

The Montague Reporter

YEAR 19 – NO. 20

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EDITOR@MONTAGUEREPORTER.ORG

THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES

MARCH 25, 2021

Flowertown: Special Permit Granted To Grow Cannabis in Paper Mill



AREZVI/AZAD PHOTO

Lights on: the former Southworth Paper company building, which closed abruptly in August 2017, is the site of a proposed cannabis grow and manufacturing facility. If all current proposals succeed, the town may end up with four cannabis businesses.

By JEFF SINGLETON

TURNERS FALLS – Another cannabis firm is on the verge of being approved to operate in Montague – potentially the third in the past year – and may be helping to stabilize a former paper mill in Turners Falls. The firm, called Hydro Flower LLC, is planning to open a cultivation and manufacturing facility in the former Southworth paper mill on the power canal.

Hydro Flower officials presented their proposal to the Montague planning board last Tuesday night at meeting which combined “community outreach” required under the state cannabis licensing law with a hearing and vote for a special permit. The

see **CANNABIS** page A5

Northfield Farm Tests Brand New Solar Rules

By MIKE JACKSON

NORTHFIELD – The Northfield planning board is expected to vote next week on a special permit for a group of solar arrays on prime, historic Connecticut River farmland. The proposed project on Pine Meadow Road, totaling 10.9 MW of generation, is being watched by solar advocates, land conservationists, and farmers throughout the state as one of the first large-scale examples of an experimental new policy on “dual-use” solar, which seeks to integrate arrays of panels with ongoing agricultural use of the land.

Massachusetts is working toward

targets set in 2008 under the Global Warming Solutions Act, an effort to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 80% by mid-century. According to a recent Mass Audubon report, ground-mounted solar panels accounted for a full quarter of all forest and farmland lost in the state between 2012 and 2017.

Cutting down trees to put up solar panels has a mixed impact on climate change, and so the state Department of Energy Resources (DOER) finds itself in a trial-and-error process over how the public can incentivize solar on existing development, such as buildings, landfills,

see **SOLAR** page A6

Local Evictions Begin, Before Moratorium Ends

By SARAH ROBERTSON

FRANKLIN COUNTY – With the federal eviction moratorium set to expire next week, some local residents have already been pushed from their homes during the pandemic as housing courts continue to hear cases and order evictions.

According to records from the sheriff’s office reviewed by the Reporter, courts have ordered 12 evictions so far in Franklin County since reopening, including seven this month. However, these statistics may not reflect the true number of people displaced so far. Housing advocates say that some tenants who are behind on rent are not showing up to their court hearings, or are leaving their homes before the conclusion of the formal court process.

“A lot of people are getting the default judgment and losing their cases by not showing up. So for those folks, it’s not clear what good the CDC moratorium is doing,” Jon Magee of the Central Valley Tenants Union (CVTU) told the Reporter. “We need a stronger moratorium, and a relief system that’s less bureaucratic and vague.”

CVTU organizers who canvassed in Turners Falls last month say they encountered housing units seemingly abandoned by renters whose court cases were unresolved.

“I have definitely visited addresses where tenants

see **EVICCTIONS** page A7

MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD

Town’s State Wishlist: School Aid, Bridge Aid, And Farren Oversight

By JEFF SINGLETON

Montague’s two representatives in the state legislature, Representative Natalie Blais and Senator Joanne Comerford, met with the town’s selectboard last Monday night to review local concerns about current state policies.

Towns like Montague have many concerns about many complex state policies, which cannot be adequately reviewed in a thirty-minute agenda item. So over the previous two weeks the board developed a list of ten concerns, then narrowed it down to three to focus on.

The first issue on the agenda was Chapter 70 state education aid to regional school districts, and the impact of declining enrollment caused by the pandemic. The board requested that the legislators advocate districts be “held harmless” under the formula for these declines, and that the state use the October 2019 enrollment census rather than the 2020 numbers, as the governor did in his preliminary budget.

Comerford pointed out that the phrase “hold harmless” is used in a number of different ways. Generally it refers to the policy of maintaining the overall level of

see **MONTAGUE** page A7

Healthcare Grant Expands Just Roots Food Program



WALLACE PHOTO

The non-profit plans to grow its farmshare program from 400 to about 500.

By LILY WALLACE

GREENFIELD – Just Roots, Greenfield’s not-for-profit community farm that promotes access to local, healthy food, has received a Baystate Health Better Together grant. The two-year grant will provide \$108,474 to expand Just Roots’ work addressing food insecurity in the area, including for those eligible for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP benefits, and those participating in the Healthy Incentives Program, or HIP.

Just Roots runs the largest SNAP-enrolled Accessible Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farmshare program in Massachusetts, with at least half of the

shares held for low-income residents. Executive director Jessica O’Neil says the farm plans to use the funds to expand their subsidized CSA farmshare program by 100 shares in 2021. “Baystate has been part of our story since our inception in one way or another,” said O’Neil. “They’ve been a supporter of our subsidized CSA farm share program over the years.”

This grant, alongside donations from sponsors, including Harvard Pilgrim Healthcare Foundation, Hunger to Health Collaboratory, and Mount Grace Land Trust, continue to help Just Roots make sure its CSA serves people up and down the economic scale. “The CSA is not set up so that the people who

see **FARMSHARE** page A6

DECONSTRUCTING HISTORY



ED GREGORY PHOTO

A pair of excavators move debris under a dust-quelling spray of water. The onetime Griswold Cotton Mill on Power Street in Turners Falls, widely known as the Railroad Salvage building, is being tidied up a bit this year by the federal Environmental Protection Agency. Environmental Restoration, LLC is handling the work. Thanks to Ed Gregory for the action shot!

Parents in College Struggle With Overwork in Pandemic

By LILY REAVIS

GREENFIELD – When Carrie Diehl gave birth last November, she expected to fall into a routine of schoolwork, hospital shifts, daycare drop-offs, and in-person clinicals while finishing her nursing degree at Greenfield Community College. A year and a half later, though, the COVID-19 pandemic has shifted her school and work online, including the labs and simulations required by her program.

Until recently, her daughter’s daycare operated remotely as well, leaving Diehl with the pressure of full-time school, work, and childcare on top of the anxiety caused by new parenthood and life in a pandemic.

The challenges faced by Diehl

are reported by many other local student parents – long hours, constantly changing schedules, and strict campus COVID-19 testing programs have reportedly caused stress and exhaustion.

“We’re educating our children while we’re also receiving an education, and there’s not a lot of space for that,” Diehl said, reflecting on the months of the pandemic that required both her and her daughter to learn remotely.

Outside of her schoolwork, Diehl works part-time as a peer doula for pregnant parents and people in substance abuse recovery at Baystate Franklin. Her appointments also moved to a remote format last year, which Diehl says added an

see **COLLEGE** page A5

Next Week’s Edition Will Be Even Better

Editorial; Letters to the Editors.....	A2	Who Was The French King?.....	B1
Local Briefs.....	A3	A Priest With A Soft Side.....	B1
Ice Melts Again.....	A3	Montague Police Log.....	B3
At Large: Shadowbanned.....	A4	Leverett & Wendell Police Logs.....	B4
Wendell Selectboard Notes.....	A4	We Know It When We See It.....	B4
10 Years Ago This Week.....	A8	Our Monthly Poetry Page.....	B6
Gill-Montague School Committee Notes.....	A8	Five Comics and a Puzzle.....	B7
The Gardener’s Companion.....	B1	The Conquest of Bread.....	B8



The Montague Reporter

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About Face Computing

Founded by
Arthur Evans Harry Brandt David Detmold
August 2002

Running Aground

This week the news readers of the world had an opportunity to chortle at the sight of a massive container ship, the *Ever Given*, which was blown askew in a sandstorm and wedged itself sideways across the Suez Canal.

As of press time, heading toward Day Three of the blockage, reports are warning that it could be "days or weeks" until the vessel is dislodged and shipping can continue to flow through the canal, through which roughly 30% of the world's container volume typically passes.

The very simplest lesson to be learned from the incident is that someone else is probably having a worse day at work than you at any given time. One step up there is the insight that every system has its chokepoints.

But there are deeper implications, too. Though public policy-makers the world around have assiduously set about converting all important decisions about our existence to the whims of the market, following the notion that markets are resilient and flexible things, it keeps turning out that efficiency is actually a very brittle condition. One cold snap in Texas can knock out the power grid; one mutation of a virus on the other side of the world can consign humanity to our apartments for a year.

We'll see what the ripple effects are, across global supply chains, of the worsening traffic jam in the Red Sea. A fair amount of crude oil passes through the Suez. It comes atop a fire last week at a key automobile chip factory in Japan, a drought in Brazil that caused a global coffee bottleneck, and a reported shortage of shipping containers themselves.

The market for short-term profits removes redundancies, and tends to focus production on individu-

al places that offer "comparative advantage" for any given thing. It would take extensive state planning to make any country self-sufficient; that is by design.

By now we take this interconnectedness so for granted that even to comment on it sounds shallow and insipid – until it is labor that tries to move around the globe. At that point, common sense turns around 180 degrees and claims that national borders are naturally occurring features.

There is a crisis, for example, involving people moving from zones of higher violence toward zones of lower violence, northward from Central America. The flow had been slowed for several years by a US policy of intensifying the violence at our southern border, but it has increased again suddenly based on the perception that policy might soften.

Granted temporary control of the US state apparatus, the Democratic party is completely incapable of offering a material response. What is the middle ground, after all, between capturing a human being and allowing them to move freely?

An actual alternative approach would be to address the "push" factors causing so many people to want to leave Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, or Honduras. Violence and poverty, yes – but these do not exist in a vacuum. Large-scale land acquisition by multinational agribusiness, cartels reaping super-profits from illegal drug exports, debt and structural adjustment...

These are global phenomena, as predictable in their own way as the steady stream of container ships through the Suez Canal. As long as we have a bipartisan consensus in support of nationalism, we will remain unable to even discuss them.



Station attendant Dave Withers stands by the new composting dumpster at the Montague transfer station off of Sandy Lane in Turners Falls. (See Local Briefs on page A3 for more details!)

Letters to the Editors

Birthday Success

Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!

I never expected that turning 90 on March 15th would be such a truly memorable experience. A special thanks to my daughter Kathy, my San Diego family, and Ann & Mark

Fisk for "engineering" the festivities. It isn't everyone that gets to stand on Center Street in Montague Center with a group of family and friends to watch and "hear" the Montague Center Fire Department pass by! Thank-you's to friends and relatives,

near and far, for cards and gifts.

One of my friends remarked (very optimistically!): "Wait 'til you see what we do on your 100th!"

Peg Bridges
Montague Center

Biomass on Town Meeting Plate

A group of Montague residents has submitted a Town Meeting resolution in opposition to the biomass plant proposed for Springfield.

Wood-burning biomass plants are a highly polluting form of energy generation, and Springfield is already known as the #1 asthma capital of the country (www.aafa.org/asthma-capitals-top-100-cities-ranking/).

A plant like the one proposed

would only be profitable with state subsidies... and now the Baker administration has proposed weakening the Renewable Portfolio Standard regulations to make biomass count as "renewable," and thus eligible for subsidies.

The Springfield City Council opposes these subsidies and the proposed plant, and other towns up and down the valley are taking similar positions and notifying state offi-

cials of their actions.

We hope that Montague Town Meeting will join this movement by voting for the "Resolution in Opposition to State Subsidies and Incentives for Biomass Plants." You can find more information at www.notoxicbiomass.org.

Ferd Wulkan
Montague Center

EVENT ANNOUNCEMENT

East Kentucky, Western Massachusetts To Meet in a Virtual Conversation

LEVERETT – On Tuesday evening, April 6, the cross-partisan dialogue group Hands Across the Hills will present a live virtual encounter between Kip Fonsh of Leverett and Gwen Johnson of Letcher County, Kentucky. Over 90 minutes, Johnson and Fonsh will discuss vaccination, coal, and more, sharing their own stories and those of their neighbors in the Northeast and the southern Appalachian mountains.

Johnson and Fonsh will also relate the story of their own unlikely friendship, borne of a heated argument over gun ownership where they nearly came to blows – and ended up hugging instead.

The event will tackle some of our country's most difficult questions. How can people possibly be refusing the vaccine? On the other hand: how can people blindly trust a government that has betrayed them so often?

How can we support violent people owning guns? On the other hand: how can others try to take away our means of defending ourselves?

The event will include a chance for viewers to submit questions of their own, which Johnson and Fonsh will respond to in real time.

The event is a production of Hands Across the Hills, an ongoing cross-partisan dialogue project started in 2017 by the Leverett Alliance in western Massachusetts and the Letcher County Culture Hub in east Kentucky.

"Guns, Coal, Vaccines, and Abortion:
East Kentucky Meets Western Massachusetts"
Tuesday, April 6, 7 to 8:30 p.m.

Register to get Zoom link:
bit.ly/guns-coal-vaccines-abortion

TWO CORRECTIONS

In our March 18, 2021 edition, the surname of Millers Falls' latest cobbler, Grace Martenson, was misspelled throughout our Page A1 profile. The article was shared and celebrated widely, and no one notified us of the error, but we have realized it. Our apologies to Grace, and to all the Martensons, and to our readers.

We will make it a point to ask in the future.

In our March 18, 2021 edition, the Montague police log retrospective on Page B1, *The Hounds of Montague, Part II*, erroneously credited the article's compilation to Emily Alling. Emily had no hand in this one, though she is typically responsible for these features, and more carefully curates them to ensure that the reader's experience is one of mirth rather than discomfort. Our apologies to Emily, and to our readers, and to certain misfortunate and neglected hounds whose worst days in public were needlessly recounted in our pages.

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Every other week in July and August.
No paper fourth week of November,
or the Thursday closest to 12/25.

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By NINA ROSSI

Drawdown Montague folks are urging people to come to the Montague Recycling and Transfer Station to check out the new **food and paper waste composting** program. In March and April, on Wednesdays and Saturdays from 10 a.m. until 12 noon, members of Drawdown Montague, a group of local residents working to address climate change, will be there to help you get started.

Countertop pails will be available free to the first 100 families who stop by and want to start composting. Bring some food or paper waste with you and get started right away! The pail giveaway is made possible by the Town of Montague, Franklin County Solid Waste District, and Drawdown Montague.

For the second year, the Franklin County Transition from Jail to Community Task Force is supporting the **“Love in a Backpack”** project of St. John’s Church in Ashfield by filling 50 backpacks full of basic supplies. This is truly a “Welcome Wagon in a Backpack” for folks re-entering the community and the community can show their support by donating supplies for the packs.

Until March 31, community members are encouraged to make donations of supplies at the following Greenfield locations: Foster’s Supermarket, Community Health Center, Franklin County Sheriff’s Office, and Greenfield District Court.

“Love in a Backpack is a wonderful collaboration of people coming together to support women and men in transition from jail to the community,” says Franklin County Sheriff Christopher J. Donelan, explaining the need. “This transition can be very

difficult, and knowing they have support from the community gives these women and men hope that a new life is possible. These donations are a way citizens can directly impact life-changing work.”

To find out more about how to help and what items are being sought for donations, go to www.stjohnsashfield.org/love-in-a-backpack/. Gift cards and financial donations can be mailed to: St. John’s Episcopal Church, PO Box 253, Ashfield, MA 01330. Write “TJC Backpack Project” on the memo line.

According to Project Bread, Massachusetts has the largest percentage of food-insecure individuals in the country due to COVID-19. CISA is trying to raise \$100,000 in **donations to Local Food for All**, a program which will sponsor 500 senior farm shares for low-income elders in Hampshire, Hampden, and Franklin counties. A portion of the fundraising will also go to supporting farmers offering the SNAP and HIP rebates at farmers markets this summer. Find out how to support the effort at www.buylocalfood.org.

Fans of the Saturday morning **Western Mass Business show** with Ira Bryck on WHMP should know that after 350 episodes and seven years of being the show’s radio host, Ira is passing the microphone over to Tara Brewster, VP of Business Development at Greenfield Savings Bank.

The show features interviews with local business owners, and seeks to foster networking and relationships in the local business community. Business owners interested in being on the show may contact ira@irabryck.com.

Montague Business owners are needed to complete an online survey to help the town Planning Department identify short term actions that the community can take to facilitate a robust rebound from COVID-19. Town planner Water Ramsey writes that results will “be reported back in aggregate form only, so your responses will be anonymous. Only one survey can be completed per business. Please note that this survey will directly inform the Commonwealth about how they will direct relief funding to downtowns in general and our specific downtown.” Go to www.surveymonkey.com/r/LRRPBiz.

The Augusta Savage Gallery at UMass announces a **participatory installation of poetry and paper cranes and canoes** with JuPong Lin called *Poetics of Repair: Being Earth, Being Water*. The digital performance, workshops, and exhibit run April 2 through April 22.

Lin will offer live online workshops and community performances on the first three Fridays in April that include a guided meditation, poetry reading, and paper folding lesson. Those interested in contributing paper cranes, canoes and/or horseshoe crabs for the installation can visit the website for information on how and where to get paper. The opening performance and workshop will be held on Zoom on Friday, April 2 at 4 p.m.

For more information and free tickets, visit fineartscenter.com/JuPongLin.

A few weeks ago, the federal government announced a **big change to PPP COVID-relief funding guidelines**. Now the PPP forgivable loan will be calculated based on your Schedule C gross income in 2019 or 2020, not your profit, so even if a lot of your business income was offset by business expenses and you had a low profit or even a loss, you may still qualify for several thousand dollars of PPP support.

This major change opens the PPP program up to many more self-employed people, and increases the

amount they can receive. And you don’t need a formal business entity, and it doesn’t matter whether your business income has gone up or down or stayed consistent during the pandemic. The current window to apply closes March 31.

The Nolumbeka Project plans to hold the 8th annual **Pocumtuck Homelands Festival** at Unity Park this year, after canceling last year’s event due to COVID-19.

This celebration of Native American art, music, and cultures will be held on August 7 and 8. Native American vendors are welcome to submit applications to nolumbekaproject@gmail.com.

The Hidden Landscapes project, a chronicle of research resulting in a series of video stories that investigate the archaeological history and the modern legacy of the Northeastern Native civilization, is available to rent on the organization’s website, nolumbekaproject.org.

The Dakin Humane Society is holding their **annual pet food drive** from April 1 to April 30. The purpose of the drive is to collect pet food for its in-house animal population and to replenish its Pet Food Aid Program, which saw an unprecedented demand for pet food from regional families facing food insecurity in 2020.

“Last year was record-breaking for our Pet Food Aid Program,” said marketing director Stacey Price. “We disbursed over 138,000 pounds of pet food, which resulted in over 1.2 million meals for pets in homes dealing with financial challenges. That’s about five times the typical yearly amount we provide.” Donations may be made locally at Animal Crackers and Stop and Shop in Greenfield.

Additional information about the Annual Pet Food Drive can be found at www.dakinhumane.org. For questions about the drive, contact Kaitlyn Holloway at (413) 781-4000 x. 118 or kholloway@dakinhumane.org.

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Deadline Approaching for Montague Nomination Papers

MONTAGUE – Monday, March 29 is the last day to obtain nomination papers for Selectboard, Moderator, Assessors, Board of Health, Parks and Recreation Commission, Soldiers Memorial Trustee (Veteran & Non-Veteran), Library Trustees, Montague Housing Authority, and Town Meeting Members. Due to the pandemic, the Annual Town Election has been postponed to Tuesday, June 22. The polls will open at 7 a.m. and close at 7 p.m.

Potential town meeting members need 10 signatures from registered voters in their home precinct. Candidates for all other elected positions need 36 signatures from registered voters from the town at large. Papers must be returned to the town clerk’s office by 5 p.m. on Wednesday, March 31.

Due to COVID-19, the town hall is open 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. and again in the afternoon from 3:30 to 5:30 p.m., Mondays through Thursdays. Call the town clerk’s office at 863-3200 x. 203 or email townclerk@montague-ma.gov to make an appointment if these limited hours of operation are not conducive to obtaining or dropping off nomination papers.

Annual Ice Off Contest Decided

By DAVID JAMES

LAKE PLEASANT – Nine days before warnings inherent in the Ides of March, walrus holes began to blotch the frozen surface of the lake after which this youngest and least-populated of Montague’s five villages is named.

Five days before March 15, pinwheel cracks began to spin into spiral arms fanning out from multiplying walrus hole cores located above subsurface springs ... the holes, the spiral cracks, as sure a sign to villagers as sprouting stalks of snowdrop and crocus, daffodil and tulip, that winter was near the cliff edge of giving up its ghost.

March 19, four days after the Ides, judges in symbolic robes scrambled over a barricade blocking access to the Bridge of Names, which is awaiting restoration from severe damage suffered last October during a Windstorm from Hell.

By tradition judges convened at precisely 5 p.m. at the official judgment spot, the Raisin Rosen picket near the midpoint of the wooden walkway which – when healthy and whole – connects two sides of a community separated by a ravine left behind in the retreat of the last North American Ice Age more than 10,000 years ago.

The judges surveyed the visible surface of the lake with high-powered bird-watcher binoculars and saw nothing but water, water, open water. Because there is nowhere on lakeside land from which the entirety of the lake can be viewed, by rule, “If you can’t see an ice cube, then an ice cube does not exist.”

The verdict rendered was that the 45th annual Ice Off the Lake contest had reached its usual and customary end.

Since 1977 the event has been a village rite of seasonal passage. Participants pay a dollar to be eligible to make a blind-luck draw from an old plastic pretzel jar of a date between February 22, the earliest ice has departed (2012), and April 19, the latest date of ice departure (1978).

The winner this year of a \$50 pot was Robert Emond, Jr., of Greenfield, son of Linda and Bob Emond, Sr., and brother of Leanne Emond, all of Lake Pleasant. The real beneficiary, however, is another matter.

Although Senior bought the ticket in the name of Junior, if he won, Junior had decided to pass the bucks to a bank account in the name of Baby Jane Doe Emond – not due to arrive in this world until August – as soon thereafter as his daughter-to-be has been given a name. That fortunate bundle of joy will therefore hit the ground proverbially running, and begin life in diapers from a home office in her crib as manager of a money market portfolio.

If the contest had ended one day before March 19, or one day after, the winner would have been one or the other of long-time partners Joy Kaubin and John Anderson of Lake Pleasant, each a winner in years past.

If the contest had ended two days beforehand, or two days afterward, the winner would have been in the first instance the Spirit of Varion Hicks, a long-term villager and three-time winner in life, and in the latter case would have been the Spirit of Henry James, a lifelong village resident and former Siamese cat.


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AT LARGE

NEPR Gives Al Norman the Silent Treatment

By CHIP AINSWORTH

GREENFIELD – Al Norman kept Walmart out of Greenfield, and now Walmart's keeping Al Norman off New England Public Radio, or so he believes. "Every year since Bob Paquette died, NEPR has refused to interview me over any issue," said Norman. "I can only assume the fact that Walmart is an advertiser has led them to ignore whatever news I'm involved in."

Bob Paquette was host of WFCR's popular *Morning Edition*. "Since Bob died, [NEPR] doesn't have a single journalist who could investigate broad daylight," said Norman, who grew up in Washington where his father was *Newsweek's* Pentagon correspondent.

What's especially irked the 74-year-old Norman has been NEPR's reluctance to let him come on the air and talk about his most recent book. It would be one thing if it was a sequel to *Slam Dunking Wal-Mart or Occupy Walmart*, but it's not about Walmart – it's about his real love, politics and history.

After Norman got his masters in teaching at UMass-Amherst, he moved to Colrain, where he worked for State Rep. Bill Benson. "For years I worked squarely in the middle of the Franklin County Democratic Party helping candidates assume office," said Norman, who mentioned state reps Carmen Buell, John Merrigan (now the Register of Probate) and Chris Donelan (currently the Franklin County Sheriff).

"I wrote their press releases, designed their fliers and lawn signs, researched the issues, made phone calls and planted lawn signs," he said. "I campaigned in Iowa for Mike Dukakis, and was a state delegate until it burned me out and I retreated to being 'unenrolled.'"

Three years ago this winter, Norman wrote *Ravings: American Wild Talk*: nineteen tales of backroom politics, union organizing and the Red Scare. He was his own editor, proofreader, fact checker, and agent.

"It is one of the favorite things I have produced," said Norman. "Everything that's in it is from internet, searching true stories about America that have always interested me."

A grainy photo of Robert Oppenheimer graces the book's front and back cover. The photo was taken while Oppenheimer was in his 40s, looking more like an average nine-to-five guy than the "the inventor of death" as he called himself. His security clearance was revoked by the Atomic Energy Commission after WWII ended, and Norman relates the irony of how it happened.

Norman flips between centuries, detailing Andrew Johnson's ascendance to the presidency despite being a Democrat from Tennessee, and tells of Henry Ford's less than seaworthy scheme to prevent World War I.

Readers will learn why Nikita Khrushchev thought the US had nuclear missiles hidden at Disneyland, and of Elvis Presley's secret meeting with Richard Nixon to help stop communists from brainwashing American citizens.

The 178-page paperback includes a humorous account over whether Nixon should ride in an American or Chinese limousine (built in Wuhan, no less) during his trip to China.

When Norman tried peddling his book, a New York City publishing house told him that readers might think he was racist for including Elliott Rankin's speech on the floor of the House in 1922. Rankin was a 16-term Democratic congressman from Mississippi who used his power to push discriminatory legislation.

"I presented the story as an illustration of the virulent racism that has been part of national government since the founding of this nation," said Norman.

A noble intent, but Rankin was a talker, and no one needed to read every word of his speech to get the point.

Shortly after it was released, *Ravings* came under scrutiny from the local media. "One writer did a review, but spent more time pondering if it was history or fiction than actually talking about the stories themselves," said Norman.



He appeared on WHMP with Bill Newman occasionally, but got the brush-off every time he tried to land a spot on NEPR. "They'd tell me they didn't have enough staff to cover it," he said.

Walmart began sponsoring National Public Radio in 2004 to improve its public image. The company was being besmirched by sprawlbusters, and Norman was Walmart's public enemy number one. His nine-year battle against putting a Walmart in Greenfield provided the blueprint to keep big

box stores out of towns everywhere.

In a perfect world NEPR would put Norman on the air like it does any local author, but CEO Martin Miller gave him the runaround: "I've forwarded [your book] to Jill Kaufman who is our Arts Reporter, Carrie Healey who occasionally does interviews like this for *Morning Edition*, and Ilan Stavans who does our *In Contrast* podcast – a broad view of culture – and his Executive Producer John Voci."

And that was the last he heard from anyone at NEPR.

Norman credits Amazon with creating a relatively pain free self-publishing experience. "It saves authors from having to search for agents, and from publishers who mostly rely on established authors," he said. "In that regard, Amazon represents the 'democratization' of book publishing."

Amazon doesn't charge to self-publish a book. It makes its money from selling directly to the consumers and with each sale comes a small royalty. Norman could buy his book at a reduced "author's rate" and put them in bookstores, do readings and badger friends. Thus far he's sold 200 copies. Al's got a lot of friends.

Ravings is available for \$11.99 in paperback (\$8.99 for the Kindle version). It's on sale at Federal Street Books in Greenfield and Boswell Books in Shelburne Falls. Autographed copies are available at no extra charge by contacting Norman at info@sprawl-busters.com.

NOTES FROM THE WENDELL SELECTBOARD

Wendell Warden Prepares a Wood Bank

By JOSH HEINEMANN

Cliff Dornbush, Wendell's tree warden, was connected to the selectboard's March 17 meeting as it opened. Dornbush told of progress he had made toward creating a wood bank in town for residents who could use some (wood) fuel assistance. His concerns were liability, and a system for distributing the wood.

For the first concern, Dornbush expected to use Saturday morning work days with volunteers for whom he would assign jobs according to their experience. Each volunteer would sign the same waiver that Montague uses for their volunteers.

For selecting recipients, he thought to start with single parents with children, and elderly people who need the wood. Selectboard chair Dan Keller and member Gillian Budine offered the Friends of Wendell, Good Neighbors, and the Council on Aging as sources for likely households.

Dornbush has already spoken with road superintendent Rich Wilder and highway commission chair Phil Delorey, and agreed on a site for the operation and storage, in the back of the property at 97 Wendell Depot Road. He said he would assess volunteers for their ability, experience, and caution in the use of equipment, including

saws, splitters, and hand tools. He wants everyone to leave a processing session with all the digits they had on arrival.

In the discussion Dornbush introduced Sean Mahoney, DCR markets and utilization forestry program director, to guide the process.

Massachusetts provides each town with enough half-cord bins for 15 cords. Wood offered through a wood bank will be seasoned for two reasons, air quality and public safety, avoiding creosote buildup in chimneys. He said grants are available for equipment like splitters. Before COVID, grant money could even pay for coffee and treats.

Normalization

Massachusetts is entering Phase 4, Step 1 in its re-opening process, and people are wondering when and how Wendell buildings and facilities will be open to the public. Statewide, indoor gatherings are now limited to 100 people. Selectboard member Laurie DiDonato said she already had an inquiry about the town hall kitchen.

Board of health members Shay Cooper and Barbara Craddock joined the meeting for answers, and they were cautious. After they have spoken to the attendants, the WRATS free store and recycling shed may open with patrons still directed to wear masks, keep apart,

and move in one direction only.

Selectboard chair Dan Keller said he is in favor of waiting.

The board of health has not spoken with librarian Anna Lawrence, but selectboard member Gillian Budine said Lawrence wants to wait, at least until staff has been vaccinated.

After town office workers have been vaccinated the office building may open for the public. The Full Moon Coffeehouse is still prohibited, as ventilation provided by the drafty windows is not adequate.

The town hall kitchen, separate from the larger event town hall, is used by one or two people at a time, and already has its cleaning and sanitation procedures in place. DiDonato said she and Kathy Becker are currently the kitchen committee, and they will meet and maybe confirm re-opening the kitchen.

Other Business

Shutesbury is setting up a police chief succession committee, and Keller said that one Shutesbury selectboard member is open to talking with the Wendell board about cooperation between the towns. Town coordinator Nancy Aldrich will write an invitation to the Shutesbury selectboard for a discussion of a possible partnership, either in Wendell via Zoom, or in Shutesbury however they meet.

State community compact grant money is available for towns to assess and upgrade their IT systems, but the town needs to be prepared in order to apply. Budine said she didn't feel she had all the information needed to make a decision.

Wendell's facilities engineer Jim Slavus and computer expert Robert Heller have set up a time to meet with Northeast IT systems president Joel Mollison to start the process of a grant application.

Since the new router was installed at the town hall, Good Neighbors has not been able to connect with the wifi or use an ethernet cable.

Heller said that the new router is not the issue, which is likely a new, and not intuitive, way of connecting. He personally will not work with Windows, but said that someone who does should be able to help.

Laurie DiDonato's son and selectboard clerk, Liam, to the side of the Zoom window, said, "I will." Laurie DiDonato will set up a meeting between him and Good Neighbors executive director Nancy Graton.

Aldrich reported that town counsel, Kopelman and Paige, plan to raise their consulting rate by \$10 an hour to \$190, or possibly \$200. Keller said he knew of a local attorney who charges \$160.

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CANNABIS from page A1

latter is needed for a so-called “host community agreement” with the town, another state requirement.

Hydro Flower officials began the meeting with a presentation about their proposed project by Nick Adamopoulos, legal counsel to the company. The company’s president Ryan Ward was also present. Ward, according to the presentation, has “vast experience” in the cannabis industry, having negotiated licenses in Pennsylvania and Maine, along with experience in raising capital, cultivation, and “large scale build-outs.”

Adamopoulos said the company would initially use 40,000 square feet on the “second level” of the mill – which is actually the ground level due to a basement access road and storage area – for cultivation, extraction, and manufacturing. This will leave more space for the company’s expansion, or an ability to sub-lease some space to other businesses.

The company would also have access to two separate parcels owned by the mill on the opposite side of the canal for use as parking.

Adamopoulos said he believed the company did not need to present a well-developed site plan since it did not intend to make changes in the external structure of the building or other properties. Later in the meeting, town planner Walter Ramsey affirmed that belief.

On the issue of “odor mitigation” – frequently a question when it comes to prospective cannabis cultivation facilities – Hydro Flower proposes a “dual system,” with “centrifugal fans” in each of the grow rooms and charcoal filters in the HVAC units. Employees would

also “closely monitor” the cultivation rooms for potential odor.

“Ryan has demonstrated at his other facilities that this process does work,” said Adamopoulos.

Adamopoulos said that there would be minimal impact on traffic from the facility because the business would use small “Sprinter-style vans” for delivery, entering and leaving perhaps a dozen times each week. This was contrasted with the large trucks that delivered to the former paper mill, which frequently blocked traffic heading across the Fifth Street bridge.

Adamopoulos said Hydro Flower wanted to be a “good neighbor,” working with other cannabis companies in town to assist local voluntary and charitable organizations.

During the community outreach portion of the meeting, a number of questions were raised about the proposed project. Curt Sherrer, who owns the former housing authority building across the street from Southworth, asked if the facility in Maine which Ryan Ward helped build – and which was cited as free from odor problems – had a residential neighborhood nearby. “Is that within a city, or out in the country, or in suburbia?” asked Sherrer.

Ward said the business was within five minutes of Kittery, Maine, a tourist destination, and on a “major thoroughfare,” but that there was no residential property “right next to us.”

Hydro Flower and town officials were asked about the current status of the cannabis industry, and if there was a risk that Montague was becoming reliant for economic development on a volatile new business sector with an uncertain future.

Ward said that many cannabis license applications coming to the state are for retail sales rather than cultivation. “There’s not enough product at this point,” he said. He also said that Massachusetts was exercising more control over the number of facilities licensed than other states.

Several members of the planning board said the future of the cannabis industry was not in their purview, and that “the market” would in the end determine the status of particular business entities.

The owner of the Southworth building, Tom Cusano, said he had rejected several other prospective tenants for the space because he did not feel they had the financial resources to sustain their operations. He also said he owned buildings in New Hampshire and Maine that are being partially used for cannabis operations, and was familiar with the issues facing the industry.

“This for me is pretty much a slam dunk,” Cusano said, referring to Hydro Flower’s business plan. “We’ll be there every step of the way.”

After the community meeting the board held another hearing on the details of the special permit, which was in the end approved with restrictions. These include reducing the visibility of the HVAC rooftop systems and requiring Hydro Flower to facilitate pedestrian access to the former mill while the Fifth Street pedestrian bridge is under construction.

Hydro Flower must now negotiate a host community agreement with the town of Montague, after which it would be on to the state Cannabis Control Commission for a license.



THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
 MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF
 TRANSPORTATION – HIGHWAY DIVISION
 NOTICE OF A PUBLIC HEARING
 Project File No. 608849

A Virtual Design Public Hearing will be published on the MassDOT website below to present the design for the proposed replacement of Bridge L-09-003, Millers Road over Roaring Brook project in Leverett, MA.

WHEN: Monday, April 5, 2021

PURPOSE: The purpose of this hearing is to provide the public with the opportunity to become fully acquainted with the proposed Millers Road Bridge Replacement project. All views and comments submitted in response to the hearing will be reviewed and considered to the maximum extent possible.

PROPOSAL: The proposed project consists of replacing the current steel and wood bridge structure with a new steel and concrete bridge. The bridge currently provides access to 2 properties. Access to the properties will be provided via a temporary driveway from January Road during construction.

A secure right-of-way is necessary for this project. Acquisitions in fee and permanent or temporary easements may be required. The Town is responsible for acquiring all needed rights in private or public lands. MassDOT’s policy concerning land acquisitions will be presented in the hearing.

Project inquiries, written statements and other exhibits regarding the proposed undertaking may be submitted to Patricia A. Leavenworth, P.E., Chief Engineer, via e-mail to dot.feedback.highway@state.ma.us or via US Mail to Suite 6340, 10 Park Plaza, Boston, MA 02116, Attention: Major Projects, Project File No. 608849. Statements and exhibits intended for inclusion in the public hearing transcript must be emailed or postmarked no later than ten (10) business days after the hearing is posted to the MassDOT website listed below.

This hearing is accessible to people with disabilities. MassDOT provides reasonable accommodations and/or language assistance free of charge upon request (e.g interpreters in American Sign Language and languages other than English, live captioning, videos, assistive listening devices and alternate material formats), as available. For accommodation or language assistance, please contact MassDOT’s Chief Diversity and Civil Rights Officer by phone (857-368-8580), TTD/TTY at (857) 266-0603, fax (857) 368-0602 or by email (MassDOT.CivilRights@dot.state.ma.us). Requests should be made as soon as possible prior to the meeting, and for more difficult to arrange services including sign-language, CART or language translation or interpretation, requests should be made at least ten business days before the hearing.

This Virtual Design Public Hearing or a cancellation announcement will be posted on the internet at www.mass.gov/massdot-highway-design-public-hearings.

JONATHAN GULLIVER
 HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATOR

PATRICIA A. LEAVENWORTH, P.E.
 CHIEF ENGINEER

COLLEGE from page A1

extra burden to her already difficult job. “Sometimes there are things you have to do in person,” she explained. “You can’t really teach someone breastfeeding through a computer screen.”

She also completes biweekly clinicals at Cooley Dickinson Hospital in Northampton. To keep up with the daily load of parenting, schoolwork and remote doula appointments, Diehl wakes up at 5 a.m. each day, giving her a few hours to read before her daughter Avery wakes up. In some ways, though, Diehl says the shift to remote learning has been a welcome change.

She was originally hesitant toward online classes, thinking that they could limit her learning capabilities or would be difficult to accomplish with the power and wifi at home. While those issues remain, she said that remote learning has allowed her to spend more time with Avery. Also, waking up so early allows her to prepare for the day’s online classes during time that she previously spent commuting to campus.

When her daughter wakes up – which can change drastically depending on the day – Diehl is able to bring her to class with her. Before the pandemic, she spent breaks between classes pumping breastmilk and driving between Greenfield and Westhampton. “Now, I get all of this extra time with her now that I would have lost having to drive or get up super early,” she said.

When daycares reopened for in-person learning, Diehl and her partner chose to re-enroll Avery.

Diehl and her partner were worried that only being around adults long-term could impact Avery’s development; “We can’t teach her how to be a baby,” Diehl said. On top of that, the time she spends outside of the home allows Diehl to work and study during the day.

Balancing Schedules

Robin Gencarelle, a non-traditionally-aged student and single parent at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, was also concerned that lockdown could negatively impact her daughter’s growth. When her daughter’s kindergarten reopened for partial in-person learning, she was

excited to re-enroll. But the tumult of the pandemic has caused multiple two-week shut-downs and changes in schedule, which has caused anxiety and confusion for Gencarelle’s whole family.

“Originally when she went back... she was doing Thursday to Fridays, they were full days. And she got that,” Gencarelle explained, referring to her daughter’s school schedule. “But if it’s like one week on, one week off, she doesn’t quite get it. She gets a lot of anxiety.”

Since her daughter’s school schedule is constantly changing, Gencarelle said she actually prefers the remote learning environment at UMass. It lets her take her daughter to class and hold her while giving presentations and, without a commute to campus, she has an extra hour each day to dedicate to her own studies.

But in Gencarelle’s last semester, she is writing a thesis on art and religion. One of her advisors requires in-person meetings, which means that she can’t stay at home the whole day anymore. Now, when she needs to visit campus for advising meetings, she also has to travel to Amherst to be tested through the university’s program.

That can be challenging for Gencarelle, because it doesn’t allow for flexibility around her daughter’s school schedule. “That’s two hours a week that I would have to spend driving getting tested,” she said. “I can’t do that.”

The pandemic has already proven difficult for her daughter, who performs above grade level and experiences some sensory issues, according to Gencarelle. With the added volatility of both of their schedules, her daughter is struggling with anxiety. “She’s not a baby anymore. She’s an actual kid,” Gencarelle said. “There’s just so many things happening, that it’s really overwhelming for her.

“My daughter’s school is already talking about in the fall that they’re going to be remote. So I think that it’s going to be another year on top of this year,” Gencarelle added.

Pulling Weight

Although the shift to remote learning has

proven beneficial for Diehl, the changes to medical education can be difficult to adjust to. Instead of learning how to perform procedures on dummies in a lab, everything has been simulated for remote schooling. Now, the only in-person experience Diehl gets most weeks comes during her clinical shifts at Cooley Dickinson.

Those shifts can also cause issues for Diehl, though, because GCC requires her to participate in weekly on-campus testing protocols before each shift, even though the hospital and the college are in opposite directions from each other.

“If I need to be on campus, or at Cooley Dickinson, I have to go up to Greenfield for weekly COVID testing. So once a week, I drive to Greenfield – for no reason other than to get a COVID test – and then drive back,” Diehl explained.

The trip can add stress to her already busy schedule, and entering the campus community just to be tested feels uncomfortable at times.

The testing difficulties faced by students of nontraditional age often vary from those of other students. For young people in college, it’s more common to live close to campus, so college testing requirements are often easier to meet.

Now, when Diehl needs to travel to campus to get tested each week, she listens to recordings of her nursing program lectures in the car. “It’s just to be sure that I got all the information, because I’ve been up all night with a teething baby,” she explained.

Diehl says that a lot of her nursing student peers also have children, which has been taxing in many ways throughout the pandemic. Some, like Diehl and Gencarelle, welcome the shift to remote learning, as it allows more time to spend supporting their children.

“A lot of the nursing students are moms and we are tripling down on duty now,” Gencarelle said. “We are teaching our children. We are keeping a house going. We’re working... But at the same time, COVID has exacerbated our inequalities at home, even in the most equal of relationships.”



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SOLAR from page A1

and parking lots. The program which allocates subsidies for solar development, Solar Massachusetts Renewable Target (SMART), has been a hotly contested arena for landowners, developers, and environmentalists of various temperaments and visions.

Dual-use solar is on the cutting edge of this debate. SMART is designed to nudge the market by assigning value “adders” to six types of location. Panels mounted on buildings will earn an extra 1.9 cents from the state per kilowatt-hour of electricity produced; built over a brownfield site or floating on water, 3 cents; on a landfill, 4 cents.

The largest bonuses, at 6 cents per kilowatt-hour, go to panels mounted on canopies over parking lots – and over farmland, provided that a project is “designed to optimize a balance between the generation of electricity and the agricultural productive capacity of the soils beneath.”

This goal is difficult to evaluate, however, and until recently very few projects qualified. In fact, DOER is still revising its guidelines as to what constitutes an “Agricultural Solar Tariff Generation Unit” (ASTGU), and how one should be certified. Factors including soil type, panel height, the amount of sun that reaches the earth, and maximum array size are all on the table.

Some organizations, including the Northeast Organic Farming Association and the Massachusetts Land Trust Coalition, are lobbying to prevent “prime” farmland from becoming eligible for the subsidy, both over concerns about loss of food production and the possibility that farmland will become too expensive for small farmers. Nevertheless, a number of dual-use projects are already in the pipeline,

including the cluster of arrays BlueWave Solar hopes to build next year in Northfield at Four Star Farms.

Test Cases

“We think dual-use projects are the future of solar in Massachusetts,” said Jackie Firsty, director of project development at the Boston-based company. “Northfield is a really good example of that.”

There is not much science to draw from about the effects of hundreds of posts, and more pertinently the shade of hundreds of panels, on the agricultural viability of Massachusetts soil. Under the current setup, DOER and the state Department of Agricultural Resources (MDAR) run proposals by UMass Agricultural Extension, which operates a small test facility near Mount Sugarloaf to evaluate plant growth under panels.

BlueWave is nearly finished building the state’s largest dual-use experiment, a 2.6 MW array at a farm in Grafton; vegetables will grow under one half, and livestock will graze under the other.

At Northfield, which would be substantially larger, the company has partnered with a sheep farmer who plans to use the site as a “wintertime home and year-round hub of a larger mobile grazing operation.” If the project is approved, the company would even drill a well and install fencing and housing for the sheep, before passing the project on to its “long-term owner.”

“That is something that we are working on,” Firsty told the *Reporter* when asked if the long-term owner has been lined up.)

The Pine Meadow Road project is technically three separate installations: two arrays, at 6.0 MW and 4.3 MW, on land owned by Four Star Farms founders Eugene and Bonnie L’Etoile, and a much smaller 0.6 MW array on an adjacent

parcel owned by their son Jacob L’Etoile and his partner Robin.

The couple’s other son, Nathan L’Etoile, also lives at the farm, and has been immersed in the issue of state solar policy in his own professional life. If BlueWave’s proposal makes it through the remaining hoops, he may soon have a front-row seat to an experiment that he has so far encountered mostly in theoretical terms in policy circles.

L’Etoile cut his teeth working for the Massachusetts Farm Bureau, and served as the assistant state agriculture commissioner under the Deval Patrick administration. He now serves as Northfield town moderator, and as the Northeast regional director of the American Farmland Trust (AFT), which has partnered with BlueWave and other developers to submit joint public comments on the ASTGU guidelines.

“We can’t just say ‘somebody else needs to solve our problems – we need more solar, but we need it somewhere else,’” L’Etoile told the *Reporter*. “We all have to be part of finding the solution, and that can be hard.”

The potential development on his own family’s land has meant stepping away from solar policy at AFT, L’Etoile said. Emily Cole, the organization’s New England deputy director, has taken the reins; this Thursday she is presenting on dual-use solar to the Franklin Regional Planning Board.

“[W]hat I’ve experienced since the SMART program established dual-use as the only allowable solar on farmland is that more developers are looking to learn how to do dual-use right, and have reached out to AFT to learn,” said Cole. “AFT has never and does not support the conversion of farmland, or displacement of agriculture. Dual use, when done right, does

neither of those things.”

Asked about the Northfield proposal, Cole said she would not comment on any specific project.

“This type of solar is still nascent, and there are bound to be some growing pains,” she said about the changing state policy. “But inviting stakeholder feedback and involvement in refining and revising the ASTGU guidelines has spurred great dialogue, which we hope continues.... I’m a firm believer in research, and see new crop/solar combinations as an opportunity to learn.”

Seeking Approval

L’Etoile said his family’s initial idea for a dual-use setup was to continue Four Star’s current farming of grains, and leasing of some of its land to vegetable farmers, but it was vetoed. “UMass Extension basically looked at it and said, ‘the only research that exists is on livestock and pasture; the only thing we will not give a negative recommendation to is livestock,’” he said.

The modified plan involving a tenant sheep farmer, according to L’Etoile and Firsty, has already been approved by DOER and MDAR as eligible for an ASTGU.

The Northfield planning board held two public hearings on February 18 and March 18, and may vote on the proposal next Thursday, April 1. L’Etoile said that BlueWave has been consulting with a liaison for the Abenaki tribe, which has “historical and present relationship with the land that this project is going to be on,” and that he anticipates the planning board may place conditions on the project based on potential culturally significant findings in the future.

If the special permit is approved, BlueWave must also secure approval of the town conser-

vation commission before it submits its application to the SMART program. After that, the company would work out an interconnection agreement with the Eversource – which would need to upgrade the power lines connecting the neighborhood to the nearest substation – and negotiate a payment-in-lieu-of-taxes agreement with Northfield, get building permits, and secure financing for the project.

“If everything goes according to plan, I’d say we would be looking at construction starting sometime in the first quarter of 2022,” said Firsty.

“We’re really excited about this project,” she added. “I think dual use in general is a fantastic structure, and I’m so excited for what it will do for the industry and for farmers – it really is the best of both worlds.”

“I can see somebody saying, ‘You have the best farmland in the world – we don’t want you doing a minimal amount of agriculture on that land,’” said L’Etoile, addressing concerns raised at the planning board hearings that the project would compromise prime local farmland. “[But] an intensively managed rotationally grazing operation, frankly, is going to generate more money from an agricultural perspective on the land than our farming has ever done.”

“Ag evolves, ag changes,” he continued. “When we started growing turf here, it had been corn and dairy for decades, if not hundreds of years before. I get that folks have concerns and questions.... We don’t have to win everybody over to our side, but we need to be transparent, and we need to be willing to talk to people. I hope that people pick up the phone, or stop by, when they have questions or concerns, or comments.”

**FARMSHARE** from page A1

are paying more are paying for the people who are paying less,” O’Neil told the *Reporter*. “That’s on purpose – we didn’t want to create that sort of power dynamic.”

According to O’Neil, the sponsorship is important in ensuring that the farm receives the full price to cover the cost of producing food, while still subsidizing the program for consumers. “We can’t just discount the food,” she explained, as it would make the program financially unsustainable. “We wanted to move towards a model seeking outside funding. Locally, we rely heavily on business sponsors, as well as two annual fundraising campaigns.”

Many of the CSA’s members leverage SNAP and HIP, federal and state programs that help Massachusetts residents access food. HIP, a newer state-funded program, faced many interruptions in its first year due to high demand and insufficient funding, but the issues were sorted out in 2020. “Last year was the first year HIP was not interrupted, so that was a big win,” said O’Neil. “We are helping to advocate for a federal pilot. I think the program continues to be underfunded for what it needs – certainly there is a lot of usage.”

While the CSA’s operating costs are covered by participants, donors, and sponsors, O’Neil noted that Just Roots is relying heavily on grant funding to help innovate its programming. “We needed to make a lot of changes to our plan during COVID,” she explained. “Those changes could not have been made with just subsidies alone.”

She added that the Baystate grant will help to support what has been successful in the past, and will also allow the farm to “innovate and do more listening in our community.” In addition to supporting the year-round CSA for the next few years, it will support programming, bilingual materials, and new staff.

“Just Roots is a key stakeholder in the community when it comes to food access,” said Annamarie Golden, community relations director at Baystate Health. “Their commitment to building community and enhancing social connectedness through food is an initiative we are excited to fund through the Better Together grant.”

“We’ve seen a demand increase since COVID locally for the CSA,” said O’Neil. “That’s not just Just Roots, it’s a trend we are seeing across the United States – people realized buying foods from local farms is a safe way to go.” When O’Neil saw this grant opportunity, she wanted the farm to be able to take what it has learned from this past year and leverage the dollars to take a deeper dive into innovating its programs locally. “Some of the things we have done for years have been forced to change last year,” she said. “Now the trick is: what sticks, and what reverts back to the way we do things?”

The Baystate grant was focused on organizations contributing to the social environment in the region. “Food can serve as a very powerful connection tool in communities,” said O’Neil. “We’ve been so isolated over the last year.” While this isolation has been exacerbated by the pandemic, O’Neil expressed that it has always been an issue faced by many communities served by Just Roots.

Much of the farm’s programming aimed at fostering community, including community cookouts and community meals, had to be taken off the table due to COVID restrictions. These events had brought together neighbors to engage in preparing meals and cooking together. “Post-COVID, we are hoping to get back to some of those things with the lens of the social environment in mind,” O’Neil said. “It was a powerful way to connect people.”

With an increasingly diverse farmshare membership, Just Roots is not only looking to



The Just Roots barn on Glenwood Drive in Greenfield is a primary pickup spot for the organization’s farmshare program.

bring people together, but to diversify their offerings to include what O’Neil calls “a variety of different palates” – engaging consumers with foods that may be “different” for some, but “culturally familiar” for others. But without the ability to offer taste tests and spend time in person engaging people with information on how to prepare and cook foods, the past year has been a challenge to introduce more diverse foods to members.

Since the farm does not grow enough food itself to fully cover the farmshare program, one place Just Roots is looking to support diversity is in the farms it partners with. World Farmers, located in Lancaster, Massachusetts, is an example of an organization

they are working with; it represents over 300 immigrant and BIPOC farmers in the region. “We are paying attention to where we buy things to answer that call to bring culturally relevant foods,” said O’Neil.

“How can we deepen the CSA model’s commitment to working on things outside what is typical?” asked O’Neil. “How can we look at how food plays a role in our mental and emotional wellbeing?”

Just Roots plans to grow from around 400 shares this year to closer to 500 in total. The organization’s CSA is not fully enrolled yet this season; those interested in a share can learn more about the program at JustRoots.org.



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EVICCTIONS from page A1

had cleared out before the process finished,” Magee said. “[I]t’s very, very hard to reach people. We have to go door-knocking because addresses are the only information we have, and oftentimes we don’t get an answer. It doesn’t help that the pandemic is still going on.”

Last September the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) issued a moratorium on evictions for non-payment of rent, as long as tenants meet certain criteria and file an affidavit asserting their financial duress was caused by COVID-19. In Massachusetts a statewide moratorium that halted all housing court hearings expired in mid-October, and since then courts have been hearing cases over Zoom. The Franklin County Sheriff’s Office has served housing court summonses to at least 126 households.

Soon after taking office in January, President Biden extended the federal eviction moratorium through March 31. Nearly 10 million people in the US are now behind on rent, according to Census Bureau statistics. Last Friday, *NPR* reported that the Office of Management and Budget is considering extending the moratorium.

However, the federal moratorium only stalls evictions for non-payment of rent, and not cases for “cause” such as violating a lease or illegal behavior.

“Many of them say they’re for ‘cause’ and not for non-payment of rent, but without talking to tenants, we don’t know what’s going on,” Magee said. “Some landlords try to file evictions for ‘cause’ even if the issue is really non-payment, because tenants have fewer rights in fighting cause complaints.”

Financial relief is available to tenants and homeown-

ers behind on their rent, mortgage, or utility payments through the Residential Assistance for Families in Transition (RAFT) and Emergency Rental and Mortgage Assistance (ERMA) programs. RAFT now offers up to \$10,000 in financial relief to qualified households, which can be used to settle debt retroactively, and the eviction process is paused while applicants await a decision.

Over 4,000 eviction cases have been filed since the end of the statewide moratorium in Western Housing Court, the regional court that serves Franklin, Hampshire, Berkshire, and Hampden counties, and a dense backlog means new cases are being scheduled several months out. The majority of cases moving through the court system right now are from Hampden County.

Some large property management companies operating in Franklin County have filed eviction cases against several tenants at once. Northland Property Management, a national company which owns the Cliffside Apartments in Sunderland, leads the county with the most eviction cases filed by one landlord, with 16 court summonses filed between December and January. Other large property owners taking multiple tenants to court include the Pine Ridge Estates in Greenfield and King Pine Apartments in Orange.

“Lots of folks definitely are benefiting from the moratorium, but without actual rental relief or debt forgiveness, I don’t know how many tenants want to stay where they are,” Magee said. “They need to know they’re not going to get kicked out randomly at short notice, and they need to know their landlords aren’t going to harass them or try to drive them out.”



MONTAGUE from page A1

state education aid (Chapter 70) to districts even if the formula, which subtracts a “local contribution” from a “foundation budget,” shows a decline. The selectboard’s use of the term, on the other hand, applies the level of enrollment used to calculate the foundation budget itself, which has declined significantly for many districts during the pandemic.

Joanne Blier, the business manager for the Gill-Montague Regional School District, said enrollment for the district had been “flat” for about ten years, but this year Gill-Montague lost one hundred students, leading to the loss of a potential \$500,000 increase in aid.

“The Senate has no intention of using Governor Baker’s numbers,” said Comerford. “We really want to make gains under the Student Opportunity Act.” The 2019 number updates the foundation budget process and provides a major infusion of state education funds, particularly to low income districts.

The next topic on the agenda was bridge repair and maintenance, which has reached a crisis in Montague, which can barely be accessed without crossing an old bridge. The board requested that the state consider establishing a separate fund for bridges, similar to Chapter 90 aid, which funds work for roads, sidewalks and bridges.

Selectboard chair Rich Kuklewicz said he also believed the state should put more funding into maintenance, rather than waiting until bridges are so at risk they must be closed.

Blais, who serves on the legislature’s joint transportation committee, did not directly address the issue of a separate fund, but said she hoped to increase the amount of Chapter 90 funding from the \$200 million in the Governor’s budget to \$300 million.

The third topic raised by the board involved the reuse of the recently-closed Farren Care Center on Montague City Road. The board wanted to make sure that the state held Trinity Health of New England, the corporation that owns the Farren, to its commitment to funding a reuse study for the building.

Comerford said Trinity has been required under its closing agreement with the state Department of Public Health to provide funds for such a

study, and to “secure the building.” “Sudders wants to be notified if they do not follow through,” said Comerford, referring to state Secretary of Health and Human Services Marylou Sudders.

The board briefly raised other issues on its “concerns” list, including the need for more funding for wastewater treatment, state-owned land within towns (in the form of “payments in lieu of taxes”), libraries, and regional transit authorities. The issue of the “taxable status” of large solar projects was also raised.

Town Election, Town Meeting

At the same meeting, the selectboard held its third lengthy discussion in a row about the spring annual town meeting, but this time made significant progress in nailing down potential dates.

The discussion began with town clerk Deb Bourbeau telling the board that the state had recently announced that local spring elections may be postponed from their mandated dates. The board agreed to postpone the election to June 22, and allow the more liberal mail-in policy used last fall.

This gave the board better options for delaying the town meeting, while still getting the warrant out on time to meeting members.

Town administrator Steve Ellis reviewed previous discussions of possible meeting dates and venues. Selectboard members had favored an outdoor, “in-person” meeting similar to last year, but also wished to leave open the possibility of a virtual meeting broken into two evenings. Ellis said that a review of June options for dates showed problems with nearly every week. He floated the idea of an in-person town meeting on Saturday, May 22, with an option for a virtual meeting on the evenings of May 18 and 20.

The board did not take a vote on the issue, but decided to wait until a survey reveals the preferences of town meeting members. Finance committee chair Jen Audley said her committee could probably finalize the town budget and issue its report by the end of April. The board also did not take a vote on when the warrant for the meeting will be closed.

Ongoing Pandemic

In his weekly COVID-19 report,

public health director Daniel Wasiuk reviewed the latest local data, the progress of the local vaccination effort, and the state’s plan to “Re-open Massachusetts.” He said the number of new cases over the past two weeks in Montague was 9, an increase from the previous week’s report but still well below the spike during the winter holiday season.

Wasiuk also noted that the state was moving to the first step of Phase 4, which allows increased capacity at larger sports and entertainment venues, that very day. He said the state’s “travel order” for people entering the state has been replaced by a less restrictive “travel advisory,” which “urges” all persons traveling to Massachusetts from other states to quarantine for ten days.

Regarding local vaccinations, Wasiuk said that the Montague Housing Authority will receive 100 doses for residents eligible for second doses, of which 30 will be given to the town health department for vaccinations in the basement of town hall. Residents and others will also receive second doses at the Franklin County Technical school on April 9.

On Monday, the state expanded eligibility for vaccines to all residents over 60, and it plans to increase the pool to all adults 16 and over by April 19.

Selectboard board member Michael Nelson said “there is great optimism” that the state will be seeing a “very large uptick” in vaccines over the next six weeks. Ellis said he had attended a county “roundtable” on vaccinations earlier in the day and believed that the Franklin Regional Council of Governments was moving toward consolidating its smaller local sites into one center, perhaps at Greenfield Community College.

Canal District

The board reviewed a design for the new pedestrian bridge over the power canal, which will be constructed on the southwest side of the Fifth Street auto bridge, presented by town planner Walter Ramsey. It authorized sending permits for the project to the town Conservation Commission, as well as state and federal authorities.

Ellis presented an update on the status of the Environmental Protection Agency’s hazmat cleanup of the former Railroad Salvage building

**MONTAGUE TREE COMMITTEE
NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING
PUBLIC TREE PROTECTION BYLAW**

The Montague Tree Committee is proposing a general bylaw pursuant to MA General Law Chapter 87. The intent of the bylaw is to encourage the planting of more public shade trees than are removed and to compensate for tree losses and the time it takes for trees to mature. The bylaw defines the role of the Tree Warden and establishes rules for the removal, maintenance, and planting of public trees. It also establishes fines for unauthorized damage or removal of public trees.

The draft bylaw is available for review at www.montague-ma.gov/calendar. A public hearing on the proposed bylaws will occur on Tuesday April 6, 2021 at 6:30 p.m. The meeting will be held remotely due to COVID restrictions. All interested parties will be allowed to speak. Written comments can be sent to planner@montague-ma.gov prior to the hearing.

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The job description and employment application form are available at gillmass.org/jobs. The salary is negotiable based on qualifications. Review of applications starts mid-April and continues until the position is filled. Submit an employment application, résumé and cover letter for consideration by mail to Town of Gill, Attention: Board of Assessors, 325 Main Road, Gill, MA 01354 or by email to assessors@gillmass.org. For questions, please call (413) 863-0138. The Town of Gill is an equal opportunity employer.

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on Power Street. He said the clean-up is “ongoing,” and that the EPA will take down the remaining standing walls out of safety concerns.

Ellis also reported that progress is being made by the public works department in fixing the nearby Bailey Bridge over the power canal, which will be needed for vehicles removing construction debris.

Other Business

Ramsey reviewed the status of a state-funded “rapid recovery plan” to assist post-COVID planning for downtown Turners Falls. The plan will be developed with the assistance of an outside consultant chosen by the state.

The board approved requests from the Country Creemee and the Upper Bend Cafe, both on Avenue A in Turners Falls, for the use of public property for outdoor tables during the warm weather.

Jon Dobosz, director of the parks and recreation department, reviewed the proposed spring sports programs. The programs, which include T-ball, a soccer clinic, and youth baseball, will run from late April to the beginning of June. Dobosz also reported on the installation of a portable toilet, the daily cleaning of which can be financed by federal CARES Act Funds.

The selectboard discussed a proposal by Steve Ellis to lift the downtown winter parking ban before the normal April 1 date, but decided not to change the date in order to allow spring street sweeping to be finished.

Ellis reported on a meeting of the advisory board of the Franklin Regional Transit Authority, where a timeline for the construction of a new maintenance facility on Sandy Lane was discussed. FRTA has now hired a firm to design the project – the same firm that designed the Montague DPW garage – and hopes to put it out to bid early this summer, putting “shovels in the ground” in the early fall.

The board approved a request by Ellis to transfer funds from the Cannabis Impact Fee Stabilization fund to the town and Turners Falls Fire Department. The transfers will reimburse the town and district for legal costs and planning associated with the establishment of the cannabis firm 253 Pharmacy on Millers Falls Road. Appropriations from town stabilization funds must be approved by town meeting.

The board retired into an executive session to discuss negotiations over property acquisition. The next selectboard meeting will be held March 29.



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NOTES FROM THE GILL-MONTAGUE REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE

No Candidates for School Committee; Drug Use Expected to Increase

By MIKE JACKSON

GILL-MONTAGUE – “Absolutely no one has taken out papers so far” for any of the three open seats on the Gill-Montague regional school committee, executive assistant Sabrina Blanchard told the *Montague Reporter* on Wednesday. Nomination papers may be picked up from the superintendent’s office and must be returned by Monday, March 29.

Montague incumbent members Jennifer Lively and Haley Anderson are not seeking second terms, and Valeria “Timmie” Smith of Gill stepped down from the committee earlier this month. “If anyone who resides in Gill is interested in filling that seat, they can submit to the school committee a letter of intent,” chair Jane Oakes told the school committee during its Tuesday night meeting.

Any volunteer for the position would serve until the Gill town election, which is currently scheduled for May 18. This week Montague, which typically holds its election simultaneously, postponed its annual election until June 22. Voters from both towns vote on representatives from both towns to the regional school committee.

Superintendent Brian Beck reported on the return of students to the school buildings, a plan still being developed by the district’s Pandemic Response Advisory Committee. Students in kindergarten through sixth grade will be invited back full-time on April 5. Seventh through twelfth graders, currently welcome two days a week, will add Wednesdays on April 7 and 14, depending on their “cohort,” then be integrated back full-time on April 26.

“We’re excited to say that there are not very many families that are

staying remote,” Beck said. While keeping learners who stay remote will be “really challenging” at the secondary level, he said, the district will assign a teacher to remote elementary students to guarantee them a “robust learning experience.” Montague member Cassie Damkoehler said that families keeping students at home due to “significant health issues” should rest assured that even though the state education commissioner “wanted us to put out that if you stay remote, you’re on your own,” Gill-Montague will work to ensure this is not the case.

“Yeah, we’re seeking to avoid that,” Beck agreed.

New state guidance has been issued on social distancing in the schools – with desks only three feet apart – and at graduation. Beck said the district is working to devise “plans to feed kids at six feet,” and said that no clear information has been provided that would “apply to a potential prom,” though the district is investigating the possibility.

“District nurses have done a phenomenal job,” he said, administering COVID-19 tests to staff and students; none of the 300-plus tests performed have turned up a positive case on campus.

Business director Joanne Blier gave a presentation on the grants the district is receiving. “This year the total is close to \$2 million,” she said. “Usually we’re closer to \$1 million... We’ll have to hold onto some of this money if our Chapter 70 [state aid] isn’t going to increase.”

In FY’21, the grants include \$252,634 in CARES Act emergency relief funds; \$245,700 in CARES Act money passed on from the towns; a \$277,250 Coronavirus Relief Fund school reopening grant; and a \$63,575 COVID Prevention

grant, which can be spent on learning programs and tutoring.

“I know it’s been a whole lot of extra work,” Oakes told her.

“It’s been a challenge, but it’s good to have those funds,” Blier said.

Blier also reported that while the district budgeted for a 4% increase next year in its rates from the Group Insurance Commission, the rates will increase by 6%. “I expect when the dust settles on those lines we will have a deficit to cover,” she wrote in her report for the meeting agenda.

The committee held a discussion about the district’s school busing policy, which is to allow busing for all students within a mile and a half of their school, the radius within which the state reimburses the district.

Montague member Carleigh Dlugosz suggested that open seats on buses could be filled by nearer students on a first-come, first-served basis.

Blier explained that the state reimburses the district for buses based on the percentage of transported students on each bus who qualify, not their total number. Filling empty seats with non-qualifying students would actually reduce the revenue to the district, she said.

“It does feel wrong to see a bus go by that’s not fully occupied,” said pupil services director Dianne Ellis.

“It’s not the simplest thing in the world,” Oakes lamented.

The possibility of charging non-reimbursable families for seats on the bus was raised, as the district has offered in the past. “We don’t charge for preschool, we don’t charge for athletics,” Blier said. “It would be difficult to charge for busing. It’s also hard to collect on.”

“That’s probably why it was

LOOKING BACK: 10 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

Here’s the way it was on March 24, 2011: News from the Montague Reporter’s archive.

Conflict Breaks Out Over Peace Commission

“I don’t intend to be quiet at town meeting about it,” selectboard member Peter d’Errico told members of the committee to establish a Leverett peace commission on Tuesday.

Proponents hope to form a town commission to assist in efforts to teach mediation in the schools, work with the selectboard in providing conflict resolution techniques in neighborhood disputes, and focus the town’s attention on matters of global resource conflict and alternatives to war.

But d’Errico wasn’t buying what the peace committee members were selling.

“I’m really struck by the fact that we’re going to create a gov-

ernment agency with no mandate but to find a mandate: ‘What do you think we should do to change your way of life, or your neighbor’s way of life?’

In December, when former selectboard member Jim Perkins and others working to bring a petitioned article to establish a Leverett peace commission to the floor for the April 30 annual town meeting first pitched the idea, d’Errico had offered encouragement. But he has since clarified his position, and would now prefer that the proponents working to establish a peace commission pursue their effort outside of town government.

“There is nothing the town of Leverett can do to end war,” declared d’Errico. “Explain to me how taking control of some aspect of town life without trampling on freedom of thought, freedom of speech, freedom of action, et cetera is going to advance the cause of peace?”



done away with,” said Montague member Michael Langknecht.

Beck and Ellis reported on a meeting between the district and the town of Montague about possible uses of the “cannabis impact fund,” currently fed by a fee from 253 Pharmacy, which can be spent on substance abuse prevention programming.

Options discussed include hiring substance abuse counselors, vape detectors at the high school, and classes and workshops.

“We anticipate a likelihood of increased substance use during the pandemic,” Beck said, “because of

the general challenge in circumstances and being able to supervise students, as well as the presence of cannabis in the community.”

Beck also said that he, secondary school principal Joanne Menard, and athletics director Adam Graves were discussing “a policy that allows students to self-report substance use, or abuse, with immunity from any type of sanction.”

The committee responded favorably to the idea, and Beck said he hoped to have a proposal by the next school committee meeting, which will be held April 13.

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FEATURES@MONTAGUEREPORER.ORG OF THE MONTAGUE REPORTER MARCH 25, 2021

Above: On the banks of the Connecticut River at Turners Falls, trees grow among bricks and debris from the old John Russell Cutlery mill, demolished in the 1950s.

Jinx: A Man of God, and of the People

By JERRY “JINX” COLLINS

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

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

TURNERS FALLS – Jinx’s dad had been baptized a Roman Catholic and received his confirmation. However, he did not practice the faith from the time he left home at a very young age. Jinx will never know the reasons for his return to the church, but will always be grateful that he did. He always made sure that the boys did not miss a Sunday or Holy Day of Obligation at Saint Mary’s.

By the time Jinx became aware of church teachings, he was in first grade and had started attending Sunday morning catechism classes that were taught by the Sisters of Providence, an order of nuns who ran the Farren Memorial Hospital in Montague City. Though his mom wasn’t a Catholic, she still faithfully saw to it that her boys studied and knew their lessons and prayers every week.

By the time he was eight years old, he had found a priest that to him was a fine model. Father Hastings apparently thought that Jinx had possibilities as he asked him to become an Altar Boy, to which he proudly responded yes.

Fr. Hastings was a large, muscular man who had been an All American first baseman at Holy Cross. Rather than pursuing a career in the Big League, he made the choice instead to join the Biggest League –



The former St. Mary’s Church on Seventh Street in Turners Falls is now the consolidated parish of Our Lady of Peace. Jinx shares the importance of St. Mary’s priest, Fr. Hastings, in this installment of his memoir of growing up in Turners Falls.

servicing God and his fellow men. Jinx really admired him, and this helped strengthen his faith. In fact, at one point in high school he even considered entering the priesthood, but God had other plans for him.

see **JINX** page B3

THE GARDENER’S COMPANION

New England Spring



By LESLIE BROWN

MONTAGUE CITY – Spring continues in fits and starts: a couple of splendidly warm, sunny days then a cold, damp spell necessitating the woodstove. But this is our version of spring. It comes and it goes, then suddenly it is summer.

For all of these reasons, the best and the brightest of flowers all have a short lease on life. We note the flowering on the quince, the apricots, and the apples, and then they are gone. The daffodils last a bit longer depending on the temperature; the forsythia, ditto. The bloodroot is up in the woods. The lilacs rush from bud to blossom and last but a week.

On one fine, recent temperate day we weeded the asparagus and strawberry beds and spread com-

posted manure. The rains came and were followed by the first glimpses of asparagus tips. This is the third year for this new bed and we will be able to harvest as much as we want. The new spears are fat and hardy, unlike the tentative new original growth. It has been hard to wait, but letting the new fronds go to fern and then to seed has paid off. Once established, an asparagus bed will go on producing, asking only for weeding, fertilizing, and the removal of asparagus beetles. Small price to pay for a tasty, easy-to-grow perennial vegetable.

Not so the strawberries. The first season we snipped off the flower blossoms, encouraging all of the plant energy into the roots. Then we set out the runners to fill in the bed. This year we will pick to our hearts’ content if we provide protection from the birds. The following year we can expect a smaller crop and then it will be time to start a new bed, preferably in a new location.

It’s probably simpler and cheap-

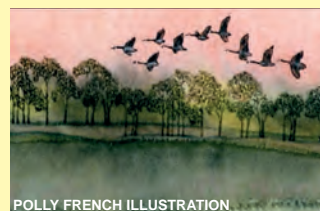
er to go out to the farmer’s patch and pick our own each year, but it’s an undeniable pleasure to walk out in the dewy grass of the morning while still in our pajamas and pick a bowlful to eat out-of-hand or on our breakfast cereal.

Last year the deer and the woodchuck forced us to set in a three foot, buried wire fence to protect the vine crops: beans, squash, and tomatoes, as well as the tasty sweet peppers. It did the job, keeping the varmints out and providing additional aerobics for the gardener. Others can stand at the edge of the fence, swing a leg over, and enter the space.

Too short for this maneuver, I was forced to set up a step stool on the outside, climb it, plant a hiking stick, and then swing in. It’s a good thing we’d laid out black plastic to hold up the temperature for these heat loving crops and to keep out the weeds.

I admit I didn’t make the climb too often, except at harvest time. However, this season, I will be

see **GARDENER’S** page B5



WEST ALONG THE RIVER THE ENIGMA OF THE FRENCH KING ROCK

By DAVID BRULE

ERVING/NORTHFIELD LINE – As those of us native to this place know, there is a massive glacial erratic rock in the middle of the Connecticut River, just upstream from the bridge that bears its name.

Visitors to the French King gorge may not even realize it’s there, given that most of it is now underwater, submerged by the pool of river that has risen progressively over the years, each time the power company has added more height to the dam at the great falls.

Have you ever wondered how the Rock got its name of “French King”?

I have. I’ve lived most of my life within a mile or two of this massive landmark. I’ve often wondered who named it such and why.

As a student and teacher of French literary and social-political history of the Francophone world, I’ve tried over the years to sort out the origins of the name of the rock. I’ve narrowed it down to possibly three or four kings of France, and a few possible French explorers who may have come downriver from New France to name it. The modern town of Northfield may well have had a role in the intrigue. Bear with me.

Throughout its recent 10,000-year history, that is, counting from when the last glacier retreated from the valley about 15,000 years ago and the arrival of the first PaleoIndians, the reach of river from Wequamps/Mount Sugarloaf as far as Northfield and beyond has been continuously inhabited by Indigenous people. Groups and tribes known as the Pocumtuck, the Nipmuc/k, and the Abenaki have inhabited these middle Valley lands.

What we do know is that the Native people called the Sokoki

by the French, Sokwaki as they called themselves, had occupied what is now known as Northfield. Squakheag and Sokwakik are historic names for this town. The Sokoki planted hundreds of acres of corn on the flood plains that are still under the cultivation of corn to this day, a thousand years later.

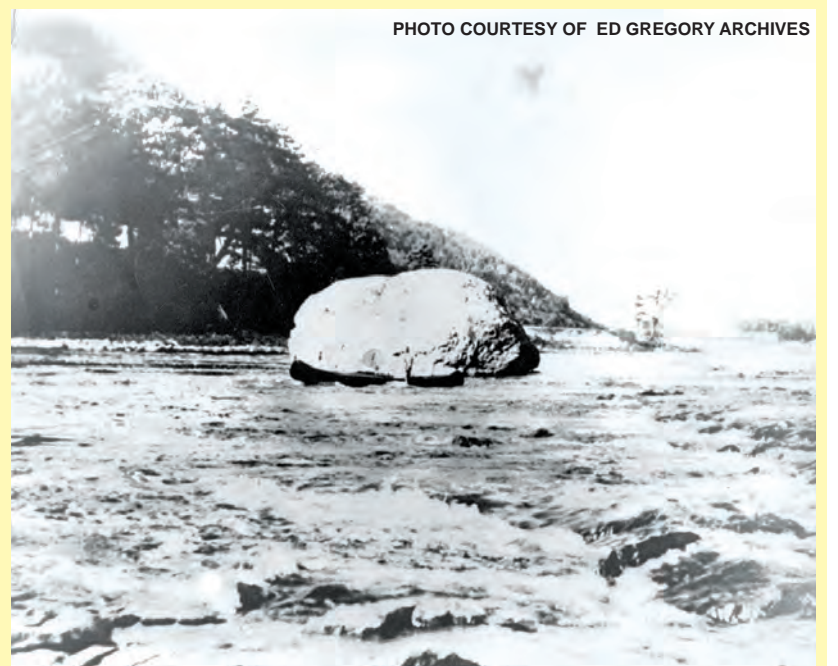
These Sokoki peoples called themselves “The Ones Who Separated” and were part of the great Wabanaki Nation that still stretches from the coast of Maine, Newfoundland, and Labrador to the Saint Lawrence River, including all of northern New England. The Sokoki form the southernmost band of Abenaki, historically dominating the region from Northfield and upriver. The fluid boundaries of their homelands abutted their allies, the Pocumtuck and the Nipmuc/k. All three territories joined at the great falls known as Peskeompskut.

In the earliest days of New France, starting with the arrival of Samuel de Champlain in 1603 or so, Champlain had a vision of developing and cultivating the friendship of the Abenaki and related tribes in an alliance of mutual protection from the feared Iroquois. It is likely that French diplomatic and military relations extended all the way down to the Sokoki populations on the Connecticut River as far as the present-day town of Northfield.

Certainly, the massive rock sitting in the middle of the rapids would have been a significant spiritual and ceremonial site for the Native Abenaki people. We have not yet discovered what the Rock was called in their language. One day it will surely respond to its true and original name.

However, historically we could narrow down the speculation concerning which king of France could have lent his name to the rock we

see **WEST ALONG** page B2



The exposed French King Rock, circa the early 1900s.

Pet of the Week



CARMODY COLLAGE

“FIGARO FIN”

Hello, I'm Figaro Fin! I like to go, go, go! I'm a very energetic guy and I need a family who wants to play a lot. I'm so sweet and affectionate – I love to be petted, and I have a really big purr. While I love attention and being petted, however, I do not like being picked up.

Playing with toys is one of my favorite pastimes, and I will run and jump and chase all sorts of things. I

need a home where I am the only cat.

The adoption fee for Figaro Fin is \$299. Interested in adopting me? Animals at Dakin are available only in Springfield currently. Contact adoption staff at springfield@dakinhumane.org and include your name and phone number.

For more information, call (413) 781-4000 or visit www.dakinhumane.org.

Senior Center Activities

MARCH 29 THROUGH APRIL 2

GILL and MONTAGUE

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

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

ERVING

Senior Center director Paula Betters writes:

“Erving Senior Center is still closed to the public. We are here daily taking calls and doing outreach work for seniors and their families. Call with any questions or concerns, need help with SHINE, SNAP. We are also taking calls to help seniors sign up

for their COVID vaccine. We are here to help make a difference.” Paula can be reached at (413) 423-3649 or paula-betters@erving-ma.gov.

LEVERETT

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

WENDELL

Wendell Senior Center is open for a foot care clinic the first-Wednesday of each month. Call Katie Nolan at (978) 544-2306 for information or appointments. Otherwise, there are no activities. The Senior Health Rides is also suspended until advisories change. For more information, call Nancy Spittle at (978) 544-6760.

Local Supermarket Senior Accommodations

Supermarkets in Massachusetts are now required to provide special hours for seniors and immunocompromised shoppers. Call ahead – this information is accurate as of November 30; hours and accommodations are still changing.

Big Y: Senior hours from 7 to 8 a.m. (413) 772-0435

Foster's: Senior hours from 7 to 8 a.m. (413) 773-1100

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

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

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

WEST ALONG from page B1

now know as the French King. Between the first French arrivals in the New World, and the violent seizure of Abenaki lands at Squakheag in the 1670s by English settlers, we can list French kings by the name of Henri IV, Louis XIII, and Louis XIV. These three French Kings had reigns extending from 1589 to 1715. So which king could it be?

My personal preference would be Henri IV. But he is a long shot. He is one of the most beloved kings of France to this day. Early in the 1600s, he supported and financed the voyages of Samuel de Champlain starting in 1603. Some even say that Champlain was Henri's own, though illegitimate, son. This speculation documents that Henri was in Champlain's village when Samuel could have been conceived (given the king's reputation of bedding every local woman he could during his travels), and that Champlain received an annual pension from Henri, and had immediate access to the king whenever he returned from his multiple voyages.

Henri IV had a fascinating history all his own. This Henri of Navarre was a Protestant during the wars of religion, which pitted Catholic against Protestant and led to atrocious slaughter on both sides for decades. Upon wedding the Catholic princess Margot in Notre Dame Cathedral, Henri was basically forced to convert to Catholicism or die. As King, he was later to declare the Edict of Nantes, guaranteeing freedom of religion to the French. That may have well been his undoing. He was assassinated by a religious fanatic in 1610.

That's another story for another time.

Champlain recruited a number of my ancestors to play a part in establishing a French presence in the New World, hence my bias in favor of Henri IV. One of those ancestors was Louis Hébert, who eventually brought his entire family from Paris to settle in Québec, reputedly the first white family to live and survive in the New World.

Another more enigmatic person recruited by Champlain was Etienne Brûlé. Although he carried the same family name as I do, we have yet to establish a true genealogical connection to Etienne. He did come from the same region of Picardie as my documented ancestors, and I do feel that he is hanging out there somewhere on a distant branch of my family tree.

Etienne Brûlé's life story is a complicated one. An infamous *coureur des bois*, he was brought to this continent to learn Indigenous languages, and serve as a go-between for the French and their Indian allies.

Quite early in his career, Etienne set out on his own and explored a vast part of North America, being the first white person to see and explore the Great Lakes. He traveled many of the waterways of the northeast, reaching the Delaware, Susquehanna, and Chesapeake Bay. If he had explored the Connecticut River in those years he certainly could have named the Rock for Henri IV.

I wish it were so, but the maps of Brûlé's wanderings do not show that he ever visited this Long River. Unfortunately as mentioned above, Henri IV was assassinated in 1610, and New France lost a dedicated supporter of the new colony. Etienne himself went on to live a complicated life between conflicting loyalties to his adoptive Huron/Wendat Nation and allegiance to Catholicism, Champlain, and France. He met an ultimately tragic, violent, and macabre death in 1632.

I believe we will have to rule out Henri IV as the French King of the Rock.

He was followed by Louis XIII, who upon Henri's death became boy king at the age of 6. His mother, Ma-

rie de Medicis, ruled as Regent until he became of age. Louis XIII's reign lasted until 1643, and was troubled by Cardinal Richelieu's intrigues, a declining population in the colonies of New France, as well as shrinking profits from the fur trade.

This Louis was at the center of several scandals in his private life including being thought to be bisexual in a strongly heterosexual world. He does not appear to be strong a supporter of the French colonies in North America. It is doubtful that the Rock was named for him.

He did, however sire a child, who was to become Louis XIV, the Sun King of Versailles, and who reigned until 1715. That time period puts him in the realm of strong possibility that he was the King of our Rock.

As mentioned earlier, Squakheag/Sokwakik/Northfield was the southernmost village of the Abenaki. This tribe was closely allied with the French. The French of course were regularly at war with England, which was attempting to colonize the Connecticut River Valley, moving upriver progressively from Hartford, to Springfield, to Deerfield, and eventually to Northfield.

Ten years before the English were to establish Deerfield, which became the northernmost frontier English town, the French Jesuit Father Gabriel Druillettes explored parts of the northeast accompanied by French-allied Abenaki guides. Could it have been that during his travels in 1650, the Black Robe Jesuit Druillettes could have visited the Sokoki, seen the towering rock in the river, and named it for the French King Louis XIV?

Of the three kings whose reigns covered the period from 1589-1715, this seems to be the likely conclusion.

It is certain that the English settlers would not have named the rock for a leader of a hated French enemy. The town that we now know as Northfield was not stolen from the Abenaki by white settlers until the late 1660s. That region remained disputed territory right on through the King Philip's War of 1675-76 and beyond. So clearly, if the Rock were named for a true French King, it likely would have been named during the early years of the reign of Louis XIV, who ruled until 1715, and during whose reign Deerfield was attacked and burned in 1704, before the English had a permanent hold on Northfield.

Louis XV took over from 1715 to 1774, by which time Northfield had fallen definitively into English hands.

Yet doubts persist about the true identity of which French King lent his name to the Rock. And why would the descendants of the English settlers who dominated this part of the valley have continued an oral tradition of calling it the rock of the French King?

In my correspondence with Dr. Peter Thomas of Deerfield, noted Connecticut River Valley scholar, he confirms that certainly the English would not have named the rock for the French. But Dr. Thomas does not think that Father Druillettes ever made it to this part of the Connecticut during his voyages of 1650-51, and so would not have then named the rock for Louis XIV, who was monarch at that time.

Another researcher, Rich Holschuh, spokesman for the Elnu Abenaki and residing in Wantastagok (Brattleboro), has provided further information on Druillettes' voyages, which could have had him passing the rapids dominated by the Rock in 1651.

We'll share their comments, and continue this puzzling out of the origins of the name of the French King Rock, in Part II.

For the time being, the enigma of the Rock remains.

Check out David's website at riverstoriesdavidbrule.com.



APPRECIATION

Happy 30th Birthday, Joey!



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Seems like it was yesterday. We remember when you were little going to Gill Elementary School for the first time and making friends, having fun and listening to Pearl Jam and Nirvana, Alanis Morissette, Lisa Lisa and Cult Jam, and Metallica's *Metallica* "Black Album." Chris Farley was one of many of your favorite comedians back in the day.

Also going to Florida for first time, going to the beach and having fun boogie boarding in the water, and going on trips to Canada. Remember baking Turtle bread with Grandpa and Grandpa and Aunt Christine? You also enjoyed taking rides with Grandpa in his yellow Mac truck or bucket loader. Wow, time flies when you have fun.

Love, Mom, Dad, Amanda, Kaitie, Auntie Christine, Uncle Tom, Nick, and Mat

Anyone who knows Joey R. Parzych can send a him a card to wish him a Happy Birthday if they want: 44 Juniper Court, Greenfield, MA 01301.

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JINX from page B1

In the early spring (when trout fishing opened), Jinx couldn't wait to serve the 5:30 a.m. mass on Saturdays, after which Fr. Hastings would have him and the other altar boy over to the rectory for breakfast, and then off to the Sawmill River they'd go to catch a few scrappy trout. In the summer he'd take all the altar boys – those still too young to work on the area farms – to his camp at Lake Spofford, New Hampshire, where they'd get to play baseball, swim, and "pig-out" on hot dogs, hamburgers, and Coke.

These were days not to be forgotten. Fr. Hastings was tough but also knew how to laugh and have fun and yet, when necessary, how to take his vocation seriously.

One story that circulated around town involved one of the unfortunate town drunks.

It seems that this young man had entered the seminary but, for health reasons, he never finished. Something caused him to start drinking which led him into alcoholism. Fr. Hastings took him under his protective wing and gave him the job of taking care of the church grounds and cemetery while trying to counsel him in an effort to over-

come that "Demon Drink."

Try as he might, he'd fall off the wagon time and time again. Still, the good priest was there to pick him up. One certain day, when he didn't show for work, Fr. Hastings went to find him, knowing that he'd be found at the Rendezvous Bar on Third Street. As Father approached the establishment, the wayward employee ran into and locked the bathroom after telling the other patrons not to let Fr. Hastings know he was there.

Upon entering, the big, friendly priest looked around and then sat down at the bar where he carried on a conversation, laughing and joking with the other men there. An hour passed, and Fr. Hastings bid farewell to all in the bar. Looking back over his shoulder as he walked to the door, he called out, "OK Howard, you can come out now."

Unfortunately, Howard's demon won out and a couple of years later, he ended his life crashing through a top floor window of his apartment onto the pavement below. Jinx heard that the news of this event was the closest anyone had ever seen Fr. Hastings come to tears.

Even a big, strong "Man's Priest" had softness within.



A 1973 photo of St. Mary's Church, from its 100th anniversary publication in 1973.

Montague Community Television News

We'll Edit Your Videos!

By HANNAH BROOKMAN

TURNERS FALLS – The Young Shakespeare Players' "Play On" performance from 2020 is now available on the MCTV Vimeo page.

This youth theater group typically performs at the Shea Theater; however, last fall they teamed up with MCTV to create a film composed of scenes from many different Shakespeare plays. The actors learned to storyboard, score, light and shoot a film, and must be applauded for this thoroughly entertaining and impressive piece! To learn more about The Young Shakespeare Players group, visit youngshakespeareplayerseast.org.

The Montague selectboard meeting from March 15 is up on the MCTV Vimeo, as well as the Montague finance committee and the police equity and use of force committees' meeting from March 11.

All MCTV videos are available

on the MCTV Vimeo page, which can be found linked to the MCTV website, montaguev.org, under the tab "Videos." All community members are welcome to submit their videos to be aired on Channel 17, as well as featured on the MCTV Vimeo page.

MCTV is always available to assist in local video production as well. Cameras, tripods, and lighting equipment are available for check-out, and filming and editing assistance can be provided.

The MCTV board is looking for new board members, specifically someone interested in filling the role of treasurer. The station is also looking to hire a producer to make Spanish-language content. Please email infomontaguev@gmail.com with a resume to schedule an interview!

Something going on you think others would like to see? If you get in touch, we can show you how easy it is to use a camera and capture the moment.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MONTAGUE POLICE LOG

Needle Disposal; Bike Dispute; Dog On Ice; Loud Music; Pet Cemetery; Dumped Packages; Suffering Duck

Monday, 3/15

10:34 a.m. Report of hit and run accident at Food City Plaza. Caller did not witness; came out and discovered damage to vehicle. Report taken.

2:49 p.m. Multiple calls reporting structure fire on Montague City Road. Road closed from Walnut Street to Turnpike Road.

3:07 p.m. Caller states that one of his tenants passed away recently, and today when the family went into the apartment to collect property, they found bags of heroin. Caller requesting officer to pick them up. All units unavailable; caller will lock items in the office safe and call back tomorrow.

4:12 p.m. Two reports of scam calls claiming to be from US Border Control.

10:33 p.m. Shelburne Control took an abandoned 911 call from Bridge Street. On call back, spoke with female who advised there is a fight going on between her, her landlord, and her dog. Caller requesting officer. Parties separated for the night.

Tuesday, 3/16

10:57 a.m. Report of approximately ten packages dumped over the banking on Wendell Road; caller advises no houses in that area but advised it is above the fork in the road below her residence. Caller advises packages have February 2021 postmarks. Officer advises 10 to 12 packages removed from brook.

5:06 p.m. Report of used hypodermic needle in the middle of Avenue A near the library. Officer collected the needle as well as others in the area.

Wednesday, 3/17

6:08 a.m. Fifteen calls received from party calling MPD business line using derogatory language toward call taker.

9:52 a.m. Shelburne Control toned out MCFD for report of smoke in the woods on Turners Falls Road south of Hatchery Road. Officer confirmed resident in area is burning; Control has a permit on file for this residence. MCFD arrived on scene as officer was clearing.

11:37 a.m. Report of four or five needles in the grass between the Shea and FCRHRA parking areas. FCRHRA advised they will have the tenant call MPD to describe where the needles are; they are looking into training their staff on safe disposal of needles; will be contacting board of health. Tenant called a few minutes later with description and is available to show the officer where the needles are. Officer advises needles have been disposed of.

1:04 p.m. Report of female yelling in caller's front yard, refusing to leave,

came there to take back a bike she claims belongs to her son. Caller advises that when that female moved out a few years ago, she gave the bike to the caller's son. Caller called back advising female left in a vehicle. Caller's husband came on the line advising they allowed the female to take the bike to keep the peace and they no longer want an officer to speak with her.

1:18 p.m. Caller from Second Street reporting that a tenant she is evicting peeled out approximately half an hour ago and the rocks that were kicked up damaged the caller's windshield. Report taken.

1:45 p.m. Caller reporting several areas in Millers Falls where there are tents set up; one tent by the railroad tracks just past East Main Street; several tents off Millers Falls Road. Officer advises known issue; tents are on railroad property. Caller advised of options and referred to contact the railroad and Eversource directly.

1:53 p.m. Caller from 253 Farmacy reporting that over the weekend, a party was out of control and causing a disturbance. Party left without incident, but made threats to co-workers.

2:45 p.m. Report of dog on ice near Bridge of Names/ railroad tracks. Caller is not the owner but advised they are watching the dog. Shelburne Control toned MCFD. Dog has been rescued.

3:48 p.m. Complaint of loud music at skate park. While on the line, caller advised the music has been turned down; will call back if it becomes a problem again.

Thursday, 3/18

12:28 a.m. Caller from Third Street complaining of upstairs neighbors stomping and slamming doors. Officers checked front and rear of building and stayed for several minutes; no noise heard.

5:57 a.m. Five calls received on business line from party making reference to a past employee of the department and using

derogatory terms to refer to the call taker.

7:18 a.m. Report of trash, a piece of clothing, and a shoe box in the conservation area on North Street. Caller discovered these items after her dog dug them up while on a walk; expressed concern as to what else may be buried there. Officers checked area, advised it appears to be a pet cemetery that got covered over. No further action needed.

11:24 a.m. Report of approximately 12 to 14 additional packages dumped over the embankment on Wendell Road. Referred to an officer.

8:49 p.m. Caller from Highland School Apartments believes that somebody is messing with cars in the parking lot, possibly trying to break into them. Area checked; nothing found.

Friday, 3/19

4:47 a.m. Control received direct call for wires down causing a small brush fire on Dry Hill Road. MCFD and Eversource responding.

10:42 a.m. Caller states there is a tree across the tracks at the Lake Pleasant Road railroad crossing. Pan Am notified.

4:15 p.m. Caller would like it on record that he received a scam call today about a warrant for his arrest.

4:37 p.m. Report of a duck that appears to be suffering on the bike path. Officer checked on bird; it does appear to be injured.

Animal control officer advised to let nature take its course. Environmental Police advised no one is in the area but to check Mass.gov for bird rehab centers. Message left with Dawndale Farm of Bernardston.

5:36 p.m. Report of male party banging on somebody's door on the second floor of the Crocker Building for approximately ten minutes now. Officer spoke with male who advised he is hard of hearing and asks that people coming to visit knock loudly. Male will contact the landlord to

have a sign put up.

Saturday, 3/20

6:16 a.m. Call from male party talking about everyone getting sick from wearing a mask. Caller called back stating everyone is scared and the caller is unemployable. Third call received.

4:22 p.m. Report of two male kids who just entered the blue house on Eleventh Street and then took off running as if they stole something.

Officer out with the two males who stated their friend lives in the blue house but wasn't able to come out at this time because he needs to clean his room. Officer made contact with residents on Eleventh Street who confirmed that the two male parties are friends of their son.

5:50 p.m. Caller requesting to speak with an officer regarding his dog being attacked by two other dogs. Report taken. All dogs registered and up to date with shots. Both parties agreed to handle it together; they will email the officer pictures of the injuries for the report.

6:21 p.m. Officer out with a male party lying on the sidewalk of the Turners Falls-Gill Bridge. Party advises he is fine, just waiting for a friend.

9:53 p.m. A 46-year-old Turners Falls woman was arrested and charged with operating under the influence of liquor or .08%, second offense.

Sunday, 3/21

3:19 a.m. 911 hangup call mapping to Sixth Street. Upon callback, female answered and stated she dialed in her sleep.

3:31 a.m. Caller from Main Street states the neighbors are still partying loudly with a bonfire; states they did this last week as well. Quiet upon arrival. A youth on scene stated they are moving inside for the night.

12:12 p.m. Officer advised in case anyone calls, a coyote was seen on Burnett Street crossing over to Montague Street heading toward the woods.

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

Virtual Storytime At Local Libraries

FRANKLIN COUNTY – March through June, Tuesdays, 4:30 p.m. on Zoom: Join Julie Stepanek for stories and songs with help from her stuffed animal friends. Snuggle up to listen or join in the fingerplays. The program is interactive, and wonderful for pre-K kids!

Supported by the Erving, Ashfield, Pelham, Northfield, and Shutesbury libraries. Contact one of the sponsoring libraries for the Zoom link. Shaker eggs and scarves are available to pick up to add to the fun!



Julie Stepanek prepares for fun with pre-K kids.

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HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE LEVERETT POLICE LOG

Package Theft; Pond Music; Dispute

Monday, 2/1

2:31 p.m. Car vs. tree accident on Shutesbury Road. No personal injuries.

2:55 p.m. Caller from Long Plain Road said that she saw an older male party attempting to ride his bike, heading into Leverett from Montague. Caller concerned because of weather, road conditions, and he wasn't getting very far.

Thursday, 2/4

7:28 p.m. Disabled tractor trailer unit at Cave Hill and North Leverett roads.

Tuesday, 2/9

5:25 p.m. Caller states she received a scam call and would like to speak to an officer.

Wednesday, 2/10

7:16 a.m. Conducted an investigation on Amherst Road.

1:14 p.m. CO alarm on Shutesbury Road. No one is feeling ill. Determined ungrounded; system reset.

Thursday, 2/11

10:19 a.m. Medical emergency on North Leverett Road.

Friday, 2/12

3:09 p.m. Car stuck in a snow bank on North Leverett Road.

7:25 p.m. Disabled motor vehicle on Teawaddle Hill Road.

Saturday, 2/13

7:30 a.m. Caller reports a call from "Leverett Police." When she answered a woman said she was from Social Services, babbled for a while, and disconnected.

2:15 p.m. Alarm on Long Hill Road. Officer found this was a septic alarm.

Monday, 2/158:53 a.m. Caller from Dudleyville Road reported an SUV off the road. Found the vehicle has been towed. *En route* to speak with owner.

6:23 p.m. Caller from Long Hill Road reported a vehicle entered her driveway driven by an unknown male party who took notes and talked on his phone for 10 minutes before leaving. Homeowner feels threatened.

Tuesday, 2/16

6:04 a.m. Caller from Long Plain Road reported a large puddle taking up both lanes. MassDOT notified.

Wednesday, 2/17

4:19 p.m. 911 hangup from Amherst Road. On call back caller advised her phone was stuck and dialed 911.

Thursday, 2/18

7:12 a.m. Assisted Amherst PD with information on resident on Montague Road. A stolen Enterprise rental vehicle was reported. Have not been able to locate party.

7:27 a.m. Caller from North Leverett Road stated that yesterday she was behind a silver SUV going over the center line, speeding, and following too closely.

11:57 a.m. Caller from Cushman Road reported a silver pickup truck doing doughnuts at the intersection of Shutesbury and Cushman roads. Took off after a few minutes. Caller unable to get a plate or

operator description.

Sunday, 2/21

12:08 p.m. Camp Road resident would like fishermen on the pond to turn down music. Issue resolved.

5:10 p.m. Officer sent to Putney Road for a report of a possible disturbance. Checked area, found nothing.

Monday, 2/22

11:30 p.m. Investigated an open door on Montague Road. No forced entry found, door secured. Might have been left open by an employee or cleaning crew.

Thursday, 2/25

1:09 p.m. No power in the area of Putney and Montague roads. Eversource has the information.

3:44 p.m. Caller from Montague Road reported the theft of a book from a package in her mailbox. She said the same happened on Tuesday.

Saturday, 2/27

11:24 a.m. Assisted with a civil dispute on Rattlesnake Gutter Road. Peace restored.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE WENDELL POLICE LOG

Roof Fire; Snow Hazard; Virus Denial

Tuesday, 2/2

8:30 a.m. Caller from Wendell Depot Road reported that her son had to leave his work truck parked on the side of the road near Wendell Depot. Exact location unknown.

Thursday, 2/4

2:28 p.m. Caller from Farley Road asked the PD to speak with a neighbor about putting snow in the road. Homeowner said he was throwing snow in the road to deter speeders. He would like the PD to sit at the end of his driveway. Snow removed.

Saturday, 2/6

2:26 p.m. Caller from Lockes Village Road and West Street reported a raccoon in the middle of the road which appeared wobbly and might be rabid.

Monday, 2/8

6:15 p.m. Caller reported a motor vehicle parked at the end of their driveway on John Quist Road. Operator has called AAA to have the ve-

hicle removed.

Thursday, 2/11

12:32 p.m. Caller reported a chimney fire on Lockes Village Road, asked FD to check that it is extinguished. Called back at 12:40 p.m. to report a fire in the roof. First alarm tones. National Grid advised to secure power. 12:54 p.m.: Command reports no flames, but light smoke from roof. Asked for first engine to stage at end of narrow driveway. Message relayed. Officer asked for highway department response for icy conditions. All units released at 2:28 p.m.

Friday, 2/12

10:45 a.m. Caller from Farley Road reports mail was stolen from a post office box. 4:34 p.m. Caller from Morse Village Road states there is a sick, potentially rabid raccoon in the area.

Sunday, 2/14

10:41 a.m. Caller from Old Farley Road reported heavy smoke

visible from Route 2 in Erving, for the second day in a row. Permitted burn.

Tuesday, 2/16

5:49 a.m. Abandoned 911 call from Wendell Depot Road. Spoke to a male party who said it was accidental.

9:30 a.m. Caller from Wickett Pond Road reported a tree down over a line on her driveway. She still has power and broadband. Determined to be Verizon; Verizon advised.

Thursday, 2/18

6:40 p.m. Served a warrant on Lockes Village Road.

6:52 p.m. Served a warrant on Davis Turn Road.

Friday, 2/19

10:24 a.m. Issued a parking complaint on Center Street. Owner will remove vehicle from roadway to allow for plowing.

Saturday, 2/20

10:02 p.m. Caller from Montague Road reported a car on the side of the road with 5 or 6 people around

it. Officer checked the entire length of Montague and DCR parking lot; no sign of the car or people.

Sunday, 2/21

4:54 p.m. Responded to a ski injury on the Wendell State Forest Saxton Bridge Trail.

Monday, 2/22

9:54 a.m. Caller from Farley Road reported an ongoing issue with people speeding on his road. He said that the PD can sit at the end of his driveway to deter speeding.

11:53 a.m. Caller from New Salem and Wendell Depot roads reported vandalism: "COVID is a hoax" written on stop sign.

Wednesday, 2/24

3:10 p.m. Caller from New Salem Road reported motor vehicle accident, no injury.

Thursday, 2/25

12:47 p.m. Chief Cuneo advises that crossing arms at Wendell Depot Road crossing are going up and down like they are being blocked. Pan Am advised.



Sex Matters

a sex-positive health column

by STEPHANIE BAIRD

This month's column will briefly explore the complicated existence of pornography, a topic best suited for unbiased book-length examinations.

Poll anyone on the street and you will get a wide array of emotional responses to the concept of pornography. Let's begin with a formal definition. Merriam-Webster defines *pornography* as "the depiction of erotic behavior (as in pictures or writing) intended to cause sexual excitement," or the materials (books, videos) that contain these images. They also offer another definition: "the depiction of acts in a sensational manner (i.e. violence) so as to arouse a quick intense emotional reaction."

Gloria Steinem argued in 1977 that if a woman and a man engaging in sex were shown as having equal power, equal pleasure, and equal choice, and the imagery is egalitarian, non-coercive, and non-degrading, this should be termed not pornography, but "erotica."

At this point most people acknowledge that porn exists and will likely continue to exist in some form. Since humans could first make marks on walls and observe ourselves and each other, we have attempted to depict our sexuality. This goes all the way back to images and sculptures of genitals in the Paleolithic and Mesolithic periods, such as the Venus of Willendorf.

Many folks also believe that most internet activity involves searching for porn. In reality, porn represents only 4% of the searches on the top million sites, and about 13 to 25% of web searches. One in three viewers of porn are female-identified.

Research shows there has been a potential decrease in child sexual abuse and adult rape over the years possibly correlated to porn availability (statistics compiled by Kait Scalisi, "Sex Tech" 2018 webinar, and Dr. Rosalyn Dischiavo, "Erotophobia" 2020 webinar).

Many sociologists, psychologists, evangelists, feminists, parents, lawyers, and justices have weighed in on what constitutes pornog-

raphy versus something more socially acceptable that might land in the erotic category, such as the well-known *Fifty Shades of Grey* book series, or the Netflix series "Bridgerton."

The Stop Enabling Sex Traffickers Act passed in 2018. While initially positive in the sense that it hopes to limit sex trafficking and sex slavery, also limits consensually working and paid sex workers, and even educational sexual health internet content that could then be labeled "obscene." Ultimately, the legalities of what can be outlawed and what is acceptable have remained complicated by varying perceptions of what the "average person" considers OK or not OK. Another troubling aspect of the porn industry is the lack of overall regulations.

Luckily, sex-positive activists have defined some working elements of ethical pornography, as well as the concept of porn literacy. Ethical pornography, also sometimes called "feminist" or "fair trade" pornography, includes standards such as fair payment to filmmakers and workers and the creation of a safe environment where everyone is of consenting age and treated with respect. Ethical pornography shows real (not faked) sexual pleasure (especially for female bodies), is created for viewers of all genders, is 100% consensual in every way, and shows diversity across body type, age, race, sexuality, and ability.

The Responsible Sex Ed Institute defines porn literacy as "a form of media literacy, which teaches individuals to think about, analyze, and evaluate the media they choose to consume and the media that is naturally around them, such as billboards and advertisements. Everything has a message, whether it's intentional or not. Knowing how content is created, why it is created, and for whom it was/is intended for can help youth better understand what they see and what they hear and how they can make healthy decisions for themselves."

Tapestry sex educator Rebekah Rennick, in a presentation on "Digital Sexuality and

Youth," notes that 89% of youth report that the internet is their primary source of information and that "unwanted" exposures comprise 66% of youth exposure. Teaching ourselves and our youth how to critique these images is becoming more and more essential for sexual health wellbeing.

Indeed, there are real concerns and issues with most "mainstream" porn that is made by cis-men for cis-men. Much of this type of porn leaves out important elements like emotional intimacy, consent, using condoms, discussing STI risks, and the showing of a variety of body types. This type of porn often includes the degradation of women, the showing of unrealistic behaviors. Actors are treated and paid poorly.

Boston University professor and researcher Emily F. Rothman, via the Boston Public Health Commission, created a curriculum to teach youth porn literacy called "Start Strong." She presents some of this information in her 2018 TED Talk, "How porn changes the way teens think about sex." I highly recommend looking into this talk, as well as other resources on porn literacy. You may also want to check out sex education programs like OWL, the sex ed program that I co-teach through the Northampton-Florence Unitarian Society, to help yourself and those in your life gain more accurate information on sexuality in general.

The Gottman Institute, a facility famous for researching and developing science-based approaches to healing and changing problematic relationships, published an "open letter to porn" on their website in 2016: www.gottman.com/blog/an-open-letter-on-porn/.

It's worth reading this post in its entirety, as they do not outrightly condemn porn. They note that when both members of a couple have an interest in viewing porn together, it can actually enhance communication about each person's likes and dislikes and it can even increase the woman's orgasm ratio.

However, the Gottmans do acknowledge many potential detrimental impacts of porn. Viewers can report lower self-esteem, and have an inaccurate perception of relationship

and sexuality information. This can lead to a possible decrease in intimacy between two people in a relationship (especially if one prefers engaging with porn instead of with another person), numbness to violence and degradation, and to a susceptibility to "supernormal stimulus."

Supernormal stimuli are all around us, and include most things in advertising like Photoshopped bodies, and even junk food laden with unhealthy fats and sugars. According to the Gottman research, the supernormal stimulus of porn can "lead to a lack of desire for sex with one's partner, [which usually] is a normal sex stimulus." Some men who report heavy adolescent porn use and masturbation later can suffer from porn-induced erectile dysfunction.

The bottom line is that the more we all speak to each other about consent, healthy sexuality, relationships, and sexual wellbeing, the less we will be satisfied by the more mainstream exploitative porn foisted on us. Hopefully, we can use porn literacy strategies to find content that is appealing, inclusive, realistic, consensual, safe, and arousing. And hopefully we are imbibing porn in places where consenting workers get paid a fair wage through our purchases.

A few places for adults to look for such ethical porn include makelovenotporn.com, BelleSa.co (porn by women), and Ifeelmyself.com (focus on female pleasure).

There is also a burgeoning audio porn market, which is possibly even more ethically minded, as there are no visual depictions. Some good places to listen include tryQuinn.com (helping people feel comfortable in their bodies), and Dipseastories.com (celebrating healthy sex).

Happy listening!

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.

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GARDENER'S from page B1

favored with a gate. A fine wooden one has been built, and I've been treating it with a brown wood stain which should extend its life. The heavy work will be digging the holes for two gate poles and then cementing them in. After that, the gate can be hinged on and put to use. There's no real hurry, it won't be until at least Memorial Day weekend before the tomatoes and peppers are ready to set out.

Meanwhile, in the sunroom the tomato plants have started to take off. I must admit to rushing the transplanting of some babies before their root systems were fully developed. These plants continue to look peaked and undersized. The more mature ones enjoyed the move to larger pots and the switch to adult food. These are sturdy, with dark green leaves and a height which suggests one more move up to a larger pot before the final transplant into the garden soil.

The timing of this move out to the garden can be tricky. We'll try to harden the plants up a bit, as they will be moving from temperatures in the seventies and eighties in the sunroom. They have been trained to handle overnight temperatures in the fifties so on nice warm outdoor days we can set them out for a few hours to ease their adjustment. Memorial Day weekend is the traditional time for setting out tender tomatoes, but they can wait a bit more if it is cold and wet or very windy.

A little patience in the timing will save the gardener the heart-break of loss of plants to overwatering or cold, windy days. The sweet peppers and delicate squashes and melons and green beans should wait until mid-June when the tempera-

tures are more steady and the soil has really warmed up.

These cooler temperatures of late April and early May are perfect for leaf crops and peas. These tasty plants much prefer the cool to the inevitable summer-like heat we'll be having before too long. Get them in as soon as possible for the first spring veggie eating. Those sweet peas with a little butter are like candy, even if shelled and eaten right out of hand!

Last fall we took out the old front steps, original I think to the house in 1928. We now have a new sturdy set with a wooden handrail.

For some reason I was loath to discard the old iron railing. It seemed there should be some new use for it and it graced the woodpile all through the winter season. My tidy neighbor found this annoying, eventually, and asked me more than once why I hadn't brought it to the "dump."

As this season's peonies sent their pink tips up through the earth, I pondered providing some support for what will be a plant top-heavy with blossom. In the past we've used folded tomato cages and a decorative, scalloped piece of fence. It turns out that the old iron railing is the perfect length and height for a permanent peony support. Not only that, it looks decorative at the head end of the garden. We'll see what my investigative neighbor has to say about that!

I once saw a support for roses fashioned from an old iron bedstead. The curves of the metal embellished the drooping vines of the climber. Enjoy the possibilities of reuse, take time to smell the gorgeous blossoms of spring – and, as always, happy gardening!



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Montague Adds Free Residential Composting at Transfer Station

Also, free countertop compost pails are available! (Details below.)

By KATE O'KANE

- Would you like to...
- Save money on your trash disposal costs?
 - Help reduce greenhouse gas emissions at landfills?
 - Help the town save money on trash disposal costs?
 - Turn food and paper waste into a valuable commodity, namely compost?

You can do all of the above by collecting your food and paper waste and bringing it to the Montague Recycling Center and Transfer Station on Sandy Lane, which is open Wednesdays 7 a.m. to 2 p.m. and Saturdays 7 a.m. to 12 noon.

To help you get started collecting your food waste at home, 2-gallon countertop compost pails are available free at the Transfer Station to the first 100 families who start composting. All you need to do is to bring some food waste that you've collected, and in exchange, Dave Withers, Transfer Station Attendant, will give you a free countertop pail. But even that first time, if you bring your food waste to the Transfer Station in a plastic bag, please remember to empty the waste into the dumpster and then deposit the plastic bag in the trash barrel next to the dumpster. (No plastics in the compost bin!)

These free pails are available through a joint program of the Town of Montague, the Franklin County Solid Waste District, and Drawdown Montague, a group of local



Montague resident Susan Campbell puts compostable take-out containers into the compost bin at the recycling and transfer station on March 17, the program's first day.

residents who develop practical, community-based programs to help address the climate crisis.

There are also handouts available at the Recycling Center and Transfer Station that explain what can and cannot be composted. While it may seem complicated at first, by following the guidelines below, you'll soon be in the swing.

What to compost: All solid food wastes, including meat, bones, poultry, fish, cheese, dairy (no liquids), eggs, eggshells, shellfish, fruits, peels, vegetables, bread, grains, tea bags, coffee grounds and paper filters. Paper is also accepted: napkins and paper towels, paper

egg cartons, paper to-go containers, and pizza boxes with stuck-on food. (Pizza boxes that are free of food should go in paper recycling.)

What not to compost: liquids, pet wastes or kitty litter, plastic bags, wrappers or cling wrap, polystyrene foam or other conventional plastic, metal, glass, or anything else that is not biodegradable. Yard waste, leaves and brush are also not accepted in this container. The Montague Recycling and Transfer Station has a separate area for yard waste materials.

Kate O'Kane is a member of Drawdown Montague.

Exhibit: Nordic Journey At Salmon Falls Gallery

SHELburne FALLS – The *Nordic Journey* exhibit at the Salmon Falls Gallery is a collaborative effort between weaver Becky Ashenden and photographer John Leni Marcy. Ashenden is the founder of Vävstuga Weaving School and the nonprofit Fabric of Life. Both organizations are dedicated to teaching and promoting traditional crafts and skills: Vävstuga focuses on Swedish textile weaving; Fabric of Life aims to help traditional skills flourish with workshops in agriculture, cooking, construction, music, community and other necessary activities from a simpler time.

Marcy's photographs give context to the exhibit. Some are of the Nordic regions that are home to the weaving techniques used by the Vävstuga Weaving School, while others feature the Bassett Homestead in Shelburne, home to both



Mönster Parti, woven samples by Becky Ashenden.

the organizations.

The *Nordic Journey* exhibit can be seen March 1 through April 25 at Salmon Falls Gallery in Shelburne Falls, Friday through Monday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., and virtually at SalmonFallsGallery.com. Call the gallery at (413) 625-9833 for more information.



The Glacier Edge #3, photograph by John Leni Marcy.

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the
poetry
page

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

- William Carlos Williams

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

Our March Featured Poet: Kaleb Torres

Post-Dinner Delicacy

I see the light of the oven as an enticing aroma fills the air, bakery goods are my favorite things to munch on, that is fair.
The sweet smell that fills the air sends shivers down my spine, thinking about what it is I'll be sampling this time!
The ding of the oven sends me over to retrieve it, a cinnamon bun I had made, to savor after dinner.
I open the oven to behold the blast of the oven's warmth, I grab my mitts and pull the sweet treat from the blasting heat.
The enticing aroma that once filled the air now sweeter than before, it made my mouth water as I caught the scent of simmering cinnamon.
I placed it on a baking rack, to make sure it wouldn't burn, then I sat and savored every sample of my post-dinner delicacy.
The sweet spice of cinnamon was a taste to behold, spectacular, splendid, all wonderful words!
The glaze from the tasty treat made it all the better, sugary, sticky, and sweet to taste, it just kept getting better!
Then finally the pastry itself, from its fluffy inside, to its crusty outside, a combination of all these things is what truly made it great!

The living nightmare we created...

A living nightmare we created out of plastic, sludge, and smog;
From industrial street corners, to oily seashores.
The sky is black and clouded, the sea is thick and oily, a porpoise on the seashore, has rotted to its bones.
The air is now polluted and the water is now poisoned, the soil is now soiled, which taints the bitter crops.
The people are now poisoned, dying on the street.
Water, food, and air is now a commodity, which is being sold by a dying economy.
This is just a nightmare, but it can become real, the only question now is: will you allow it to be real?

Music is my Maker

Music is magical, merry, and Miraculous; that much I can say.
Music is as much a tool as it is a merry pleasure, from helping the memory weary, to sounding nice at dinner!
Music is truly a gift from god, the ability to make noise, and notice that within noise, lies a note-worthy rhythm.
Music is my maker, for music is what made me the marvelous man I am, And I can assure you, music is the greatest gift, God has ever given to man.

In might comes unity

"Through brightest day, or darkest night", unity is what gives us might.
Alone in a weakened and weary world, we welcome you with open arms.
When they kick you down we lend a hand, to bring you to your feet.
When a deadly contagion plagues the air, no matter how far apart, we are always unified, and with unity comes liberty.

The importance of a mentor

A mentor is a person, who can show you the way, to guide you through the difficult times that may come your way.
When you lose your way and find yourself lost within the dark, a mentor will be by your side, to push back the night with bright.
When all seems lost, when you feel alone, a mentor will be there to guide you home.
A mentor is a teacher, a mentor is a friend, a mentor can be anyone you can comprehend.
I'm grateful to my mentors, for they are who shaped me, the ones who molded me into the marvel that I am.

A time of warning long past...

Twisting pipes, turning gears, Industrial life brings me tears.
I look around to see a world rotted to its core, to see the filth fester below, ready to explode.
The ones above, high above, care not for their acts, As long as they get publicity and cash.
The remains of ships spill their shimmering substance, but this shimmer is not gold, This shimmer will bring death, wherever it may go.
And in the thick and oozy sea lie the islands of the dead, all the dead creatures, from all the lands, brought onto a single spot, to rot into the land, but rot would be a mercy, compared to what became of these poor creatures.
Mutated and distorted, you can barely tell, which was an animal body, and which was a human one.
Above this sea of oily black, lies the mainlands, the savannah is on fire, and the west is a wintery wasteland.
The time for warning long had passed, and in its place stood fear.
Who among us will live on, through sludge filled water, and smoggy air?

I Love Winter

From snowy September winds to delightful December nights, I love a good winter's night!
From sitting by a cozy fire, to cooking up baked goods, from feeling all the falling flakes, tickling your face!
Winter is a miraculous season that can truly spark such wonder, the only thing to wonder now, is what will come with summer...

Contributor's Notes

We are exceedingly pleased to present the work of **Kaleb Torres**, this month's featured poet. Kaleb is a 9th grader at Turners Falls High School, and he has been writing poetry since February of 2021. His hobbies include antiquing, writing obviously, and singing. We also want to thank Jessica Vachula-Curtis, special education teacher at Turners Falls High School, for encouraging Kaleb to send us his work. Perhaps Kaleb had her in mind when he wrote these lines: "A mentor is a teacher, a mentor is a friend, a mentor can be anyone you / can comprehend."

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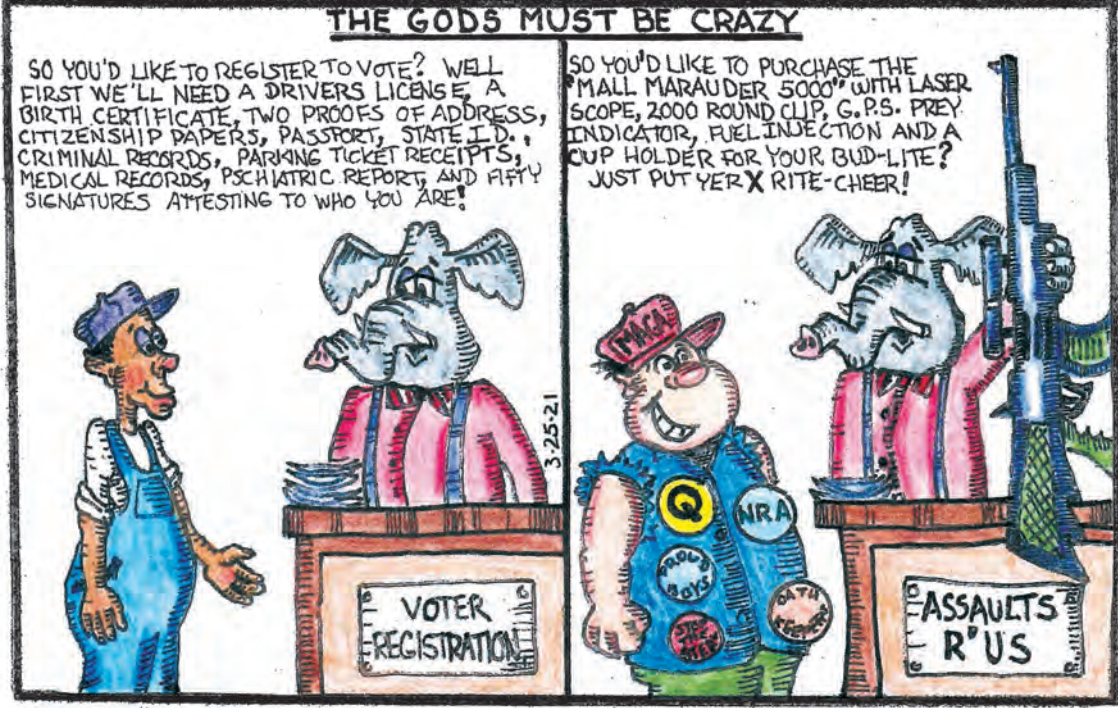
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JOEL PAXTON ILLUSTRATION

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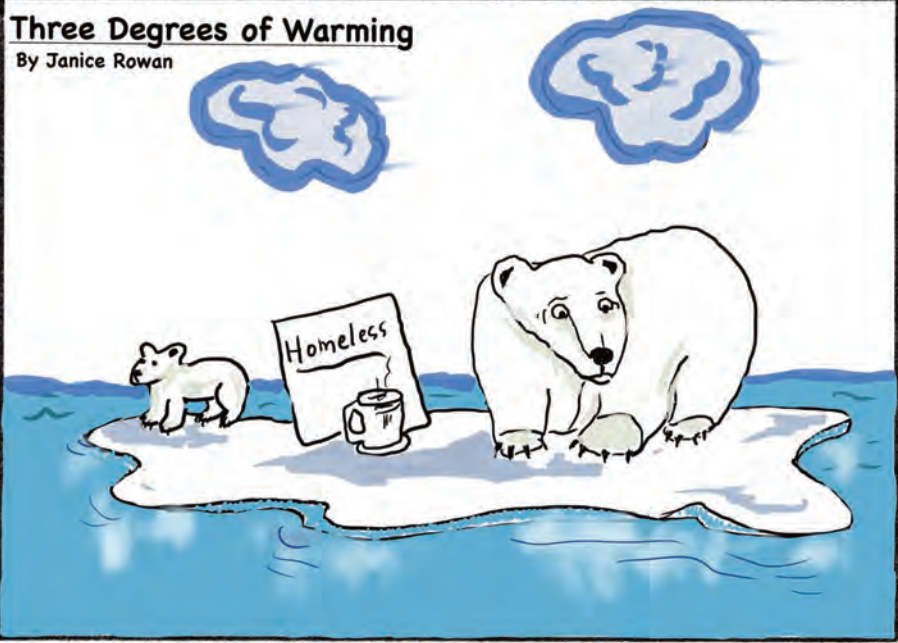
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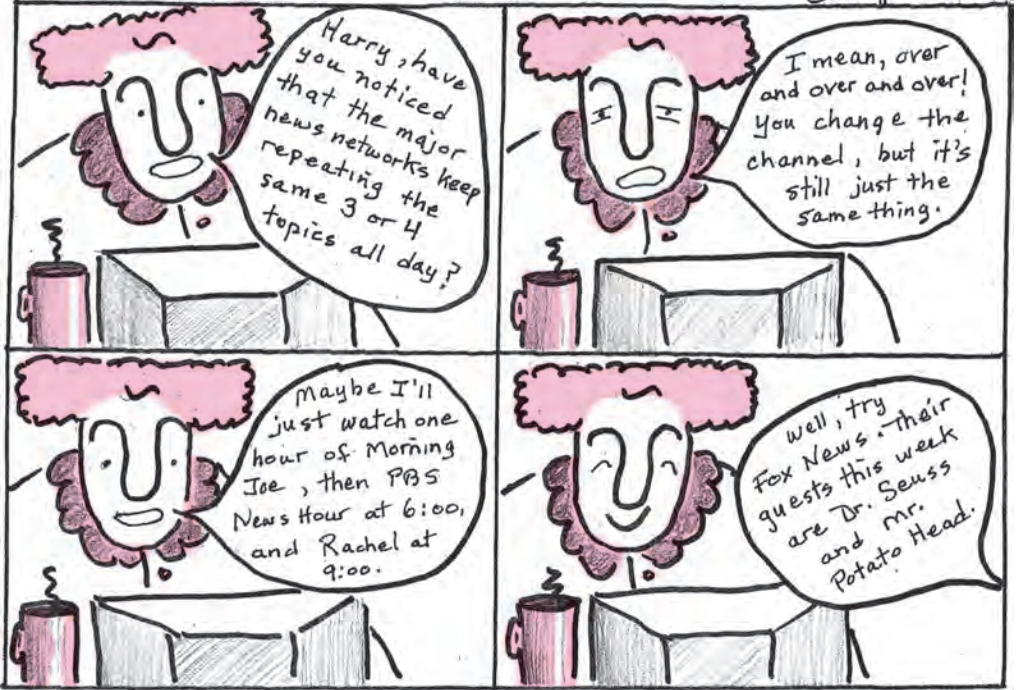
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GREAT FALLS APPLE COLUMN

By ANNABEL LEVINE

TURNERS FALLS – Spring is finally here, and powered by today's warmth I took my first steps in taking down last year's dry, dead stems and removing mats of leaves from perennial shoots around my yard. The debris is now layered like a lasagna in one of my raised beds, ready to decompose and give fuel and energy to a new crop of vegetables to come. Everywhere I look there's something fresh and verdant, and on the first day of the season I ate my first flower of the season: hairy bittercress, tiny and delicious!

Just as the plant world is finding energy in the warming sun with which to grow, the cogs continue to turn behind the scenes here at the Great Falls Apple Corps. After last year, which felt like a summer of organizational uncertainty, a lot of planning and a dash of hope is going into the 2021 recipe. We are gearing up to start our fourth season at the Unity Park Community Garden; we plan on continuing to plant delicious edibles during our third season at the "church lot" food forest on Prospect and Seventh streets; and we are working on scaling up our newest endeavor, the weekly free table.

While there will be more plant talk to come this season, I wanted to take today's column space to explore some of the philosophy behind our free table. We've given a

lot of space over to how the table came to be, but we have yet to really dive into the why.

This month's topic comes as a response to the most common reply we hear when we offer food to people walking by our table: "No thank you, it should go to someone who needs it."

I wanted to explore this a little because it's come up so many times that I have answers ready to go. I say that I understand, and try to impress that there is an abundance and the food needs to find a home regardless of who can or can't afford it. Would you eat it? If yes, take it!

Sometimes we're about to close up shop, or it's just a slow day and there's bags of greens that won't last another week. Maybe we have five crates of giant carrots that we couldn't fully distribute even if we tried.

Sometimes I'll mention that we have a donation jar if they want to "buy" some items. Funds from the jar go to stocking the table, so it can offset the transaction. Those are the quick responses that appeal to logic, which is not the route I go if someone is stopping to talk. That is when I add that everyone has different needs, and maybe there's a lot going on in someone's life and they could use a home-cooked meal regardless of their ability to pay for one. While I believe food should be a right, I know that food is not just survival

but comfort. Our offer is universal because comfort is felt universally.

I liken it to the library. Just because you can buy books doesn't mean you can't borrow them from the library. There is no such thing as a library VIP card where you can pay more for extra perks. A library card is an equalizer, it's something that you can get just by living in a community, with no consideration of financial status.

Public libraries, as well as public schools, exist because we have deemed the right to an education as a common good. We spend taxpayer funds and resources to keep these buildings lit and staffed. Why is it that we do not treat food the same?

Last summer I gleaned a farmer's field for the first time. I found myself the next in a long line of folks who have taken to the fields after harvest to take what's left. The practice is described in the Old Testament, and gleaning practices are part of Jewish farming law.

While eventually made illegal in many places, gleaning was once a right in many European countries. French filmmaker Agnès Varda has a short documentary about gleaning called *Les Glaneurs et la glaneuse* (English title: *The Gleaners and I*) that provides an artist's view of gleaning practices, both in the fields and in the city, in France in the year 2000. Among the many interviews in the film is one with a French lawyer



Great Falls Apple Corps members, and a guest, offer free food on Avenue A.

who stands in a field and holds up a thick tome to emphasize that a 1554 French law that legalized gleaning is still on the books.

But gleaning as a right is no longer "on the books" in most places, and while there are farmers who allow it, many do not. It reminds me of a clickbait article that was going around a few years ago about how medieval European peasants had more time off than the average modern American worker. When did the governmental norm of dealing with food insecurity become means-tested charity, when practices like gleaning can redirect food resources without using government aid?

Today in the United States food insecurity is endemic while acres of imperfect or otherwise unprofitable food gets tilled under to rot instead of being fed to our hungry neighbors. Lawns spread instead of gardens across communities where hunger has taken root. The Apple Corps

is just one part of a whole network of people around the world who are trying to reimagine feeding our community in a public and universal manner.

So until there is a taxpayer-funded town tavern slinging out meals on the daily, we're going to be standing on Avenue A once a week offering free food, clothing, pantry items, and whatever else we've got, to everyone who walks by, no questions asked. Come by and say hello!

The Great Falls Apple Corps, founded in 2017, advocates for edible landscaping and community gardening in Turners Falls. Find us via social media (Facebook, Instagram, and now TikTok!) or send an email to greatfallsapplecorps@gmail.com. We are currently taking limited donations for our free table, so please be in touch if you have any food, clothing, or other useful items to offer!

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