

# The Montague Reporter

YEAR 19 – NO. 12

also serving Irving, Gill, Everett and Wendell

\$1

EDITOR@MONTAGUEREPORTER.ORG

THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES

JANUARY 28, 2021

GILL-MONTAGUE SCHOOL COMMITTEE

## State Aid to Schools Lower Than Hoped

By MIKE JACKSON

**GILL-MONTAGUE** – A small group of high-priority students returned to in-person learning this week, and if local virus cases do not spike first, a return to “hybrid” learning two days a week will be offered to all families in the regional school district on February 8.

Meanwhile, the administration is already looking with concern at the next school year, after preliminary estimates for state aid released on Wednesday came in lower than was hoped for on Tuesday night, when the school committee approved a preliminary budget.

“It’s not good news for us,” business manager Joanne Blier told the *Reporter*. “It looks like the state did use the current-year enrollment.... I’m disappointed.”

Chapter 70, the main category of state funding for districts, is calculated using a formula that includes student enrollment. After years of decline, which results in a “hold-harmless” status of frozen Chapter 70 growth, Gill-Montague had enjoyed a brief period of increased aid due to a combination of a stabilized head count and



JACKSON PHOTO

*Gill-Montague schools plan to go “fully hybrid” February 8.*

tweaks to the state formula. Then the pandemic hit.

According to pupil services director Dianne Ellis, the number of students in the district who opt to homeschool is typically “in the low 40s, and this year we’re over 80.”

see **GMRSD** page A4

MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD

## Cannabis Grow Proposed at Southworth



MIKE JACKSON PHOTO

*The former Southworth mill (at right) has been empty since 2017. Could the building be saved by a popular plant?*

By JEFF SINGLETON

**TURNERS FALLS** – Is the town of Montague about to become the cannabis capital of Franklin County?

At its meeting Monday night, the town’s selectboard reviewed a presentation by Ryan Ward and Nick Adamopoulos, who represent a company called Hydro Flower LLC which seeks to establish a cul-

tivation and manufacturing business in 40,000 square feet of the former Southworth Paper mill on Canal Road. The building, which is reported to total over 120,000 square feet, was sold last year to New Hampshire developer Tom Cusano after Southworth abruptly closed in the summer of 2017.

Hydro Flower could be the fourth cannabis business in town. 253 Organic, a cannabis cultivation, manu-

facturing and retail sales operation, opened in the summer of 2019 at the entrance to the airport industrial park. Two other cannabis businesses – a cultivation facility within the industrial park and a delivery business in Millers Falls – have negotiated host community agreements with Montague and are now applying to the state for licenses.

Adamopoulos, who is serving as

see **CANNABIS** page A5

## Not My Mill, Says Golrick

By MIKE JACKSON

**TURNERS FALLS** – Following last week’s decision by the Montague selectboard to hold off pursuing the taking of the historic Railroad Salvage property for back taxes, Jeanne Golrick, who as of 2014 was the sole “member-manager” of an LLC that owned the building, asserts that it has actually been owned by the town since 2015.

Golrick’s claims, which are laid out in a Guest Editorial on Page A4 of this edition, hinge on the contents of a land court judgment.

A plan submitted in June 2012 to the Registry of Deeds by then-owner Nice & Easy Properties LLC, a

see **MILL** page A4

## Sunderland Complex Leads County in Eviction Warnings

By SARAH ROBERTSON

**SUNDERLAND** – Owners of the Cliffside Apartments on Route 116 in Sunderland have sent at least 15 tenants housing court summonses for nonpayment of rent during the pandemic, more than any other property owner in Franklin County, according to records reviewed by the *Reporter*.

“Our managers at the Cliffside Apartments are working with those residents who are experiencing financial hardship to ensure they are fully aware of their options including government assistance through the RAFT and ERMA programs,” read a statement from a company representative. “At Northland, we

care deeply about all of our residents and have worked tirelessly throughout the pandemic to ensure their safety and wellbeing and will continue to do so.”

Northland Investment Corporation manages 26,000 multi-family housing units across the United States, including the Cliffside Apartments and the Boulders Apartment Homes in south Amherst. The company holds \$7 billion in real estate assets, generating \$500 million in annual revenue, according to their website, and manages at least 18 complexes in Connecticut and Massachusetts.

The 280 units at the Cliffside Apartments house 464 people,

see **EVICTON** page A5

## Greenfield Will Administer Montague’s First Vaccines

By JEFF SINGLETON

Montague may be receiving a total of 100 doses of the COVID-19 vaccine next week to begin the rollout of Phase 2 of the state’s immunization project in four local towns, the selectboard learned on Monday night. But a state-approved vaccination site in the basement of the Montague town hall, intended to serve Gill, Erving, Wendell, and Montague, is not yet up and running, so the board agreed to allocate the doses to a collaborative effort led by Greenfield at the city’s John Zon Community Center.

The news that the state planned to begin implementation of Phase 2 next week, when large numbers of Phase 1 recipients – including medical workers and first responders –

have not yet received their second doses came as something of a shock to local officials. This precipitated a series of meetings to plan how to administer the limited number of doses projected to be received as early as next week.

The number of eligible vaccine recipients will increase dramatically in Phase 2, with the first group being residents 75 and older, who were moved up on the state’s priority list just last week. The number of local residents in this category is unknown, but based on US Census estimates could be above 800 residents in Montague alone. Add the towns of Gill, Erving, and Wendell and the number of residents attempting to sign up for vaccines beginning next week could exceed 1,000.

see **VACCINES** page A7

WENDELL SELECTBOARD

## New Salem and Wendell Seek A New Town Coordinator

By JOSH HEINEMANN

New Salem selectboard members Zoomed in to the Wendell selectboard’s January 20 meeting to discuss finding a replacement for town coordinator Nancy Aldrich. At Wendell’s January 6 meeting Aldrich mentioned that she was leaving her positions with each town.

Aldrich said she can work into July, and then begin to use up her five weeks of paid vacation, during which time she can come in once a week to work with her replacement. August and September are usually relatively quiet, Aldrich said, but there are always surprises. She has started a book about her responsibilities.

Together, the board members of both towns decided to include town clerks and the finance committees from both towns in the search process. With the aim of hiring someone to start work on July 1, they will meet again together in a month with the towns’ fin coms to work out more details, and will begin to advertise in May.

Wendell selectboard chair Dan

see **WENDELL** page A7

ERVING SELECTBOARD

## Police Uniform Update Okayed; Sludge Dryer Grant Rejected

By KATIE NOLAN

On Monday night, acting police chief Robert Holst asked the Erving selectboard to consider a change in the police department uniform. Holst recommended using a “load-bearing” vest to which equipment such as badge, taser, cuffs, radio, and flashlight could be attached. Holst said that the current uniform, where equipment is attached to the uniform belt, is uncomfortable and a strain on the lower back.

In a call after the meeting, Holst referred to a 2019 study from the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire that found significantly less hip and back pain in officers who carried their equipment on a load-bearing vest rather than the traditional duty belt. The researchers reported that this equipment often weighs up to 30 pounds.

The vest has reflective lettering on the back identifying that the wearer is part of the police department. Holst said that outfitting six officers with the vests would cost \$3,348.

Selectboard member William Bembury said he had some initial

see **ERVING** page A8

## Sports Scammer Sentenced To Three and a Half Years

By CHIP AINSWORTH

**NORTHFIELD** – Former local sportscaster Marty Tirrell was sentenced to 41 months in prison by Federal District Judge Stephanie Rose in an Iowa courthouse on January 20. Tirrell had moved to Des Moines after burning his bridges in New England, where he worked at radio stations from Greenfield to Springfield, and at stations in Boston and New Hampshire.

In Iowa he billed himself as “The Mouth of the Midwest” and hopscotched from station to station leaving a trail of unpaid debts and broken promises. A popular and talented sportscaster, he excelled at basketball play-by-play and was able to procure topflight guests including Boston columnist Bob Ryan

and MLB umpire Tim McLelland who retired in 2015.

In order to pay for his extravagant lifestyle, Tirrell allegedly took money from clients, sponsors, and friends for promises that he failed to deliver. He racked up two dozen civil suits in Iowa and caught the attention of the FBI who arrested him two years ago next month. He was charged with ten counts of various forms of fraud and pleaded down to one count of mail fraud.

“I’m glad this one’s over,” said Kevin Kohler, the FBI agent who examined contracts, bank statements, and credit card bills. His findings were presented to an Iowa grand jury that indicted Tirrell on charges that could’ve put him away for three decades.

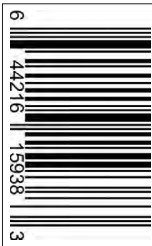
Michael Gartner, a columnist for

see **SCAMMER** page A8

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# The Montague Reporter

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## Holding the Line

First, the good news: Two more COVID-19 vaccines, those manufactured by Johnson & Johnson and AstraZeneca, are working their way toward FDA approval. If the AstraZeneca product is determined to be safe, it could be a game-changer: it can be manufactured cheaply and in very large quantities. It is expected to pass muster in Europe this week.

The United States has turned its attention even further in on itself in the last four years, but we must remember that this virus is a global problem, and most of our 7.8 billion people need to be inoculated to beat it. Mutant strains have now been detected in a number of countries where the virus has been allowed to spread extensively: South Africa (1.4 million cases), the UK (3.7 million), Brazil (nearly 9 million), and now the US (over 25 million).

In this race of science – and, importantly, regulatory capacity – against biology, we have known all along what would help: governments directly paying people to socially distance. In most places, it hasn't even really been tried. Instead, we have had "lockdowns," essential-worker workarounds, a softening of the traditional means of forcing people back to work (eviction and starvation), plus some apology cash here and there.

This inconsistent approach has pitted small business owners against large corporations. Anti-lockdown movements here have tended to be led by the former, lobbying to get their workers back. But the longer

this drags on, the more likely we are to see serious anti-lockdown riots of the sort that have erupted this week in the Netherlands.

It's a chaotic time, and we're slowly seeing the effects of the pandemic's exposing relations of power normally hidden under the fabric of civil norms. Many debts are accumulating, and we all have to wonder what will happen "after."

This week a report by the International Labour Organization estimates that the world's workers have lost \$3.7 trillion in collective earnings so far due to the pandemic.

Also this week, a report from Oxfam estimates that the world's billionaires – there are a little over two thousand of them – have *gained* a net worth of \$3.9 trillion.

As we write this midweek, a dramatic struggle is unfolding on the stock market, where millions of small investors networking on social media platforms – many of them stuck at home, trading on phone apps – are cooperating to punish hedge funds for trying to short certain companies to death.

We'll see where that one goes, but a lot of money might change hands, and the gleeful mob virtually storming Wall Street right now is, to say the least, an indicator of the national and global mood.

A desire to see comeuppance, bubbling resentments, a willingness to see chaos: Some people are already losing their patience. More still are waiting for the vaccine. Once *they* get it, it's another story...

## Yup, Whoops!

Thank you for the coverage of the Leverett Village Co-op's revitalization. It is so good to see co-op members and community rally to save their community asset and have coverage in our local paper. I'd like to point one thing in a recent *MR* article (January 21,"On the Mend, Coop Calls Annual Meeting," Page A1) that needs clarification.

Leverett Village Co-op is *not* a non-profit.

The co-op is incorporated as a Co-operative Corporation under Massachusetts laws specifically designed for co-operatives. The co-op may make a profit (or better described as "net savings" or surplus), though the significant difference setting co-operatives apart from investor-owned businesses is that the co-operative exists to serve its membership and community rather than to make money for

its corporate shareholders.

Co-operatives are businesses collectively owned and controlled by the people who use them, and are economic engines generating wealth and helping to create a more democratic economy.

We are fortunate to have many organizations and individuals working to meet the needs of our communities, but let's not perpetuate the misconception that co-operatives are non-profits.

Thank you for continued excellent coverage of the happenings in our communities. We are fortunate to have so many examples of community richness, resilience, and co-operation – and the contribution of *The Montague Reporter* is a prime example!

**Suzette Snow-Cobb**  
Turners Falls

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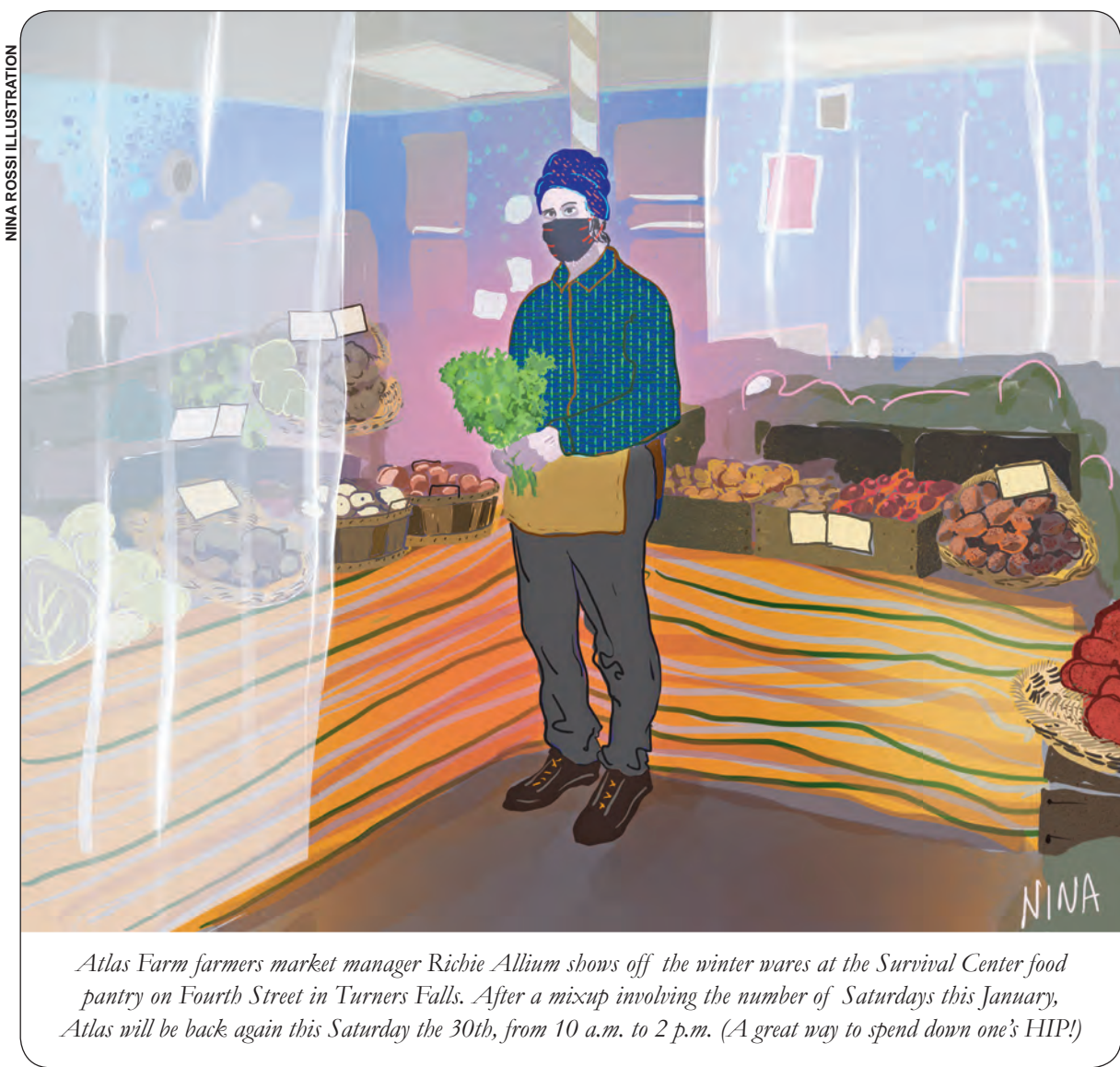
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*Atlas Farm farmers market manager Richie Allium shows off the winter wares at the Survival Center food pantry on Fourth Street in Turners Falls. After a mixup involving the number of Saturdays this January, Atlas will be back again this Saturday the 30th, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. (A great way to spend down one's HIP!)*

## Letters to the Editors

### High Living in Leverett

Well, there's The Stone Pony, where they breed Horses with a capital H. My friend Macaylla says that this is the principal money-maker in town. This is not the same venue which rents out the horses ridden by a few snotty equestrians up and down the Rattlesnake Gutter and past my house. The Stone Pony is an imposing place of real estate as well. You should make a point to see it. The owners will perhaps give you a tour.

We should not omit the number of medical and other doctors living here. When I talk with one of them they will shyly say that they live on Long Plain Road, for example.

The air quality is better than in many surrounding towns because there is no industry. Instead, we have the Leverett Crafts and Arts in the former Box Manufacturing Building. On the other side of the Town Hall is the tiny Post Office, not beloved by Washington.

When you go to sleep at night you may hear an occasional swishing car. But if the electric power is out and you step outside at 3 a.m. you cannot find your way

after a minute or two. You can still see the panoply of stars on a clear night. You will also see the whitish glow of Amherst, our neighboring city, on the horizon.

There is the modest Congregational Church in the center of town, the Buddhist Peace Pagoda reachable atop one of Leverett's hills, the Quaker Meeting House, and other seats of worship.

This *précis* is not complete without mention of the Leverett Co-Op, an unusual kind of grocery store which also sells ceramic mugs made by local artisans. There are a few tables and chairs in the back where you can imbibe a soft drink and eat a sandwich or so in a quiet atmosphere.

Visitor or resident, you will experience a kind of afterglow of a vanished New England town where they in winter no doubt cut ice off the top of Leverett Pond. Is it worth it? You decide.

**Hans Herda**  
Leverett

## State House Transparency

Advocating for climate solutions in Massachusetts is currently an exercise in cognitive dissonance. So many of our representatives are publicly supportive of climate legislation, and yet many of those same bills die in committee.

After securing majorities of co-sponsors and hours of citizens testifying and advocating, the Equitable Corporate Polluter Fee bill and the 100% Renewables act never left the Joint Committee on Telecommunications, Utilities and Energy. Which representatives voted to report it out? Which did not? We citizens can't find out what is happening to a bill, as the "Bills" page on [malegislature.com](http://malegislature.com) is often not updated, and lacks important information. Essentially, committees vote behind closed doors, and currently one must call the House Clerk and search through a PDF hundreds of pages long to find out how members of joint committees voted.

Some votes are not recorded at all, leaving us in the dark as to what actually happened.

With the House voting soon on its rules for the next two years, our Reps have an opportunity to change this inaccessible and untransparent system. About 40 constituents recently met with our state Rep. Natalie Blais to urge her to support a House rule to make all committee votes public and easily accessible online. Massachusetts Senate committees already do this, so the precedent and infrastructure already exist.

Rep. Blais has not made a commitment to support such an amendment yet, but has stressed that she

would like to hear from more constituents on this matter. If you live in the 1st Franklin, please go to [bit.ly/1stfranklin](http://bit.ly/1stfranklin) to sign a petition requesting Rep. Blais to support transparency measures.

Despite the infamous IPCC report in 2018 that urged immediate climate action, and over two-thirds of legislators co-sponsoring many of the bills we have fought for, there has not been any consequential climate legislation passed into law in years. Given this, it is logical to point towards lack of transparency on Beacon Hill as the major issue standing in our way.

**Alexander Davidson-Carroll,**  
*Our Climate Field Rep*  
**Ferd Wulkan, FCCPR**  
Montague Center

**WE WELCOME YOUR LETTERS!**  
*(ORIGINAL CONTENT ONLY, PLEASE)*

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By NINA ROSSI

Do you have a student at home who needs **help with schoolwork**? The Brick House Community Resource Center has one-on-one on-line homework help available during weekday afternoons from 2:30 to 5 p.m. This resource is available for students ages 11 through 19. Contact Jane Goodale, youth programs manager, at [jgoodale@brickhouseccrc.org](mailto:jgoodale@brickhouseccrc.org) or (413) 800-5705 with any questions or to sign up.

Join a **Love Letter Workshop** this weekend sponsored by the Slate Roof Press on Friday, January 29 at 6 p.m. Slate Roof Press member and poet Audrey Gidman will facilitate the writing of “break-your-heart-open love letters to ourselves because, let’s face it, when was the last time you wrote yourself a love letter?”

To register for the January 29

event, see [tinyurl.com/loveletter-workshop](https://tinyurl.com/loveletter-workshop).

A virtual children’s event on Sat., January 30 at 2 p.m. will feature an interactive read-aloud of **Steve Shanley’s new book, The Disappearing Forest**, a “choose your own adventure” type of story where participants decide what happens.

Shanley says that kids can immerse themselves in “the lovable world of gnomes as they struggle to preserve their secret way of life and help Gary Gnomelley make wise decisions.” The event is sponsored by the Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust, and is open to the public and free. Visit [mountgrace.org](http://mountgrace.org) for more information.

Mass Cultural Council announces a new series called **Recover, Rebuild, Renew** which includes over 40 webinars and hours of one-on-one consulting designed to help

those in the cultural economy recover from the impacts of COVID-19. Topics include human resources, legal issues, leadership and management, finances, and advocacy.

It is free, and open to all cultural organizations across the state. Sign up by going to [massculturalcouncil.org](http://massculturalcouncil.org). The first workshop begins on February 2, and two workshops will be offered each week through June 29.

A Festivals Program of **\$500 mini-grants** to people who are mounting festivals in the Commonwealth are also available through the Mass Cultural Council. The funds may be used for promotion and organization, and the deadline is March 15. “Specific Projects” grants are also available for cultural organizations with specific project goals, and you can apply by March 2 for one of those. See [massculturalcouncil.org](http://massculturalcouncil.org) for both programs.

A conversation about **teen suicide prevention** takes place on Thursday, February 4 through The Support Network. Real Talk for Parents Concerned about Teen Suicide is facilitated by Karen Carreira, a parent and suicide loss survivor. Karen will share her story and offer information and support to participants. RSVP to Margery Jess, [mjess@wmtcinfo.org](mailto:mjess@wmtcinfo.org), for the 1 p.m. Zoom event on February 4.

Growing blueberries, brambles, strawberries or currants can be rewarding and fun, whether for ornamental reasons or to grow food. Skip over winter and start planning your garden with a virtual event called **Growing Small Fruits in Your Backyard**, sponsored by the Massachusetts Horticultural Society. Check it out on Thursday, February 11 at 7 p.m. Register at [registrations@masshort.org](mailto:registrations@masshort.org).

**Help keep those in need warm** this winter. Donate new and gently used clothing, outdoor gear, sleeping bags, tents, and other items by bringing them to the parish hall of the Episcopal Church of St. James and Andrew at 8 Church Street, Greenfield, any Monday through

Friday between 8:30 and 4:30.

You never know when and if you might be in a situation to save someone’s life who is overdosing on opioids. Prepare yourself with a free **Narcan and Overdose Prevention workshop** online on Thursday, February 11 at 7 p.m. You will learn how to recognize and respond to an opioid overdose, and how to administer Narcan, an overdose-reversing drug. Register by emailing [maile@opioidtaskforce.org](mailto:maile@opioidtaskforce.org).

Are you unemployed and seeking work? Did you know you might be able to get **free internet and a subsidized, low-cost laptop** (or free Chromebook) through the MassHire Franklin Hampshire County Career Center?

Mass Internet Connect provides these services, plus referral to free courses on how to use digital technology for those who need to learn how to use those free tools. Call MassHire at (800) 457-2603 for more information and to sign up for the Mass Internet Connect program.

Also available through MassHire is a program designed to help you **become a CVS Pharmacy Technician**. This free, eight-week online program prepares participants to work in retail pharmacy. Classes are offered three days per week, four hours at a time, for eight weeks, followed by two weeks of 1:1 support for trainees around job placement. Virtual instruction on job search, interview skills, resume writing and other topics is also included. This training prepares you to apply and interview for open Pharmacy Technician positions at CVS Health.

Candidates must be at least 18 years of age and be unemployed, underemployed, or have a disability. Students must have internet access and a computer with camera and microphone. Loaner computers may be available. Upcoming classes are scheduled to begin on April 5 and June 7. For more information, contact Jen Duval at (978) 273-1898 or [JDuval@PolusCenter.org](mailto:JDuval@PolusCenter.org).

Send your local briefs to [editor@montaguereporter.org](mailto:editor@montaguereporter.org).

## Another Letter to the Editors

### Such a Generous Community!



Sincere thanks go out to all the folks in the community who supported the seasonal fundraisers at Greenfield Savings Bank in Turners Falls. During these most difficult times of not only financial worries but also health challenges, friends in our area rose to the challenge of the Warm the Children and Toys for Youth drives! We had drop-offs of beautifully handmade hats and mitten sets as well as blankets this year. Our toy box was overflowing several times,

and we needed to call Tim and Marcia McCrory from the Marine Detachment in Gill to come and help Santa Claus load his sleigh.

All donations stayed local and I am sure were very much appreciated. Once again, thank you for realizing the true spirit of the Holidays!

Hopefully the New Year brings good health and unity to all!

Linda Ackerman  
Greenfield Savings Bank

#### GUEST EDITORIAL

By MIKE NAUGHTON

**MILLERS FALLS** – After last Saturday’s outreach meeting on Montague’s proposed purchase of Pioneer Aviation (January 23), it seems clear that there are really two questions, and the answer to the first has a big influence on the answer to the second.

The second is the one on the ballot: whether the town should provide its share of the price for the Pioneer purchase and proposed upgrades. That’s the question that town officials seem to have focused on, and I think they have done a good job of researching and laying out what seems like a viable plan. If the town wants to get into the fuel sales, aircraft maintenance, and education businesses, this seems like a reasonable way to do so.

But that leads us back to the first question: Does the town really want to take on these responsibilities? We’re told that doing so is essential for the continued operation of the airport, so the question really is: Does the town want to continue to operate an airport into the foreseeable future?

Let me be clear – simply closing the airport down is not an option. The town has incurred obligations by accepting state and federal grants and leasing hangar space, and those obligations must be honored. But that’s why it’s important to look down the road now, before taking this proposed step. The airport likely needs to keep operating for the next decade or so, but what about

20, or 30, or 50 years from now? Do we see a town airport as part of that future?

If the answer is yes, then doing what we can now to secure the airport’s future seems like a good idea. But if the answer is no – or even just “not necessarily” – then making this purchase seems less attractive. It would further lock us in to doing something that we may not want to keep doing.

In these polarized times, I’d like to emphasize that I don’t think this is a case of one side being “right” and the other “wrong.” This is basically a matter of opinion – either you like having the airport there and think it should keep going or you don’t – or, and this may be the majority, you really don’t care much either way. In normal times, town meeting would be a forum for airing these opinions, but given the challenges of conducting the upcoming town meeting virtually, along with the fact that most people in town are not town meeting members, I hope that people will find ways to voice their opinions ahead of time.

Right now, I’m in the “don’t care” to “would just as soon not have an airport” camp – it’s been around for a while, and people are used to it, but it uses a lot of town-owned land without (as far as I can see) bringing a whole lot of benefits to the community. But I know other people feel differently, and I hope they’ll chime in.

I’d like to add two more thoughts. The first is that even if the airport never asks for any tax dol-

lars to fund its annual budget or capital projects (which is the airport manager’s goal), its use of town land means that taxpayers are still contributing through forgone tax dollars. The size of this contribution is speculative, as are the benefits to the community from having the airport, but they are both real. Once again, whether having an airport is “worth it” is a matter of opinion.

The other is that this proposal makes clear that nobody expects that the airport can support itself entirely with revenues from airport-related activities. Even with the new ventures, the airport will depend on income from leasing a warehouse whose purposes have nothing to do with the airport. We’re told that this is common for airports, but for me it’s one more reason not to encourage them. It seems to me that if the town wants an airport, but the airport can’t support itself with its own revenues, then taxpayers should be ready to come up with the difference. The airport shouldn’t be diversifying into non-airport activities just to make money any more than the sewage treatment plant should acquire land and operate businesses just to lower sewer fees.

Some government is necessary – I’m not an anarchist – but it should stay in its lane, and its costs should be clear to the voters. At least, that’s my opinion. I hope to hear others.

Mike Naughton is a town meeting member from Precinct 2.

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## MILL from page A1

Delaware corporation that had acquired the one-time Griswold cotton mill complex two years earlier, split the property into a 2.27-acre main building lot and a 32,473-square-foot lot for the Annex.

According to Registry documents, Nice & Easy sold the 2.27-acre parcel to Peter Champoux of Greenfield that July for \$200, and Champoux resold the same parcel to Solutions Consulting Group, LLC in August 2013.

That October, the town of Montague initiated a tax taking against Champoux, Nice & Easy, and another former owner for a parcel "containing 2.914 acres more or less," referencing deeds and an assessor's map dating to before the lot split. This appears to have resulted in a land court judgment in Montague's favor, and against Nice & Easy, in September 2015.

That November, the town filed a complaint against Solutions Consulting "to foreclose a tax lien acquired under a certain tax deed" on the date of that judgment.

The town would go on to sell the Annex lot to Power Street LLC, owned by Bob Obear, Jr., for \$1,000 under a land development agreement. By then Solutions Consulting Group had been legally dissolved and a major fire affected the main mill building, already in a state of collapse. Now Golrick and the town each hold that the other owns the distressed parcel.

Town administrator Steve Ellis dismissed Golrick's position that the 2015 judgment "completely transferred" the mill to the inhabitants of Montague.

"The town is confident about its legal standing with regard to 11 Powers Street," he wrote. "This is the result of a long series of legal processes in land court. The town has been represented by tax title counsel, and Ms. Golrick has spoken for Solutions Consulting LLC..."

"Land court would not be taking this on if they believed we owned the property," he added. "The tax taking is the end of a long process, not the beginning."



## GUEST EDITORIAL

"The Montague Swamp  
Needs to Be Drained, Too"

By jeanne of the family Golrick

Given the limited wording allowed in this media venue, I wish to inform the townspeople of the five villages of Montague of the facts regarding the story of RR Salvage and inform everyone to step up and pay attention to what the Selectboard is, or is not, doing allegedly "on their behalf" as their "elected officials" for the social compact of Montague.

The story of the Railroad Salvage is much bigger than what the Selectboard has presented in its weekly meetings. As you may understand from these documentable, truthful facts, *the TOWN has been the owner of the RR Salvage since the judgment in 2015*, and so I have been scapegoated (as a member of a state discontinued corporate entity) over these many years so that they could avoid the responsibility for their obligations as owners of this property, and attempt to blame and extract money and reputation from me and my family.

- The property known as Railroad Salvage has been called many other things, but is properly referred to as Assessors Map 3, Lot 27 (and since 2012 also includes a newly created Map 3, Lot 89). The larger (whole) parcel was split into two lots in 2012, and later each smaller parcel was sold to different owners.

- The larger portion retained the now ambiguous Map and Lot designation of Map 3, Lot 27, and the smaller portion became a new parcel on Map 3 - Lot 89.

- In October 2013, the Town of

Montague filed a tax taking against "Map 3, Lot 27," citing the owner, incorrectly, as Nice & Easy, who was at that time the third previous owner. After two years, Land Court judged in favor of the Town of Montague, and Map 3 Lot 27 was then completely transferred to the Town of Montague on August 28, 2015.

- A year later, Solutions Consulting Group dissolved, leaving the parcel in the uncontested ownership of the Town of Montague. Six months after that, the Town-owned parcel was destroyed by fire.

The RR Salvage story has served as either (1) their hidden intention to cause harm to me because I do not share either a political designation or world view or (2) cover up for their professional incompetency; either way I have been "railroaded" out of town.

People of Montague need to be fully aware of the fact that governments do *not* earn their own money as do the townspeople who have to work for a living, but rather governments live off the efforts of others. I am one of those people who fully understood this truth and now wish my former community members to know the facts and to clear my name of the horrors which the Montague town government has, and continues to *falsely* ascribe, to me and my family.

The Town operates only with funds it receives from taxing the townsfolk or from gifts/enhanced revenues (grants) from other allied (federal) government agencies (such as the EPA) which support it

## GMRSD from page A1

Most other districts in Massachusetts have also seen enrollment drop this year, however, which had led to widespread rumors that the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) would plug in FY'20 figures, rather than FY'21, to calculate FY'22 aid.

On Tuesday night the Gill-Montague school committee agreed to guess high, unanimously approving a preliminary budget that assumed \$7,395,110 in Chapter 70 aid, because budgets may only be reduced after that point in the process. The figure announced on Wednesday was \$7,129,856.

"We may have to make some reductions from where we started," said Blier. "We'll look at everything." About \$115,000 of the \$265,254 shortfall, she said, will likely come from the towns of Montague and Gill, after Montague revised its "affordable" assessment upward. Another source is federal COVID-19 money under the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) program, which may be rolled into next fiscal year if unspent.

Ultimately, though, staff positions may be hit, said Blier.

Tuesday's meeting did not focus on the budget for very long; the main topic at hand was the return of students - and teachers - to the buildings.

Superintendent Brian Beck said a final report measuring air exchange improvements at the middle and high school was expected this week. "We want to make sure that work is done," he said.

Classroom windows will be cracked, Beck told the *Reporter*. "Opening one window just an inch or so, substantially increases fresh air," he wrote. "I am asking everyone to do it, even though ventilation is greatly improved and we have air purifiers throughout the schools. I am willing to sacrifice some heating expense in order to maximize our air quality."

Under the "hybrid" learning model, students will meet in smaller classrooms, and continue to learn via computers; some will attend via vid-

eoconference. The district is surveying families about whether they intend to send in children, with the goal of organizing them into cohorts, so that siblings can attend on the same days.

Beck said Gill-Montague has not yet heard back on its application to help pilot a "pool-testing" program for the COVID-19 virus, but that Binax rapid test kits are on hand to promptly check anyone showing symptoms.

Montague member Mike Langknecht suggested contacting the town's wastewater department to inquire about testing effluent from the building. "They have been able to anticipate outbreaks a couple weeks before positive tests," he explained.

Beck said that if the air exchange study shows positive results and local COVID numbers remain low, he will contact district families to announce the February 8 return. "I do recognize that'll get us started before vacation," he said. "Everything is obviously completely a work in progress."

Beck warned that the return to in-person teaching may lead to further staffing gaps. "There are some additional positions that may need to be filled as a result of granted leaves of absence, either short-term or long-term," he said. "Until those are confirmed and posted, I can't share a list." The food service director position is unfilled.

The committee continued a discussion from its previous meeting concerning learning loss attributed to remote learning. "This is going to be a standing agenda item," Beck said.

Several members clarified their comments from the previous meeting by stressing their support and praise for the district's teachers.

"The academic backslide is concerning, but I count it as an unavoidable side effect of the pandemic," said Montague member Haley Anderson. "People are in survival mode. I wouldn't expect to see academic gains."

A vote by DESE on Tuesday removed the requirement for seniors to pass the MCAS test.

The next school committee meeting, scheduled for February 9, will include a public hearing on the FY'22 budget.



## Timeline of Events

*As submitted with the editorial. The [square brackets] denote Franklin County Registry of Deeds (FCRD) Book and Page in book/page format.*

**June 8, 2010:** Nice & Easy acquires Map 3, Lot 27 from Court Receiver. [5865/199] {Two years transpire.}

**January 2012:** Nice & Easy submits plan to split parcel known as Map 3, Lot 27 into two separate lots to Montague planning board.

**February 2012:** Planning board meets and fails to take action on the Approval Not Required (ANR).

**April 24, 2012:** Town clerk issues letter indicating that the inaction of the planning board means the parcel split is accepted - but not necessarily approved - by the Town. (Approval Not Required.)

**June 18, 2012:** Town clerk's letter is filed in FCRD. [6203/127]

**July 23, 2012:** Nice & Easy sells Map 3, Lot 27. [6224/152] {Over a year transpires.}

**August 1, 2013:** Map 3, Lot 27 sold to Solutions Consulting Group. [6418/65]

**October 30 2013:** Town treasurer files Tax Taking for Map 3, Lot 27 from incorrect owner. [6459/269] {Two years transpire.}

**August 28, 2015:** Land Court awards Map 3, Lot 27 to Town of Montague. [6744/8] {A year transpires.}

**June 30, 2016:** Solutions Consulting Group ceases to exist. {Six months later...}

**December 31, 2016:** The building on Town-owned property, Map 3 Lot 27, is destroyed by fire.

**January 2017:** Town incorrectly files suit against defunct Solutions Consulting Group to seek repairs to the Town-owned property, and issues a "no trespass" order prohibiting any access to the property.

**2019:** Town files new Land Court case to take Map 3 Lot 27, without any State Tax Form 301 (Tax Taking document).

**2020:** Town directs EPA to seek permission from Solutions Consulting Group for access to Town-owned property.

**2020:** Land Court hears arguments in the case, but does not issue any judgment.

through grants.

Please take notice of the first preamble to the Mass Constitution, which says in part:

"The end of the institution, maintenance, and administration of government is to secure the existence of the body politic....."

Are you as members of this Town happy with the way the Town is upholding its end of the social compact (the body politic), for which this Town administration operates?

I am not and was not; this chapter (the Railroad Salvage Saga) is but a small portion of a much longer story that proves my position. Please watch what is happening for I have moved on, but you are still there.

I am, as always, in truth with integrity,  
jeanne of the family Golrick.

*If you would like to contact jeanne, please write to 15 Lincoln St. #147, Wakefield, MA 01880.*

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### EVICTION from page A1

according to the company representative, who declined to answer follow-up questions regarding how many of these residents were behind on rent, and the nature of specific cases.

Two Cliffside residents who received housing court summonses spoke with the *Reporter* for this story, but both spoke on condition of anonymity. Both said they were already communicating with Cliffside management, sending regular “statements of faith” and making partial rent payments, when they received the summonses by surprise.

“I sent an email inquiry to the lawyer and management office, but did not receive a response,” said one resident, who we will call A. “I was just furious/panicked after the summons which was why I emailed the lawyer.”

A social worker who had supplemented their income with informal work before the pandemic, A. fell behind on rent and exhausted the financial aid available through RAFT, the Residential Assistance for Families in Transition program. After receiving a court summons two weeks ago, they were able to pay back the rent owed to the property management company last weekend thanks to a GoFundMe campaign.

“My income continued to suffer but it was only partially COVID-related,” A. said. “Plus, I needed to wait a year from the last time I used RAFT.”

Another Cliffside renter, B. says they fell two months behind on rent after having to take off work for health reasons. They communicated their situation with Cliffside’s management and began a partial payment plan, but still received a court summons two weeks ago.

“I’m stressing like crazy, because I work at Stop and Shop and they don’t pay me enough,” B. said. “I’m running around with my head chopped off trying to find the money to pay for it.”

Franklin County saw a spike in recorded coronavirus cases in the second week of December, and a subsequent spike after the Christmas holiday. In the last two weeks, 3.63% of the 827 Sunderland residents tested were positive for COVID-19, higher than the neighboring towns of Montague and Leverett, but lower than in Hadley and far less than the 9.17% positivity rate in Whately.

“Northland’s first priority is the safety and well-being of its employees, residents, and communities,” read a statement on the company’s website. “We are

continuing to closely monitor COVID-19, and the recommendations put forth by the Centers for Disease Control and World Health Organization, as well as federal and state officials.”

Living at Cliffside is expensive, said B., who splits a one-bedroom apartment with a roommate for \$1,103 a month. They also complained to the *Reporter* about inadequate maintenance at the complex, and the combined cost of utilities and additional fees charged by the property owner.


“We have been trying to leave this place for months,” B. said. “We asked to move to a first-floor apartment with no stairs because of my condition, and they asked for a deposit of \$100, when we are already living here.”

No evictions have been carried out in Franklin County since the state moratorium expired on October 17, but a backlog has been accumulating behind a large number of court summonses served by the Franklin County Sheriff’s Office. All housing court case hearings in Franklin, Hampshire, Hampden, and Berkshire counties are being held daily over one busy Zoom call.

Nationally, COVID-19 has killed 423,519 people to date as new mutations hasten the spread of the airborne virus. On Wednesday alone 3,692 new deaths were reported.

“I thought of moving at the end of my last lease, but COVID was a bit daunting,” A. said.

In an executive order signed on Inauguration Day, the Biden administration extended a Centers for Disease Control (CDC) moratorium on evictions and foreclosures until March 31. To qualify, renters must sign an affidavit proving they made efforts to pay at least partial rent and pursued other forms of financial relief. Similar protections for homeowners were passed by the Federal Housing Finance Agency on January 19. On Wednesday, the USDA also suspended the collection of overdue loans and foreclosures for farmers citing the pandemic.

A working paper released this month by the non-partisan National Bureau of Economic Research titled *Housing Precarity & The COVID-19 Pandemic* concluded that “housing precarity policies are important and effective policy mechanisms for reducing the spread of COVID-19.” The study calculated that if a federal eviction moratorium had been in place since the pandemic’s beginning, COVID-19 infection may have been reduced by 14.2%, and deaths by 40.7%. 

### CANNABIS from page A1

legal counsel to Hydro Flower, said his company was aware that there were other cannabis businesses in town and hoped to work with them “to have a common goal.” In a slide presentation to the board, Adamopoulos said Hydro Flower seeks to negotiate a host community agreement similar to the other franchises, pledging to donate to “community causes,” encourage employees to volunteer, and hire locally.

Adamopoulos said CEO Ryan Ward had “vast experience in the cannabis business,” citing licenses he holds in Pennsylvania and Maine. The presentation showed a number of pictures of pot growing in a warehouse or factory setting in Maine, where Ward was said to have obtained one of the first cannabis licenses in the state. He is a co-owner of Arcanna LLC, which holds cannabis manufacturing and cultivation licenses in Eliot, Maine.

Hydro Flower LLC, which was created in mid-December 2020, is listed at having its office at 36 Canal Street, where the former Southworth building is located.

At the hearing, Cusano said he had so far been approached by several potential tenants who “really weren’t in a suitable position to see their project through and make it work, so we’ve got pretty good confidence in Ryan and his company.”

Town administrator Steve Ellis said he had had a “terrific conversation” with the town manager of Eliot, Maine and “he was pretty effusive in his praise of the business interaction.”

Ward was asked by Ellis about

odor control, “given the proximity to the Turners Falls village.” Ward said he had “several carbon filters in each of our flower rooms, with standing fans... so that you have no smell escaping the facility.”

The selectboard voted to begin the process of negotiating a host community agreement with Hydro Flower. The next step will be a joint public outreach session and special permit hearing with the town planning board.

In an interview with the *Reporter* on Tuesday, Cusano was asked if he had abandoned his initial plans to bring papermaking back to the former Southworth facility. Cusano said that he had discussed the possibility with paper manufacturers and was told that the chances of making such a business succeed in the current market were “one in a million at best.” He also estimated the cost of putting the old equipment still in the factory, some of which dates to the 1920s, back on line would be in the “tens of millions of dollars.”

#### Pole Glut Bemoaned

The selectboard attempted to hold a hearing requested by the electric company Eversource, which has requested approval for the installation of two poles along Unity Street and Broadview Heights “to reduce excessive span distances.”

However, the Eversource representatives failed to attend, so the meeting became a forum for the complaints of chair Rich Kuklewicz that the electric company has consistently failed to remove poles it has replaced in the Hill section of

Turners Falls.

Kuklewicz reviewed poles he had inventoried in three sections of the neighborhood, counting as many as 66 that he said need to be removed. The cause often cited for this problem has been that other utilities using the system, such as Comcast and Verizon, fail to transfer their wires to the new poles.

“I just want them to give us a plan,” Kuklewicz told the *Reporter*.

The board took no vote on the Eversource request, but continued the hearing until February 8.

#### Compost Bin Announced

Department of public works superintendent Tom Bergeron came before the board to report on a plan to add a composting station to the town transfer station on Sandy Lane.

Bergeron said he had been “holding off” for a couple of years but had been convinced by the Franklin County Solid Waste Management District, which provides the composting bin, to install one. Pickup and delivery would be paid for out of recycling funds and a group based in Montague Center, called Drawdown Montague, has offered to help initiate the program.

Bergeron said the compost will be picked up by a Brattleboro company called Triple T Trucking and taken to Martin’s Farm Compost in Greenfield. “We’ll try it,” he said, noting that he had been concerned about “the stench,” but that “ten other towns are doing it.”

#### Anctil Rectoried

The board executed a real es-



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tate agreement with John Anctil to purchase a building at 25 Sixth Street, the former Ste. Anne’s Rectory. Anctil operates a film lighting business at the former Ste. Anne’s church next door.

The property was originally awarded by the town to Anctil in 2019 for \$25,000 under the urban homesteading program. The program requires a land development agreement, which gives the town considerable oversight over financing and building use.

The agreement approved by the selectboard requires an immediate cleanup of the property, removal of vines from the front foyer (and finding a “gentle way” to remove small animals living there), and sealing any “penetrations of water” in the structure. Within six to 12 months the owner is required to repair the chimney, boarded windows, the back porch, and the exterior of a second-floor bedroom.

Town planner Walter Ramsey said Anctil, who once owned the Strathmore factory complex but ceded it to the town for unpaid taxes, does not have a specific “occupancy plan” for the building, but may use it for office space and “potential housing for workers.”

#### Other Business

The board approved a variety of resignation requests and appointments to the library board of trustees, the conservation commission,

and the Montague Economic Development and Industrial Commission.

It also approved an application from Musica Franklin, an after-school music program for children in the town’s elementary schools, for events in Peskeompskut Park from February 2 to June 1.

Ellis reported on the recent annual meeting of the Massachusetts Municipal Association, where he said the governor made remarks about local aid in the upcoming FY’22 state budget that “far exceeds our best expectations.”


He also reported on the status of the town’s federal CARES Act spending in response to COVID-19. The balance of that federal aid is approximately \$211,000, although there may be some expenses not yet accounted for and some reimbursements from the Federal Emergency Management Agency. The town anticipates spending between \$7,000 and \$19,000 to hold a special town meeting virtually on February 25.

Ellis reviewed the planning for the virtual special town meeting. The town will partner with a firm called Options Technology, Inc. to run the meeting. “We’re going to need a lot of advanced training and cooperation with special town meeting members,” he said. The board informally gave Ellis permission to enter into a contract with Options.

The next selectboard meeting will be held on February 1.



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

- William Carlos Williams

edited by Christopher Sawyer-Lauçanno  
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or to: [poetry@montaguereporter.org](mailto:poetry@montaguereporter.org)

# January’s Featured Poet: Gary Greene

## Ghost of Funeral Past

One year ago,  
seated before the altar,  
I mourned you at the inaugural  
of the end of our life.

In that same hour today,  
the sad ghost I am now  
returned to the shrine  
of that bitter anniversary

to find a baptism underway,  
renovating the echo of your last rites.  
From the last pew  
I bore silent witness

to the rituals of a newborn life,  
as I wept over the remains of ours.  
I departed quietly,  
a poltergeist with no role in that play,

unseen, unremarked, unrequited,  
and made my solemn way to the graveyard,  
the very last specter in your funeral procession,  
the very first in hers.

## Wish Fulfillment

I want  
to look out the window and see you  
ripping around the corner of our drive,  
top down, silver hair flying,  
zipping up the hill to the garage,  
and know I'll be holding you moments from now.

I want  
to enter our house  
and hear you call out my name with delight,  
happily welcoming me home,  
no matter whether I'd been gone  
for an hour or a day.

I want  
to look over and see you  
gently asleep on your couch,  
warmed beneath your angel blanket,  
smiling, perfectly relaxed,  
knowing, even while you dream,  
nothing could trouble you while I was near.

I want  
to stop crying,  
to know you're safe,  
protected as I would protect you,  
to know your pain is gone  
and you're content to wait,  
as long as you must,  
to call out my name one last time.

And because I can have  
none of those things,  
the last thing I want  
is to stop wanting.

## Guilty as Charged

As treatment failed  
and symptoms worsened,  
a decision was compelled  
to mediate your suffering.

In our conscripted trinity  
of doctor, patient and spouse,  
we were mercy bound to discuss  
the end.

Though we knew  
what was going to happen,  
what was happening,  
you were,  
(and how could you not have been,  
who would not have been?)  
reluctant.

It fell to me, then,  
your protector and fiercest guardian,  
the one sworn never to harm you,  
to become your executioner.

Terrified, desperately alone,  
I assented to a plan  
to ease your approaching death,  
prescribing an end to the life  
I would have ended my own to preserve.

There are  
no meetings or minutes,  
no roll calls or reunions,  
of this guild I was loathe to join,  
this fractured confederacy of Hobson's ghosts,

forever damned for choosing the unthinkable,  
unforgivable, impossible,  
changing everything but the outcome,  
each of us lost to the other,  
and the world.

## Logic of the Non Sequitur

Revenge is a dish, like albatross,  
best offered and served with tea.  
Hate's the emotion, like applesauce,  
sweeter than it has right to be.

Sadness is like a marriage,  
a way of never saying goodbye.  
Tears anoint your face with courage,  
but argue it's time to cry.

Anxiety, a frosted blight,  
serves none but those it frees.  
Fear creeps in on godless nights,  
when dreams provide no ease.

Living makes no sense to the dead,  
who have no tears to dry.  
Dying, like a dog seeking its bed,  
circles before it lies.

## Contributor’s Notes

We are pleased this month to feature the work of Gary Greene. Gary writes: “He is a native and lifelong resident of Greenfield, MA, with an undergraduate degree in Psychology from UMass and a graduate degree from the Univ. of Hartford. In 2018, he lost his remarkable wife, Jean Fielding, to a neurological disease that remained undiagnosed to the end. As someone who previously enjoyed writing, his grief led him to compose poems in an attempt to express the depth of his loss and try to understand it in all its nuance. As the pieces accumulated, an inspired grief therapist suggested they might be helpful to others in a similar situation, as many people both struggle to express their grief and continue to experience it acutely long after the world around them wants to continue to deal with it. That led to the publication of *Poems In A Time of Grief*, his first book, through local bookstores and in a Kindle edition at Amazon. A second volume is near completion as this goes to press. Learn more at [poemsinatimeofgrief.com](http://poemsinatimeofgrief.com).”

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VACCINE from page A1

Franklin County has five other potential distribution sites, most of which combine several towns. Each has been told it will initially receive 100 doses of Phase 2 vaccine on a weekly basis for the 75-and-older category. Phase 2 will eventually expand to include all residents over 65, prioritizing those with two pre-existing conditions, and a wide range of workers in “essential industries” such as retail and public employment.

Phase 3, which is projected to commence in April, will see vaccinations extended to the “general public.” By then, vaccination is expected to take place at larger state-managed sites in the region as well as at local pharmacies.

A great sense of uncertainty about local vaccination policy prevailed at Monday’s selectboard meeting. The comments of both public health director Daniel Wasiuk and emergency management director John Zellman were peppered with statements like “it’s a constantly evolving situation,” “it changes every hour,” and “as of right now.”

Town administrator Steve Ellis said that in planning for a meeting with towns earlier in the day, the Franklin Regional Council of Governments “started the morning thinking it was going to be one conversation, got guidance from the state, and [then] it was a completely different conversation. So it’s rapidly evolving.”

Ellis went on to say that Greenfield, which has a vaccinating station set up at the John Zon Community Center on Pleasant Street, had volunteered to implement vac-

cinations for the four towns covered by the Montague allocation for the initial few weeks, with the assistance of staff in the towns. He said that the Center may designate a day when these residents can be vaccinated.

Several selectboard members expressed irritation that a small vaccination room in the basement of the Montague town hall, which has been renovated with federal CARES Act money, may not be used for the initial doses.

Chair Rich Kuklewicz asked for the estimate for the daily capacity for the town hall room. When he was told by Wasiuk that “those calculations still need to be done” and given an attempted estimate, Kuklewicz responded that “someone needs to do the math, because I would have expected to have heard that by now. That’s a pretty basic calculation. What you’re really telling me is we’re not ready yet.”

Ellis justified giving the initial vaccines in Greenfield by saying that staff in the four towns served by Montague had yet to be trained on the “PrepMod” vaccination appointment software the state is requiring. “We want to make sure we have our protocols 100% right,” he said.

Ellis also said that staff and residents going to Greenfield for a few weeks “did not preclude” using the town hall basement room later, once space issues have been addressed.

“This is not like the flu, where you can get a shot and walk out the door,” Ellis said. “We have had very little time to process this, I’m not going to lie to you. We didn’t know we’d be getting this [Phase 2] news today.”

Selectboard member Michael

Nelson said when he first heard the Montague vaccine allocation might be administered in Greenfield, he was “frozen about the idea,” because money had been put into renovating the town hall basement site. But he said he realized that the Greenfield collaboration would be a good opportunity to train Montague, Gill, Erving, and Wendell staff in the PrepMod system.

Nelson also noted that beginning Phase 2 did not mean that eligible recipients in Phase 1 who had not received their shots would be excluded.

In the end, the board agreed to collaborate with Greenfield on vaccinations. As of press time, the shots for the four towns had not yet arrived, and protocols had not been established for administering them. Al Cumming, chair of the board of health, said eligible residents should check the town website for updated information as the Phase 2 rollout evolves.

Wasiuk told the *Reporter* he was aware that the promised expansion of COVID-19 vaccinations to broader populations has led to chaos in some states, with long lines at inoculation centers, appointments canceled due to vaccine shortages, and registration websites crashing. But he expressed confidence that, despite the uncertainties, the towns in the region would be able to move on to Phase 2 without such setbacks.

“We have been told by the state that we should not allow scheduling until we have the vaccine in hand,” Nelson said. Updates about vaccine appointments will be posted to the town website at [montague-ma.gov](http://montague-ma.gov).



WENDELL from page A1

Keller suggested that this time a contract would be a good idea.

Dam Riprap

The meeting began with citizen Ray DiDonato updating the town on developments around the dam that contains McAvoy’s Pond. Ownership of that dam is shared by Wendell and a limited liability corporation (LLC) whose members are Ray DiDonato and selectboard member Laurie DiDonato. Along with their half of the dam and property around the pond, the LLC owns a house downstream of the dam and across Lockes Village Road, #318.

Back in 2001 Wendell replaced the box culvert that allows the pond to drain under Lockes Village Road and the wings upstream and downstream. In 2020 Wendell and the LLC shared the expense of restoring the dam spillway.

Now the state Office of Dam Safety is concerned about maintenance of riprap downstream of the culvert. That maintenance, considered part of the box culvert and wings, is the town’s responsibility, but the downstream side is on the house lot.

Ray DiDonato offered two ways to allow the town to maintain that small area. The LLC could give Wendell a permanent easement for access to the riprap, or could cede that necessary small piece of land from the house lot to the town.

“Either sounds fine,” said Keller.

Ray DiDonato also did not appear to prefer one choice over the other, but said that surveying the necessary piece and giving it to the town is probably the simplest. The house lot is grandfathered, but the loss of frontage might raise an issue with the planning board.

“Permanent rights of way are not uncommon,” said building inspector and highway commission chair Phil Delorey, indicating that the transfer would not result in loss of frontage for the house lot at #318.

In the long term, the Office of Dam Safety noted spalling on the concrete and a need for more riprap. Davenport Construction has estimated \$45,000 for the work.

Keller said the town would support a repair, but noted that money is a constant issue with the town.

Speed Limits

Speaking as highway commissioner, Delorey said there are five roads in town with no posted speed limit

signs. The ground is frozen now, so planting signs will have to wait, but Delorey said the town can post signs as he and the selectboard see fit.

Without an expensive engineering study to justify the limits set, those limits are not legally enforceable, but if someone is ticketed and fights the fine in court it is not a big deal for the town, he suggested.

Citizen Don Stone recommended posting a speed limit of 35 mph by his house, but Delorey said he thought 30 was more appropriate, with a hill, a curve, and an intersection all within 100 feet.

Other Business

A \$50,000 grant is available for installing an electric vehicle charging station, with the cost of connecting to National Grid also partially covered by an available grant.

The station would take two parking spaces out of use for conventionally-powered vehicles, and board members could not think of anywhere that stood out as a good location. Laurie DiDonato said she would bring the grant to the energy committee for consideration.

Herb Hohengasser is retiring as plumbing inspector after three decades on the job. The selectboard hired Casey Bashaw to replace him. Bashaw is a graduate of the plumbing department of Franklin County Technical School, and is already plumbing inspector in Orange and Warwick.

Aldrich will write a letter of appreciation for the town to send to Hohengasser.

Board members hesitated to grant citizen Laurel Facey’s request to use the town hall for a socially-distanced, in-person meeting. With an exception for Good Neighbors the building has been closed since March, and Good Neighbors leaves up tables and the barriers that define a one-way path through the week.

Board of health chair Barbara Craddock said she is more concerned about the spread of COVID-19 because of the new more contagious variant. Laurie DiDonato suggested offering Facey the town’s Zoom account.

Both the fin com and the highway commission have communicated a need for upgrades to their computer systems. Fin com chair Doug Tanner is adamant about the need. Laurie DiDonato suggested that other departments might also need upgrades, and it is worthwhile checking to see if getting them all at once will save money. Keller said the fin com should know if there is enough money.



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LOOKING BACK:  
10 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

Here’s the way it was on January 27, 2011: News from the Montague Reporter’s archive.

Traffic Fears Aired  
At Big Box Hearing

The Greenfield planning board hearing on Ceruzzi Properties’ special permit request for a proposed 135,000-square-foot super store on the French King Highway entered its fifth month, eighth meeting, and 30th hour of public testimony at the Greenfield High School on Thursday, January 20.

The session was devoted to the traffic impacts of the proposed development on Greenfield. Nearly 90 residents showed up to speak. One, Verne Sund, spoke in favor of the proposed development, saying traffic had been bad in front of his house for many years, and it was time others in town got used to similar conditions. All the other residents who spoke opposed the scale of the development and the likely traffic impacts outlined in a number of studies presented to the board.

The developer’s lawyer, Tim Sullivan, said Ceruzzi planned to spend \$1.15 million to mitigate traffic impacts from the development. But a number of the opponents pointed out that 80% of that sum – more than \$800,000 – would be spent on the traffic light and driveway to the super store itself.

After Kenney Leaves, More  
G-M Administrators To Follow

When former TFHS principal Jeff Kenney retires on his 60th birthday next month, the Gill-Montague school district can expect further administrative changes in the year ahead. Superintendent Carl Ladd recently submitted his plan to reduce central office staff by three positions – for a total savings of \$170,000 – for the school committee’s review.

Ladd said his plan for central office reconfiguration is based on the district review prepared by a visiting team from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Educa-

tion, as well as a need to reduce the district’s cost-per-pupil expense.

“We have too many central office administrators; that’s just the bottom line,” Ladd said in an interview at his office this week. “We need to be more efficient and smarter about how we are spending our limited money.” As he moves to reduce central office staff, Ladd said he plans to shift their responsibilities to other buildings, while assuming more himself.

In Ladd’s plan, the director of technology and grants, a position held by Marty Espinola, the director of early childhood education and related programs, a position held by Chris Jutres, and the assistant to the superintendent for special projects – Kenney’s current position – will be eliminated.

Remembering the  
Northfield Chateau

A replica of the Northfield Chateau sculpted by Turners Falls ceramic artist Jack Nelson was on display at the Greenfield Savings Bank on Avenue A over the last few weeks. Nelson built the model to scale from original architectural drawings.

When it was standing, the castle-like Northfield Chateau, with its turrets, capitals and friezes, was a startling sight for a stranger to come upon. The chateau was the brain child of Francis Robert Schell. His grandfather and father were diamond merchants. His uncles had also distinguished themselves by amassing money — lots of it.

Schell hired Bruce Price, a leading architect, father of Emily Post, to build his dream palace. After many conferences, Schell and the architect settled on plans based on the Chateau Le Chambord in France. Schell insisted on incorporating many unusual features in his summer home. He liked circular rooms, although they wasted a lot of space and left many odd shaped corners in the square building, which measured 130 feet by 130 feet.

The chateau was eventually torn down in 1963, no mean feat.



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SCAMMER from page A1

the weekly Des Moines CITYVIEW, watched the two-hour sentencing hearing. He reported that one of Tirrell’s victims, known as “J.W.” in court records, addressed Tirrell in court. “You are the lowest form of human life there is,” he said.

When Tirrell apologized, J.W. responded, “That doesn’t mean shit.”

Tirrell must repay J.W. \$886,077, part of the roughly \$1.5 million in restitution he owes to eight of his victims.

Tirrell turned 61 years old on January 27, and according to federal prosecutor Rachel Scherle he must serve at least 85 percent of his term, meaning that with good behavior he could be out in about three years. That would be followed by three years of supervised release.

Tirrell asked the Court if his time could be served here in Massachusetts.

In the days leading up to sentencing, Tirrell’s second ex-wife Stephanie Gifford said in an email, “I’m so relieved. Even if he just gets only two years, I’m glad he’s finally got to go.

“These continuations and delays have been difficult,” she added. “A lot of my fears will finally subside. I won’t have to keep telling my neighbors or the school to be on guard or look out for him, or wonder who he’s hurting now or how’s he gonna hurt me next.”

Gartner reported that Tirrell wept as he sat at the table with his attorneys. “I knew this day would come,” he said.



ERVING from page A1

concerns about how the vest would look, but the vest “doesn’t look militaristic, or like a SWAT team.”

Chair Jacob Smith said he had had the same concern about the look of the vest, but agreed that it did not look “overly militaristic or tactical.”

Smith wondered whether the board should approve the uniform change immediately or wait until a new chief is hired to replace former chief Christopher Blair, who went on leave in August.

Holst reminded the board that two new officers were hired recently and would need to be outfitted. He also suggested purchasing two uniform shirts and two pairs of pants for each of the five current members of the police department and the incoming chief.

Smith and Bembury suggested using “Erving Police” in reflective letters on the back of the vest, rather than simply “Police.” The board also asked that the American flag be embroidered along with the badge on the shirts. Holst said he would check on costs for these additions.

The board voted to approve the changes to the uniform.

Sludge Dryer Saga

Jacob Smith reported that the town had been turned down for a state revolving fund (SRF) loan it had applied for to pay for a project to install new sludge dryers at POTW#2, a wastewater treatment plant owned by the town but operated by Erving Industries

subsidiary ERSECO.

The October special town meeting authorized borrowing up to \$17.9 million from the SRF for the dryers and installation costs, on the understanding that Erving Industries would repay the loan.

The company later reduced the scope of the project to \$10 million and developed several new proposals: having \$5 million come from the town through the SRF loan and \$5 million from Erving Industries borrowing, or having the entire \$10 million come from Erving Industries borrowing, using the dryers as collateral for the life of the loan.

Board members had expressed concern with Erving Industries’ potential ownership of the sludge dryers.

“What’s the difference,” capital planning committee member Peter Mallett asked, “them or us owning the dryers?”

Town administrator Bryan Smith answered: “If the town is not supporting the loan, there’s no need for collateral.”

Because “the town owns the facility, we have a right to the assets,” said Jacob Smith. He added that, given that the town was denied the SRF loan, “I have less concern [about ownership of the dryers].”

“What would happen if the mill goes out of business?” asked capital planning committee member Linda Downs-Bembury. “Would we be left with a non-functioning treatment plant?”

Town wastewater superintendent Peter Sanders said that if the

mill closed and the town took over the plant, it would be a smaller plant, processing less wastewater. “Without the [paper mill],” Sanders said, “the dryers wouldn’t be any use to us.”

The board agreed to put off a decision about allowing Erving Industries to retain ownership of the dryers until the next board meeting, February 1.

Ambulance Service

On the recommendation of fire chief Philip Wonkka, the board decided to develop a memorandum of understanding with Northfield Emergency Medical Services (EMS) to provide ambulance service to the Erving side section of town.

Currently, national company AMR provides ambulance service to Erving side, while the town of Orange provides ambulance service to Erving Center. Wonkka said that Northfield EMS planned to charge \$15,000.

The board asked Wonkka and Bryan Smith to work with Northfield EMS to structure a one-year agreement.

Capital Planning

The selectboard, fin com, and capital planning committee reviewed the capital planning committee’s request for \$1.499 million in capital projects for FY’22.

The majority of funding (\$899,000) would come from grants from the state Department of Transportation for sidewalk improve-

ments and from MassWorks for sewer upgrades on Papermill Road.

Approximately \$600,000 would come from appropriations, for projects including construction of a dry storage shed and office building for the highway department, emergency communications expansion and upgrades, drainage on Mountain Road, an upgrade to Center Cemetery, and carpet replacement at Erving Elementary School.

Other Business

The selectboard voted to approve a memorandum of understanding with Bernardston to provide full-time animal control officer services until June 30, 2023, and another memorandum of understanding to provide backup animal control services to Greenfield until June 30, 2021.

The board approved hiring OWL Engineering of Andover for \$9,200 of electrical engineering services for installation of the new standby generator for POTW#1.

The board awarded William B. Meyer, Inc. of Windsor, Connecticut, the project for digital archiving of public records at a cost of \$19,454.

The board ended the meeting with an executive session, citing Massachusetts General Law Chapter 30A, Section 21(a)(3), “to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining,” with the notation that the discussion involved the New England Police Benevolent Association.



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Above: A gang of Canada geese, too cool to fly, hang out near the canalside bike path at Turners Falls.

# Discover Locally Grown, Heirloom ... Seeds!

By DONNA PETERSEN

**MONTAGUE** – The days are getting longer, and soon thoughts will turn towards green growing things and – for many – making plans for the garden. The racks of seeds from many suppliers are up in stores, and there are so many varieties of vegetable and flower seeds. But why buy seeds from an Ohio company when you can buy local? Yes, from a Montague seed company – can’t get anymore local then that.

Ox and Robin Seeds was started in 2017 by Linda Enerson, who has lived in Montague for twenty years up on Chestnut Hill. She has always been interested and involved in some aspect of local agriculture and finally decided to concentrate that energy into producing and selling organic heirloom vegetable seeds.

I spoke with Linda recently about her company,

SUBMITTED PHOTOS



Linda Enerson with the two oxen, Simon and Gabe, that she uses as draft animals on her Montague farm.



Several seed packets by Ox and Robin Seeds of Montague, featuring owner Linda Enerson’s illustrations.

its origins, products, and philosophy, and her plans for the company’s future.

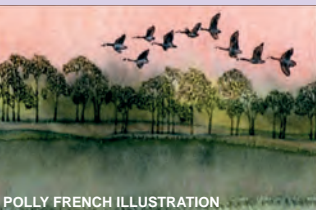
Linda’s gardening and interest in agriculture led her to join the Seed Savers Exchange based in Iowa, an organization where one can exchange seeds from all over the world. The general goal is to preserve the diversity and integrity of so-called heirloom varieties of vegetables, herbs, flowers, and assorted other plants. Linda said that through education and sharing, the hope is to increase the amount of organic seeds and to remedy the dearth of heirloom varieties and maintain family varieties often grown for generations.

Linda said she realized she had “a lot to learn,” and did some things wrong. One thing she learned was that in order to maintain these varieties, selection of the best plants for seed is vital, otherwise vigor and desirable qualities will decline.

I asked Linda what inspired her to make the jump from a seed collecting and gardening interest to a business venture. I was surprised to hear that art was really a part of it. Linda said she could combine two interests into one business: she could create illustrations for the seed packets, and sell interesting heirloom plant seeds.

She succeeded, because one thing that makes the Ox and Robin Seeds packets stand out among the larger big-company seed racks is the wonderful art that graces the packets. Linda created the small watercolor and collage masterpieces illustrating the plants and vegetables that may grace the garden.

I wondered what inspired the name and logo for Ox and Robin. I see **SEEDS** page B4



POLLY FRENCH ILLUSTRATION

## WEST ALONG THE RIVER QUIET WINTER

By DAVID BRULE

**ERVINGSIDE** – It’s been a quiet winter down here on The Flat along the west-flowing river on the edge of the known world. Let me explain.

Just beyond the village of Millers Falls, our river completes its 50-mile journey by passing through mostly uninhabited islands and woodlands, tumbling over river stones, past the old oxbow and abandoned pasture. I say unknown because not many humans venture down here to the domain of fox and wild cat. Especially at night when the river follows its path through deep darkness and this becomes the haunt of barred owl and great horned owl, the sharp-barking fox and foraging coyote, occasional bear.

This rushing river makes its way to a rendezvous with deeper and darker waters. It sings out its name one last time before being lost in the old man river that is the great Connecticut.

Our river carries three names, two ancient ones given thousands of years ago, one for the upper reaches and one as it passes through our lands near the mouth. The upper reach was called the *papguntiquash* by the Nipmuc/k. It carries its Indian name for that reach well: “clear water through cleft bank rocks.” By the time it reaches our settlement down here on The Flat, it has changed its nature and name to *paguag*, “clear water through open land.” By the time white people settled on its banks, they had given it a contemporary name, the Millers.

The *paguag* still answers to its native name when I speak to it, and when the river’s mood is right.

Time was when I could cross

the river on snowshoes, the rapids flowing beneath me under two feet of ice. I could cross over to the oxbow here at the bend, spend the twilight hours watching small birds heading to the white pine tree island to roost, and listen for the call of the screech owl. It’s been a while since the river froze like that. Maybe it never will again.

An open winter makes it difficult for this winter-inspired writer to write about winter when winter is such a non-event this year!

It is, however, quite merciful for most creatures who still have to make their living in January and February. Certainly most predators, both the winged ones and the furry ones, have an easier time of it this year. They are able to snatch mice and voles scurrying over the sere brown earth, without having to guess where their victims are beneath the snow.

I’m more concerned about those who went underground to sleep through the winter months. They count on a good snow cover for insulation, like the chipmunks and our knot of garter snakes somewhere beneath the woodpile. But it isn’t the first bare winter for their species; they’ve had millennia to adapt and they likely knew enough to tunnel far down below the frost line.

Out here in the yard, the blue jays still do swarm over sunflower seeds and cracked corn.

Always in flashes of blue and loud declamations, they dominate the yard but in fewer numbers than other years, maybe just a dozen or so instead of their usual flock above thirty.

That laser-guided assassin, the Cooper’s hawk, has taken to slashing through the yard, startling

see **WEST ALONG** page B3

LOUIS AGASSIZ FUERTES ILLUSTRATION



The harlequin duck (*Histrionicus histrionicus*).



By MISHEL IXCHEL

**TURNERS FALLS** – I don’t raise my voice anymore. Well, I don’t raise my voice anywhere near as much as I used to. I’d be lying if I said it didn’t happen anymore because – damn it – 5-year-olds can be testy little turds. On the rare occasion that it does, it cuts right through. My point, though, is that I’ve been doing the opposite of raising my voice.

It’s a tool I picked up in this parenting book I’m reading, and the technique is called the Calm

## Using the Calm Voice

Voice. (The book is *If I Have to Tell You One More Time* by Amy McCready.) The trick is to use a calm voice as frequently as possible, and especially during situations when losing one’s composure would normally be the initial reaction.

Though I gotta ask: God, why do kids have to be such cute little sponges? It’s incredibly hard to hold back laughter when, for instance, I hear a pile of Legos fall all over the kitchen floor, followed by an exasperated “shit!” uttered in a tiny voice.

Like a mirror, my kid reflects back to me my very own frustrations, profanities, and reactions. Thing is, I could never fault him for dropping an F-bomb or having a freak-out reaction to something.

Mainly because I’ve exhibited those same behaviors myself, time and time again, so when my 5-year-old responds to life’s stressors in eerily similar ways as I do, I know that the best I can hope for is stifle back laughter and reach for help from the parenting experts.

Thus, the Calm Voice. On the one hand, my kid has witnessed me in my worst of moments, when I am overwhelmed, and my mental health feels like it’s spinning out. Exhaustion, sleep deprivation, and wearing the 30 hats during a time of pandemic has definitely led me to feel some of my lowest lows.

And my kid has seen this side of me. I don’t like it and, of course, see **INDIE MAMA** page B2





# “KATE”

Meet Kate! Kate is a spirited little rabbit looking for a new home. She enjoys people and attention but isn't shy about letting you know when she's had enough! Kate also loves a good salad and is a big fan of red lettuce and cilantro.

Rabbits are intelligent and complex animals who do well in families with humans who understand that they are prey animals, and do not enjoy being picked up. The best way to bond with rabbits is to spend time with them outside of their

pens, and shower them with plenty of fresh leaves. Rabbits are easy to litter-box train, and we've begun that at the shelter! They also need plenty of daily time to explore outside of their pen.

Interested in adopting? Animals at Dakin are available only in Springfield currently. Contact adoption staff at [springfield@dakinhumane.org](mailto:springfield@dakinhumane.org) and include your name and phone number. For more information, call (413) 781-4000 or visit [www.dakinhumane.org](http://www.dakinhumane.org).

## INDIE MAMA from page B1

neither does he. When I've emerged from those hard moments, I make sure to tell him that yes, mama feels tired, angry and sad and it's okay to feel like that. And most importantly, I promise him that I will work on my reactions.

This is what this work is starting to look like: since implementing the Calm Voice, when I feel triggered by feeling unheard, or when my kid is making a poor choice, I usually say something like, "I'm going to close my eyes and take a deep breath. And when I open my eyes, I will see my boy listening with a calm body."

I then proceed to take that deep breath, primarily for me, but as a cue to him that I am making every effort to keep my cool. A reminder that I'm doing my best in that moment to keep my promise to respond differently. Taking a deep breath has become the bridge that allows me to guide both myself and my kid from a potentially funky rut and cross over to tranquility and cooperation.

My intention amidst all of this, even the tough mo-

ments, is to show him that it's healthy to feel emotions. And then, to breathe deep, and once we feel calm, to communicate.

The deep breath thing actually works. When I take that breath and I open my eyes, he's standing at attention. I then take that opportunity to remind him that I really don't want my tank to get low, and that I really need his help. I do my best to communicate this to him in a calm voice.

We also talk alot about tanks in our house. My kid has come to understand that in order for me to be my best self, my tank needs to be full. And when my tank is low, which obviously still happens, I do my best to tell him where I'm at. Sometimes it's a direct result of a choice he made. Other times, it's the stressors of life weighing me down.

But at least now I know I can communicate this to my little one, and that he has the capacity to understand what this means for me, for him, and for us both.



# Sex Matters

a sex-positive health column

by STEPHANIE BAIRD

Phew, now that a more inclusive administration is in office, I hope many of us are sleeping easier at night. We might even notice our sexual "brakes" beginning to lift, getting our sexual "accelerators" a chance to work out again. Therefore, now might be a good time to consider some sex-positive intentions for the new year.

I've taken the liberty to put together a few potential intentions for different groups of folks, hoping that some might resonate. I'm primarily drawing upon my own client base and some of the issues they have struggled with.

**Cis-women.** I could come up with a million intentions and wishes for this group. I'll divide this group into four sub-groups:

*Cis-women who have yet to experience an orgasm for themselves:* Please resolve to explore your body this year, and give yourself the solo time and space to see what makes your engine hum. Some good references for this are the books *Sex for One* by the queen of masturbation, Betty Dodson, and my recent favorite sex-positive book for people with clitorises, *Come as You Are* by Emily Nagoski. Another day need not go by without knowing the pleasure and joy of orgasm!

*Cis-women who have orgasms:* My main wish is for you to have orgasm and pleasure parity with any sexual partner. Too often my cis-women clients describe sexually unsatisfying experiences with cis-men who seem to forget they are having sex with a live person that has the capacity for pleasure and orgasm, as well.

Orgasm and pleasure parity may require much more communication and assertiveness, but it is completely worth it when you can also lay back, spent and satisfied, after one or more orgasms. Additionally, since folks with clitorises are often capable of more than one orgasm in a sexual encounter, I suggest you go for two or three or more when the energy and mood allows. Yes, orgasm isn't everything, but always having an option open for one is important. And you might as well "help balance the orgasm book" if you can – tough job, right?

*Single cis-women:* If you've been on dating apps and have experienced a lot of disappointment, frustration, and perhaps even disgust (like some of my cis-women clients), take a

break! Consider the option of dating yourself for a while – the pandemic is a good time to do this.

Discern exactly what you want from interacting with a potential romantic partner. Perhaps even write up a relationship "vision" list – what qualities do you need and want in a partner, ranked from highest priority to bonus material. We do this when we search for a car, home, apartment, or pet, so why not when we search for an intimate partner? The clearer the vision, the easier it will be to spot that potential partner(s).

I'll even begin the list for you: caring, passionate, sexy, funny, happily employed, curious...

*All cis-women:* Ask for more oral sex! At least the same amount that you might provide for others. If you experience discomfort receiving oral sex, take some time to look into what this is about. Is it due to specific oral sex erotophobia? Is there a worry about smell or taste? If there are medical concerns, make an appointment with a sex-positive feminist physician. But if nothing is amiss, which is likely the case, then do some experimenting and exploring with receptive and caring partner(s). Breathe!

**Cis-men.** Keep enjoying the pleasures you are hopefully already enjoying, but make sure your partner(s) are having fun, too. Here are some suggestions:

*Ask them more about what feels good or not.* Suggest giving them oral or manual sex, especially if you are used to mainly penis-vagina intercourse. Ask if they would enjoy more kissing and touching, and what that might involve. Suggest new positions, role plays, or places for sexual activity. Read erotica out loud to your partner.

A lot of my cis-women clients lament that their partners don't bring much imagination to sex. Bring it on – with your partner's permission and enthusiasm, of course.

*Ask your partner to initiate more often,* taking the load off you, if you are used to being the initiator more often. Get in touch with fantasies about what you would like your partner to do for you. No one can read minds, so open and active dialogue is the best path to getting more personalized pleasure. Paul Joannides' book *The Guide to Getting it On* is a great encyclopedic resource for more ideas. Another good concept to consider is the idea of "doing,

being done, or f\*\*\*ing." If you are used to being "done," consider "doing" to your partner, and vice-versa. You can read more about this concept in David Schnarch's book *Passionate Marriage*.

*If you watch porn via the internet, pay for it.* The folks creating porn deserve to be reimbursed for their time and efforts. A good website to start with is [www.makelovenotporn.tv](http://www.makelovenotporn.tv).

*Take care of your health.* If you notice erratic erections or difficulties, make sure you get a good medical screening. If it is not a physical issue, seek therapy to address what might be holding you back emotionally.

**Gender non-conforming and trans-identified folks.** Unapologetically advocate for your needs whether at your workplace, at businesses, with family, friends, or partners. The website [transequality.org](http://transequality.org) is a good resource for helping to improve the world for the joyful inclusion of non-gender conforming folks. Each person's gender journey is to be cherished.

Folks who identify as cis-male or cis-female: make a practice of readily identifying your own pronouns and examine the binary gender construct which holds most of us hostage to outdated beliefs. Challenge the binary, and understand why many others find it limiting. There is nothing inherently "masculine" about taking action or leading, or inherently "feminine" about nurturing or soothing. All humans demonstrate these qualities at different moments in the form of "protecting" or "nurturing." Embrace that every human can activate these beautiful behaviors when the situation calls for it.

Lastly, for **all folks** who are sexually active: If you have multiple partners, use protection and get tested for STIs and COVID-19 regularly. Engage in open and honest conversations about health and needs. Always make sure you have full enthusiastic consent. And get off your phones and into bed making love!

*Stephanie Baird, LMHC is an OWL facilitator, EMDR consultant and psychotherapist, certified in Advancing Clinical Excellence in Sexuality (ACES,) and encourages her clients towards thriving sexual health. She welcomes feedback and suggestions at [sexmatters@montaguereporter.org](mailto:sexmatters@montaguereporter.org).*

# Senior Center Activities

## FEBRUARY 1 THROUGH 5

### 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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto:pickup@franklincommunity.coop) (413) 625-2548
- Stop and Shop:** Senior hours from 6 to 8 a.m. (413) 774-6096

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WEST ALONG from page B1

everyone, bird, human note-taker, and dog alike. Just the other morning, as dog and I sat pondering poetry and coffee in the chill 20 degrees, pale sun rising above the valley rim, that accipiter whipped through the yard at thirty miles an hour. The hawk passed overhead so close that Nicky jumped up from his snowdog morning dreaming on the porch rug to see what the ruckus was. I could feel the wind from the wings push past my face as the hawk shot by in his slanted dive, honed in on a jay.

The air-raid alarm, however, put out by the vigilant chickadee and jay throng, caused all creatures to scatter just a split second before. The frustrated hawk flew furiously into the rhododendron, beating the branches with his wings hoping to drive out a sparrow or two in panic. The little birds remembered what their mother taught them, and didn't move.

The hungry hawk had no luck. I shifted my weight to get a better look at the attacker's tactics and with Nicky's now tensely alert profile, ears and tail erect just a few feet away was enough to spook he who would have spooked his prey. Off went the hawk, surely muttering a few choice hawk swears and curses at all of us. He roved out over the woods to find his breakfast elsewhere.

I'm sure he will be successful, after all he does have to eat, to transform the life force within his prey into energy that he will transmit to the next generation of Cooper's hawk, come next April. Judging by the scattered puffs of plumes, feathers, and bird remains that I regularly find scattered under the white pines just yonder, he knows his profession well.

So I look longingly at photos of snow-covered landscapes down along the river, taken just on December 24, before that night torrential rains washed away all dreams of a White Christmas. Photos of our own scenes of snowdog and snowshoes, along with similar photos sent over by Jude and Martin of snowscapes in faraway Leverett, challenge my sense of snow and self-identity as a winter-born child. Given the circumstances, shouldn't I begin longing for spring, looking at garden catalogues and thinking about the joys of wearing lighter clothing?

Resisting the feeling that I should give up on winter, I do find solace in day-dreaming along the river, occasionally changing places with the fox and the otter.

Down here, the only stress, anger, and fears of disaster in Washington are those that I bring here myself. Those emotions do diminish after time spent in the presence of wild things.

My thoughts turn to the silhouette of the lone harlequin duck sitting on a rock above the swirling and frigid river at the mouth, not a mile from where I write this. She's there all alone, far from her native Hudson Bay, perhaps enjoying the comparatively balmy 20 degree weather here in New England. She might be dreaming too about her companions over on the coast, riding the frigid Atlantic waves off Gloucester and Rockport.

This hardy duck and I somehow merge with the spirit of the river, just a bit, before going our separate ways. She will be finding her way back to the Far North, and I will be still trying to find some sort of solace in an uncertain future and, on second thought, in this very *un*quiet winter.



**The Montague Historical Society  
presents a new 12-minute narrated video:**

**“Fourth of July at Turners Falls – 1951”**

**Find it at [youtu.be/6VyYFBC3f6k](https://youtu.be/6VyYFBC3f6k)  
and [montaguearchive.org](https://montaguearchive.org)**



**PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT**

**Wells Trust Scholarships Available**

**GILL-MONTAGUE** – Fred W. and Ethel Dow Wells were longtime residents of Franklin County. Upon their passing, their will established a trust to provide financial assistance to area students who are seeking to continue their education. Through their generosity, scholarships have been awarded to hundreds of students in Franklin County over the last 70+ years.

Applications for the Fred W. Wells Trust scholarships for the 2021-2022 academic year are currently available at public or private high school guidance offices and town administrative offices in Ashfield, Bernardston, Buckland, Charlemont, Conway, Deerfield, Gill, Greenfield, Hawley, Heath, Leyden, Monroe, Montague, Northfield, Rowe and Shelburne.

Scholarships are available to students graduating from high school

who are planning to enter college or an advanced educational program and to students who are currently enrolled in these programs. Students must have resided in the towns listed above for at least two years immediately prior to application. Recipients are selected based on scholarship, need, extracurricular activities and recommendations from counselors and teachers.

The maximum award for any one academic year is \$1,000 and is contingent upon the number of qualified applicants and funds available.

Applications, letters of recommendation, and official transcripts must be postmarked no later than March 20, 2021 and be sent to Prudence D. Blond, GSB Wealth Management and Trust Services, 400 Main Street, Greenfield Savings Bank, Greenfield, MA 01301.

**HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MONTAGUE POLICE LOG**

**Heavy Swerving; Rashy Dog; Beyonce Reenactor; Wheelies; Panhandling; Manhandling; Thirsty Skunk**

**Sunday, 1/17**

1:52 p.m. Report of large white dog covered in mud running loose in the solar field. Referred to an officer. 3:41 p.m. Caller states that her son just came home with a bloody nose and said he was jumped by a couple of other kids. Not requesting ambulance at this time. Officers spoke to other involved juveniles. Report taken.

**Monday, 1/18**

7:27 a.m. Caller states that there is a VW van in the Fourth Street parking lot with its side door open and no one around. Vehicle appears to have a mechanical issue. Officer went to registered owner's residence; no answer at door. 10:24 a.m. Caller from Federal Street states that a landlord from a property around the corner just "got in his face" and he wants to report it. Advised of options. Chief Williams also came by and had caller move a vehicle that was partially blocking the sidewalk.

4:09 p.m. Off-duty officer calling in an erratic operator who was driving on the wrong side of Montague City Road and heavily swerving. Operator showing an active warrant. Units advised.

5:27 p.m. 911 caller reporting erratic operator who just pulled into FL Roberts; states vehicle was heavily swerving and not keeping consistent speeds. Unable to locate. 5:28 p.m. Caller requesting an officer to retrieve a used hypodermic needle that was found at the bottom of the stairs to the Our Lady of Peace church rectory. Needle disposed of.

8:38 p.m. 911 misdial; spoke with male who advised that his son sat on his phone. Confirmed misdial.

**Tuesday, 1/19**

8:53 a.m. Officer reporting several deep potholes on Turners Falls Road. DPW notified.

11:15 a.m. Caller states that she received an email that appeared to be from her boss that asked her to buy \$1,200 worth of gift cards. Caller still has the cards but would like this on record.

11:23 a.m. Employee from animal shelter requesting well-being check on a dog on Turnpike Road after receiving a call from the MSPCA referring to possible neglect. Officer made contact with owner and saw dog; it is an older dog with a skin rash, and the owner has medication provided by a vet for treatment. No concerns of neglect.

2:20 p.m. Caller from Fifth Street states that the upstairs neighbor was being very loud on purpose and was making threats to the caller when he confronted him. Caller has to leave but

stated he will call back if the problem continues.

3:59 p.m. 911 caller reporting three males beating a dog in a backyard on G Street. Caller unable to provide descriptions of involved parties but stated that dog is white with brown spots. Units unable to prove allegations; both the second and third floor residents have similar-looking dogs; all parties denied any involvement. Spoke with neighbor who stated he saw one of the dogs get hit in the face but wouldn't disclose who was involved. Parties advised that charges are possible if the complaints persist. 8:34 p.m. Caller from Highland School Apartments requesting officer to check area around his Jeep. Caller states the front end is moving and he thinks someone may be under it. Officer advises nobody is around Jeep or in area at this time.

**Wednesday, 1/20**

12:24 a.m. Caller from Fourth Street reports loud music and yelling coming from upstairs apartment; ongoing issue. Officer made contact with tenants, who will turn the music down.

11:59 a.m. Report of white sports car with no front bumper that has been sitting on Randall Wood Drive with its hazards on for approximately fifteen minutes. Officer spoke with operator, who is waiting for a friend, but his friend's parents do not want him parked in front of their house while he waits.

6:29 p.m. 911 caller reporting two male parties who just parked their ATVs in front of his house on East Main Street. Caller would like them removed. Caller later stated ATVs just left and went up South Prospect Street. Unable to locate.

7:06 p.m. 911 caller from East Main Street states that a female is refusing to leave his property and is attempting to light things on fire outside and is hitting his truck with a metal baseball bat.

Gill PD on scene. A 19-year-old Greenfield woman was arrested and charged with vandalizing property.

**Thursday, 1/21**

10:36 a.m. Report of bike and backpack untended next to a pillar on the sidewalk side of the Turners Falls-Gill Bridge, closer to the TF end. Caller has crossed the bridge multiple times and did not see anyone around. MPD and Gill PD responding. Contacted Northfield Mountain control room; operator will review cameras and call back with findings. Officer advises bike is broken and item reported as backpack is a sleeping bag; believed to belong to a subject involved in an incident yesterday afternoon. Called Northfield Mountain control room back to advise all set.

11:44 a.m. Report of one subject on a go-kart and one on a four-wheeler riding up and down Randall Wood Drive, doing wheelies and riding on neighbors' lawns. Officer checked area; advises vehicles were put away on arrival.

12:52 p.m. Caller reporting theft of an air purifier from a common area in the Keith Apartments building. Report taken.

**Friday, 1/22**

9:34 a.m. Greenfield PD requesting assistance with traffic control on the TF side of the Canal Road bridge; advise head-on accident approximately halfway up the hill on Turners Falls Road. Services rendered.

12:55 p.m. Caller reporting that she received a scam text message telling her that if she watches a video she will receive approximately \$1,400 in COVID relief money. Caller clicked the link but does not believe it is legitimate. Advised of options. 2:17 p.m. Caller from Dell Street complaining of a skunk hanging around her yard; same tried to drink from their hose.

Caller advises skunk is not foaming at the mouth but has sprayed her dogs. Animal control officer still out/unavailable. Caller will call back if the skunk becomes aggressive or shows signs of being rabid. Caller later called back to report that the skunk is still hanging around, roaming between her yard and the neighbor's yard. Advised of options.

3:32 p.m. Resident reporting that there is a skunk wandering in the neighborhood around Dell and Elm streets. Skunk not observed foaming at mouth and has reportedly not shown signs of aggression. Caller will call back if its behavior changes.

4:06 p.m. Caller from Turners Falls inquiring who she can contact on behalf of a customer re: a skunk that has been in the area for a few hours. Advised caller that ACO is unavailable until further notice; provided with number for Environmental Police dispatch; advised they may have info for someone who can trap or relocate this type of animal.

5:13 p.m. Caller from Federal Street reports that yesterday someone was doing donuts. Plate was obtained at that time, but it was not reported. Caller advises that today, damage to a customer's vehicle was discovered (broken window). Officer spoke with neighbor who has contact with suspected operator; incident under investigation.

**Saturday, 1/23**

1:36 p.m. 911 caller reporting two children, a boy who appears to be approximately eight years old and a girl approximately six years old, walking by themselves on Avenue A. Caller asked the kids where their parents are and they said they were on their way to their parents now. Officers checked area thoroughly; unable to locate. 2:45 p.m. Report of two males panhandling on Avenue A. Unable to locate.

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**Now is a great time to get involved! MCTV is still providing public access to filming and editing services and equipment! Cameras are sanitized and available for pick-up Monday through Friday 10am-4pm.**

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

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

**If you are interested, please contact the station to set up a meeting.**

**MCTV is also hiring for a Spanish Language producer.**

**To apply, please send a cover letter to [infomontaguettv@gmail.com](mailto:infomontaguettv@gmail.com)**

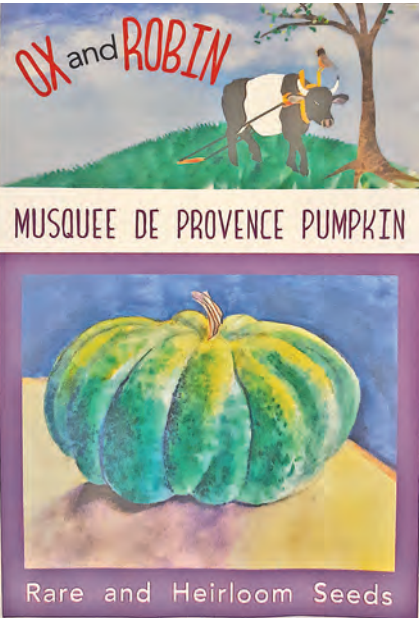


SEEDS from page B1

and Robin. Linda has two oxen on her property in training for work on her land. She hopes to have them help with the bane of New England farmers for a few centuries: clearing the field of rocks! A harbinger of the springtime planting season is seeing a robin perched on the oxen's horns, and so that image became the company logo.

The offerings of Ox and Robin are limited, but chosen carefully to be good varieties for backyard gardeners – varieties that have been proven to do well in our soils and climate. Linda said some are common but she has some rare ones as well. Her top seller is nettle seed – nettle (*Urtica dioica*) has numerous medicinal applications, but Linda was surprised to see how well it sold. The Tom Thumb pea and a couple of corn varieties also tend to be popular.

I asked Linda about any varieties that she felt were “must-haves.” She called the rare heirloom North Carolina Heirloom Pickling Cucumber a “sleeper,” and said, “Come on, people!” encouraging them to try this yellow lemony slicing and pickling cuke. As far as herbs go, she loves the Holy Basil offered. Musquee de Provence pumpkin, green with some streak-



Left: One of the many heirloom varieties grown for sale by Ox and Robin Seeds of Montague. Right: A watercolor collage of Fish Hot Peppers, an African American heirloom pepper variety, painted by Linda Enerson for an Ox and Robin packet.



ing, is very nice but is only available online.

For many gardeners, bugs and disease can be big problems. I asked her about this and she said the selected varieties were vigorous and often somewhat resistant to diseases. With careful crop rotation and composting, healthy plants keep these problems manageable. She got a grant to fence her field, which keeps out some of the large critters like deer, but squirrels love to munch on corn, and peas can be

a target of smaller animals.

Linda's goal is to grow the company a bit, but keep it focused on breeding new varieties and improving old ones. She cites as a model Wild Garden Seed, a company in Oregon's Willamette Valley that is organically growing and improving organic and often heirloom seed stock through careful breeding. Linda is enthusiastic about working on breeding and on providing yard-long bean varieties. This bean, also known as Chinese long bean or as-

paragus bean, is like the name says: a long green or red bean which is used like the familiar green bean. Linda gave me a few last year to try, and they were tasty!

She also hopes to work on breeding heirloom corn varieties. Like all plant breeding, this will take several generations to produce. Linda says she is being “really careful about selecting the best stock because over time it can degrade.”

Online sales are likely to play a major role in the company's future,

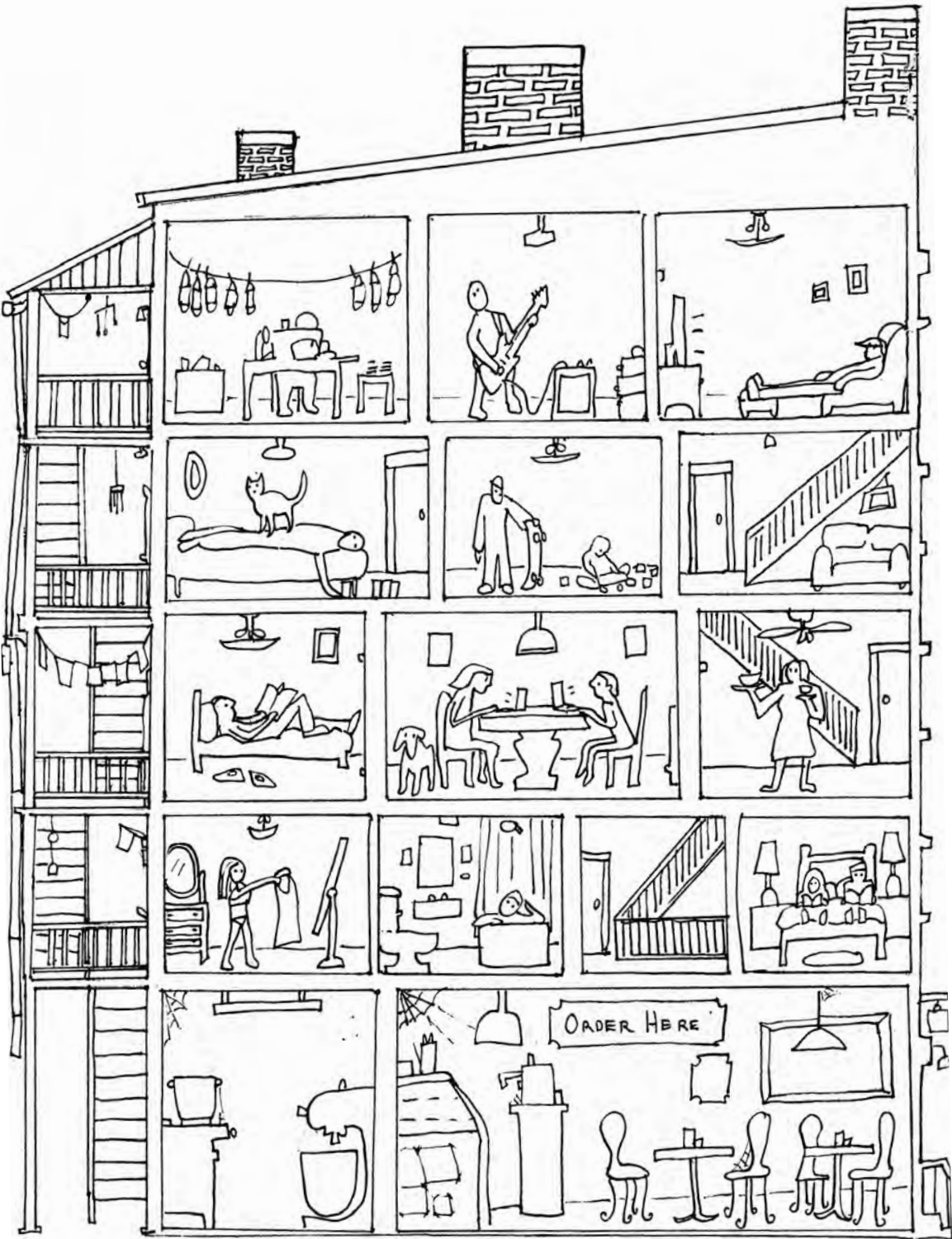
and Linda sees the intellectual property of her breeding to be a large part of company growth.

Talking to Linda it became clear that she wants to continue to have an outlet for her artwork, especially as it relates to the plants she grows. There are already blank greeting cards being produced with her artwork, and she says she hopes to have an online gallery up soon.

While working on the breeding and growing and promoting of these heirloom and often rare varieties that can feed and nurture us, Linda said she feels like a “part of history, passing on a culture,” and that there is a spiritual depth in her work. That's a pretty great way to feel about your work and contribution to the planet!

The website for Ox and Robin is [www.oxandrobin.com](http://www.oxandrobin.com).

The seed packets cost \$3.75 and can be purchased at the Greenfield Farmers Cooperative Exchange in Greenfield, Upingil in Gill, Red Fire Farm North in Montague, the Hadley Garden Center in Hadley, Simple Gifts Farmstand in Amherst, Quabbin Harvest in Orange, a few locations in Northampton, and the Achilles Agway stores in nearby New Hampshire and Vermont.



# FACES & PLACES

Montague Center reader Richard Anderson captured this rare Bernie on his front deck last weekend. “He’s making himself comfortable before the playoff game in Green Bay, and is practicing social distancing,” Richard wrote. “So, I hear, does the Bucs’ secondary.” (More of this, please, readers. More of this.)



Montague Reporter photojournalist Joe R. Parzych, of Joe R. Parzych Photography and Etc., shared that he is engaged to be married to his beautiful fiancée, Amanda Burrier of Greenfield. They've set the date for July 9 of this year. Congratulations, Joe and Amanda!

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by denis f. bordeaux

CHECK OUT ALL THE PEOPLE WAITING TO SAY GOOD BYE TO ME AND MELANIA...

MY GENEROUS PARDONS TO KNOWN AND UNKNOWN CRIMINALS HAS BROUGHT OUT THE LOYAL REPUBLICAN BASE

LOOK THEY'RE EVEN WEEPING UNCONTROLLABLY. AAH... TRUE PATRIOTS

ACTUALLY SIR, THEY'RE COMICS AND CARTOONISTS.

WE NEED YOU... WAH WAH WAH WAH WAH WAH WAH YOU MADE ME WAH

DON'T GO

Cool Cats on the Ave

Susan

It's too cold to go out.

On Luna you have a fur coat.

But what if the humans don't let me in and my nose gets cold?

I'll sound the alarm.

Meow Ye oow Meow

Good does come from being my brother's keeper.

Thanks Apollo!

OVER THE HILL

Carolyn Clark

Harry, videos of that mob are nightmare-ish.

Remember how Shakespeare's Julius Caesar incited the mob?

Antony, too. Like Donnie he then ducked out on them.

In Casca's words, the mob would forgive Caesar even if he "had stabbed their mothers."

I don't understand that kind of blind idolatry, Harry.

Feeds on lies and racism.

So many angry men...

White men, Thelma, Proud Boys, QAnon, other white Supremacists...

So, what now?

Three Degrees of Warming

By Janice Rowan

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By MOLLY MOON MOONEY

**TURNERS FALLS** – Before I moved to Turners Falls, I lived for a few years in a very rural part of upstate New York. I lived off a mile-long dirt road through the woods, and my small neighborhood was surrounded by fields and many acres of forests. The long winters were even more harsh there than they are here, due to the high elevation of the area.

It was a time of many challenges in my life, I had few friends and felt immensely isolated, but what I gained from it was the amount of time I spent in nature, no matter the season or weather. It was the first time in my life that I walked outside almost every single day, all year long. It made the winter less

ominous, learning that I could be outside each day, and connected me with the Earth and the rhythm of the seasons. I actually learned to appreciate the wintertime, something that before then had been nearly unthinkable.

As I enter another winter of isolation, I have been thinking back on that time and trying to remember the importance of getting outside whenever I can muster up the motivation. I am a person who *loves* to be cozy, so it does take a little push, but I know once I get out there, it is greatly rewarding and beneficial to my mental health.

The other day my partner and I went on a hike in the woods, and I realized how long it had been since I had spent time in the forest. Wearing my big warm boots, crunching

through snow, brushing past pine branches, I remembered how good it feels to be in among the trees. As an herbalist, I also remembered how much is still available to us in the off season.

Besides the pines, the trails were also lined with an abundance of wintergreen, proving its name. I felt newly inspired to come back another day with my clippers, to gather pine needles from the branches of white pine that had fallen near the path to make an infused oil, and perhaps pick some wintergreen, too. It is comforting to know there is still medicine to be gathered in the sparse, less colorful winter woods.

The next night in the book I was reading, I came across quite a synchronistic line. The author, Sharon Blackie, quotes a forester campaigner who says, “Forests are places to really remember that we’re animals.”

Time in the forest helps me feel grounded, connected to the earth, *part* of Earth, part of nature. While it is difficult to feel as connected with other people these days, just like it did back in New York, some of my needs can be met spending time in nature. And these days being outside is the only way I can still physically be with a friend. Not to mention that the fresh, piney air is good for your lungs, and the sun on your face is great for getting a dose of vitamin D.

So, my humble little tip for you in these strange times is to get out to the woods. It can seem daunting at first, but put on those layers and your hat and gloves and before long you’ll be like me, unzipping your coat and pulling off your hat as your trudge through the trails gets you nice and toasty.

If you’d like to make your own **infused pine oil**, it is very easy! Though all pines can be used,




*This example of white pine (pinus strobus) can be found in Unity Park, a great place to practice your plant identification skills.*



*A white pine branch up close, showing the clusters of long, thin needles.*

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