

The Montague Reporter

YEAR 19 – NO. 10

also serving Irving, Gill, Leverett and Wendell

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THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES

JANUARY 14, 2021

GILL-MONTAGUE REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

Hopes to Return to Hybrid In February, As Impacts of Remote School Grow Clear

By MIKE JACKSON

GILL-MONTAGUE – Gill-Montague classes have been fully remote since last March, and on Tuesday the school committee had its first chance to review data reflecting the impact learning from home has had on education.

The figures, though not entirely unexpected, were sobering. The committee approved a plan to make every Wednesday a half day at the middle and high school, as it has been at the elementary schools, to allow teachers time to work as teams and develop interventions for struggling learners.

“The personal connections between teachers and students are of the utmost importance,” chair Jane Oakes said at the end of an emotionally charged meeting. “It’s what makes children succeed.... I’m not saying that there isn’t some connection by computer, I know people are working really hard to make that connection, but for some children, I’m sure that doesn’t do it.”

At the middle and high school, across all seven grades, a total of 99 “F”s were issued in the fall of 2019. This past fall, that figure tripled to 297, with dramatic increases at every grade level.

In the elementary schools, results varied by school and by grade, but the average portion of students not meeting a standard metric in math edged up from 66% to 69%, and in reading from 60% to 69%.

“This is terrible,” said Montague member Cassie Damkoehler after hearing the presentation from superintendent Brian Beck. “You can’t tell me that remote learning is working.... Not only are we not teaching our students, we’re killing their spirits by forcing them to

see **GMRSD** page A5



The proportion of Hillcrest first-graders not passing a standardized reading assessment grew from 42% in Fall 2019 to 74% in Fall 2020.

Contractor Pushes for Bigger Bridge Job

By JEFF SINGLETON

MONTAGUE CITY – The company hired by the state to oversee the project to stabilize the General Pierce Bridge, which connects Montague and Greenfield over the Connecticut River at Montague City Road, has proposed a \$6,679,699 change order to paint the upper portion of the bridge. The proposal by Northern Construction Service LLC to the Department of Transportation (MassDOT) was endorsed by the Montague selectboard at its Monday night meeting.

The board also discussed two bridges over the Turners Falls Canal: the closed Bailey bridge on Power Street, and the Fifth Street pedestrian bridge, which is scheduled to be moved this summer to the southwest side of the automobile bridge it sits beside. Several other bridges also on the board’s agenda were pushed to a later meeting, as members apparently reached their bridge limit during a very long session.

The proposal to paint the upper portion of the General Pierce,



The General Pierce Bridge will soon be closed to automobile traffic until 2023.

made barely two months before it is scheduled to close for construction, appeared to come out of the blue. The issue was raised last February at a packed public hearing in Turners Falls on the state’s plan for the bridge’s reconstruction. Town officials and most of the public at that hearing expressed shock and

dismay that only the lower portion of the bridge was going to be renovated, while the peeling “ugly green paint” on the upper portion, which reveals significant rust, would remain for the next 25 years.

The selectboard lobbied for a more ambitious project, but to no see **BRIDGE** page A4

MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD

Virtual Town Meeting Set For Next Month

By JEFF SINGLETON

The Montague Selectboard voted to hold this winter’s special town meeting on February at its meeting Monday night, and opened the warrant for articles to be submitted until January 20. This will be a virtual meeting – the first of its kind in the region, since state law only allows such meetings in towns with representative town meetings. Several towns, including Lexington and Plymouth, held virtual town meetings last spring.

The board began by considering the timeline for the meeting, but the discussion quickly moved to the technical aspects of holding the meeting virtually. Town executive assistant Wendy Bogusz said that the regular Zoom program, which most town boards currently use, was limited to 100 participants, and the town needed to be prepared for a meeting larger than that.

She said Zoom Webinar could include more participants, but this raised the question of how members could

be identified by the chair to speak. Bogusz said she was investigating a separate application for this purpose.

Board chair Rich Kuklewicz asked if there was a more advanced option to handle larger public meetings.

Bogusz said a company called Option Technologies advertised such a platform and provided direct support for the meeting itself, at a cost of just under \$6,000.

Town administrator Steve Ellis said Plymouth had used this platform at its annual town meeting last spring. “I spoke to the [Plymouth] moderator, and he said that the technology was great,” Ellis reported, adding that the town had “another level of software” to implement voting.

“It’s proven technology – a safer way, even though it’s kind of expensive,” said Kuklewicz. He also said that being in charge of setting up the meeting might be an unrealistic burden on the selectboard office.

“If it’s CARES eligible, then that money’s there for a reason,” said town meeting moderator Chris Collins,

see **MONTAGUE** page A7

Towel At Downtown Art Nook Thrown In

By MIKE JACKSON

TURNERS FALLS – For nearly nine years, four afternoons a week, Nina Rossi wedged herself far back in a five-foot-wide space on Avenue A, waiting to see who would walk in next. “Nina’s Nook” was an art installation, she told this newspaper in early 2011 as she undertook the work of rehabbing the enclosed alleyway, but it would live its official life as a shop and gallery, surprising curious visitors and fostering her local network of patrons and collaborators.

“I was kind of afraid, at first, to stick my neck out, but it’s been a really positive experience,” says Rossi. “I got used to it pretty quickly – I felt welcomed. It’s an easy town to get something like that going.”

Rossi closed the Nook’s door when the COVID-19 pandemic hit, and hasn’t reopened it – the narrow layout would not encourage social distancing. Last weekend she announced, “sadly but with relief,” that the shop will not be reopening.

“It was never more than a breakeven venture,” Rossi wrote on the Nook’s Facebook page. “After taking a long break from running the store, I find it a not very appealing prospect to continue with trying to maintain a retail gallery in Turners Falls.”

Rossi, who moved to Turners Falls in 1987, first noticed the space that became the Nook seven years later, while she was transcribing interviews of older residents for a project run by the Montague Economic Development and Industrial Corporation, the town’s onetime

see **NOOK** page A8



Nina Rossi, pictured here with slugs, has decided not to reopen Nina’s Nook when the coronavirus pandemic is over.

New State Bill Will Mandate Sewage Spill Transparency

By SARAH ROBERTSON

FRANKLIN COUNTY – On Tuesday Massachusetts governor Charlie Baker signed a bill that will require water treatment plant operators to notify the public whenever there is a release of untreated sewage into a river.

“It passed the Senate when the disaster at the US Capitol was happening, so it got muffled by larger events,” said Andrea Donlon, a steward for the Connecticut River Conservancy, who had a hand in crafting the bill. “It creates a mechanism for the public to find out when there’s untreated sewage going into a river or waterbody.”

Stormwater runoff, flooding, power outages, and other equipment malfunctions cause hundreds of millions of gallons of untreated sewage to enter the Connecticut River watershed each year, according to Donlon. The new legislation will require a wastewater treatment facility to notify their local board of health within two hours whenever sewage is released into a waterway, and provide updates on the amount of waste discharged and perceived public health risk.

In severe cases, a town can initiate a reverse-911 call to notify residents in the affected areas.

“The bill has earned widespread, bipartisan support, evident when the bill passed the Massachusetts House of Representatives this past summer unanimously,” said

see **SEWAGE** page A7

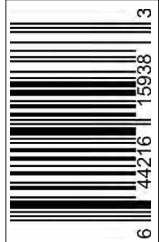


Montague’s treatment plant typically keeps up with the town’s load, but heavy storms can overwhelm the combined sewer system and carry waste into the Connecticut.

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The Montague Reporter

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The Exit Ramp

It was another crazy Wednesday on the national scene, as members of the House of Representatives voted 232 to 197 to impeach the president.

“Donald John Trump engaged in high Crimes and Misdemeanors by inciting violence against the Government of the United States,” they resolved.

The impeachment goes to the Senate for a trial, but Georgia’s two new Democratic senators have not yet been certified or sworn in, which means Mitch McConnell is still majority leader, and he won’t convene a regular session early. Tuesday the 19th is the first day they’ll be back, and Wednesday, the 20th, the mainstream news media claim that a new president will be inaugurated *in any case*.

A lot can happen in a week, and Trump’s last week in office – *ever*, provided Democrats do end up carrying out the trial in the Senate retroactively and enough Republicans agree – is likely to be a doozy.

Eager to at least see some tangible death, the outgoing party has been scrambling to execute federal prisoners. Eleven have died by lethal injection since July. (To get a sense of why this feels fast: *before* July, only eleven federal prisoners had been executed since the electrocution of Ethel and Julius Rosenberg in 1953.) Two more are scheduled for this week.

Lame-duck executions are a very particular show of character; before Trump, the last one was in the 19th century. But here we are.

This week, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo declared that Yemen’s Houthi rebels and the government of Cuba are both sponsors of terrorism. Pompeo’s statement cited, among other evidence, the political asylum Cuba has provided since 1984 to onetime Black Liberation Army militant Assata Shakur, who Trump has obsessed over since his first year in office.

And on Tuesday, Pompeo asserted that Al-Qaida has moved its “home base” to Iran – not impossible, but not likely, and not backed up by any particular evidence – and called “for America and all free nations to crush the Iran-al-Qaeda axis.” Okay...

And then there’s the executive orders. Since the November election, Trump has issued 16, including “Rebranding United States Foreign Assistance to Advance American Influence” (put a logo on all aid); “Promoting Beautiful Federal Civic Architecture” (by condemning Brutalism and Deconstructivism); “Expanding Educational Opportunity Through School Choice” (redirecting tax money to private schools, because COVID); and “Promoting Small Modular Reactors for National Defense and Space Exploration” (nukes in space, oh boy).

The cherry on top is Trump’s January 5 “Memorandum on Inadmissibility of Persons Affiliated with Antifa Based on Organized Criminal Activity,” an attempt to *bar people who are opposed to fascism from entering the country*.

We trust that there are already enough anti-fascists *in* the country to make all this lame-duck scrambling a moot point in just a few weeks. Stay safe, kids.



James Robison sells a scratch ticket to “Stash” at Scotty’s Convenience Store on Tuesday afternoon.

Letters to the Editors

Questions and Issues of Doubt

Who is responsible, who was involved, and who financed the January 6, 2021 insurrection?

- 147 federal legislators voiced opposition to the Electoral College documents being legally presented at Congress that day.
- Only 1/5 of Capitol Police were on duty that day – approximately 500 of 2,300 – when it was known Trump was organizing a protest rally nearby the Capitol.
- Few effective barriers were erected, and what is always a most scrutinized entryway to the building was effectively breached.
- There were no police on horses, as with other demonstrations or with mob presence.
- Photos are seen of some legislators and police seemingly complicit in the mob behavior, allowing entry into the building.
- Those gaining violent and destructive entry into the Capitol Building knew exactly where to go to locate offices and tunnels otherwise undesignated.
- Hours elapsed before tear gas was used.
- The mayor of DC called Trump for the National Guard to come, but with no response.

Congresspeople tried to protect themselves. No protective backup arrived for hours, when the National Guard finally did arrive.

- Groups wore banners of hatred, racism, anti-Semitism, and insurrection. Confederate flags were flown in our Capitol Building.
- Few were arrested that day because of the 6 p.m. curfew.
- In some cases, only minor felony charges, like trespass and stealing, have been pressed.
- Some mob leaders were stationed at the famous Willard Hotel, one of the most expensive hotels in DC, located across the street near the White House, and they were photographed in celebration the night of the riot.
- Some mobsters were carrying zip-tie cuffs, difficult to obtain military and police objects of restraint.

Because of these unanswered and incomplete questions, there remains suspicious and complicit behavior that must be investigated. Any legislators, officers, military functionaries, and others in power must be held accountable and punished now.

Nina Keller Wendell

Free COVID-19 Testing Opens in Greenfield

GREENFIELD – Mayor Roxann D. Wedegartner announces the opening of a **free testing site** as part of the Commonwealth’s Stop the Spread testing initiative in Greenfield and the collaborative efforts between the Commonwealth, City of Greenfield, Greenfield Community College, and CIC Health of Cambridge, Massachusetts.

The CIC Health Stop the Spread Greenfield site is located at Greenfield Community College (Sloan Theater) at 1 College Drive. It supports the testing of asymptomatic individuals (i.e., individuals with no COVID-19 symptoms) and is free for all Massachusetts residents.

Hours of operation will be Thursdays, 12 to 7 p.m.; Fridays, 8 a.m. to 3 p.m.; and Saturdays, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

According to Mayor Wedegartner, “Greenfield is thrilled to have the full support and weight of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts behind this COVID-19 testing effort – we have seen countless residents of Franklin County utilize this type of testing service and thank the State for their attention and assistance.

“This expanded, free COVID-19 testing initiative could not have been possible without the explicit support of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts – including HHS Secretary Marylou Sudders, Greenfield Community College President Salomon-Fernández, GCC Director of

Public Safety Alex Wiltz, Greenfield Health Department Director Jennifer Hoffmann, Greenfield Fire Chief Robert Strahan, and our partners at CIC Health. Thank you!”

CIC Health is facilitating the ongoing, no-cost COVID-19 PCR testing at the Greenfield site for individuals 2 years of age and older. **Testing is by appointment via mass.gov/info-details/stop-the-spread.** Minors (under the age of 18) must be accompanied by a parent or guardian.

Individuals do not need to present an ID at the Greenfield, or any Stop the Spread site. When people register for testing, they will need to share some basic information in order to receive important updates from CIC Health and its collaborators, be notified of results, and speak with a contact tracer if they test positive. If an individual does not have a computer, smartphone, email address, or internet access, a parent, guardian, caretaker, or loved one can register on their behalf.

CIC Health facilitates the “gold standard” RT-PCR test. It is self-administered with a simple, shallow nasal swab and takes just a few minutes. On-site staff can assist parents/guardians with collecting younger minors’ samples if needed. Test results are usually delivered in 24 to 36 hours.

For more detailed information and answers to other questions, check out CIC Health’s FAQ at www.cic-health.com/support.

Vigils

Local peace and justice groups invite all to dress warmly, wear masks and join the Saturday, January 16 vigils on the Greenfield Common, 10 a.m. until noon. Messages include support for the Black Lives Matter movement, calls to remove Trump from office, and general calls for peace and democracy. Come when you can, bring a sign or get one there.

On Saturday, January 23, the Greenfield Common 11 a.m. to noon vigil will also welcome the UN Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, coming into effect on January 22, 2021. An important move for peace.

More info at traprock.org.

Anna Gyorgy Wendell

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LARKINROSSI ILLUSTRATION

By NINA ROSSI

The **Greenfield Warming Center** is open seven days a week, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. for anyone who needs to stay warm during the day. It is located at 140 High Street in Greenfield. There will be free coffee, snacks, peer support, and connections to resources for anyone who comes in.

The LAVA Center in Greenfield announces **two new gallery shows**. Local artists Charmae Bartlett and Cara Finch display pastel and acrylic paintings, respectively, which can be viewed during the Saturday Salon every Saturday from 1 to 4 p.m. at 324 Main Street, Greenfield.

The latest **Coalition Connections e-newsletter** has come out on January 11 and is packed with tons of really timely information and links to resources that individuals and families can use during this time, regarding COVID testing, visiting after vaccinations guidelines, and support for grief and loss – including grief we experience from the loss of normal activities.

There are links for resources like homework support, free clothing and food, reading and literacy programs, places to keep warm, and resources to do with family matters such as teen alcohol use and more. If you would like to receive this newsletter, email ilana@frcog.org.

This Saturday, January 16, join

Great Falls Books Through Bars for a virtual volunteer day and letter writing party from 1 to 2 p.m. This event is for all ages and all levels of experience writing to folks who are incarcerated. Come with questions, stories, or just a general interest in writing to someone inside. Organizers will be providing some prompts and resources as well as names and addresses.

Since the pandemic shutdowns the collective has been continuing to send books, as well as information for incarcerated people about how to stay healthy. Find the link at www.greatfallsbooksthroughbars.org.

The Shea Theater and Pioneer Valley Performing Arts Charter School present a Valley-wide **virtual multi-arts festival** on January 16 at 7 p.m. The livestream event brings the youth art community together with a showcase of talent from middle and high school age artists from Springfield to Greenfield. There will be dance, film, poetry, music, theater, and visual arts.

Proceeds will go towards non-profit arts organizations in the three counties of Franklin, Hampshire, and Hampden. Get your tickets or make a donation at sheatheater.org.

Sweet Honey in the Rock celebrates Martin Luther King Day with a concert on Sunday, January 17 at 3 p.m. and 8 p.m. The acapella ensemble are broadcasting live on Zoom from the historic Lincoln Theater in Washington, DC. Spe-

cial guests Keith David, Mumu Fresh, Azar Lawrence, Wycliffe Gordon, and Kiki Shepard will be reflecting on the life of Reverend King and offering inspiration for the future. Tickets are available at laudableproductions.com.

The 37th **Martin Luther King Day Celebration** sponsored by the Resistance Center for Peace and Justice will – surprise! – be held virtually on Zoom this year. The program on January 18 will be day-long and will be on the theme of “Uniting the Beloved Community.”

It includes many speakers, and a tour of Afro-American history by the David Ruggles Center from 10 a.m. to 11 a.m. There will be community workshops from 1 to 4 p.m. with opportunities to get involved in social justice work. Call or email to get a link to join the free event: (413) 584-8975, or contact@theresistancecenter.org.

Every Wednesday, the Brick House offers **Wellness Workshops** at their downtown Turners Falls location. Join them on Zoom from 3:30 to 4:15 to explore issues such as Healthy Relationships, Nutrition, and Coping with Stress. Youth 13 to 18 are encouraged to attend, with or without video. Every week the Zoom link will be posted on the [brickhouseteencenter](https://www.instagram.com/brickhouseteencenter) Instagram: and the Brick House Community Resource Center Facebook page. Questions? Email iortiz@brickhousearc.org.

A new **Parent and Guardian Group** is also starting on the second Friday of every month through the Zoom platform, hosted by the Brick House. A surprise gift card and raffles will be included at the end of each meeting. The next topic, on February 12, is Bullying.

Email slangknecht@brickhousearc.org to join. Find out about

other Brick House programs at brickhousecommunity.org.

Freelancers and creatives may be interested in a workshop on **Taxes and Preparing for a Downturn** with Hannah Cole. Offered through MASS MoCA's Assets for Artists program, the workshop is free and held over Zoom on Tuesday, January 26 at 3 p.m.

Cole is an artist who has also earned the IRS's highest certification as tax preparer. She will discuss tax issues for freelancers and creatives, followed by a question-and-answer period. Register at www.assetsforartists.org.

Free help with tax preparation is also available for those who qualify as low to moderate income earners through Community Action Pioneer Valley. The VITA Free Tax Filing Assistance Program is virtual this year with phone lines now open to taxpayers in Franklin and Hampshire counties as well as the North Quabbin region.

Certified IRS volunteers are ready to help with secure, efficient, and accurate tax preparation. Volunteers are trained to help get you the best possible refund. To learn more and schedule an intake call, visit www.communityaction.us/taxes or call (413) 376-1136.

The 30th annual **Poet's Seat Poetry Contest** is soliciting entries in three categories: youth 12 to 14, and youth 15 to 18, and adults. The contest is open only to Franklin County poets. You may submit up to three poems for your chance to win First, Second or Third prize and your entry must be postmarked by March 17. Please see the complete guidelines at friendsofsgpl.org under “Events.”

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GUEST EDITORIAL

How to Connect Across This Divide?

A letter written, to I don't know whom, on the evening of Wednesday, January 6, 2021:

I'm furious. Today's events have left me reeling with anger. Typically I am not one to wade into politics, or, aside from voting, engage in what seems like futile debate. But the news of our nation's Capitol Building, the people's house of the United States of America, being overrun by a mob left me reeling.

It was 3 p.m. and I tried to keep working, but my blood was boiling, and my anger was laced with feelings of impotence, a particularly caustic combination. What could be done?

Before long I couldn't take it anymore, I decided I had to do something, so I called my cousin in Tennessee.

My cousin thinks like I do, more or less, and I had lived in Kentucky, not far from her, for a number of years, but her partner and her brother who live with her ascribe to different views: a divided house. For the past years I had ignored and bit my tongue when faced with their rhetoric, but I couldn't hold my tongue any longer, and I decided now was the time to call and unleash my fury.

I didn't know exactly what I would say, but as I held the phone in my hand I figured that I would tell my cousin that she had a responsibility to speak up, and if I got them on the phone that I would tell them that I hold them partially responsible for today's events.

Once I got my cousin on the phone, I stumbled as I tried to articulate my anger. She could tell I was upset. I couldn't yell at my cousin, I

love her too much, but my voice was shaking.

I ended up telling her that I'd been stewing for months over a comment she made back at the beginning of the pandemic. She claimed that all the prisoners down there were faking COVID-19 symptoms so they could get out of jail. At the time it struck me as unlike her, and more like a Fox News talking point she probably overheard while her partner watched TV. I should have spoken up at the time instead of stewing for months.

Concerning her partner, she said she didn't feel able to engage with him on the topic of politics, but that she had been waiting for years for the right person to come along who could debate him point by point, and maybe help to begin to change his mind. She thought maybe I could be that person.

My immediate response was *no*, I am not that person. I'm not that invested in political talking points to be able debate point by point, and besides, I don't have that kind of relationship with him; there is not enough mutual respect.

In the end, I wasn't feeling like the phone conversation was going to help my feelings of anger and impotence, but I did hit on an idea at the last minute. Rather than trying to engage in a debate, I offered to send her partner a book I'd read in the past year for him to read, and if he was interested, he could send me a book for me to read representing his ideas. Then, after each of us had read the books, we could try and have a conversation.

I am an avid reader but I almost exclusively read fiction. The only non-fiction book I

read in 2020, I read because it was written by a college friend of mine, and it shares some of my political views: *Shelter from the Machine, Homesteading in the Age of Capitalism*, by Jason Strange.

I hung up the phone and I was left wondering what could come from this, except possibly that two people will pick up books written by opposing views. What, if anything, significant could come from that?

As I said I am an avid reader, and I believe that reading cultivates the life of the mind, in particular that part of the mind that allows you to imagine other people's lives. Reading begets empathy. Is it possible that reading is one of the most important things that we can do to save our country, ourselves, our planet?

Try this. Call someone you disagree with, and make them a similar offer: to read a book they recommend. It's a risk. You might find yourself humiliated, you might get shot down. On the other hand, the offer might prove disarming, allowing for a moment of understanding.

There was another time our country was divided, and people across the country took action, taking a risk and putting themselves in other people's shoes. They were called Freedom Riders.

I am furious, and in response I choose to pick up a book and read. I exhort you to do the same. Pick up a book and read, become a Freedom Reader.

A father of three struggling with hope,

Isaac Bingham
Gill



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BRIDGE from page A1

avail, and by last spring seemed to have settled for a MassDOT commitment to enhance lighting on the bridge’s upper structure.

Great Northern’s decision to lobby the state for a costly change order did not seem to be the product of local pressure, but rather of genuine concern over the condition of the upper bridge structure. According to Shawn Clark, the company’s project manager who attended last Monday’s meeting, the Great Northern has worked on similar “truss bridges,” including one in Holyoke.

“We just thought it was unique that the rest of this bridge wasn’t being painted,” Clark said. “To leave this bridge in shambles in the upper truss section is odd.” He went on to say that “a half-dozen painters looked at the bridge and were shocked.”

The Great Northern proposal also stresses the bridge’s historical significance, calling it “established and cherished historically in the community as well as the state” and noting that the bridge is a “landmark structure by being one of the very few and longer Pennsylvania through truss spans and Camelback through truss spans in the state.”

The document combined the proposal to paint the bridge with a request to close it to pedestrian traffic during construction, which Clark said would greatly speed up the construction schedule. He said that a total closure would speed up the project and might allow it to conclude in the spring of 2023, rather than that fall as under the current schedule.

The change order would also raise the cost of the project by nearly 50%, although the request noted that the final bid had come in significantly under the project’s original estimated cost. The

letter stated that the company’s paint subcontractor had based its cost estimate on \$46.47 per square foot, lower than an estimate used in 2016 “for a similar structure in District 2.”

Neither Clark nor Montague town administrator Steve Ellis, who flashed close-ups of peeling paint and rust on the bridge’s upper structure over Zoom, were willing to predict how MassDOT would react to the request. “I can’t say I know what its prospects are, but I understand that it is something that has been proposed, and projects have been expanded,” said Ellis. “Northern has some track record of successfully pursuing such change orders.”

The board informally agreed to allow Ellis to write a letter of support for the project to state officials, signed by chair Rich Kuklewicz. Ellis also agreed to “reach out” to state legislators and the Greenfield mayor about the issue.

Several Bridges Too Far

In other bridge news, department of public works superintendent Tom Bergeron said he had talked to a “couple of contractors” about fixing the Bailey bridge which crosses the Turners Falls power canal at Powers Street. The bridge was closed recently by order of MassDOT due to structural damage to plates on its deck. It provides access to the Patch section of Turners Falls, including for fire trucks, some of which cannot pass over the remaining bridge.

Bergeron said he had received two “very, very good” quotes for the fix, and that MassDOT could provide the plates for free. There was some discussion of whether the cost of the project would require more bids under state law. Bergeron said he would be able to use Montague’s allocation of state Chapter 90 funds “at these prices,” but add-

ed that “I’m not trying to be a jerk about this, but the town has to start paying for some of this stuff that my Chapter 90 is constantly going out for.”

Town planner Walter Ramsey then came before the board to discuss the “latest challenge” in moving the Fifth Street pedestrian bridge to the other side of a state-owned vehicular bridge. The original plan had been to “nestle,” in Ramsey words, the foot bridge on the south side of the state bridge, but MassDOT now has a policy that “any new bridge has to be at least 30 feet from an existing bridge.”

The new bridge will also need to be longer, because its abutments can not border the canal, and this will require a “ramping system” for accessibility, according to Ramsey. The redesign will also require more discussions with the FirstLight Power Company, which owns the canal, and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, which is evaluating FirstLight for a new long-term license.

At this point, Kuklewicz noted ruefully that there were still four more bridges on the agenda to be discussed. Ellis committed to only talking about the South Street Bridge in Montague Center, and delaying the rest to a future meeting.

Ellis shared that MassDOT had begun a preliminary design on a project to repair the bridge, estimated to cost \$3 million. He said the engineers plan to close the bridge, which is not reduced to one lane, “on or about February 8” to perform some boring “so they understand what is going on in the subsurface.” He said the project may also require “some easements,” which could go to a special town meeting next winter.

Ellis indicated that he would place more “bridge updates” on the board’s January 18 agenda.



NOTES FROM THE ERVING SELECTBOARD

Scenic Bridge Gathers Negative Connotations

By KATIE NOLAN

“I can appreciate the symbolism, but the bridge and ‘a great place to live’ on the same sign has always been like a punch to the gut to me. Oxymoron doesn’t even begin to describe that. Surely there’s another building or view that could be used / or not change it until the barriers are up and then the branding would reflect the true Erving.”

This was one of the comments about Erving’s proposed new logo either posted on the town’s Facebook page or documented by assistant town planner Mariah Kurtz from telephone calls and emails.

The hexagonal logo features the French King Bridge, mountains, the Connecticut River, a rising sun, and the slogan “a great place to live.” According to the May 18, 2020 meeting minutes, the purpose of the logo is “to help unify the Town’s brand and that it can be incorporated into business cards, letterhead, and signage.” Kurtz and the selectboard have been working with graphic designer Tiny Town Marketing of Orange on draft logo designs, with drafts presented and discussed at numerous selectboard meetings since May.

Other comments included: “Why half Gill? Maybe something with the Millers River?” “Thanks for all you are doing

to move us forward and for offering us the chance to comment on the design.”

“My original observation was the misplacement of the sun, which I then saw explained in the Facebook post. It reminds me of the state deer crossing signs, which had the antlers painted on backward. It became a joke and a poke at government, and this will too.”

“Love the sign, the bridge and river!”

“My suggestion would be a stylized representation of Route 2 as it winds through Farley along the Millers. It is scenic, represents the connection between our three villages and highlights the natural beauty as well as the importance of transportation.”

“I don’t like the use of the bridge. It is tied up in too much sadness right now. It also simply connects our town to Gill; it is not at the ‘heart’ of Erving.”

At Monday’s virtual Erving selectboard meeting, selectboard chair Jacob Smith responded to the comments by saying, “I didn’t look at this, or think of [suicides from the bridge], as what we’re trying to promote.”

“The bridge is a beautiful bridge,” said selectboard member William Bembury. “It’s a scenic stop site. Unfortunately, it’s associated with some suicides. It’s not an

issue with the bridge, it’s a technical glitch with the bridge.”

Kurtz told the board that the logo could be redesigned with other images, using the hexagonal shape and the same color scheme. “I want to digest the feedback a little more,” said Jacob Smith. He added that he liked the idea of Route 2 winding through town as an alternate image.

Both Jacob Smith and Bembury agreed to take time and get more feedback. Kurtz said she would work with Tiny Town to develop alternative images to present to the board.

Town administrator Bryan Smith commented that, even if the imagery is changed, “It still leaves an emotional issue. We have a topic that needs healing, and we need to address it.”

Selectboard Vacancy

The board reviewed a memo from town clerk Richard Newton about the options for the vacant selectboard seat after Peter Sanders’ December resignation.

Newton wrote that the earliest possible special election date to fill the vacancy would be March 16. This is about two months before the May 10 annual town election. Newton reported that a candidate elected March 16 would take office right after the election, but a candidate elected at the annual election would

take office on July 1. He noted the difficulty in finding poll workers during the COVID emergency.

Jacob Smith and Bembury voted to fill the vacant seat at the annual town election rather than at a special election.

Other Business

Bryan Smith told the joint meeting of the selectboard and finance committee that the Regional Retirement Board assessment to the town will increase by \$50,533 to \$384,000. He said the town’s insurer, Massachusetts Interlocal Insurance Agency, has not voted on its assessment yet but is considering a 6.5% to 7.5% increase.

The board voted to sign a contract with the state Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development accepting a \$500,000 grant to upgrade the wastewater piping system from the former International Paper Mill to Prospect Street.

The board accepted a \$2,200 quote from Edward Muszynski of Greenfield to survey the town’s 18 Pleasant Street property, which includes the former library and the former Pleasant Street School, to prepare the property for potential subdivision into two lots.

The board accepted a \$15,000 quote from Scanlon & Associates of South Deerfield to audit the town’s financial records for FY’20.

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NOTES FROM THE WENDELL SELECTBOARD

Town Coordinator Signals Retirement

By JOSH HEINEMANN

On January 6 at 7 p.m., the Wendell selectboard took a break from national events and focused on things inside Wendell.

Early in the meeting, almost as an aside, town coordinator Nancy Aldrich mentioned that she plans to retire. Contacted after the meeting, Aldrich said she will continue working for Wendell and New Salem into FY’21, August or September. She also said she would bring cookies for the winter holidays, if meetings are held in person by then. The Wendell and New Salem selectboards have seven or eight months to find someone to replace her or, as often happens when a woman leaves her job, to find two people to do what she was doing by herself.

Fire chief Joe Cuneo was connected when the Zoom meeting opened, hoping to move a step forward in the process of getting easements for a dry hydrant at McAvoy’s Pond. The first step is a survey, and Cuneo said he should get that done over the weekend. Field work was done in November, but it was done *pro bono*, and Cuneo was unwilling to put pressure on for faster results.

With the survey town counsel can create the easement document, and then the selectboard and the landowners, Laurie and Ray DiDonato, can review and sign the document if it needs no modification.

Cuneo said that Wendell’s first responders are scheduled to get a COVID vaccine “late next week” (January 11 to 16).

Wendell’s longtime dog officer, Maggie Houghton, whose job was expanded to “animal control officer” (ACO), will give her equipment to Meghan Gallo, Leverett police officer and Wendell’s new ACO. Finance committee chair Doug Tanner said Houghton could keep the kennel that was built inside her fence as small compensation for her 30 years of service to Wendell.

Half of the ACO’s FY’20 stipend, \$400, will be Gallo’s pay for the second half of FY’20, and the selectboard authorized allowing her \$300 from the selectboard’s expense account for equipment.

Board members also agreed to continue the contract with Leverett police department for them to continue serving Wendell through FY’20, at a cost of \$3,667 a month. In January Leverett will start patrolling in Wen-

dell for a limited time every week, and board members agreed to have them start small, at four hours a week. At first speeders will be issued a warning. The two towns are still working on a long-term policing contract.

An unnamed person, who selectboard chair Dan Keller called “our favorite lawyer,” said that the house at 40 Gate Lane gives Wendell legal difficulties. Keller suggested posting the property to limit the town’s liability, and said, “I don’t think we can sell the property with the house on it.” Doing so would guarantee a house lot.

Selectboard member Gillian Budine said a request for proposals – to dismantle and remove the building for salvage – should require a commitment to ensure that a person who starts the process will continue working until it is done, and recommended including a timeline and consequences for not following through. Keller suggested using a refundable deposit. Removing material one small pickup truck at a time is probably the best way to get it out of there.

Selectboard member Laurie DiDonato reminded the other board members that the open space committee also has an interest in the property to maintain open space.

Aldrich found the price of an ozone generator, for killing mold under the town hall, varies from \$50 to \$300, but asked if the town really wants to own one. The floor area that needs insulation was originally measured at 900 square feet, which included only the main floor, and is actually 2,645 square feet with the stage and kitchen area. There were two bids for 6” of foam insulation under the floor: \$5 and \$11 per square foot. The town has enough money for insulating under the entire town hall if the lower bid still holds.

The selectboard authorized Robert Heller to replace the town hall modem with a newer one that will avoid the difficulties that the neighbor has had with people using the town hall WiFi. Unlike the present modem it will have the ability to switch from password-accessible to open for all, and will allow its settings to be changed remotely.

Aldrich reported that Good Neighbors wants to use a sanitizing ultraviolet light in the town hall. Keller suggested asking facilities engineer Jim Slavas about possible harmful effects of the UV light. Budine asked if there is mercury in the lamps.

GMRSD from page A1

log onto a computer all day long, and then telling them that they’re doing a horrible job.”

“We can’t control the standards,” said Montague member Jen Lively, “but this is reality – and our school is not unique, I’m sure.”

Initial plans to progress from small groups of high-priority students to a fully hybrid learning model, giving all families the option to send children into the school buildings for two days a week, were derailed in November, first by delays in the ambitious project to upgrade the buildings’ ventilation systems, and then by a positive case of COVID-19 on campus.

A wave of the virus hit Franklin County after Thanksgiving, spiking in mid-December. Case counts released by the state Department of Public Health were lower for two or three weeks, though as of this Wednesday, the figure is rising again.

Closed-door negotiations with the Gill-Montague Education Association have also been ongoing, and as of this week, Beck said the district is moving forward to fill vacant positions – a food service director, two medical waiting room attendants, a special ed teacher and a substitute paraprofessional – and that all the elementary school buildings have been tested for air flow and are ready to receive students.

At the high school and middle school, a newly-installed automated building management system has caused further delays – 47 error alarms registered when it came online, most requiring minor replacements – and a full building air test

should be conducted next week, according to facilities manager Heath Cummings.

Gill-Montague is applying to serve as a pilot district for “pool testing,” Beck told the *Reporter* on Wednesday. Under pool testing, large batches of samples are combined and tested for the virus weekly, and if a pool turns up positive, all individuals can be rapid-tested using BinaxNOW nasal swabs.

“The more access to testing we have, the easier it is to try to stop transmission from occurring in the schools,” Beck said.

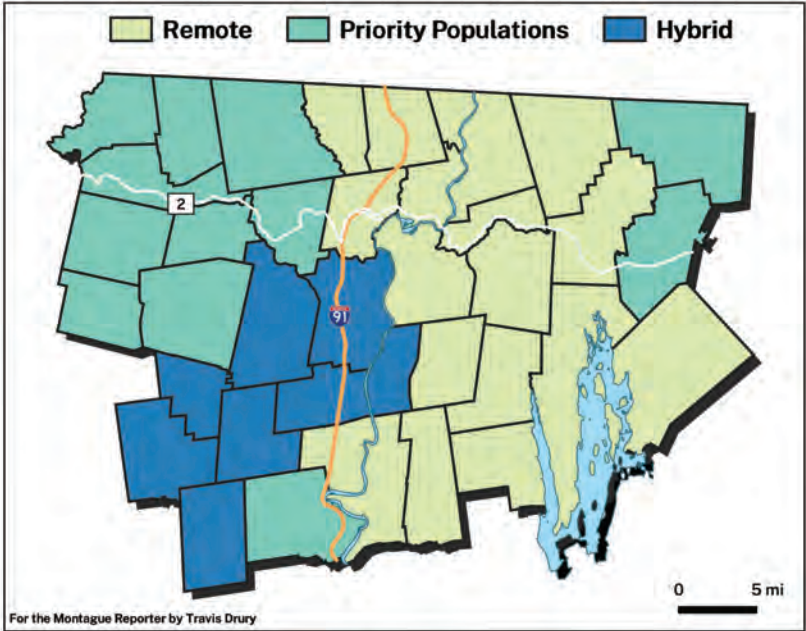
Beck has announced to families that the first small group of students will return to the buildings on January 25, and depending on the ventilation test results as well as the prevalence of COVID-19 in the area, full hybrid learning may begin as early as February 4.

Making Up

At the school committee meeting, frustration with poor educational outcomes boiled over, and talk turned to what it will take to help students catch up on learning.

Beck said the proposal to make Wednesdays half-days at the middle and high school level came in part from meetings with students, but the main aim is to allow teachers to meet at each grade level to hash out targeted support plans for individual students. The committee approved the new schedule unanimously.

“It’s really hard to see that data and sit with it,” said pupil services director Dianne Ellis. Ellis reported that “a significant portion of our students with disabilities cannot effectively access remote learning,” and that the district has seen a 25% increase in requests for special ed evaluations. “And we’re [only] in



Beck shared a list of area school districts and their current learning models on Tuesday.

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January,” she added.

“We have outstanding teachers in this district, and they have been working exceptionally hard,” Beck said. “But what we are seeing – not just here, but in every school district that has been in an extended period of remote time – we all have to acknowledge that we can’t best serve our students in remote.”

“If everybody’s fallen so far behind, how do you propose they’re catching up without some sort of formal intervention?” asked Gill member Bill Tomb. “This current group is going to graduate when they’re 20.”

“Additional years for high schoolers is a possibility,” agreed Montague’s Mike Langknecht.

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education has signaled that it will use the MCAS standardized tests this year “not as an accountability tool for schools... but as a diagnostic tool,” Beck said.

“We’re going to begin a process of de-emphasizing the content, and we’re going to start teaching to students,” he added, of hopes that relaxed standards might grant districts greater flexibility over intervention.

Preliminary Budget

The committee heard a presentation on next year’s budget, which is in its early stages. “I’m not as worried about FY’21 as I am about FY’22,” business manager Joanne Blier began. The current year is seeing “savings here and there,” and current projections have the district in the black by \$262,351 come June,

which would be rolled into the excess and deficiency (E&D) account.

Real enrollment has dropped from 934 to 849 at Gill-Montague this year, which could result in relatively lower Chapter 70 aid, but Blier said the state may carry over last year’s enrollment numbers since declines are happening statewide. It will not become clear which figures the state will use until the governor releases his anticipated budget on January 27.

Blier plugged in a lower-end Chapter 70 figure, an increase of \$81,438, for the budget, but said that if last year’s enrollment is used it could rise by closer to \$500,000.

Sluggish gains across the board – including affordable assessments offered by Montague and Gill – add up to a total 0.8% rise in revenue, but expenditures are on track to rise by 2.6%. The result is a working deficit of \$414,354.

“Hopefully it comes to us in Chapter 70,” Blier said, but the school committee is required to approve a balanced preliminary budget on January 26. A special session is scheduled for Tuesday, January 19 to pore over the budget line by line.

Blier said the budget could be balanced by eliminating new hires, rolling over money from a two-year state Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief grant, and drawing down more from E&D and the school choice revolving fund.

“I always feel like as soon as budget season ends, it begins again,” observed Damkoehler.



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Esta es la página en español del periódico **The Montague Reporter**. Aquí podrán encontrar cuestiones acerca de la comunidad hispana, eventos de interés, curiosidades, y noticias en español. Si quiere participar o compartir alguna sugerencia, envíenos un correo electrónico a: spanish@montaguereporter.org. ¡Feliz Año 2021 a todos nuestros lectores! Esperamos que en este nuevo año se cumplan algunos de sus deseos, pero no dejen de seguir soñando.



La fragilidad de la democracia: El golpe de estado de 1981 en España

Por VICTORIA MÁILLO DE AGUILERA

TURNERS FALLS – Empiezo a escribir este artículo todavía con la piel de gallina debido a los momentos de violencia vividos en el Capitolio recientemente. Esta semana es la segunda vez en mi vida que soy testigo de un golpe de estado. Y puedo prometerles a ustedes que jamás hubiera imaginado que esto podría ocurrir en Estados Unidos.

El pasado 6 de enero, día en que se celebra la fiesta de los Reyes Magos en muchos países hispánicos, decidí ir al gimnasio para quemar algunas de las calorías acumuladas durante estas fiestas y poder disfrutar del Roscón de Reyes. Me gusta correr con la televisión, ya que normalmente en casa no la veo, y voy cambiando de canales para conocer las noticias desde diferentes puntos de vista.

Pasé por Fox News justo en el momento en que Donald Trump hablaba a una multitud de personas que llevaban grandes banderas con su nombre, banderas confederadas, muchas gorritas rojas de MAGA y mucha vestimenta de camuflaje o de tipo militar.

Trump estaba repitiendo su discurso acerca del fraude electoral que ha sido negado siempre por los gestores de los comicios. Indirectamente atacó también a los miembros de su partido que no le estaban apoyando para poder parar la certificación de los votos que se iba a celebrar unas horas después. Fue muy claro diciendo a sus miles de fanáticos que tenían que eliminar a aquellos que no luchaban por hacerlo, y aún más les arengó diciendo: “Vamos a caminar hacia el Capitolio, yo iré con vosotros”. Ni siquiera los comentaristas de la Fox fueron capaces de defender esas palabras, y hablaban ya de división el partido republicano.

Tuve que dejar de correr porque un malestar recorrió mi garganta, pero ni siquiera podía imaginar lo que iba a ocurrir momentos más tarde.

Llegué a casa y al abrir mi computadora para comprobar mi correo electrónico, saltaron las primeras noticias acerca del intento de golpe de estado. Se me pusieron los pelos de punto al recordar otro en España, hace muchos años, cuando todavía era muy joven, pero fui muy consciente, por segunda vez, de lo frágil que puede ser una democracia.

Fue el 23 de febrero de 1981, solamente seis años más tarde de la muerte del dictador Francisco Franco. España había celebrado en 1977 sus primeras elecciones democráticas después de la Guerra Civil y que ganó la UCD (Unión de Centro Democrático) liderado



Tejero con su arma en el estrado del Congreso de los Diputados.

por Adolfo Suarez, el primer presidente de la transición en España. Ese mismo año fue legalizado el Partido Comunista de España que había sido ilegal hasta ese momento después del golpe de estado de Franco que desembocó en una dictadura de 40 años. Esto originó un descontento con los políticos en activo durante la transición, pero que habían estado cerca del régimen franquista.

Suarez formó en 1977 un gobierno (integrado solamente por hombres) compuesto por una mezcla de liberales, socialdemócratas, y democristianos. Este gobierno hizo una ley de amnistía que permitió salir de la cárcel a presos políticos que habían sido condenados durante el franquismo por sus ideas políticas.

Suarez no obtuvo la mayoría absoluta, así que tuvo que realizar diferentes pactos para sacar adelante una nueva constitución que fue refrendada en 1978 por casi un 90% de los votantes. El gobierno decidió entonces disolver el parlamento y convocar nuevas elecciones.

En estas elecciones de 1979 los partidos que consiguieron mejores resultados fueron la UCD que consiguió el 35% de los votos, seguida del PSOE (Partido Socialista Obrero Español) de Felipe González con un 30% de los votos. Quiero aclarar que en España desde 1977 existe un parlamento en el que hay representación de más de 20 fuerzas políticas, así que no es una democracia bipartidista al uso.

Las tensiones internas en el partido de Adolfo Suarez derivadas de una crisis económica que venía desde 1974 y que se acrecentó por la crisis energética de 1979, los roces con los partidos nacionalistas catalanes y vascos, el terrorismo de ETA que estaba en su punto más álgido y la legalización del divorcio hicieron que Suarez presentara su

dimisión como presidente del gobierno en enero de 1981 alegando que no quería que la democracia fuera solamente un paréntesis en la historia de España.

En ese momento los analistas políticos no supieron descifrar esas palabras. El vicepresidente Calvo Sotelo fue presentado como candidato a presidente y debía ser refrendado por el parlamento. Su candidatura se presentó por primera vez el 22 de febrero, pero no consiguió obtener la mayoría absoluta, así que el parlamento se reunió de nuevo el 23 de febrero.

Recuerdo que era un día de clase, había salido del colegio a las seis de la tarde e había ido con una de mis mejores amigas a merendar a su casa. Serían las seis y media de la tarde cuando uno de sus hermanos mayores entró en la cocina y me dijo que me fuera a casa lo más rápido posible. Intentó explicar a dos adolescentes que algo grave estaba sucediendo en el parlamento y que las cosas no parecían bien.

En aquellos años no había teléfonos móviles, ni por supuesto Internet, así que las noticias dependían de las cadenas de radio y de la única cadena de televisión que transmitía a todo el país, que era la TVE. Mis padres estaban tratando de encontrarme y esos 20 minutos entre la casa de mi amiga a mi casa se les hicieron eternos. Recuerdo las caras de preocupación en mi casa, el nerviosismo de mi padre que no se atrevía ni a llamar por teléfono y a mi abuela diciendo que llegaba otra Guerra Civil y era necesario rezar y poner velas.

Lo que estaba ocurriendo delante de mis narices adolescentes era un golpe de estado. El teniente coronel Tejero de la Guardia Civil entró en plena sesión de la cámara baja acompañado de 200 hombres armados gritando: “*Todo el mundo quie-*

to” y disparando sus armas al aire. Las emisoras de radio y televisión habían dejado de transmitir al oírse los primeros disparos y las últimas imágenes de la televisión pública mostraban como los guardias civiles amenazaban al periodista que estaba captando las imágenes obligándole a apagar la cámara.

Tejero subió al estrado y pistola en ristre continuó gritando que todos los miembros del parlamento se tirasen al suelo. Algunos lo hicieron, pero otros no, ya fuera por estupor, por miedo o por coraje, continuaron en sus asientos y Tejero desde el estrado que normalmente se usa para dar la palabra a los representantes del pueblo siguió disparando.

Tejero ya había protagonizado en 1978 otro intento de golpe de estado que no consiguió llegar a despegar, así que, para los periodistas y diputados, después de los primeros minutos de confusión y al reconocerle ya estaban seguros de que se trataba de un golpe de estado. Solamente el General Gutiérrez Mellado que era el ministro de Defensa y el propio presidente Suarez se atrevieron a desafiar a Tejero, llegando incluso a forcejear en

los pasillos del hemiciclo.

En mi casa esa noche se vivió una gran tensión. Mi padre nos explicó a mis hermanos y a mí que era un momento muy importante que podía condicionar nuestro futuro. Nos dijo que teníamos que estar tranquilos, pero teníamos que saber que el futuro hay que ganárselo cada día y que la democracia no se debe dar por regalada, que había que luchar por ella.

Mi padre en aquellos años había sido abogado defensor de muchas causas de la CNT, el sindicato de los trabajadores y temía por los archivos de su despacho, así que en compañía de otros abogados decidieron destruir o esconder esos datos personales que podían ser utilizados en el caso de que el golpe de estado triunfase. No fue fácil salir de casa ya que los tanques patrullaban por las calles de Salamanca, y había toque de queda.

Recuerdo rezar con mi abuela y con mi madre, cuyas ideologías estaban muy lejos de la de la CNT, pero sabían que aquello podía terminar muy mal, especialmente mi abuela que había sufrido las consecuencias del golpe de estado de Franco y la consiguiente Guerra Civil. Fue una noche muy larga.

En las primeras horas del día, exactamente a la una y cuarto del 24 de febrero, se interrumpió la emisión de música militar y Juan Carlos I, el Rey de España en ese momento, apareció ojoso en la pantalla conminando como Jefe de los Ejércitos a los golpistas a salir del parlamento. A las diez de la mañana de ese día, y después de muchas negociaciones con Tejero, los Guardias Civiles abandonaron el Congreso de los Diputados y fueron detenidos. Tejero y los otros militares que habían participado en el golpe de estado fueron condenados a prisión.

Los agujeros de las balas en el techo del parlamento nunca se han reparado para dejar constancia de que la democracia es frágil y debemos luchar por ella cada día.

• **Food Bank de Massachusetts** sigue ofreciendo alimentos gratis cada tercer miércoles de mes en el parking del Senior Center en Turners Falls cuya dirección es 62 5th Street. La próxima distribución de comida será el miércoles 20 de enero de 1:30 a 2:30 p.m. Por favor, asegúrense de traer sus propias bolsas, así como mascarillas. Este programa se realiza en alianza con FCCMP y Montague COA. Si tienen preguntas, contacten con **The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts** en el teléfono (413) 247-9738.

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MONTAGUE from page A1
referring to the federal COVID-19 aid program.

The decision to investigate the Options Technologies platform led Ellis to propose that a “practice meeting” take place on February 18, and the actual meeting be scheduled for Thursday, February 25.

The board voted to support these dates, but did not set a time for the February 25 meeting. It then opened the warrant for the meeting, and set a January 20 deadline for submission of articles.

Ellis later said the airport commission had scheduled two public outreach meetings to discuss the proposal to purchase Pioneer Aviation, which will be the main and probably the most controversial article on the warrant. These meetings will be held on Thursday, January 21 at 6:30 p.m. and Saturday, January 23 at 10 a.m.

Salvage Zone

Ellis announced that the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) will be conducting a hazardous materials mitigation project at the site of the former Railroad Salvage building on Power Street on the Connecticut River side of the Turners Falls power canal. The site, which is currently privately owned but is in court over unpaid taxes, was nearly destroyed by a fire in 2016. Piles of rubble and several partial structures remain at the location.

The EPA’s proposal, shared in the agenda packet, did not state specifically when the project would begin, but Ellis indicated that it would probably get underway in March. The proposal estimates the total cost of the project at \$1.9 million.

The announcement of the hazmat project led to a discussion of whether the town should gain control of the property by pushing for an expedited decision in land court, which deals with tax title issues.

Ellis said that an early land court decision, before the end of the fiscal year in June, would be necessary for the town to execute a \$25,000 state planning grant to evaluate future uses of the property. However, he noted, town legal counsel has advised that it would be best to wait for the federal cleanup to begin so the town would have more information on “what we will be encountering” when it takes over the property. He said this would probably mean waiting until the fall.

The board was about to take a vote on the tax title issue when, after looking at his meeting materials, Ellis declared, “It’s not on the agenda.” Noting that a vote would therefore be a potential violation of the state open meeting law, he said that the decision needed to wait for a future meeting.

River Recreation

Town planner Walter Ramsey reviewed a list of “priorities” for

Montague to push to be added to FirstLight Power’s new long-term federal license for its local hydroelectric projects.

The priorities include upgrades to whitewater rafting entry points below the Turners Falls dam, improvements to the trail through Cabot Woods to the Rock Dam, a boat launch near Unity Park, and renovation of the buildings at Cabot Camp on the Millers River. The board did not take a vote on the issue, but Kuklewicz told Ramsey that “if you need us, you know where we are.”

Other Business

Public health director Daniel Wasiuk reviewed the latest data on active COVID-19 cases. He said the number of “active cases,” which he defined as the number of positive COVID tests, was at 23 from December 27 to January 9, lower than the previous two-week period.

“If that’s a sign, it’s a sign in the right direction, but we still should be holding our breath,” Wasiuk said.

Nour Elkhattaby Strauch gave a lengthy presentation on a potential “age-friendly community” designation for the town being promoted by LifePath, a regional senior services agency. The program has an emphasis on dealing with elderly residents with dementia. The board voted to participate in the proposed “age-friendly network,” and send a letter of support to be signed

by Kuklewicz.

The board also endorsed a host community agreement with the cannabis company Flower Power Growers, which plans to locate a large grow facility in the airport industrial park. The agreement includes provisions to monitor potential odor from the facility, as contained in a special permit issued in December. If approved by the state, Flower Power would become either the second or third cannabis facility in Montague.

The board approved the transfer of a beer and wine license from Mystic Pinball, which closed its doors permanently during the pandemic, to the Upper Bend Café, located in the same building on Avenue A.

The board rejected a request by public works superintendent Tom Bergeron to pay an hourly rate for certain emergency work rather than being reimbursed with so-called “comp time,” as is the present policy. Bergeron has argued that he

found it difficult to use vacation or comp time, and should be paid at the rate he receives for snow plowing. Selectboard members said they empathized with Bergeron’s concern, but feared that creating a new policy for him might produce inequities with other department heads.

The board approved a \$10,000 transfer from the reserve fund to cover underfunded liability insurance, and a \$21,600 reimbursement to the Franklin County Community Development Corporation for COVID-related loans to small businesses.

It also executed a \$23,700 contract with McMahon Associates for sidewalk work funded by the state Complete Streets program.

Ellis was appointed as the town’s official delegate to the annual meeting of the Massachusetts Municipal Association.

The next selectboard meeting will be held on Tuesday, January 19.



LOOKING BACK:
10 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

Here’s the way it was on January 13, 2011: News from the Montague Reporter’s archive.

Half A Million Saved

The public safety building committee made its final report to the Montague selectboard on Monday night. Committee member Deb Radway, with co-chairs Pam Hanold and Jay DiPucchio, told the board the new police station came in on time and substantially under budget – \$5,109,316.74, which was \$485,683.26 less than the amount the committee had been authorized to spend by town meeting and townwide referendum.

Hanold said taxpayers would see that savings reflected in their tax bills, as the town will reduce the amount of borrowing needed to finance the project over time.

Hanold credited the hard work of her committee members, who approached the project with a “Get it Done, We Need This Building,” attitude, along with the combined grantwriting efforts of police chief Ray Zukowski and fire chief Ray Godin, which brought in about half of the money saved.

Going Halfsies On Sewage

By an overwhelming majority, Montague town meeting on Thursday gave the selectboard the power to terminate or revise a 38-year-old contract with the town of Erving governing the joint usage of the town of the wastewater treatment plant in Ervingside.

The contract requires Montague to pay a share of capital expenses for maintaining the plant – which processes sewage pumped beneath the Millers River from the village of Millers Falls in Montague, along with sewage from the Erving side of the river – in proportion to the amount of flow Montague contributes.

Now that the International Pa-

per Mill in Ervingside is closed, Montague is contributing about 50% of the flow to the treatment plant, according to Erving town administrator Tom Sharp.

A Chance To “Thrive”

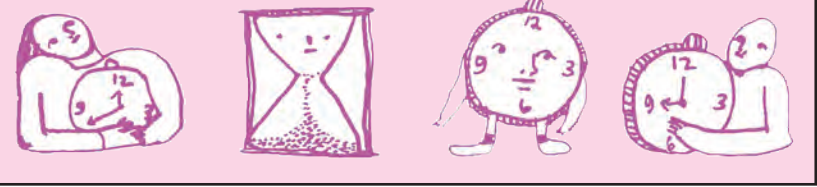
If you had to measure it, what parts of your life would you weigh to determine your quality of life? What makes you happy?

“For some, it’s a career, or owning a business,” said Jamie Berger, executive director of the Thrive Project, a new non-profit designed to help area young adults tackle this question.

“For others it’s a happy family life, for others it’s a pastime that offers satisfaction. I’d say that while none of us thrives completely, too many people – if they haven’t gotten a jump on it by age 18 – aren’t given much of a chance to thrive in any aspect of life they feel is important. That’s all I’d like to help change: to give people more chances to thrive in one way or another. I feel as if I’ve been given so many of those chances it’s ridiculous.”

Thrive offers computers and free internet in their storefront space, and a creative, motivated group of fellow “Thrivers” to greet you at the door, take you seriously, and talk to you about reaching out and grabbing what you want in life.

Three months since Thrive held its grand opening – a four-day, three-venue food, music, and comedy extravaganza, complete with the talents of Rusty Belle, The Winterpills, Michael Showalter, and Eugene Mirman – Thrive has offered everything from workshops on financial strategies and resumé writing to film screenings, knitting nights, and inspirational speakers on stand-up comedy. In January, Thrive will host open invite jam sessions, and workshops on “Becoming a Mobile Worker,” among other events.



SEWAGE from page A1

Katharine Lange, a policy specialist for the Massachusetts Rivers Alliance. “We look forward to meeting with the Department of Environmental Protection to work out how the public notification system will be implemented, and how the public can sign up for alerts.”

In Montague, wastewater superintendent Chelsey Little says she was already researching ways to notify the public of untreated sewage releases before the new law went into effect. She assumed the role of superintendent last March after a lengthy search to fill the role left vacant by Bob McDonald’s resignation in August 2019.

Little created the department’s first Facebook page as part of her effort to improve public outreach and education. “People follow their local police and fire departments on Facebook, so why not your water treatment plant?” she said.

While many communities have separate systems to handle sewage and rainwater, some older departments like Montague’s have combined sewers that handle both at once. To avoid overwhelming the plant when a heavy rain occurs, these combined sewer overflows (CSOs) can release a mixture of stormwater and sewage directly into the river.

“These facilities, a lot of them, were built after the Clean Water Act in the ‘70s, and they haven’t really had any major upgrades since,” Little said. “There was a lot of government aid to build these facilities.”

The Montague water treatment plant was built in 1964, and Little said that some pumps at the facility have been running nonstop since the 1980s.

Public Interested

The need for a formalized, statewide public notification system seems to be evidenced by earnest response to the potential health risks. In a testimony given before the Joint Committee on Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture, Donlon explained how Facebook posts made by the CRC notifying their followers of sewage releases received unusually high levels of engagement.

In July 2018, after a lightning strike reportedly triggered the release of untreated sewage from the Montague treatment plant, the CRC published a post that garnered 2,000 comments and reached over 100,000 people.

“We’ve never had anything shared that much,” Donlon told the *Reporter*. “There’s thousands of people out on the river every weekend – people are interested in that information.”

Another accidental release from the Montague treatment plant happened last July when the facility ran low on chlorine and partially-treated wastewater flowed into the river for several hours. Water treatment facilities were already required to report such

“dry” releases to the state Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP), but under the new law any kind of sewage discharge will now require a public notice. Other states like Connecticut and Vermont already have similar laws requiring public notification in case of a sewage release.

“It doesn’t fix the problem at all,” Donlon said. “It just lets people know.”

Comparatively, sewage releases caused by power outages and chemical shortages are less common than heavy rain events that overwhelm combined sewer systems.

“Just because there’s a CSO overflow doesn’t mean the river is unsafe in any way. It depends on the duration of the event,” said Little. “It is untreated, but it is extremely diluted.”

Montague has two combined sewer outfalls where diluted sewage can enter the river: one just before the water treatment plant on Greenfield Road, and another at Seventh Street that discharges into the river beyond Food City.

Under the new law, signs must mark the locations where these systems discharge into the river to communicate the potential health risks. Anytime it rains more than a tenth of an inch, Donlon said, these areas should be avoided for about 48 hours.

Weekly water quality tests in Sunderland and Northampton show that the northern Massachusetts section of the Connecticut River almost always meets safety standards, Donlon said, but water quality worsens further south near Holyoke, Springfield, and Chicopee. Higher population density, combined with an aging and expansive network of combined sewer systems, result in high accumulations of untreated discharge during rain events.

“We’re reaching the end of the design life for these treatment plants, and there’s no more grant funding,” Donlon said. “It’s a tremendous cost for the community to not just take a Band-Aid approach.”

“If the public is made more aware of this, there will be more public support for infrastructure funding to go towards fixing the problem,” she added. “Even when Trump was first elected there was bipartisan support for an infrastructure bill, but that never happened.”

Looking forward, Little said Montague’s wastewater treatment plant should see major capital improvements in the coming years.

“We’re hoping to do [sludge] composting on a larger scale in the future,” she said, “so that’s very exciting.”

“What we’re working on over the next year is our long-term control plan, which needs to be reevaluated,” Little added. “Part of updating our long-term control plan is having public input and education, and to make more people aware of the fact we have combined systems.”



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NOOK from page A1
revitalization arm. “Someone mentioned a little place that sold roasted peanuts next to Equi’s candy store,” she would later recount. “So I looked for it.”

It was another 17 years before Rossi gathered up the nerve to ask Equi’s owner Walter Williams about the space, which by then had long been used to stash soda and beer bottles for redemption. He agreed to offer it to her for nominal rent, but rehabbing the space took a significant investment of time and resources.

Rossi’s initial concept for the Nook included “Omnium Gatherum,” a project to collect oral history from those who entered.

“One of my aims was to be a story collector,” Rossi says. “That never really panned out too well – people were reluctant, when directly confronted, to share their story. But if you didn’t ask them, they’d be telling off really spicy, good stuff. How do you bring out the tape recorder? It kind of spoils everything. So I relaxed about that, and just listened.”

The Nook served as a gallery for scores of local artists, and Rossi sold art and jewelry on consignment as well as her own – sculptures, paintings, “curios and unnecessary,” and the slugs, stuffed and otherwise, that became her trademark. The shop, which Rossi calls

an “automatic platform to stir things up,” also became known for hosting a quasi-annual community art show called “Triple SSS: Sensual, Sexual, and Smut.”

“I mounted that with some trepidation, but it worked out okay,” Rossi says of the show’s first year in 2012. “There were some weird reactions... It’s always fun, though! It’s always a lot more fun than you think.”

Along the way, the candy shop-slash-package store next door was replaced by the Black Cow Burger Bar, and the heating company sharing the Nook’s opposite wall became a package store. And in December 2014 Rossi was recruited, on the sidewalk in front of the shop, to serve as features editor at the *Montague Reporter*. (Full disclosure: she remains in that role to this day.)

“A lot more visitors came to town as more things opened,” Rossi says. “Loot especially, and the Shea [Theater] made a big difference. Being between a package store and a burger place, I started feeling at the end like I was on the wrong side of the street – I used to feel like I was on the right side, but when Oliver Miller and those guys fixed up that big block, that’s been really good to see.”

When COVID hit, Rossi recalls sitting at the Nook – Friday the 13th of March – and noticing the Upper Bend Café across the street



Rossi helps an early customer in this file photo dating to the Nook’s first months.

was empty. Triple-SSS 2020 lined the shop’s walls, but no one was coming by to check out the art. “I was like, ‘why am I here?’” she says.

Rossi used the Nook’s closed doorway as a venue for a number of art installations this year. She has also “refurbished” her Etsy store, but says it didn’t become a major focus. “I don’t put enough effort into it,” she explains. “The whole marketing thing just gets really wearying.”


Rossi is on to new projects – see *ninastu-*

dio.net to find her blog and online shop – but says they will not involve retail anytime soon. “It takes a hard shell,” she says. “Not how I want to spend my time.”

“I enjoy being part of the community,” she says, “and having a role: creating delight and surprise.... Every town should have a cheap little market stall like that, where people can try out their ideas and see if they work. There should be three or four little spaces like that!”



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Above: These garage doors in the Patch, looking out over the power canal, have a story to tell.

NOTES FROM THE HEARTFELT CAFE
BY TROUBLE MANDESON

GREENFIELD – Dear Readers, let’s talk finger foods this month. Those small individual portions of food that are portable, don’t require utensils, and provide diners a varied eating experience while allowing one hand free to greet people or hold a drink.

These bite-size goodies began in the late 18th century in France as *canapés*, which translates to “sofas,” as the handheld slices with toppings resembled a person on a sofa. Originally toasted or fried slices of bread served with savory toppings, they then came to be known as *hors d’oeuvres*, a one-bite item that translates to “outside the meal.”

From these small bites evolved more casual fare: tiny sandwiches served to drinking patrons in 1920s speakeasies, 1950s housewives following Betty Crocker recipes for chicken livers wrapped in bacon, and state fairs hawking corn dogs on a stick.

The concept of wrapping foods in dough and cooking them is a global one. Think of a full-to-bursting spicy beef empanada from a Portuguese street vendor; savory Asian pork dumplings in a flavorful dipping sauce; a steaming Indian samosa with peas and potatoes alongside a curry; neat bundles of flaky Greek phyllo packed with spinach and feta, drizzled with a mild tzatziki sauce – and even the afore-mentioned corn dog (my favorite fair fare!) festooned with a squiggle of piquant yellow mustard.

One of my personal favorite finger foods are empanadas. They derive from the Spanish *empanar*, “to wrap or coat in bread”: a pastry stuffed with meat, fish, vegetables, or fruit that is baked or fried. In order to be considered an empanada, it must combine dough, filling, and whatever cooking method is used within that particular culture.

Brought to Latin America and the Philippines by Spanish colonists, empanadas are mentioned in a cook-

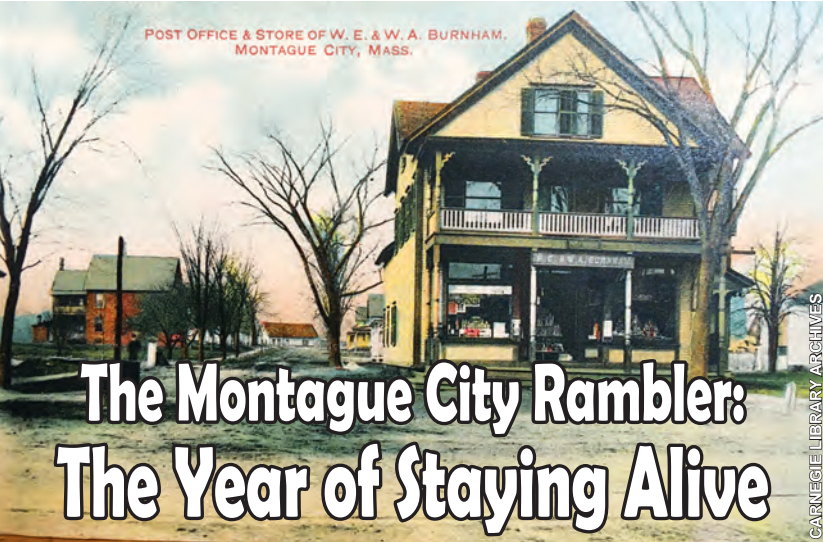


A tray of savory, beef-filled empanadas ready from the oven.

book from the 1520s with recipes of Catalan, Italian, French and Arabian food. Thought to have evolved from samosas in the Middle East and Central Asia, they also found their way to the Indian continent where they became a part of daily fare.

Empanadas vary regionally, and one would have to try every infinite combination to find them all. They are woven into the fabric of each culture. In Argentina, the pastry-like dough is cut with beef fat or butter. In Venezuela they are made with corn flour, and yucca or plantain is used in the Caribbean. Some call for a specific

see **HEARTFELT** page B4



By LILITH G. WOLINSKY

MONTAGUE CITY – Greetings from the least loved (though not by me) little village of Montague. Today we are the passing scenery of the bike path, times two – both through the woods and over the river, and up the canal into town – and home to a nursing home for the hard-to-place, soon to be moved to the southern climes of Holyoke. But we once were a thriving little bustle, complete with a

post office, a trolley station, a hospital, a library, a two-story schoolhouse, at least one church, numerous brick makers, and a small factory that produced world-famous fishing rods.

Things have quieted down. With the Montague Rod and Reel in ruins, the Farren’s planned departure, and the church long since converted to housing – ditto the trolley station, post office, and library – we are now a sleepy byway infused with fog and ghosts, and the rumble

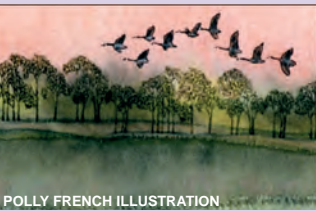
of 16-wheelers. The Cabot Station emits its electrical hum, and wildlife – deer, coyotes, skunk, eagles, and owls – move quietly through the open spaces.

Profoundly shaped by water, this little chunk of land was my backdrop and my constant companion, along with two semi-feral kitties, throughout this pandemic year. The place from which I contemplated my privilege, and worked early on to manage my anxiety and fear of death as this virus raged while our knowledge lagged.

I both lost so much – a sense of safety, the comfort of a hug, and visiting my elderly mother, who changes with each passing day – and also so little, as both I and those nearest and dearest to me are alive, and my community did not see bodies piled up in hospitals and makeshift morgues, as is still, again, occurring.

I watched this summer, and as the pandemic stretched into fall and early winter, as though I had banged

see **RAMBLER** page B3



WEST ALONG THE RIVER
LOOKING FOR MASHALISK
PART THREE

By DAVID BRULE

MATTAMPASH – As we wrote in *Part II*, the world in the 1670s was closing in on Mashalisk, one of the remaining woman sachems of the Pocumtuck, and her son Wattawolunskin. During these last years of their lives, they were living on an island called Mattampash, at the mouth of the Sawmill River in what is now known as Montague.

Mashalisk, as we have shown in Parts I and II, was a powerful hereditary ruler of the Pocumtuck Tribe. She held out and defied the inevitable rising tide of colonial settler dominance of her beloved valley, this fertile valley where we now live. She had inherited the lands from what is now known as Sunderland to the Peskeompskut Falls at what is now known, ironically, as Turner’s Falls.

There is danger in naming her the Last Woman Sachem of the Pocumtucks, since both the spirits of the Pocumtuck as well as their living descendants are still here among us. It was a popular 1880s antiquarian practice of naming certain individuals as the “Last of their race,” to offer as proof of Indian extinction. That practice of erasure has thankfully been challenged and debunked.

Mashalisk could be a tragic forgotten figure in our valley’s history but for the fact that we do remember her here, and celebrate the strong woman sachem who called her holdings by their original names: *Tomholissick*, *Masquamcossick*, *Wusquawwag*, and all.

Those places might still answer to their original names, if only we knew them.

There are one-sided perspectives found on aging white metal signs from the 1880s and 1920s dotting our landscape, written by antiquarian historians celebrating the conquest of the local Indians by their settler ancestors, but none mention Mashalisk. None tell of her being forced to relinquish her hereditary lands to the cunning and insatiable John Pynchon, who was engaged by the Massachusetts General Court to acquire the deeds from the Pocumtuck.

We are reminded by modern historians that not all Indians were victimized, as some portray; that on occasion, they played a willing role in trading away their tribal lands. This was not the case for Mashalisk.

The story has come down to us that Pynchon entrapped her son Wattawolunskin in a web of alcohol dependency, growing debts to Pyn-

chon himself, and finally prison. Some tell of a plan by Pynchon to sell Wattawolunskin to slaveholders in the West Indies, a fate often reserved for rebellious Indians in the Plymouth, Massachusetts Bay, and Connecticut colonies.

We are told that Mashalisk traded her doomed son’s freedom in exchange for her rich homelands along the Connecticut River. To her credit, she never deeded away our falls at Peskeompskut/Pasquamscot, Wissatinnewag, or the Montague Plains.

But beneath the paper-thin surface of early deeds signed with the signature symbols and marks by local Natives including Mashalisk, there is more that may indicate that the woman sachem had a deep design in signing over her lands that included Wequamps (Mount Sugarloaf).

So bear with me.

We know that in the Algonkian cultures, there were almost always lessons embedded in the stories told during the long winter nights around the hearthfires in longhouses, *wetus*, and wigwams. You are perhaps understandably not familiar with such stories, although they have been told for thousands of years.

Do you know why the muskrat (*muskquash*) was sent to live in the marsh where it is neither quite land nor quite water? Why the Great Bear is chased across the sky by four brothers and their little dog? Why each year there is a season of short days and bitter cold weather to remind people of their ancestors’ neglect to give thanks for all good things? Why the hermit thrush chooses to sing alone deep in the forest? Why the chipmunk has three stripes on his back?

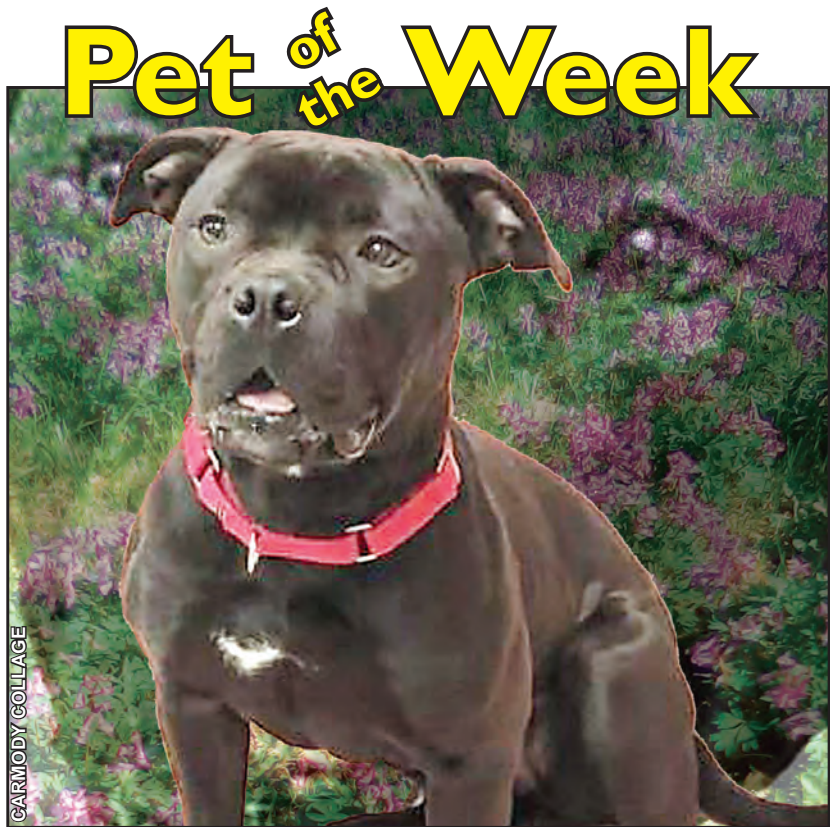
All these Algonkian stories have a lesson.

To Mashalisk, Wequamps (Mount Sugarloaf) was actually the petrified remains of the Giant Beaver which was slain by the giant shapeshifter Hobomock. Vanquished, the beaver sank to the bottom of the lake and turned into stone. The beaver’s body extends from its head at the familiar landmark of Sugarloaf all the way to the falls at Peskeompskut.

This oft-told story can be found in many writings elsewhere, and there’s no need to recount that full tale here. This stone beaver, which sank to the bottom of the ancient lake now known as Lake Hitchcock, was part of the inherited lands that Mashalisk was forced to trade away to Pynchon to save her son.

She must have known the story,

see **WEST ALONG** page B2



“BAYLEE”

Baylee is one and a half years old, and still full of puppy energy. She is super adorable, loves meeting people, and is small for her breed. Baylee is very eager to please, which makes for a great house dog. She has lived with kids but we recommend older kids who can handle her rowdiness. She is crate trained and will lay down and play with her toys inside her crate.

She will need some training to teach her some basic manners but is very treat motivated, so she should

Senior Center Activities

JANUARY 18 THROUGH 22

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@erv-ing-ma.gov.

LEVERETT

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

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

WEST ALONG from page B1

recounted for thousands of years by her Elders and ancestors, and she must have known what moral lesson was embedded in the Giant Beaver. She was the steward of Wequamps, and knew that the petrified beaver carried a lesson that had been retold over all that time. That was the lesson about the consequences of selfishness and unbridled greed.

Many contemporary Indigenous scholars are certain that Mashalisk had few qualms about transferring that burden of greed over to land-hungry John Pynchon and “*his heirs and assigns forever...*” In doing so, she may well have had the last word in this deal, in perpetuity.

We can be sure that she was broken-hearted in giving up those beloved places in her care: *Nepesoneag, Sawwtapshechuwas, Mattamooash, Papagcontuckquash, Corroheagan, the islands of Mattampesh, Allinnack-cooke, Taukkanackos...* Unfortunately for us, we do not know where most of these places dear to Mashalisk are located, although we undoubtedly pass them every day.

She did turn over the burden, and what some would call the curse embodied in the petrified beaver, to Pynchon and his heirs forever.

As for Watawolonskin, the reprieve Mashalisk bought for him was tragically short-lived, and it is recorded that he died of alcoholism by 1674. In his *History of Montague* (1910), Edward Pressey wrote:

Jinx: Squirrel for the Table, Rats for Practice

By JERRY “JINX” COLLINS

This excerpt from “Jinx: A New England Mill Town Urchin’s Life, the Depression through 1952” was written by Jerry “Jinx” Collins about his youth growing up in Turners Falls.

Collins prefers to write in the third person, and in his memoir seeks to present “not just the pleasant memories showing him in a glowing light but also those that aren’t so favorable.” A copy of his book is available at the Carnegie Library.

TURNERS FALLS – The first time Jinx and his friend “Hoppy” met, Hoppy had recently moved to “The Hill” from Berlin, NH. His father had taken the night superintendent’s job at the Millers Falls paper mill.

He was playing on the front screened-in porch of their rented house next to the skating rink on Millers Falls Road when Jinx walked by and they exchanged greetings. Hoppy proceeded to come out and talk and as the urchins turned and were walking towards the rink, Hoppy’s mother came out of the house and, with a shrill yell that went right through Jinx, called out “*Junior, oh Junior!*”

At that moment, Jinx promised himself that he would never give his name to any son of his and have him go through life possibly listening to such a shrill sound. Hoppy’s mother, in spite of that piercing cry, was a wonderful lady who became like a second mother to Jinx.

A Hunting Tale

In Massachusetts, deer hunting was for six days only, the first Monday through Saturday in December. This story from high school took place in the first week of December, 1951. Jinx and his best friend at the time, Hoppy, just could not imagine having to wait until Saturday, the last day of the hunt, when all the bucks and does had been spooked and would bed down rather than move about. Whoever thinks that animals are stupid does not know how instinct tells them what to do, and in the case of deer, tells them when the hunt in this area would end.

As they walked to school that Monday morning, Jinx and Hoppy hatched a plan for getting out of class after the first period. Hoppy would go in first and tell the Principal, Mr. Wrightson, that he had a bad case of heartburn. Jinx would wait ten minutes and then go in with his excuse. After he had been excused, they’d meet in the woods behind the school, go home to get their shotguns, and off they’d go on the hunt.

When Jinx saw Hoppy coming out of the office, flashing every ivory in his mouth, he knew the plan was working to a T. Ten minutes, which seemed like an eternity, passed. Jinx nervously entered the office and faced “The George” (as they called him) and, overly nervous,

“Watawolonskin with a few choice spirits... sat drinking within the long house, drinking misery to the dregs. And so they passed the winter away.... At last spring came. He sprang into his canoe on the first day and drifted down to Springfield. He sought out Major John Pynchon, and made a negotiation with him for money, giving Pynchon security of lands around Mattampash. Then he proceeded to get howling drunk and to smashing shop windows. For all this, he was arrested and fined...”

We know that Mashalisk was probably in her 80s by then. We can hope that she was not a victim of the massacre of the elderly, women, and children refugees led by Captain William Turner at Peskeompskut on May 19, 1676.

In spite of Pynchon’s acquisition of lands as stated on the paper deed, it is likely that for many years to come, the Beaver’s Head and the ridgeline that is the rest of the beaver’s body and tail (*Pemamachuwatunck*) remained territory too hostile for white settler habitation.

Somewhere on Pemamachuwatunck, we know that the spirit of Mashalisk resides. Some have even felt her presence there. Many are now encouraged by her resistance and spirit. We are all grateful that she is again recognized, and that her name, no longer forgotten, is again being called out from the heights overlooking her beloved Connecticut River Valley.

forgot what he had planned to use for his excuse so he fumbled into the same heartburn story – even though he didn’t know what heartburn was.

“The George” sat there sternly looking him in the eye, called his secretary, and asked her to bring Jinx’s records. “Oh boy, I’m in trouble now,” Jinx thought. “I should never have lied.”

After perusing the file, the principal looked up and said, “Your marks are good. I guess you should go home and take care of your throat. You don’t have to go see the school nurse.”

Clearing his throat a couple of times, Jinx thanked him, turned, and as he was going out, heard: “Have a good hunt.”

Mr. Wrightson was the fairest principal Jinx had ever known. But, in fact, neither Jinx nor Hoppy saw a deer that season.

Plinking Rats

Jinx got his real interest in guns and hunting from his five-year-old brother Donnie, who owned a twelve-gauge double-barreled shotgun and a sixteen-shot bolt-action .22 rifle. Neither of which he would let Jinx use.

To overcome this obstacle, Jinx started squirreling away a few cents here and there until at age 14 he was able to buy a used, single-shot .22 rifle of his own for the huge sum of \$4.00.

In that era, it was not unusual for a boy that age to start hunting, and to help develop his shooting skills Jinx would go with “Slug” and “Lits” to the town dump and “plink” rats. Landfills in the ‘40s and ‘50s were not covered over with dirt as quickly as they are today, so the refuse would be conducive to a rather large quantity of huge rodents inhabiting the place.

The boys would walk up to Turnpike Road and, not far below what is now Montague Street, enter the unmanned site and start shooting. At first they’d wait until a rat stopped running before “plinking” – what they called it because when a bullet missed and bounced off an old steel drum, it made a “plink” sound. As the urchins became more accurate, the challenge grew into hitting them on the run.

This practice came in handy when Hoppy and Jinx would start squirrel hunting along the river bank from the roller skating rink to the Rod and Gun Club. As with rat plinking, the shooting started by waiting until the squirrel stopped running and jumping from tree to tree, then advanced to trying their skills while the bushy-tailed grey squirrels were racing on the ground. It would be the perfect shot when they hit one in the air.

Today, people would think that a cruel thing to do, but the boys kept their kills. After they had skinned them, the mothers would make a squirrel pot pie or a stew with the cut-up meat. In 1949, money was still tight, so adding a little extra meat to the table at the price of a .22 caliber bullet was well thought of.

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RAMBLER from page B1

my head, and needed to clear the stars. Mechanisms of safety, seemingly simple and apolitical, such as social distancing and wearing masks were used as cudgels of division by a leader apparently removed from the concept that life is sacred. For many months, it felt like we were in the middle of a particularly devastating fairy tale.

The rapid development of multiple vaccines, hastened by scientific prescience (if such a thing is not an absolute contradiction of terms), an unprecedented sharing of scientific knowledge, and billions of dollars, were the first indications that what has been a nightmare for so many could end.

Last week, after I received the Moderna vaccine as a non-frontline health care provider, I was overwhelmed with emotion. The

waiting for the vaccine, and then the privilege of receiving it, the fear and misinformation that exists about it, the effort it took to stay alive this year, perhaps lessened now, the sorrow at what has changed and cannot be regained, and the tiniest hope that we will collectively come to our senses and realize the interdependence with which we survive.

For the patients with whom I work, for the elderly and others who departed alone and too soon, for my sister who is a frontline worker, and for the people of color and women who have disproportionately kept our economy afloat: my wish is that we will honor these sacrifices with life, and will choose to be vaccinated for the shared advantage it brings us, so that we can begin to heal the dark year we’ve left behind.



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MYSTRA REVIEWS #1

By JOSH B.

TURNERS FALLS – Here it is.... 2021! The Mystra column will be a little different this year. In addition to the interviews, there are going to be a few reviews of local releases. Please get in touch if you have a release you would like us to check out: mysteryentourage@yahoo.com.

At the end of the strangest year, with few or no new local releases circulating in the area, Mystra was handed this great new tape by a local “super group”... Panda Fort!

This group has origins in many other projects, mostly also on the Arbitrary Signs label – Spectre Folk, Lil’ Dusty, Magik Markers, GHQ, Virgin Eye Blood Brothers, and more – but this is its own thing for sure. Panda Fort has the added dimension of two new magical beings who bring new sounds and deep elements to the usual cast of characters (No-lan, Computer No-Doz, Lil’ Dusty, and the Kentucky Colonel). Their names are Violet and Julie, and both are welcome additions to the local music scene!

In recent years Arbitrary Signs releases have moved in a more “well recorded/well played” direction, and this release continues in that way, with great and wild rock

playing... solidly centered with a great drum sound... and scorching guitar sounds as well!

This tape, to our ears, is like a really epic house show... one that is also a raging party. The kind that builds up really early on... into who knows where... and all of a sudden you don’t know where you are, or how it could possibly get any better... and don’t know where it could possibly go from there... but then you turn the tape over....

And wow! The party starts all over again!

There are some songs on here that you will recognize, but maybe in very different incarnations. And then there is that point in most every good party when Neil Young music is added to the mix, and seemingly always adds a really unexpected and great dimension to things, and keeps us all “Rocking In Free-est World”... the best!

So yeah.... basically, this tape is good! Good good good.

To check out Panda Fort online, head over to YouTube, where they can be found covering “Surf’s Up On Titan” by the Magik Markers. (Who also have a new album out, by the way, on the Drag City label. We hear it has already sold out, but will be repressed soon, on colored vinyl this time...)

Happy 2021, everyone!

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MONTAGUE POLICE LOG

Bank Tantrum; Judd Chud; Moltenbrey Drama; Two Phantom Women; Stuck Truck; Struck Deer

Monday, 1/4
6:59 a.m. Third-party call reporting car vs. deer on Montague City Road between Farren Care Center and the golf course. Deer deceased on side of road. Vehicle is operable under its own power. Report taken; DPW advised.
11:48 a.m. Report of male causing disturbance inside Greenfield Savings Bank; yelling, swearing, etc. because he was upset that he had to wait in line. Last seen on bike heading toward Food City. Area checked; unable to locate. Units will continue to be on lookout.
11:57 a.m. Caller reporting that earlier this morning while he was loading tools at Railroad Salvage on Power Street, there was a suspicious-looking male in the area. Caller suspects he may have been there for drug-related reasons. Advised caller this would be logged and advised to call back when in progress so an officer can respond.
12:08 p.m. Citizen reported to officer that they had difficulty accessing the walk button at the intersection of Seventh Street and Avenue A due to the snow/ice. DPW advised.
6:24 p.m. Caller reporting that a male party driving a dark-colored pickup truck almost hit her while he was backing up on Third Street. Caller states the truck is still parked out back and she saw the party take beer out of his truck. Officer advises vehicle did not hit caller; she is not injured; vehicle was backing up and caller was wearing all dark clothes, so he probably did not see her.
7:51 p.m. A 46-year-old Turners Falls man was arrested on a straight warrant.
9:05 p.m. 911 caller reporting an unwanted person on Randall Road. Active no-trespassing order from landlord to involved male. Area checked; unable to locate. Two subsequent reports of party returning to property; one caller reported that a party matching the description just asked him if he could use the caller’s phone because his car “broke down.” Area checked via foot, K9, and cruiser; nothing located. Summons issued.
Tuesday, 1/5
9:39 a.m. Officer spoke with Asplundh crew working without a detail at Walnut Street and Turnpike Road. Detail shut down. Crew advising they were supposed to work on Dell Street next, but they will contact their supervisor and will not proceed without a detail officer.
3:51 p.m. Concerns reported about ongoing harassment and vague threats from an ex-employee at Judd Wire. Advised of options, including harassment order and civil process trespass order as well as 911 options concerning off-premise employees.
4:56 p.m. Employee from Carnegie Library advising that someone stole a set of DVDs from a bag behind the library that was scheduled for someone to pick up. Another staff person saw a short male in a blue hoodie, possibly around 10 years old, hanging around the library earlier.
6:07 p.m. 911 caller reporting vehicle vs. deer on Turners Falls Road; airbag has deployed, but driver told caller that he is not injured. Medical transport refused. Vehicle is driveable.
6:40 p.m. Fire department received direct call about an odor of natural gas on Dell Street. Investigated.
10:07 p.m. Caller from Highland School Apartments believes that someone is in the parking lot attempting to steal parts off of his vehicle. Area and vehicle checked; nothing found.
Wednesday, 1/6
8:54 a.m. Caller concerned about a vehicle that is parking on Highland Avenue. Vehicle has shown up two days in a row. Caller is concerned that parties may be trespassing on her property but has not witnessed any trespassing. Vehicle legally parked on a public road. Caller advised to call if there is any evidence of trespassing.
1:50 p.m. Officers checking on two males who are doing door to door without permits on Bulkley Street. Involved males advised of town bylaw.
3:35 p.m. Moltenbrey Apartments property manager requesting officer attempt to locate and remove an unwanted male who does not live there, and who threatened a ServiceNet worker on his way inside to his mother’s apartment. Mother found to have active warrant. A 38-year-old Turners Falls woman was arrested on a straight warrant.
4:39 p.m. Report of a hit-and-run accident on the General Pierce Bridge; caller states that vehicle just hit his vehicle while attempting to do a U-turn and took off towards Food City. No reported injuries, smoke, or fluids. Officer requesting county-wide be on lookout advisory be issued for a black or purple Nissan Murano with right front-end damage. Shelburne Control and Greenfield PD advised.
8:54 p.m. Tractor trailer driver requesting an officer assist him by directing traffic on East Main Street so he can get himself turned around. Services rendered.
10:52 p.m. Caller from Third Street complaining of noise from his upstairs neighbor, who may be intoxicated. Officer made contact with residents. All quiet on arrival. Advised of complaint. Caller called back stating they were still being loud upstairs. Officer states that when he was just there, they were playing a game at the kitchen table; nothing abnormal, noise-wise. Officer sat outside residence for a while; nothing coming from residence. Officer did speak with parties, and they are heading to bed for the night.
Thursday, 1/7
12:38 p.m. Caller from Moltenbrey Apartments states that someone stole a prescription of hers while she was being arrested. Advised of options.
Friday, 1/8
12:57 a.m. Caller from Sherman Drive states that he was sleeping and suddenly there were two unknown females in the house. Caller states he is visiting and there are other people in the house, but that is not who this is. Caller states he has one female in the closet; not sure where the other one went. Caller states he does have a weapon in his hand to protect himself. House searched; nobody located.
7:55 a.m. Officer received a complaint from Board of Health re: an unshoveled sidewalk on Masonic Avenue. Officer advises sidewalk has been cleared.
Saturday, 1/9
1:06 a.m. Caller from Keith Apartments states that it sounds like they are pulling out a sink upstairs and throwing it. Caller states she has reported this to Housing Authority, but the noise has not stopped. Caller slurring words and not making complete sense; started talking about electrical panel and being “zapped.” Caller requesting someone be in area between 1:30 and 2 a.m. to see if they hear anything from the upstairs apartment. Officer advised.
5:57 p.m. Officer checking on suspicious vehicle near water control station on Power Street; a few people are having a fire and fishing along the river. Parties advised to move along. TFFD advised.
9:24 p.m. 911 caller from Avenue A reports hearing what sounded like a single gunshot or explosion. Unfounded.
Sunday, 1/10
5:35 a.m. Caller reports that while out walking on Dell Street, she noticed a dog that appears to have been left outside for some time. Officers spoke to party at house; they advised the dog is a Malamute and is reportedly a cold-weather dog. Info will be left for animal control officer to follow up.
8:43 p.m. Caller from Second Street states that a package from Amazon was stolen from her porch earlier today; would just like on record for now.

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HEARTFELT from page B1

style of beef filling, with or without olives, raisins, egg, or peppers, while others are filled with cheese and guava or *dulce de leche* for a sweet treat.

The empanada, by whatever name, is food for the masses: cheap, easy to eat, and not terribly fancy.

On a side note: while I was studying sociology in college, I met a student who was a trained French chef who studied the culture of food – the hows and whys of what we eat, and how we classify and attach status to food. She pondered why some foods are seen as indoor versus outdoor, like caviar versus hot dogs, and street food versus home food, such as tacos versus pot roast. She even considered the ways in which meal preparation is gendered: Mom

cooks the weekday meal (and is likely expected to) vs. dad BBQing on the weekend (and, according to my pal, “having a ticker tape parade thrown for doing so...!”).

In essence, finger foods can be eaten inside or outside, both at low-cost gatherings or high-class soirees, and can be made from simple ingredients or expensive gourmet items.

Check out my recipe here for Beef Empanadas. I am admittedly not good with making crust and so I like to keep a couple of packets of Goya brand *discos* or pastry discs in my freezer (available at Stop ‘n Shop). I also have a plastic press which I use to form the empanadas. I’ve included a recipe to make your own dough if that’s your thing. Salud!



MANDESON PHOTOS

Beef empanada ingredients wait for assembly in the author’s home kitchen.

BEEF EMPANADAS

- 2 hard-boiled eggs
- 1 small onion, finely chopped
- 1 Tbsp olive oil
- 1 garlic clove, finely chopped
- ½ tsp each cumin and oregano
- ¾ lb ground beef
- 3 Tbsp yellow raisins
- 3 Tbsp chopped pimiento-stuffed green olives
- 1 (14 oz) can whole tomatoes (reserve 2 Tbsp juice), or fresh chopped tomatoes
- 1 packet Goya brand pastry discs, thawed
- 4 cup vegetable oil for frying



Using a press helps seal the dough around the filling.

Cut each boiled egg crosswise into 10 thin slices and set aside. Cook onion in olive oil in a heavy skillet over medium heat, stirring frequently, until softened. Add garlic, cumin and oregano and cook, still stirring for 1 minute.

Add in meat and cook, breaking up lumps, about 4 minutes until browned. Add in raisins, olives, salt and pepper, and tomatoes with reserved juice. Cook, stirring occasionally, until liquid is reduced but mix is still moist, about 5 minutes.

Spread on a plate to cool, and set aside.

Roll out dough (either a pre-made disc or your own) to about a six-inch circle. Put 3 Tbsp of meat mixture on disc and top with 1-2 slices of egg. Moisten edges with water using your finger, and either crimp by hand or squeeze the press together to form a semicircle. Crimp with a fork if closing by hand.

Repeat until all discs are stuffed and crimped.

Heat ¾ inch of vegetable oil in a deep skillet over medium heat until it reaches 360°F. Fry 2 or 3 at a time, turning once, until golden brown. (Alternatively, bake at 350° for 25 minutes.)

I like to eat them with a Thai sweet and sour sauce; experiment with your favorite fillings and dipping sauces.

Makes about ten empanadas.

EMPANADA DOUGH

- 3 cup flour (plus a little more for kneading)
- 1 tsp salt
- ½ cup cold water
- 1 egg + 1 egg white
- 1 tsp vinegar
- 3 Tbsp shortening

Beat water, egg, egg white, and vinegar together, then set aside.

In another bowl, mix flour and salt. Cut the shortening into the flour mix with a pastry blender or two knives. Make a well in center, pour in wet ingredients, and mix until stiff.

Turn dough out onto a floured board and knead just enough to incorporate all the flour, until the dough is smooth.

Wrap in plastic and refrigerate for at least one hour before rolling out, but never more than 24 hours. Freeze if you need to keep it longer.

Makes about ten 6-inch discs.

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

Dakin Provides Clinic For Non-Urgent Veterinary Issues

SPRINGFIELD – Dakin Humane Society’s Clinic PLUS, a twice-weekly curbside, COVID-compliant clinic, treats non-urgent veterinary needs at its Springfield location at 171 Union Street.

The Clinic is run by a veterinary team that helps dogs and cats with the following issues: itchy skin/allergies; ear infections; minor injuries, cuts and wounds; limping; diarrhea; torn or embedded nail; sneezing, discharge from eyes/nose (cats only).

Other available services include microchip, FeLV/FIV testing (for cats), flea & tick preventive, nail trim, heartworm test, and heartworm preventive. Healthy Pet Packages are a combination of services geared to specific needs. All include examinations and range in fees from \$94 to \$194.

Appointments for the Clinic need to be booked online at www.dakinhumane.org/Clinic_PLUS.html or by emailing Medical@dakinhumane.org.

Review: Get Down With Your Home Town

By MELISSA WLOSTOSKI

GREENFIELD – A school called North Star in Sunderland, the Shea Theater in Turners Falls, and the Institute for Musical Arts came together starting on January 8 to do a music festival featuring local and national music stars live on Facebook. It was a two-day event, the second day being January 9.

It sounded like an interesting music festival to do under the circumstances, so after I figured out how to watch it online, I began to look forward to it. After all, there were going to be national music stars in it. That does sound cool.

Ann Hackler and June Millington introduced the start of the event, and then the Nields were introduced as the first act. It was a four-person group that featured two guitarists and three singers. Two of them backed up a male individual at first.

Of the three singers featured in the

group, I liked one of the backup singers, a woman, the best. That continued through the performance. The guitar playing was all right, but I found I liked the singing better than the guitars in the group.

A three-girl group called Kalliope Jones was next. I found them to be a group of decent musicians. Two electric guitars were played in the group. A drum set was also being played. One of the women did a decent job with singing what sounded like a ballad. What was also good was that they sang and played their guitars nicely in sync with each other. Those are the only things that really stood out to me. The drummer ended up singing a song reasonably well at one point.

High Tea appears to be a duo involving one lady and a male. Both sang well together. In fact, I really liked the male voice. At that point, I liked his voice better than the singing I had heard from other musicians.

At one point, June talked about the In-

stitute for Musical Arts and what it does for young girls with music. John Genyo Sprague, apparently a music legend, played a Native American drum. He was kind of the oddball out when it came to the other musicians I heard, but he played that all right.

He then introduced an individual named Aviva Strong, a teenager from the North Star school, and sang her praises. Her singing was the top of my list. But she played the guitar decently – maybe a little better than a couple of other individuals I heard in the festival. It certainly worked well with the song she did.

John also introduced Catsby, a male guitarist, and drummer. His performance was unique sound in part due to playing a drum set and two guitars at different moments while singing a little.

The musicians in this event were very enjoyable. It wasn’t a bad music festival to see online!

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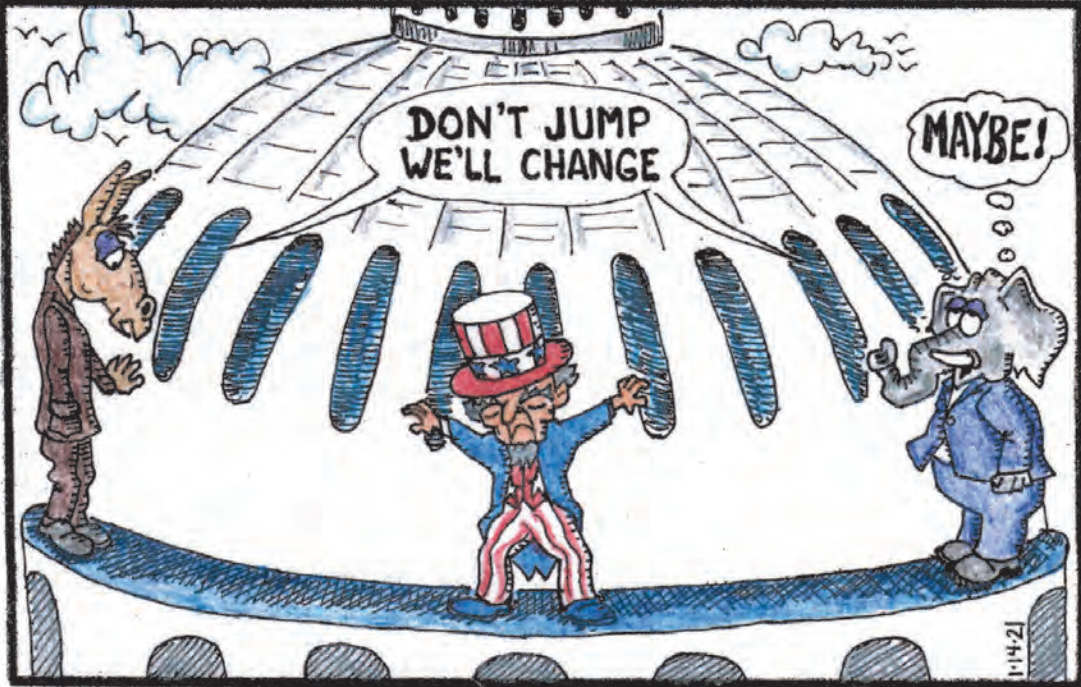
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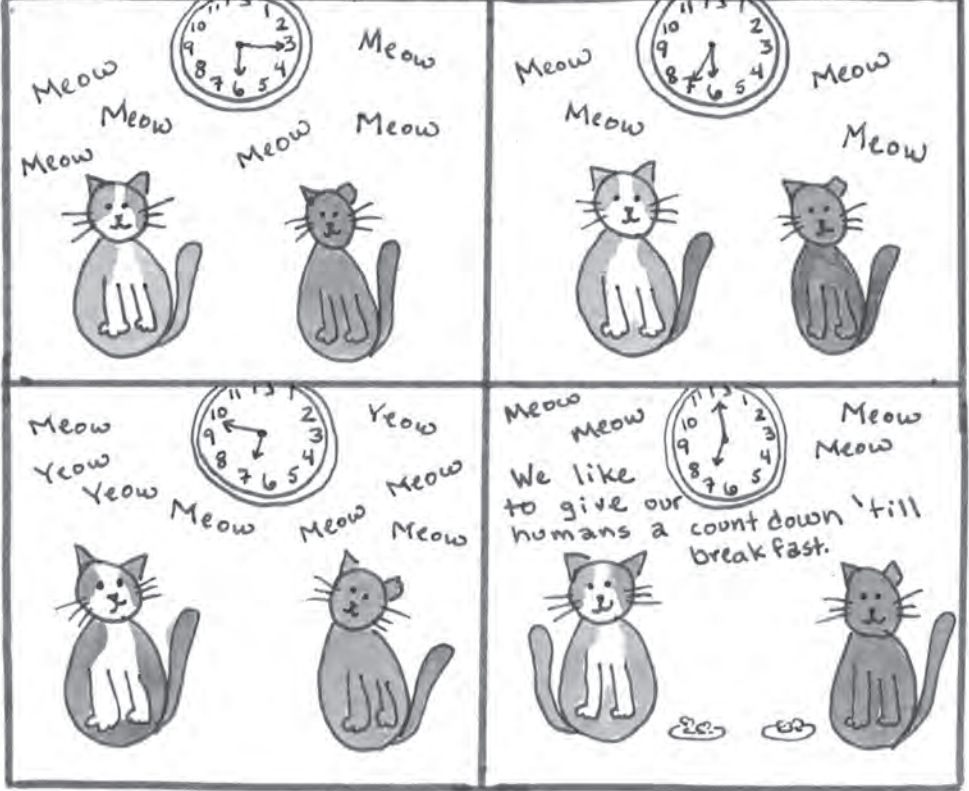
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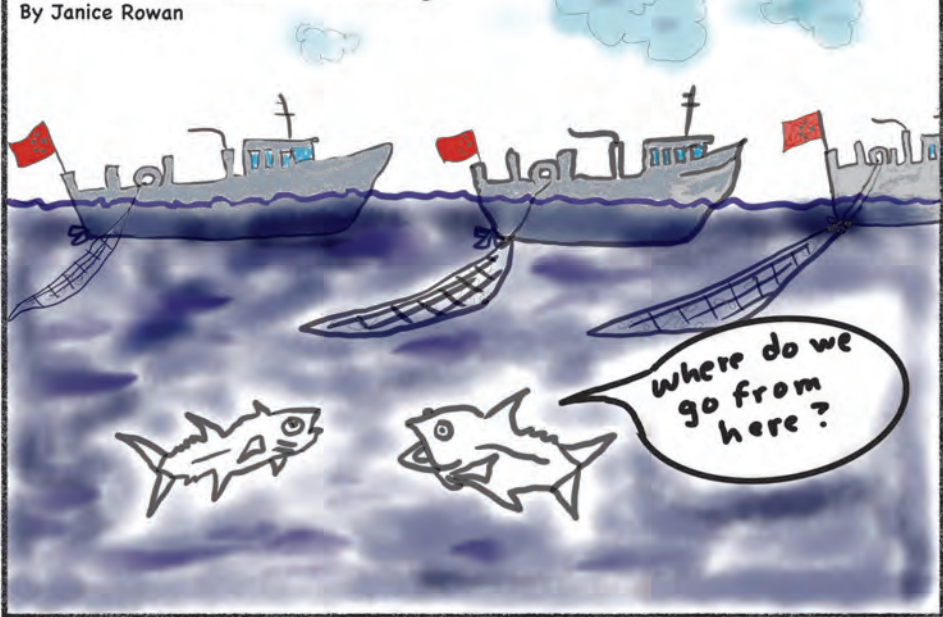


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About Face: The Right Turn to Take

By KAREN GUILLETTE

TURNERS FALLS – A few weeks ago I was confronted with what seemed to me to be a dire situation. All of a sudden the charger cord was falling out of the socket of my Mac-Book, and the computer was quickly running out of power. I was afraid that it was either an \$80 problem requiring a new cord, or, worse, that I'd be paying \$1,500 for a new MacBook.

Luckily, About Face Computer Solutions in downtown Turners Falls was open. With a quick call to the store I had an immediate appointment to bring the computer in for them to take a look at it. Within the first five minutes, Dana, one of the store's two tech problem solvers, discovered the problem by peering into the socket and noticing a very tiny piece of something that had wedged itself in there. Solved for a small fee and with very swift service.

I am fairly new to town and somehow hadn't known about this business until a friend mentioned it this past summer. I discovered that the two computer technicians, Brian and Dana Faldas, are father and son. This made me curious about them, and I wanted to know how the business started and how it came to be here in town.

According to Brian, the father in this relationship, the business was started back in the 1990s by Veronica Phaneuf and her sister Vivian Sarna who operated About Face as a computer service out of Veronica's house in Montague Center. These early pioneers in the tech world really wanted their business to be a resource for the community, to help demystify things and make computers more usable.

When I asked about the business's unusual name, Brian explained that in the mid-'90s the internet was just getting rolling and Google hadn't yet been created. To find computer service you had to go to the Yellow Pages and let your fingers do the walking. The sisters named the business About Face so that when you looked under computer services for Franklin County, the letter "A" would position it at the top of the listings!

At the same time, Veronica's brother-in-law Brian was working in Littleton, MA, providing computer repair services, among many other projects. He had a broad and varied background ranging from computer programming and systems administration to creating several biotech companies. He had also provided some technical services to the young About Face business.

By 2010, Brian had wrapped up the last biotech company and decided that the business environment was not looking good for startups. He shared Veronica's interests and philosophy about working with the public on computer issues, so he decided to move to western Mass and go into business with her.

By then her sister Vivian had left the business, and Veronica decided to focus her sup-



Dana and Brian Faldas work at their bench at About Face Computer Solutions in Turners Falls.

port services on Quickbooks. Brian took on computer services and soon his son Dana, a student at UMass Amherst, joined the business providing technical support to the computer service side of the business. In 2011 they opened a store in Turners Falls on Avenue A as they needed more space for computer repair than a dining room table could provide!

Last year they moved down the street from their original location to an office space in the Greenfield Cooperative Bank building at 176 Avenue A.

About Face offers virus and spyware removal, new PC sales, PC repairs, and custom-built systems and upgrades as well as IT support for business and home. They also provide warnings about scams and other dangers to computers on their Facebook page, where information about store hours can also be found.

In addition to computer sales, repair, and related services, Brian enjoys custom designing and building specialized tech projects. If you're looking for a bigger, faster, "hotter" computer system for some type of specialized use, look no further. As he points out,

just how fast and how good a machine he can build depends on the budget.

Brian also keeps an eye out for small ways to help the community for free. For example, a while back he participated in a career day at Turners Falls High School, bringing with him a disassembled laptop to demonstrate the inner workings of his profession and to give students interested in a tech career a chance to have a conversation with a professional in the field.

About Face also offers tech support to this newspaper. "Those guys have bailed us out more times than I can count," managing editor Mike Jackson told me. "We're putting out a weekly newspaper on deadline using a patchwork of donated gear and outdated software, and when something inevitably goes wrong, Brian will come over at the drop of a hat to get us rolling again."

"And they don't charge us for it – they just do it because they love the community, and want to see its newspaper survive."

My impression was that About Face seeks to make their services available at a reasonable cost. According to Brian, they don't like

to overcharge for services that are rather easily resolved, but rather "remain sensitive to value received for dollar spent." Obviously, they can't afford to address serious problems at incredibly low rates and remain in business. And they have not escaped the economic difficulties of the pandemic. Quite a few local businesses they service have been hit hard by the pandemic, so About Face has lost approximately 50% of their business over the past year.

What I particularly appreciated about my encounter with them was the welcoming, supportive and unrushed atmosphere at About Face. It seemed a bit unusual in my experience and I wondered how it was possible for them to be so calm and collected given the many repair projects visible on every shelf and countertop, the frequent phone calls, and a customer or two lined up waiting.

Brian reports that Veronica deserves the credit for this. He notes that her goal of helping customers be able to use their computers effectively has shaped the tone of the business from the beginning. As Dana pointed out, "We're good at customer service!"

Some credit for the positive experience is also due to this father-and-son relationship. Working with his son, says Brian, is an absolute gift. They have always been close, he says, and they really enjoy working together.

"When we first opened the store in 2011 and Dana had just signed on, my dad in California was having medical issues and I went out to help him," Brian recalls. "Dana, in his mid-20s, ran the store and provided all services for five weeks all by himself."

Dana seconded that emotion. "It's been amazing working with my dad. It's a treat that very few people get to have... having the relationship we have and being able to work together. He taught me everything I know about computers. I didn't go to school for this... I learned just by watching him work, and doing projects with him."

"In high school, I was able to help my friends by troubleshooting Xbox connections for them. It provided me with a strong foundation in this work. Then I worked in the office of information technology at UMass Amherst, which opened other doors for me."

Dana finished by adding, "Dad was the best man at my wedding, and he's my best friend on the planet. I suppose it's a little unique that we had that relationship before, and it's only been strengthened by working together every day for the past ten years."

About Face Computer Solutions is located at 176 Avenue A in the Greenfield Cooperative Bank building. They are open Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.; Tuesday and Thursday from 2 to 6 p.m.; and Saturday 10 a.m. to noon. Give them a call at (413) 863-5447 before heading over, as they sometimes are out helping clients.

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