revised airport budget.

Negotiations leading to a purchase and sale agreement are waiting an appraisal of the facility, which should occur in the next few weeks. The purchase and borrowing are time-sensitive and need to be approved by Montague town meeting, a central reason for a special town meeting this winter.

Tax Split

The selectboard, assisted by the board of assessors and director of assessing Karen Tonelli, held a tax classification hearing to determine the “split” between the town’s residential and the higher commercial/industrial tax rate. After wading through a series of complex charts on various options, connected to the revenue needs for the current fiscal year’s budget, the selectboard voted to approve a “residential factor” of 0.8466.

This means that the residential tax rate will actually decline from \$17.57 to \$17.44 while the commercial industrial rate will increase by five cents to \$26.99.

Part of the reason for the lower residential rate, Ellis told the two boards, is that the town will leave a substantial gap this year between the total tax levy it will pass on to property owners and the “levy limit” required under the state law known as Proposition 2½.

Other Business

At the November 23 meeting, the board heard a lengthy presentation of a proposal from a cannabis company called Flower Power Growers, Inc. to build a facility in the industrial park (*see article, page A1*).

A proposal by town planner Walter Ramsey to extend a lease on the

Judd Wire parking lot on Sandy Lane, which is owned by the town, until April 1, 2021 was approved. Ramsey said Judd Wire will probably buy the lot, but the sale has been delayed by the pandemic.

The board approved the transfer of funds from the police “injured on duty” (111F) expenses budget to the town insurance fund, and approved a policy that after December the 111F expenses will be charged directly to the fund without approval of the selectboard.

The board also approved an extension of a contract with Sciaba Construction Company for reconstruction work on Spinner Park until June 1, 2021.

Ellis updated the board on the current status of the Franklin Regional Transit Authority maintenance facility currently planned to be located on Sandy Lane. A purchase and sale agreement between the authority and the town has been delayed by the need for a new design that conforms to lower funding levels available from state and federal governments.

The board approved a request by the Franklin County Sheriff’s Office to use the town hall annex shed for storage. The items to be stored include medical equipment for the disabled and elderly refurbished by inmates at the House of Correction.

On November 30, the board heard an update on the town’s efforts to poll town meeting members about their ability to participate in a winter special town meeting over Zoom or another online application. Ellis said town officials had decided to send out the “readiness assessment” by mail. So far town hall has received 16 responses, of which 14 said they had an internet connection that could handle such a meeting. He said that 11 of these respondents said they had participated in 20 or more Zoom meetings.

The board approved a request by town planner Walter Ramsey to approve a form for a modified corrective action design plan for capping the burn dump on Sandy Lane. The corrective action will be necessary because additional waste has been discovered outside the perimeter of the original design.

The capping is primarily being funded by the solar company Kearsarge, which plans to construct an array on the site, but the design itself will be funded by the town through town meeting appropriations already approved.

Ellis reported on a grant from the Massachusetts Interlocal Insurance Association that will fund “new chainsaw gear” – including helmets, chaps, gloves, vests, and a communication system – that “everyone ought to have.”

The board approved a new collective bargaining agreement with the United Electrical Workers, the union representing employees at the DPW and water pollution control facility.

They also approved a request by town treasurer Eileen Seymour to expand the hours of Tina Sulda to compensate for the impending retirement

MONTAGUE CONSERVATION COMMISSION NOTICE OF COMMISSIONER VACANCY

This volunteer body is responsible for administering the Wetlands and Riverfront Protection Act and also for facilitating the protection of open space in Montague. The ideal commissioner will have expertise in natural resources, engineering, or construction; however, applicants with other qualifications and from diverse backgrounds are also encouraged to participate. This volunteer board typically meets the second Thursdays of the month at 6:30 p.m.

Interested? Sit in on a monthly (ZOOM) meeting or talk with Conservation Agent Walter Ramsey to learn more about the position. 413 863 3200 x 122 or planner@montague-ma.gov.

PUBLIC NOTICE

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) hereby provides final notice of its decision to provide Pre-Disaster Mitigation program funding for an action located in a wetland. Funding would be provided through MA Emergency Management Agency to the Town of Montague to complete drainage improvements on Montague City Road and carry out a floodplain/stream restoration to mitigate flooding of the roadway. A map of the wetland areas is available upon request to Karen.ValeVasilev@fema.dhs.gov or (202) 699-0650.

The proposed action is located on and south of Montague City Road between Walnut Street and Turnpike Road. The project is to install two new catch basins, a drainpipe, and new berm. The adjacent stream and wetlands would be dredged of sediment and debris, connected to the original floodplain, and stabilized with plantings. Total wetland impact area is 30,180 SF. Vegetation and approximately 20 trees would be selectively cleared. A variety of erosion control measures would be used, and staging is expected to primarily occur along the roadside and shoulder of Montague City Road.

The project is within an area that contains forested, freshwater emergent, and riverine wetland habitats. Temporary disturbance caused by construction to ground, vegetation, and stream flow would be mitigated through a variety of Best Management Practices for erosion control. The restoration of the stream and adjacent wetlands will have beneficial impacts long-term.

The action is in a wetland to provide stream channel and wetland restoration and improve flood storage capacity. Five alternatives were considered, and the preferred alternative is a combination of the five: floodplain restoration, channel dredging and restoration, installing a new berm, installation of new drainage structures, and developing a long-term operational and maintenance plan.

This combination meets project objectives. Grant conditions will require compliance with all federal, state and local laws including permitting from U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and MA Department of Environmental Protection.

Comments about this project and wetland impacts are encouraged to be submitted within 15 days of the date of this publication to:

Eric Kuns, Senior Environmental Protection Specialist
Federal Emergency Management Agency, Boston, MA
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of a long-term employee. Seymour also commented on the work over the years of Cheryl Clark, who she said will be “sorely missed.” The selectboard informally agreed to send a “recognition certificate” to Clark for her service to the town.

Ellis and health director Daniel Wasiuk discussed plans for emergency dispensing sites when a COVID-19 vaccine becomes avail-

able. Ellis said that the emergency team dealing with pandemic issues has determined that the airport may be the best location for a drive-through dispensing site, with additional locations in a basement room of town hall and possibly the Turners Falls High School.

The next selectboard meeting will be held on December 7.



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POP UP from page A1

about a positive change in someone’s life. In the case of Doug Honeycutt and his newly established business, Reimagine Resale, it was the sudden halt to business as usual that prompted him to explore his creative interests and talents.

A retired service engineer who had traveled the globe in his work, Honeycutt relocated to Turners Falls two years ago. He had always wanted to own his own business, and had a lot of donations of furniture and odds and ends from family and friends. His original business concept was to create an indoor yard sale. He was about to open when all non-essential businesses were required to close.

With this sudden downtime, Honeycutt began to reimagine the business. He had always had a passion for woodworking, so he began to create some original pieces – furniture repaired and refinished in unique ways. In some cases he has refinished desks, cabinets, and tables with a *decoupage* process. Other pieces he has designed with a wood-graining tool that creates a dramatic look. Still others he paints in striking colors and designs, sometimes using metallic paint.

Not only does Honeycutt love what he is doing, but he is community-minded as well. He told the *Reporter* he is keeping prices low to ensure that his products are affordable. He would also like to offer a

space in his store for local artisans to display their work.

Reimagine Resale has now been open for three months. “If you are looking for something different,” says Honeycutt, “this is where you’ll find it!”

Look for Reimagine Resale on Facebook, or visit during store hours: Wednesdays through Saturdays, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., at 194 Millers Falls Road in Turners Falls.

Upper Valley Cabin and Cottage

If you’ve passed by Unity Skatepark in Turners Falls recently, you may have noticed a wooden shed-like structure being built behind Nova Motorcycles. The small-scale building is actually a tiny house, the first of many being created by Jody Shanabrook and Nevin Murray.

Shanabrook and Murray, two young carpenters, have been friends since they met in the seventh grade at Amherst Middle School. In those early years they were always down in the basement, says Shanabrook, building things and creating a variety of projects. They attended college and then both decided that they love building more than other career paths. As a result they began building standard homes and doing renovations for an area builder.

Recently, these young builders decided to create their own business, Upper Valley Cabin and Cottage. They are not looking to build large traditional homes, however. As Shanabrook points out, the pandemic has been devastating for many in terms of housing, causing a lot of people to be displaced. It seems that a lot of people are looking for housing alternatives right now, he says, so it seemed the timing was right to put their skills and vision to the test.

They plan to make a variety of modular cabins, travel trailers, vans, and other types of small-scale dwellings. The structures will be the kind of place that you can live in temporarily or permanently.

It is their passion to design small

enclosures because, as Murray explains, they are fun to work on and it’s a faster process from start to finish. They note that, because the price point is a lot lower, a small-scale house or structure can be more accessible to those who are not in a position to buy a standard-sized home.

The structure currently on view behind Nova Motorcycles, where they are temporarily renting space, will be for sale at \$60,000. It is 130 square feet with a 100 square foot loft, a gas cooking stove and heater, and electric hot water. It has a full bathroom with a toilet and sink, and a full kitchen with a soapstone sink. The tiny house also features a solarium and three huge windows, floor to ceiling in the front. They also offer options for off-grid solar panels and other eco-features.

To find out more, contact Upper Valley Cabin and Cottage on Instagram @uppervalleycc or email upcc.ma@gmail.com.

Rustic Romance

If you are looking for both inspiration and materials to take your holiday decor up a notch, Rustic Romance has what you need. The owner, Cindy Bayer, has transformed her popular barn sale business, previously based in Greenfield, into a more comfortable indoor shopping experience at 26 East Main Street in downtown Millers Falls.

Bayer is “bringing the magic to Millers Falls,” she says, because she wants people to be inspired and to know that they can create equally beautiful decor in their own home for holidays and during the whole year. The showroom is currently brimming with an amazing array of holiday-themed items, creating the kind of festive spirit that is a much needed uplift in these challenging times.

Bayer curates artful displays of elegant and whimsical vintage items arranged on numerous antique wooden mantels and table tops throughout the store. Every inch of space in the showroom is



Cindy Bayer sells festive holiday – and everyday – decor at her Millers Falls shop Rustic Romance.

filled with wooden and metal structures, antique signs, christmas tree decorations, pottery, and all manner of both delicate and rustic figurines. In need of a gnome to add to your holiday decor? Look no further!

Bayer points out that there is a continual flow of fresh merchandise for her store’s inventory from other antique dealers, wholesalers, and barn picks, as well as from her team of “pickers” who travel all around Pennsylvania and New Hampshire searching for treasures.

A sister store is also being opened across the street at 41 East Main in early January. It will be open twice monthly in a barn sale model, featuring more of what Bayer calls “rusty crusty” farm equipment and other pieces relished by crafters.

An active supporter of Big Brothers Big Sisters Franklin County, Bayer recently donated a fully-decorated, farm-style Christmas tree to the annual Yankee Candle Festival of Trees celebration, one of the many ways she contributes to this worthy cause.

Rustic Romance is open Thursdays and Sundays from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., and Fridays and Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. For more information, find “Rustic Romance at Bayer Farm” on Facebook.




Nevin Murray (left) and Jody Shanabrook (right) hope to provide small solutions to a growing housing problem with their new business, Upper Valley Cabin and Cottage.

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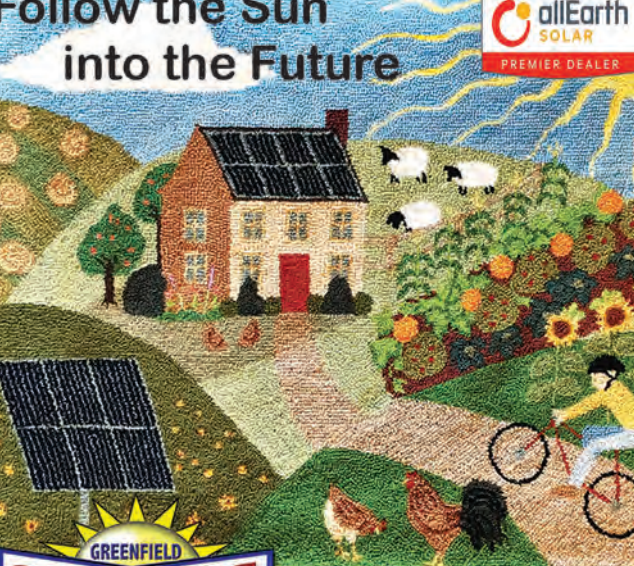
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Sunday's moonrise over the Northfield hills, as viewed from Apex Orchards in Shelburne, with Monadnock looming to the left.

ArtBeat

by Trish Crapo

Turning His Lens Back Home

GREENFIELD – Matthew Cavanaugh wants to take your picture. At the beginning of November, the Greenfield photographer moved to a new space in the old Newell Snow factory building right on the Green River at 2 Mead Street in Greenfield, and set up a studio where he's offering quick-and-easy nontraditional holiday portrait shoots.

The historic brick building was originally built as a sawmill in 1690. After hundreds of years of continued industrial use, it is now home to the Museum of Our Industrial Heritage, which celebrates our area's mills and factories through its collections, and a handful of artist studios like Cavanaugh's.

The building's industrial character, which includes long, double-hung windows designed to let in natural light before the advent of electricity and painted interior brick walls that hint at a palimpsest of previous uses, is perfect for the holiday portraits he likes to make.

"They're grittier," Cavanaugh says, comparing them to those you might get at other studios. "They're more industrial-looking."

Cavanaugh says the idea began a few seasons ago when he and fellow photographer JP Langlands rented a section of the top floor of the Hawks & Reed Performing Arts Center and offered family portraits as part of a building-wide holiday pop-up. People responded well to their photos' nontraditional look.



Matthew Cavanaugh's self-portrait in his new studio.

"We had people who said, 'We weren't going to do a family photo because we thought that might be cheesy. But then we saw your photos,'" explained Cavanaugh.

A variety of factors contribute to the final look of the images, including lighting, composition, and Cavanaugh's choice to process them as black and white. He composes his shots from far enough away to capture the character of the room, often including elements that would be intentionally hidden in a traditional photo shoot, such as the backdrop stands. He also avoids over-directing his clients.

"I'm not trying to force everybody to look at the camera and smile at the same time, to get that 'perfect' moment," Cavanaugh says. "If you've got a three-year-old who's jumping

around, sometimes it's better to just let that kid jump around and capture the energy of that."

The holiday sessions are short, no more than half an hour, including shooting and assessing the images. Because he tethers his camera to his computer, it's easy for clients to see how things are going, and to choose their favorite image at the end. The \$60 session fee includes one digital image, which Cavanaugh emails to you right then.

"So, it's basically done when you get home," he says. From there, you can upload the image to an online printing service or take it to a local store to make cards or prints.

DC Days

Cavanaugh and his wife, Nicole see **ARTBEAT** page B5

CHEFS STIR UP SOME ONLINE LOVE

By LEE WICKS

MONTAGUE CENTER – Looking for holiday gift ideas? Here's one that supports the Treehouse Foundation, local restaurants, and the love we demonstrate to friends and family through food. Stir Up Some Love is an online series of video cooking classes featuring



People's Pint owner Alden Booth during the filming of a Stir Up Some Love episode.

chefs from local restaurants. Subscribers can watch experts prepare some of their signature dishes, then follow a link to the recipes.

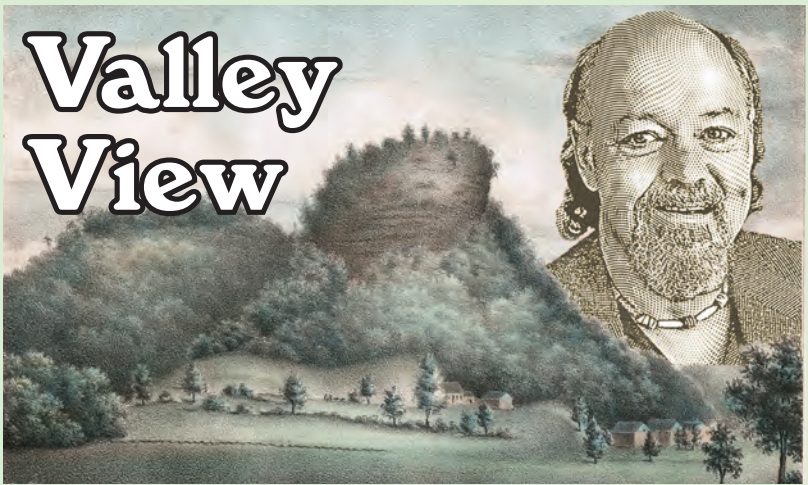
"Folks can nibble on them at their leisure," says Julie Kumble, director of strategic planning and development for the Treehouse Foundation, "or binge on a lot of them one after another."

The Easthampton-based Treehouse Foundation was created to serve children in foster care and their caregivers. Since 2006 more than 115 people, ranging in age from birth to 95 years old, have been living and playing at the Treehouse community. The name is inspired by childhood treehouses, and the vision of safety they create.

The children living at Treehouse far exceed national averages for high school graduation and college acceptance among kids in foster care, and a high percentage of these "fosters" become adoptions. To learn more about this intergenerational neighborhood community, go to www.treehousefoundation.net.

"Forty percent of the youth in foster care in Massachusetts live right here in western Mass, including

see **CHEFS** page B4



ORRA WHITE HITCHCOCK PRINT

By GARY SANDERSON

GREENFIELD – The deck is stacked against our ring-necked pheasants these days, when hunting for them has, unfortunately, become strictly a put and take game.

The beautiful, pen-raised gamebirds arrive at selected coverts open to hunting – mostly state-owned Wildlife Management Areas – crated four to a box in racks on the back of stocking trucks driven by MassWildlife personnel. These men and women follow weekly routes to release birds bought from private vendors into habitats that can support them. Few of them survive the six-week season. Those that do have little chance of seeing spring, even if they find their way to neighborhood birdfeeders bordering swamps, meadows and cropland.

The biggest problem pheasants face, other than shrinking habitats brought by development, is predators, which – with leghold trapping outlawed since 1996 and birds of prey under federal protection decades longer – have multiplied greatly since I was a South Deerfield boy. Back then, in the late 50s and early 60s, we had no coyotes or eagles and far fewer hawks, falcons, foxes, fishers and bobcats. I vividly recall spring pheasant broods feeding like barnyard fowl under our cherry tree fronting three tidy rows of peonies.

We looked forward to the annual visits of such adults and their broods before the field and wetland in the backyard became Frontier Regional School athletic fields and the agricultural fields to the south and west became South Deerfield Elementary School grounds, bordered on the south by cattail marsh and Bloody Brook. Of course, that was also before hens became fair game in the 1980s, before Route 5 & 10 was rerouted away from the center of town, and before Interstate 91 was built, cutting off a continuous mix of open farmland, fields, marsh, and woods extending uninterrupted to the base of the western hills. It was all great pheasant habitat that produced an annual crop of "native" birds.

The reason for the quotation marks around the word "native" is that, in fact, pheasants are not native to New England, or North America for that matter. The Asian game-

birds were instead "introduced" here in the late 19th century for hunters. Even the broods I remember were produced by holdover birds that had survived the hunting season and mated with protected surplus hens stocked annually by state-owned game farms to encourage "wild" brood production.

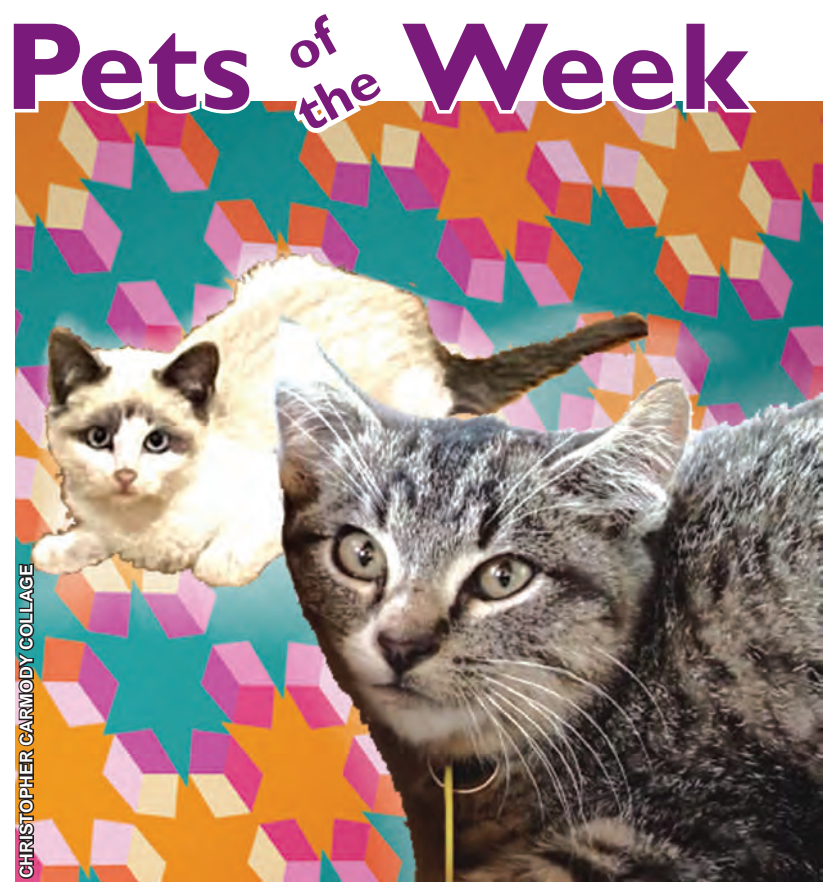
When pheasants came to Massachusetts during the Gilded Age, it was fashionable for men of status to hunt, own gundogs, hire trainers and game-keepers, and start and/or join trendy hunt and sporting clubs, where top-shelf bourbon and heroic sporting tales flowed freely over toasty fieldstone fireplaces.

Even that has changed dramatically today. Yes, there are still hunters and sportsmen's clubs, but today hunting, and especially put-and-take hunting, is largely viewed as barbaric and immoral, not at all cool, especially in effete academic communities like our Happy Valley, once the state's finest pheasant country. Development and 21st-century public perception has changed all that, not to mention the focus of outdoor writing.

Yeah, sure, hunting and fishing tales from the *Field & Stream* and *Outdoor Life* genre still sell in Alabama, Texas, and the Dakotas, but not here, and not in urban and suburban markets. The best outdoor writing these days is about nature and conservation and maybe even the hunter/gatherer cosmos of primitive man. *Orion* magazine is the gold standard, supplanting literary *Gray's Sporting Journal*. What it peddles is relevant and sells, not blow-by-blow accounts of gunners and archers downing a big buck or bear, or wing-shooters executing impossible shots on cackling pheasants flushed and retrieved from wet, thorny cover by gundogs of aristocratic pedigree. Once public-square fodder, those tales no longer suit the mainstream.

Something I learned many years ago, primarily from email interaction, itself relatively "new," is that the reading public prefers tales about the one that got away through guile, instinct, or pure coincidence. Readers are not interested, more likely disgusted, by accounts of hunting kills, such as a big buck shot through the heart and lungs and quickly bled out by a lethal, state-of-the-art broadhead.

see **VALLEY VIEW** page B5



“WINTERBERRY & CORNCOB”

Winterberry and Corncob are best friends. Their love for each other is something only twins could relate to; when separated they will cry out for each other. These beautiful boys are spirit-like and leery of human interaction. They need help with socialization in a home that is calm, quiet, and patient, but more so persistent. With time and a lot of love, these boys may come around and enjoy the company of their humans.

While they have yet to learn to

trust humans, they are very comfortable around other adult felines, and their interest is immediately taken when a cat comes into their space, so adult resident cats may be ideal in the social growth of these kittens.

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.



By LESLIE BROWN

MONTAGUE CITY – After a night of the full moon, the end of November arrives with bright sun and clear skies after several gray gloomy days more typical of the month. The turkey carcass simmers in a pot of chicken broth with vegetables and seasonings: soup to come. We bought a smallish turkey from Diemand Farm in Wendell. Three of us had dinner and sent leftovers home with Ken’s brother Jack, our one guest.

We learned from the Diemand family that they typically travel to Canada for turkey poults, or babies, several times through the summer, but that this year trips to Canada were difficult in part from customs procedures and that they ended up buying some poults in Massachusetts instead.

We are happy to report our turkey was both tender and moist, and from the scents in the kitchen, our soup will be delicious as well.

This season is a strange one. What has always been a family holiday will not be so this year. Before we went to Maine this past August we got tested for the Covid virus. Our tests were negative. And no one asked to see our results.

Now New York has much more stringent requirements, so for Christmas we will not see my

THE GARDENER’S COMPANION November Surprises

nephew and his partner, and my sister’s family will not be here as expected. Ken’s brother likely will come up from Warwick, as he did at Thanksgiving. We are all staying in touch by phone nonetheless.

Soon we will cut a Christmas tree and put it up in the sunroom, leaving the lights on well after dark for cheer. We will still hang up stockings for Santa to fill with small gift surprises, including one for the cat.

What is exciting now is planning for Christmas giving. I don’t mind working from someone’s gift list, but it’s more fun to find gifts that will be a pleasurable surprise. There is no lack of gift options. Today we received no less than nine catalogues filled with possible gifts to buy. It’s not that we do all that much shopping in this household. Six catalogues are from places I never heard of.

We find ourselves missing the store we refer to as Auntie Wilson’s. We are not mall hounds; in fact, I try hard never to go there. But if you needed a decent gift and one that could be exchanged, Auntie Wilson’s was your store for man, woman, and child, never mind special-occasion presents.

Now I send my nieces, nephews, and their partners gift cards and leave it to them to pick what they want. Makes many happy, I suppose.

My sister and I remember the pleasure of the Christmas stockings we woke to find on our beds on Christmas mornings. These were filled with small items, all wrapped up. What fun to open all of these surprises: small bottles of perfume, books, jewelry, games and toys,

and in the stocking’s toe, a cookie and an orange.

At our house, the tradition continues even as the contents change. These small, unexpected tidbits are more fun than all the socks, sweaters, writing paper, big books, etc. which line the floor under the Christmas tree.

Then there are the checks sent to our favorite local charities like Warm the Children. These warm our hearts more than any gift can. Many of us have all we need and more. To keep that warm Christmas feeling, plan to donate time to a local charity, provide a gift for a charitable group that reaches out to those in need, or make a donation to a worthy cause or to service programs connected with groups you know.

Think about folks you know who have lost family members this year, and reach out to them with a gift of food or such.

Peruse the seed catalogues which begin now to arrive in the mail. Don’t grow just the things you love to eat, but some of those that are popular in the farmer’s market. Leave a bag full out at the edge of the street or at the food bank or on your neighbor’s driveway. If Santa gives you gifts you will never use or need, give them to your local thrift shop or Salvation Army store. These gifts will make you feel like Santa and help those in need.

For some, Christmas is a blessed, holy time. For others, it holds special meanings derived from their own beliefs or traditions. Make what you will of it, and especially in these contentious times, and reach out to others with support and love.

Senior Center Activities DECEMBER 7 THROUGH 11

GILL and MONTAGUE

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

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

ERVING

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

“All programs are canceled or postponed. With that said, I will be here or at least checking my messages daily. I want anyone to call me and leave a message if they have any questions or concerns regarding food or other services. I

will call them back and if we can help with services of any kind we will do so. I am working with other agencies so we can be sure to keep our seniors healthy & safe.”

Paula can be reached at at (413) 423-3649 or paula-betters@erving-ma.gov.

LEVERETT

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

WENDELL

Wendell senior activities have been canceled. The Wendell Senior Center is closed. The Senior Health Rides program is also suspended until advisories change. For more information, call Nancy Spittle at (978) 544-6760.

Local Supermarket Senior Accommodations

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

— LOOKING BACK: 10 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK —

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

Mill Redevelopment?

Pigeons divebombed the consultants from the Urban Land Institute who climbed the handsomely beveled wooden steps to the fifth floor of the Strathmore Mill on Wednesday. Loose panes of glass rattled in decaying sash; tatters of old plastic sheeting blew in the wind in vacant window frames. The visitors stepped around piles of guano, and waste matter left behind by larger intruders.

“You have squatters here?” one man asked, and town officials on the tour admitted that was a possibility.

Holes gape in some ceilings; piles of specious debris and rotten framing material huddle in random corners; sheets of plywood and yellow warning tape ward passers-by from voids that yawn at unexpected intervals in the scarred old hardwood floors.

“Structurally, the buildings are pretty good,” said Northampton architect Tris Metcalfe cheerily.

Metcalfe knows the strength of the mill’s massive underpinnings, brick arches, pillared floors, and supporting beams intimately, after working up plans for converting the mill to a video school and production center with myriad associated restaurants and nightclubs for previ-

ous mill owner John Ancil.

The town became the owner of the complex – asbestos arson pile and all – earlier this year, when Ancil failed to make required security upgrades or property tax payments on the property.

Now, with the real estate market at the bottom of a trough, and demand for empty mill buildings with difficult access issues at a seeming lull, the town – which has already invested more than \$300,000 in securing the Strathmore, upgrading the sprinkler system, and replacing the fire damaged roof on Building #1 – is searching for the answer to the pressing question of what to do with the old mill.

Health Board Rejects Request

A bid for simple living just got more complicated on Tuesday, when the Wendell board of health voted unanimously not to sign the building permit for Jonathan and Susan von Ranson’s proposed “simple living” non-electric, low-carbon footprint apartment.

On November 9 county health agent Elizabeth Swedberg had provided Code of Massachusetts citations regarding the need for electricity and running water, while the von

Ransons presented a letter detailing how they would provide the necessities of potable water, hot water, lighting, and safe sanitation.

As well as voting not to sign the building permit, the board also voted not to allow an increase in flows for the property’s septic system.

Parking Tickets Hiked

On November 29 Montague chief of police Ray Zukowski recommended, and the selectboard approved, increasing parking fines by 100% for small infractions and 20% for more serious parking infractions. The change from the old rate of \$10 for minor violations – like failing to move your car off the street between 1 a.m. and 5 a.m. during snow removal season – to the new rate of \$20 went into effect December 1. More serious parking violations will cost you \$50 now, instead of the old rate of \$40.

Zukowski told the selectboard every three to four years his department needs to order new tickets, and currently there are only 100 parking tickets left at the old rates. So, Zukowski proposed taking this opportunity – at the beginning of the annual on street parking ban – to increase the fines and order new tickets.



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Schools Hold Food Drive

MONTAGUE – The Gill-Montague Regional school district is holding its fifth annual food drive over the next few weeks. Each of the district schools is collecting non-perishable food items for the Montague Catholic Social Ministries Food Pantry, and they need your help!

Most needed items include canned vegetables, soups, and proteins, as well as staples such as peanut butter and jelly, cereal, oatmeal, instant potatoes, rice, pasta and sauce, juice, and snacks.

To contribute, you may deliver items to the drop boxes in front of

the schools. Find them at:

Turners Falls High School/Great Falls Middle School, 222 Turnpike Road, Turners Falls;

Sheffield Elementary School, 35 Crocker Avenue, Turners Falls;

Hillcrest Elementary School, 30 Griswold Street, Turners Falls;

Gill Elementary School, 48 Boyle Road, Gill.

The Food Drive ends on December 17 and the drop boxes are available from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., Mondays through Fridays, at those locations.

Please help support this local food pantry, which is in dire need of donations.



Montague Community Television News

We'll Edit Your Videos!

By MICHAEL SMITH

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

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

staff editors, or you can try it at home!

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

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



REVIEW

GCTV's Lights! Camera! Greenfield! Competition

By MELISSA WLOSTOSKI

GREENFIELD – The Greenfield Community TV station has a film competition to its name called Lights! Camera! Greenfield! I have reviewed tons of concerts, music festivals, and theater performances. I decided it would be cool to review a showing of the winners' films that the Greenfield Garden Cinema had on October 31. The executive director of GCTV, Nick Ring, said "It's the second year it's been done, and we plan to do it annually."

The films that played were all short films. "Each team had several props that were drawn from a list that's incorporated into the film," Ring explained.

The first film I saw was called *Fall of Candymaker*, which didn't really make sense to me at first. Then it was shown it was basically someone creating a film, and then getting someone's opinion on it who was watching it at the time.

The Following of the Flamingo was what the second was called. I know the prop guideline was involved with the making of the films, but this use of what objects they had to work with didn't seem to be very good.

The Whistle of the Hobo was the name of the third one. It seemed to involve a day in the life of a hobo. At least that's how I saw it. An interesting idea for a film!

Blocked was the next one. It in-

involved writer's block or someone having it. He tries to write, and his idea is literally being shown happening as part of the film. It does a decent job of showing the way writer's block is supposed to look.

Pumpkinhead was another one, and I just didn't get it at all, what was going on in the film. What was the plot? *Box Chocolate Mash Oscillate* was another. It seemed to resemble a music video, or a video you would find on YouTube. Which is not a bad thing – but it's not exactly a "short film," to me. I recognized the guy behind it, and in it, as someone I know volunteers at GCTV.

A fair thought for this competition, with what they had to work with for the film, is that some of the films did a better job than others. That is what I have to say about the films in general. The *Blocked* one was my favorite. I am a writer, so I know what writer's block feels like! *Fall of Candymaker* is next when it comes to how I would rate my favorites in order. *Box Chocolate Mash Oscillate*, the hobo one, and the rest I didn't care for at all, so they are low on my list.



HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MONTAGUE POLICE LOG

Road Rage; Idling Train; Lenny Seekers; Divided Deer; Anxiety; Drumming; Cat Walker; Trash Griller; Hydrant; Desecration; Carcass; Racist Threats; Bridge Ramming

Monday, 11/16

7:16 a.m. First of five reports of trees and wires down around town.

11:40 a.m. Report of crew working on Meadow Road without detail. Crew advised and will be moving their equipment.

6:02 p.m. Caller would like it on record that she just received a scam call from a number that showed MPD as the caller ID.

Tuesday, 11/17

8:22 a.m. State police received call from motorist reporting road rage incident on Montague Street; may still be in progress. Made contact with caller and confirmed no longer in progress; ended 15 or 20 minutes ago. Incident of tailgating/speeding/etc. began on Route 91, caller got off at Exit 24 and ended up behind the vehicle in Turners Falls. Last seen on Montague Street. Units advised.

10:50 a.m. Caller reports encountering a man walking his dog on a leash on L Street; the man told the caller not to walk behind his dog or the dog would bite him. Referred caller to animal control officer; ACO will be following up.

11:06 a.m. 911 call; female stated address into phone; male in background heard saying "My mother is coming," then line disconnected. Multiple calls back attempted; no answer. Upon arrival, parties refused assistance.

4:39 p.m. Caller from Craig Avenue would like it on record that there has been a train idling for 24 hours outside his home. Train is loud and puts out a lot of pollution.

Wednesday, 11/18

6:55 a.m. Caller reporting a grey Lincoln Continental that has been parked on G Street since the spring. Advises bumper is missing and license plate is tied on. No info on party in house. RMV address is the Red Roof Inn in Greenfield. Referred to an officer.

4:53 p.m. Caller from Fifth Street states that two men were pounding on her front door and screaming for someone named "Lenny." They went around to the back of the house and tried to force their way in. Caller partially opened door to say that no one named Lenny lives there. Caller was able to close and lock door. Both men seemed intoxicated and appeared to be in their late 30s to 40s; left in dark-colored Subaru with New Hampshire plates. Advised caller to call 911 if vehicle returns.

6:39 p.m. Caller states that he heard a "crash" on L Street. When he came outside, he saw a white vehicle had been struck and

its bumper was on the ground now. Caller did not see the other involved vehicle. Officer requesting Greenfield PD be advised to be on lookout for other involved vehicle, a UHaul box truck.

Thursday, 11/19

11:11 a.m. Officer stopping a UHaul truck that matches description of a hit-and-run yesterday. Truck has no damage; no way to tell if it was involved or not.

12:54 p.m. Caller states that someone has dumped a mattress in the back of the Springdale Cemetery. DPW notified.

1:01 p.m. Walk-in would like to speak to an officer about the rules re: mask-wearing. Advised of options.

4:40 p.m. Report of fire in pellet stove exhaust pipe on Turner Street. Shelburne Control conferred; TFFD advised.

5:52 p.m. Call transferred by Shelburne Control. Report of car vs. deer on Turners Falls Road. Caller states she is uninjured and that she believes she saw the deer divide into pieces on impact. Report taken.

8:23 p.m. Caller states his son is acting belligerent and fighting with him about marijuana. Could hear son in background stating that he has anxiety and would just like to be given marijuana to help it. Units advised. Situation mediated; parties advised of options.

Friday, 11/20

8:18 a.m. Officer flagged down about needle lying on side of road near Judd Wire. Needle recovered.

Saturday, 11/21

11:09 a.m. Two-vehicle accident on Millers Falls Road near 253 Pharmacy. No smoke or airbag deployment. One vehicle leaking fluids. PD and TFFD sent. Third caller advising one vehicle has airbag deployment. TFFD updated; AMR started as precaution.

2:36 p.m. Caller requesting options re: her landlord's son disposing of some of her belongings that were in the garage. Caller recovered the items from the dumpster on site. Advised of options.

8:04 p.m. Report of tires screeching for the past ten minutes in the area of Food City. Could hear tires screeching in background while on line with caller. Erving PD officer states he took a report of the same thing, possibly from the area of Riverside Drive, and will be responding. MPD officers observed Food City area for about ten minutes; all was quiet.

10:03 p.m. Officer report-

ing smoke and smell of burning plastic in Avenue A area. TFFD advised.

Sunday, 11/22

12:03 a.m. Caller states that a loud party with drumming has been going on for hours on Thirteenth Street and there seem to be a lot of people around. Officer advises fairly quiet on arrival; no drums, but parties were advised of the complaint.

11:59 a.m. Caller advises someone dumped a couch at the river's edge off Newton Street; requests officers keep an eye out on patrol in case someone dumps again.

7:23 p.m. Report of dog barking outside on Grove Street for approximately five hours. Caller states this is an ongoing issue that has previously been brought to the ACO's attention as well as MPD. Officer reports residence was quiet upon arrival, but the dog started barking as he approached the home. Advised homeowners of complaint; they will bring the dog in for the night.

9:59 p.m. Caller states that she hit a deer in Erving and was able to drive her vehicle away; states she is now on Route 63 and that the vehicle started smoking and is no longer driveable. Caller states she is with her eight-year-old granddaughter; both are uninjured and out of vehicle. MPD units and Shelburne Control advised. Report taken.

Monday, 11/23

3:52 p.m. Caller from Grant Street states that he was walking his dog when another dog came running out of its yard and across the street and started attacking him and his dog. Caller states that his hand is injured and bleeding and he is taking himself to the hospital; will call when he returns to speak with an officer. Message left for ACO.

5:01 p.m. Caller states that a male in shorts and a t-shirt walked through his yard up into the Plains carrying something black; seemed strange because it's dark out and too cold for shorts. Officer spoke to male party, who advised that he was just walking his cat and found the trail into the Plains through an app.

8:14 p.m. Store customer requesting that Cumberland Farms employee call the police and have them respond so she can report an incident that happened with another customer in the store; wanted it on record that a car parked next to hers hit her car with their door and did very little damage.

8:16 p.m. Caller advising

that he keeps getting calls from a wrong number and doesn't know what to do about it. Advised caller to block number.

8:53 p.m. Caller from L Street states that the neighbor is burning trash in a grill and the smell is very bad. FD responding.

Tuesday, 11/24

12:05 p.m. 911 hangup call from tech school; caller repeatedly stated "oh my God" but did not respond to dispatch, then line disconnected. School resource officer advises all set, no problems.

4:40 p.m. Deputy from Carroll County, NH sheriff's department requesting MPD check address of vehicle that has been sitting in the woods up there for about 10 days. Vehicle comes back to resident in Montague Center. Caller made contact with involved male; he is camping in the woods up there. No issues.

5:04 p.m. 911 caller states that a tractor-trailer unit may have taken out a fire hydrant near the railroad tracks by East Main Street. TT unit heading west on Millers Falls Road. Fire hydrant on ground near tracks; no water flowing from it. Water Department will be notified.

Thursday, 11/26

7:35 p.m. Report of large bird sitting in middle of Turners Falls Road. Caller unsure if bird is injured but states it is alive. Unsure what kind of bird it is. Units advised. Unable to locate.

Friday, 11/27

6:18 a.m. Caller from Bulkley Street states that her car was broken into overnight and she is missing her purse. Caller states that she has to be at work at 7 a.m. and doesn't know what to do. Caller called back advising that when she called her bank to cancel one of her cards, she discovered an unauthorized charge. Caller will be going to bank after work and will bring paperwork to MPD.

6:39 a.m. Assistant manager at FL Roberts reports that a car broke down at one of the pumps, was pushed into a spot, and has been left there for four days now; wondering if there is anything MPD can do to help them get it moved. Ran plate; officer will contact owner and see what is going on.

8:58 a.m. Caller from Turners Falls Road reporting illegal dumping at his rental property. Advised of options.

2:53 p.m. Report of stolen package on Central Street. Advised of options.

3:39 p.m. Caller states that

see MPD page B4

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MPD from page B3

he just arrived at Our Lady of Czestochowa to set up for mass, and it appears that somebody has smeared feces all over the statue of Mary. Report taken.

6:46 p.m. Anonymous report of deer carcass in bike path area off Depot Street. Caller states it appears that somebody took the meat and antlers from the animal and dumped the carcass. Environmental Police advised.

7:59 p.m. A 27-year-old Palmer man was arrested on a straight warrant.

9:13 p.m. Greenfield PD requesting MPD officer check Turners Falls Road location for any signs of an accident. GPD states male party heard the crash and followed the involved vehicle to Federal Street in Greenfield, where it is now on fire. Officer located guard rail damage in area. Summons issued for leaving the scene of property damage and

marked lanes violation.

Saturday, 11/28

12:10 p.m. Caller from East Main Street states that a male was following a customer and being vulgar toward them this morning. Caller plans to speak to landlord and see if issue can be addressed that way, rather than with police. Advised of options.

4:31 p.m. Caller from Turners Falls Road would like it on record that one of the tenants in his apartment complex has been threatening him and his family. Caller states male uses racial slurs and threatens to tie them up and lock them in the basement. Caller has already informed landlord of incidents and is not requesting police response at this time. Advised caller to call while incidents are occurring so that an officer can respond. Caller also requesting to speak with officer about new cameras put up by the landlord without issuing a new contract to tenants.

Advised of options.

8:44 p.m. 911 call reporting domestic assault. Peace restored.

8:59 p.m. Report of five-car accident at General Pierce Bridge; caller states a car ran the red light and hit the car in front of her head-on. Caller's car involved as well. No injuries reported for either vehicle. Caller states car that caused accident is attempting to ram the involved vehicles now. Involved vehicle then took off toward Turners Falls on Montague City Road. MPD units on another call. Greenfield PD reports they are off with the vehicle that caused the accident at Avenue A and Fourth Street. MSP responding. MPD officers responding to bridge and to Avenue A and Fourth.

Sunday, 11/29

4:12 p.m. Off-duty officer reporting vandalism to a tarp covering a boat on Hillside Road. Investigated.



ILLUSTRATION BY KRIS

CHEFS from page B1

Franklin County,” Kumble says. “That number really surprised me. Treehouse started a new program in Franklin County right at the beginning of the pandemic to serve youth and young adults who’ve experienced foster care. It’s all virtual at the moment. Youth 14 to 24 from Franklin County are eligible, and we’re excited to be serving Turners Falls and Greenfield!”

This year, the Foundation could not host its usual in-person fundraisers due to COVID-19, and restaurants have also been struggling, especially during months of lockdown. Kumble and the development staff at Treehouse brainstormed alternative fundraising strategies and came up with Stir Up Some Love. Love for food and community infuses the effort.

“Remember,” says Kumble,

“when you go to a restaurant, you’re supporting all the people who work there – chef, waitstaff, prep, cleaners – and the farmers who supply the local food. Every single chef participating in Stir Up Some Love says that locally-grown food from our amazing farmland is absolutely unique and special to the Pioneer Valley, and some have moved here from major cities because of the land, the food, and the people. It’s important to us to support restaurants as they struggle to stay open and keep their staff employed during COVID.”

The proceeds from this fundraiser will be split fifty-fifty between the Treehouse Foundation in Easthampton and the restaurants involved, though some chefs have insisted that Treehouse keep 100% of the proceeds for their episode.

The program began in September, and the last episode of Season One

airs on December 23, but it’s not too late to sign up. All episodes remain live on the website indefinitely, so there’s no expiration date. Once someone buys an episode, multiple episodes, or the full season, they can view it any time, and multiple times, and they get a downloadable recipe with each episode. All fifteen lessons cost \$275, but individual episodes are \$20 each for those who do not want to subscribe to the entire series. Go to www.stirupsome-love.com to see all the offerings, and sign up if you choose to do so.

In 10- to 15-minute segments, subscribers can learn to make *salsa verde* with chicken and rice or pan-fried hake with creamed corn, to name just a few dishes. “Diversity was our main priority,” Kumble says. “We wanted to achieve a geographic representation of the Valley, a sampling of ethnic cuisine, and we wanted to feature both veteran chefs and new restaurants.

“We feature a new food truck owner specializing in Puerto Rican fare, a baker, and many, many others... We went for breadth this season! One of our episodes features food justice activist Neftali Durán, who offers his episode in Spanish and English.”

Emily Monosson from Montague Center says she learned the proper way to chop vegetables from one chef, and the Ashfield Lake House eggplant sandwich has become a family favorite. She loves the work the Treehouse Foundation is doing and welcomes an opportunity to support it.

On a rainy Sunday afternoon, Eileen Mariani, also from Montague Center, was making focaccia. The video advised her to let the dough rise in the oven, if the oven had a light inside. Just that little bit of constant warmth, especially on a cool day, would guarantee success. She’s an accomplished cook but appreciates that advice, and she also welcomes ways to support Treehouse.

A year ago, Eileen and her husband Paul Mariani attended a breakfast where adults and children from the program told their stories. The Treehouse mission resonated with Eileen. As she is a lifelong elementary school educator, children’s welfare has always been close to her heart. She was impressed by the Treehouse success stories and became a donor. This year she made her donation by subscribing to all 15 cooking shows, which she describes as well-produced, entertaining, and easy to access – a real plus for those who’ve struggled to master Zoom meetings in the last ten months.

Mariani also notes that the chefs are extremely engaging, and that all place an emphasis on healthy eating and fresh local ingredients. “These videos would make an excellent gift for anyone who cares about food and social justice,” she adds.



A cake from Small Oven Bakery.

Adrienne LaPierre, who lives in Montague Center, agrees. “I love that Treehouse supports children, elders, and families to build community together,” she says. “Everyone needs to feel that they have roots – that sense of connection and belonging to one another is absolutely essential, and the Treehouse model really grows out of that understanding.”

Kumble says the response to Stir Up Some Love has been amazing; about 230 people have subscribed so far. “We’re hopeful that we’ll make up the shortfall of our usual in-person fundraisers and help the restaurants,” she says. “Even when people can start dining out again, restaurants are going to need our help, and this is one way to do that. Who knows, after the pandemic we may continue with some innovative online fundraisers like this.”

She hints at another season. It certainly looks like a win-win proposition.



Above: Dre Rawlings, owner-chef at the Ashfield Lake House, shares some recipes on Stir Up Some Love. Below: Ashley Arthur, owner and chef at the Five Eyed Fox in Turners Falls, is another of the chefs featured on the series.

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VALLEY VIEW from page B1

The story I am about to share fits this preferred mold. It’s about a cock pheasant that had over a few short weeks learned to survive hunters against stiff odds in the mixed wetland into which he was stocked. Far more likely to occur late in the season, this long-tailed rooster had learned to elude gundogs and hunters. It can happen.

Most of the pheasant-hunting pressure in the Valley has been intentionally redirected over the past 20 or 30 years from private land to the aforementioned Wildlife-Management Areas, places like Bennett Meadow and Pauchaug Brook in Northfield, Poland Brook in Conway, Montague Plains, and Leyden. Most of these coverts are stocked at least twice a week, with some getting a daily dose that draw overflow crowds – not my cup of tea.

The thorny, viny covert I most often hunt, a mix of alder swamp and overgrown dairy pasture and hayfield, is deeply stained with my family DNA. I have hunted it for nearly 50 years and know it top to bottom. Since the state bought it some 20 years ago – setting off a flurry of subsequent purchases bringing the total to nearly 500 acres today – the surrounding hayfields have grown in, doubling or maybe even tripling the prime pheasant habitat. So, yes, stocked birds have a chance and can offer challenging hunts in difficult cover that presents many screens and obstacles obstructing sight lines.

When young, I could pick my way through the deep, dense alder swamp along the southern perimeter. Today, that swamp is impenetrable due to ever-increasing beaver activity that brings pockets of deep water and thick, thorny undergrowth. For birds and beasts, however, this alder jungle that once lured many a migratory woodcock flock is a place of refuge, where they can escape from humans but not furry predators. That even goes for farm-raised pheasants that soon discover escape routes to and feeding zones within the safe haven. Once they’re acclimated to the habitat, the stocked birds flush into the swamp to escape hunters and fly in and out

of it to feed on seeds, berries, and grasses. The longer they survive, learning to flee the sounds of human voices and whistles and dog bells, the better at escaping they become.

So, there we were, two of us, hunting over Sunrise Rex, a 15-month-old dynamo of a springer spaniel owned by a field-trialer friend who allows me to hunt the dog when he’s working. After my gundog, Chubby, died suddenly and tragically on the final day of the 2019 pheasant season, I figured I was in for a couple of lean years. Not so. As it turns out, I now had young Rex at my disposal and, miraculously, my Fall routine didn’t seem to skip a beat. Incredible... unexpected.

Young Rex was there, tagging along as a three-month-old pup on Chubby’s final few hunts last year, displaying great desire and athleticism. Now he has grown tall and lean to rapidly and admirably fill the void left by Chub-Chub, which is saying something. Replacing that veteran gundog, who, by the way, carried not an ounce of fat despite his name, was no mean feat. Chubby was essentially a flawless flush-and-retrieve gun dog with indomitable spirit, a superior nose, and extraordinary agility and stamina. He went through tough covers aggressively and effortlessly, never seeming to tire. Rexxie, a big, athletic dynamo, is cut from similar Sunrise Kennels cloth, and shows the same attributes, right down to impossible blind retrieves that can be quite shocking.

On this particular late-afternoon hunt, we had pounded about half the covert without a flush and it was beginning to feel like one of those rare outings without so much as a wild flush. Yeah, yeah, Rexxie lit up a few times and went into his telltale hops through high cover that often portends a loud flush. But he had flushed nothing in productive cover he knew well.

Then, from afar, I heard the familiar call of a cock pheasant emanating from the direction of the impenetrable alder swamp. Unable to pinpoint more than the general direction from which it came, I decided to give it a whirl and cut across high cover to get closer. There, I thought, Rexxie may get



The common pheasant (*Phasianus colchicus*).

enticed into an enthusiastic search mission that’s always fun to watch.

But no, despite hunting aggressively and penetrating some 40 yards back into the swamp’s edge, the pheasant went silent and Rexxie flushed nothing. The bird must have heard us approaching and wisely shut up.

Oh well, time to circle back to the truck and call it a day. Who knew? Maybe we’d bump into a bird on the way out.

After walking maybe 50 yards in the direction of my buddy, I heard a flushing cackle from deep in the swamp that caught my attention. I turned to look and soon caught a cock pheasant angling away from us across the field toward my truck. Hmmm? How about that?

I marked the landing near a young oak wearing its rust-colored leaves and told my buddy to circle into position before I worked Rex toward him. He did so, taking maybe five minutes to get into a familiar spot with many shooting lanes where he’d stood many times before. It helps to know a covert.

When I got to within 50 or 60 yards of my buddy, Rexxie hunting between us, the dog caught fresh scent, came to a screeching halt, changed direction, and went into what I call his high-RPM mode: red hot. He thought the wind-washed rooster was near, and it’s never wise to doubt him. He circled the same spot two or three times, hopping several times and widening the arc as he searched. Finally, he lit up on a path created by hunters and raced down it toward the back corner of the small alder patch we were hunting.

Uh-oh, I thought, a runner.

I quickly backtracked 35 yards to the north-

east corner of the alders and took a stand in a familiar spot from which I could see out over dense cattails bordering the big, impenetrable alder swamp. I would have liked to position myself closer to the cattails about 40 yards south but didn’t think I had time. So, I got into position where many shooting lanes were available and rolled the dice. Rexxie’s animation told me that a flushing cackle was near. I liked my chances where I stood.

I soon heard the flush, shouldered my shotgun, and never had a freakin’ chance. The rooster flushed straightaway over the cattails and into the alder refuge. Maybe dumb luck, the bird took its only escape route. Neither of us had a shot.

The rooster had won the game. Acclimated to the covert and the sounds of pursuing hunters, he’d recognized danger, fled afoot, flushed and escaped to see another day.

“How many times do you think that bird’s been flushed?” I asked my buddy after reuniting and hunting back to the truck.

“Plenty,” he answered, “and we may yet flush him again.”

Very true.

To be honest, I don’t often give stocked pheasants much credit for intelligence. This was an exception. That rooster had outmaneuvered a great young gundog and two experienced wing-shooters who knew the escape routes and shooting lanes.

Within sight of my truck, I heard a distant squawk, turned, and noticed a red-tailed or sharp-shinned hawk perched high in an old, deeply furrowed poplar tree overlooking the impenetrable alder swamp to which our pheasant had escaped. That can be a problem. Both hawks prey on pheasants when the find them out in the open. So, even when they learn to evade human hunters, pheasants are never safe from furry and feathery predators.

Thus, the chances that the pheasant which escaped us will see spring is slim indeed. Like I said before: the cards are stacked against them in what has become strictly a put-and-take game.



ARTBEAT from page B1

Letourneau, met when she was a staff reporter for the *Springfield News*, and he was a freelance photographer. They moved to Washington, DC in 2002, when Letourneau got a job as press secretary to Congressman John Olver.

“Over time, I started getting freelance assignments and learning how

things worked in Washington,” Cavanaugh says. “The other photographers were incredibly friendly and welcoming to me, which I didn’t expect. I didn’t know if it would be winner-take-all. But there were so many talented photographers there who really knew the drill, and I found that if I would just ask for help from someone I recognized

from a previous assignment, they would show me around.”

Cavanaugh spent six years working in the White House press corps, covering elections, inaugurations, and traveling overseas on Air Force One with presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama.

“It was a fascinating and thrilling job,” he says.

A scroll through the “political/editorial” gallery on his website reveals images of, among other important figures, Obama, Sarah Palin, Hillary Clinton, and the Queen of England.

“The Queen has a very impressive entourage,” Cavanaugh says with a laugh. “It puts the President of the United States in perspective. The number of people that move heaven and earth to create her schedule!”

As for the historical importance of the work, Cavanaugh says, “You kind of take it all in later. If you stop to think about the historical importance of what you’re doing, then you’re not doing your job. You can’t pay attention to the words of a speech, for instance. You have to watch for the visuals.”

Asked for a photo of his DC days, Cavanaugh offered this one of George W. Bush, with the following story:

“It was a somewhat routine assignment at the White House. The Bush administration was announcing a foreign aid package that would help African nations fight malaria. The event included a performance by this dance company. It wasn’t expected to be a headline grabbing event. The President and the First Lady normally sit in the front row during the performance,



US President George W. Bush dances with the Kankouran African Dance Company during an event in the White House Rose Garden on April 25, 2007.

thank them when it’s over and that’s that.

“But after the last song, the President got up on stage to thank them and they surprised him by starting to play another song and asking him to dance with them. He looked at the audience and shrugged with a smile, as if to say, ‘I guess I have to dance!’ He was always very appreciative and kind to visitors and a good sport too. He started dancing and the photographers like me were very happy because we knew right away that the photos would get published. It went from a Page 17 photo to a Page 1 photo instantly.”

Bringing It All Back Home

Cavanaugh and Letourneau returned to Greenfield in 2010. She was pregnant with their second son and his dad was sick with cancer, Cavanaugh says.

“We felt the pull to come back.

It was tough to leave,” he adds, “but we don’t regret the decision.”

They were able to afford a house in Greenfield, for instance, which they would never have been able to do in DC. They’ve been glad to reconnect with their western Mass community also. Cavanaugh still provides freelance photos for the *New York Times*, *Boston Globe*, and *Washington Post*.

“Just once in a while, when they need something out my way,” he says.

Weddings are his bread-and-butter these days. And the new studio opens up possibilities for headshots and portrait sessions.

“I’m really enjoying it,” Cavanaugh says.

For more information or to schedule a portrait session, visit matthewcavanaugh.com.



Cavanaugh is offering fun, nontraditional holiday portrait sessions in his new studio.

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— Lisa McLoughlin, editor

SPACE NEWS

Planetary Transits and Exoplanets

BY LISA McLOUGHLIN

NORTHFIELD — Since poor Pluto has been downgraded from being a planet to an object, we now count eight planets in our solar system. In order from closest to the sun to farthest out they are Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, and Neptune.

From our vantage point on Earth, we can sometimes see when the orbits of Mercury and Venus take them between us and the sun. This is called a *planetary transit*, and whichever planet is doing it will show up as a dark spot against the sun.

Although these planets are always orbiting the sun, our ability to see them in transit is rare — even more rare than seeing solar eclipses, which is when our moon comes between us and the sun. This is because the orbits of Mercury and Venus are tilted relative to ours, so we don't always line up with them and get to see when they cross between us and the sun. For instance, Mercury orbits the sun every 88 days, but there are only an average of 13 transits of Mercury per century that we can see.

Transits of Venus come in pairs eight years apart, but over 100 years separate these pairs, making a transit of Venus a very rare event — only six have occurred since the invention of the telescope.

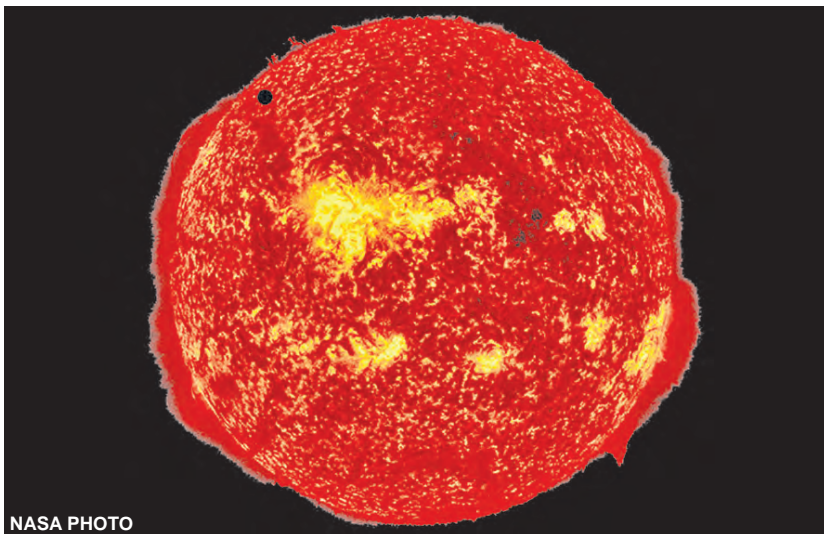
The first transit ever observed by a European was of Mercury, in 1631, by the French astronomer Gassendi. In 1639 Horrocks and Crabtree were the first Europeans to witness the Venus transit. In 1716 Edmond Halley wrote about how transits could be used to measure the distance to the Sun.

There are some great videos of planetary transits on nasa.gov. NASA currently has a fleet of spacecraft positioned between us and the sun to measure solar winds and the movements of energy and particles throughout the solar system; this is called *space weather*. More are planned, including a Solar Orbiter (in conjunction with the European Space Agency) that will help determine how planets and life are formed.

The next Mercury transit will be on November 13, 2032, and Venus will transit on December 11, 2117. Time to get planning!

However, our sun is not the only star obscured by planets. "Transit Photometry," sometimes called the "Transit Method," is now widely used by astronomers to find exoplanets — that is, planets orbiting a star other than our own, meaning they're outside (exo) our solar system. The basic technique is to point a telescope at a star and see if its light dips in brightness, indicating a planet has crossed between our view and the star. Then they wait to see how often it happens, and if it happens on a regular schedule.

Lots can be inferred from the data. For example, the planet's size, which is in turn used to infer if it's of



NASA PHOTO



NASA / AMES RESEARCH CENTER / DANIEL RUTTER IMAGE

Top: Venus transit across the sun.

Below: This artist's concept shows exoplanet Kepler-1649c orbiting around its host red dwarf star. This exoplanet is in its star's habitable zone (the distance where liquid water could exist on the planet's surface) and is the closest to Earth in size and temperature found in Kepler's data.

a type and in a position to be a planet that might support carbon-based life. Over 4,000 confirmed discoveries of exoplanets have been made since they were first discovered about 20 years ago; another 3,000 are waiting to be confirmed with further observation. According to NASA, the number of known exoplanets doubles about every 27 months, so by the time you read this, we may know of many more of them.

The drawbacks of transit photometry for exoplanet discovery are that the planets can only be seen if they line up directly with our line of sight, significantly limiting the planets we can find. The method also produces quite a few false positives, in part because the dip in light brightness is so very small — about 1/10,000th of its brightness, and only for a few hours at a time.

In 2018 NASA launched the Transiting Exoplanet Survey Satellite (TESS), which studies stars for exoplanets using transit photometry from an elliptical orbit above Earth. In its first year TESS discovered 21 exoplanets, with another 850 awaiting confirmation from ground-based telescopes. Each planet must be seen to transit three times before it's considered a real find.

Planet sizes and their potential for carbon-based life vary. According to Ravyn Cullor at NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center, "The planets TESS has discovered so far range from a world 80% the size of Earth to ones comparable to or exceeding the size of Jupiter and Saturn. Like [retired NASA space telescope Kepler, TESS is finding many planets smaller in size than

Neptune, but larger than Earth."

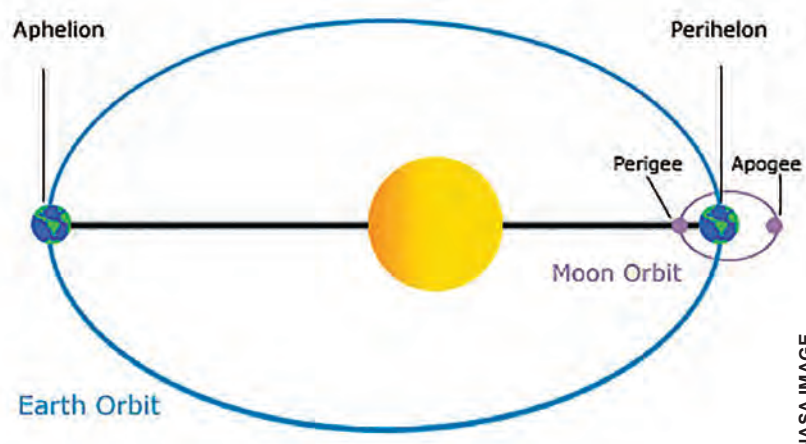
While the ultimate goal of NASA's exoplanet research is to find life on other planets, they expect this may not happen until the next generation of telescopes is launched 10 to 30 years from now. In the meantime, NASA emphasizes that TESS has found many other "unexpected" phenomena, including "violently variable stellar objects." These include six supernovas and an undisclosed number of exocomets orbiting distant stars.

TESS will soon have help in its search, as the launch of another space telescope focusing on exoplanets, NASA's James Webb telescope, is planned for 2021.

For more information on the Kepler mission, visit www.nasa.gov/Kepler. For more information about exoplanets, visit exoplanets.nasa.gov.

MORE SPACE NEWS

Earth's Perihelion and the Quadrantids Meteor Shower



NASA IMAGE

By LISA McLOUGHLIN

NORTHFIELD — Our planet Earth's *perihelion* occurs when it is closest to the sun and will take place on January 2. Earth's distance from the sun at perihelion will be 0.9833 AU, the abbreviation for an Astronomical Unit, which is approximately the average distance between Earth and Sun. Astronomers take the average distance because it changes due to the Earth's orbit being an ellipse, not a perfect circle.

The Quadrantid meteor shower occurs on January 1 through 5, peaking on January 3, which is not one we've highlighted on the Science Page before. This meteor shower has many meteors — about 120 per hour at its peak if conditions are perfect — but most meteors in this shower are clustered right around its peak, which unfortunately is 9:47 a.m. You may want to try looking earlier that morning while it's still dark.

The radiant point where the meteors appear to be coming from in the sky is just below the Big Dipper, coming from the defunct constellation Quadrans Muralis. This constellation was created by the French astronomer Jerome Lalande in 1795. It is very visible, and one I think should have been kept in the list reified by the International Astronomical Union in 1922. (A quadrant is a great navigational aid. If you know how

to use it you can get your latitude by observing either the sun at its highest point, or the north star Polaris.)

The meteor shower was first seen in 1825. The likely parent object of this meteor shower was identified by Peter Jenniskens of SETI in 2003 as a two-mile-wide asteroid 2003 EH1 which some astronomers believe was formed when the comet C/1490 Y1, identified by Asian astronomers in about 1490, broke up.



NASA/CALTECH IMAGE

A comet is an ice-covered rock. It gets a tail of ice and dust as it orbits the sun and melts a bit. EH1 has no ice, just the rock core, so it's called an asteroid. Meteor showers caused by asteroids are rare, which makes it even more likely the comet left some debris for us to go through, and the piece of itself which is now an asteroid. There are no photos of EH1 or C/1490 Y1 in NASA's database. Instead we are showing (above) a photo of another comet, Wild 2.

December 2020 Moon Calendar

Last Quarter
Monday, December 7

First Quarter
Monday, December 21
(Winter Solstice, 5:02 a.m.)

Western crescent, near side of our moon.

New Moon
Monday, December 14

Full Moon
Tuesday, December 29

NASA PHOTO

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For a complete directory of local shopping, visit www.turnersfallsriverculture.org #ittakes5villages

 The Montague Reporter is also seeking writers to cover local board and committee meetings. Modest compensation and editorial guidance provided. Most of these are being held via Zoom (etc.) during the pandemic, so you won't need to travel far. No experience necessary, but please don't sign up because you have some weird ax to grind! Send expressions of poorly contained excitement to us at editor@montaguereporter.org.

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) on one of the next two Saturdays, **December 5** and **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.)



Stuff can get wrapped with them!

The Montague Reporter is an independent, nonprofit weekly paper that stays in print thanks to voluntary support from readers like you. We weren't eligible for a PPP loan this year so we're basically going with hawking wrapping paper instead. You don't even need to use it on presents; it works pretty well for anything you don't want to see. Get yours before they're all gone!

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