

The Montague Reporter

YEAR 19 – NO. 21

also serving Erving, Gill, Leverett and Wendell

\$1

EDITOR@MONTAGUEREPORTER.ORG

THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES

APRIL 1, 2021

MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD

Town Hall May Bump Tree Law to Fall

By JEFF SINGLETON

On Monday, Montague’s selectboard approved a new bylaw to protect local public shade trees and replant those that need to be removed. The bylaw, which has been discussed for nearly two years by the town tree committee, will move on to a public hearing organized by the tree committee next Tuesday, April 6,



MIKE JACKSON PHOTO
A recent clearcut at Unity Park in Turners Falls.

and may appear on the annual town meeting warrant in May. However, the selectboard is also considering delaying town meeting discussion until the fall in order to keep the spring “annual” as short as possible.

The new bylaw was introduced to the selectboard by tree committee member Michael Marcotrigiano. He reviewed the recent history of the tree committee, established five years ago, and some of the provisions of the new bylaw.

“Some of it has to do with replacement of trees,” he said, “and some of it has to do with what is and what is not acceptable. For instance, you can not cut down a town tree for firewood. That seems obvious – but trust me, nothing is obvious.” Marcotrigiano said the bylaw would also help the town apply for grants, though the tree committee is in the midst of planting 600 trees they have been awarded.

Selectboard chair Rich Kuklewicz asked about the projected length of the spring annual meeting warrant. Town administrator Steve Ellis said the current warrant would produce a meeting five or six hours long, and that for that reason he was delaying a personnel bylaw

see MONTAGUE page A7

GILL SELECTBOARD

Debt Exclusion Vote Required For Asbestos At Gill School

By JERRI HIGGINS

Gill’s selectboard meeting on Monday night mainly deliberated on asbestos remediation plans at Gill Elementary School, while Chapter 90 spending for the highway department, appointments at the fire department, and land-use bid awards filled the rest of the evening’s agenda.

Containing or replacing any exposed asbestos tiles or asbestos-containing floor adhesives at the Gill Elementary School must happen soon, because asbestos, while having very good fireproofing and material-strengthening properties, can cause lung cancer when its fibrous dust particles are breathed in after being exposed and disturbed.

Gill-Montague Regional School District business manager Joanne Blier and facilities director Heath Cummings answered questions and offered guidance during the remote meeting as the board sought to nail down their flooring removal and replacement plans.

According to Cummings, a minimum remediation project, estimated

see GILL page A6

Forum Tackles Vax Fears

By LILY WALLACE

GREENFIELD – The Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG) and LifePath co-hosted a virtual community forum on Tuesday focused on the COVID-19 vaccines, including how they work, the level of protection of those vaccinated, what it feels like to be vaccinated, possible side effects, the state vaccination plan, and when community members can expect to be vaccinated.

The panel featured local public health and healthcare professionals from Valley Medical Group, Bay-state Franklin, Community Health Center of Franklin County, the

Greenfield health department, state senator Jo Comerford, and community members who have received the vaccine.

Senator Comerford, chair of the State Joint Committee on COVID-19 and Emergency Preparedness and Management, began the evening by taking a moment to thank all of the public health officials on the front lines battling the pandemic. Comerford expressed that the pandemic had exacerbated health inequalities already present in Franklin County, and took a moment to reflect. “We mourn the deaths of those we have lost,” she said, “107 deaths in Franklin County alone.”

see VACCINE page A8

Choking Fire Chief Revived

By JEFF SINGLETON

TURNERS FALLS – On the afternoon of March 13, a Saturday, Turners Falls fire chief John Zellman was relaxing at his home with a beverage and some chips. Suddenly one of the snacks became lodged in his throat, and he began to choke.

After attempting to dislodge the foreign object by forced coughing in the bathroom, he was found by his granddaughter, who alerted his wife Cathy. Cathy called 911, and Shelburne Control dispatchers in turn

called the fire department in Turners. Ms. Zellman was also directed to attempt the Heimlich maneuver, which failed to remove the blockage.

When fire department personnel Michael Currie and Christopher Mason arrived at the scene in an ambulance, Zellman was slumped over the toilet, attempting to cough up the object. As they were joined by Captain Kyle Cogswell, Zellman abruptly passed out.

When Zellman regained consciousness a few minutes later in an

see CHIEF page A7

Erving Holds a Drive-Thru ‘Special’

By KATIE NOLAN

ERVING – Saturday morning, as Erving started its special town meeting, the air was cool, the sun was bright, and a bald eagle soared overhead in the cloudless sky. Town clerk Richard Newton and assistants checked in voters arriving in vehicles for the town’s first drive-in town meeting. Each voter received two large voting cards: a green AYE and a red NAY.

Approximately a dozen vehicles lined up at the Erving Elementary School parking lot, while the selectboard, finance committee, and capital planning committee sat at tables in the open air facing the line of vehicles. The town used a sound system and two FM radio channels to transmit the meeting deliberations.

The most controversial article proposed spending



NOLAN PHOTO
Aye: Voters vote with cards at the drive-thru town meeting.

\$195,000 for engineering, permitting, and consulting services for the repair or replacement of the Church Street bridge. The engineering tasks listed in the article were: conceptual design; public participation; an opinion of probable cost; finalizing construction

see ERVING page A6

THE BIG PICTURE

Grazing in the Shadows Of a Renewable Future



JACKSON PHOTO
Nathan L'Etoile shows where the first 14,456 tracker panels could go.

By MIKE JACKSON

NORTHFIELD – The Northfield planning board is deliberating on whether to issue a special permit for a set of large solar arrays off Pine Meadow Road, on property owned by Four Star Farms. For last week’s edition I spoke with Nathan L’Etoile, the son of Four Star owners Gene and Bonnie Tucker L’Etoile, and the Northeast regional director of the American Farmland Trust (AFT).

AFT has been working side by side with BlueWave Solar, the project’s developer, to help shape the course of the Solar Massachusetts Renewable Target (SMART) program, the state’s policy for subsidizing solar energy. The program attempts to steer solar construction away from forests and farmland.

This has meant assigning additional subsidies – by way of an “adder” of a certain number of cents per kilowatt-hour – to different categories of land, such as rooftops, landfills, and parking lots. Recent changes in the policy have made a special “dual-use” adder, for facilities combining panels with farming, easier to attain.

BlueWave is nearing completion of what may be the largest dual-use project in the country in the town of Grafton. What it plans to build at Four Star, at 10.9 megawatts DC, is three to four times as large.

L’Etoile invited me to walk the land with him last weekend to see the site for myself, and dig deeper into some of the issues at play. He made it clear that he does not speak for AFT on the topic of solar.

Besides the planned arrays – which will be rented out to another farmer, Jesse Robertson-Dubois, for grazing sheep – Four Star has also been moving in a different direction, with a newly built brewery and taproom next to its 17 acres of hops. That’s a topic for another day.

The following is a condensed, reordered, and edited version of our conversation – the actual transcript was over three times as long!

MR: This feels large for Northfield, but how big is it for Massachusetts, in terms of the amount of renewables the state is hoping to bring on?

NL: It’s huge for dual use. The biggest one right now is 2-point-something megawatts. Now, this is actually three different arrays – it’s three projects – but it’s really one big project.

Getting it right, here, to me, is super important. Getting every aspect of it right.

Getting the ag mix right; having

a legitimate hearing process where neighbors are listened to, their concerns are listened to, the extent that they can be addressed they’re addressed; the planning board to look at all of those concerns and say “do we want to say yes or no, in the end, given the whole impact of this?”

That is really important to get right, because other developers are watching. Other projects are watching, other farmers are watching.

MR: If you put this model at scale across the state – which I know you’re not responsible for here –

NL: I have a lot of thoughts, a lot of insight. I can’t speak for AFT on it, I can give you my opinions from a long time in this –

MR: You’re at the eye of the hurricane, though.

NL: Yeah, it is all swirling! And I don’t think we have enough rooftops and parking lots to meet our energy needs in New England.

MR: So this is a 20, 25, 30, or 35-year installation?

NL: The agreement is 20 years, and then there’s two five-year options. At the end of 30 years, the panels will probably be reduced down to about 80% of their efficiency – they’ll still have about 80% life left. The lease can be renegotiated. The dual-use solar incentive will have stopped at 20 years – it stops when that first term of the lease runs out.

MR: Are you going to be here in 20 years? Is it going to be your decision whether to extend?

NL: I’ll be here. I’ll probably be involved in the decision-making process – it shouldn’t be up to me. If my brother and I own the land in 20 years, if my parents aren’t with us anymore – they may be, they’re 70, but these days it might be them making the decision. I hope I can help inform it.

But one of the reasons they wanted to do this, and not just sell the farm: my dad, basically since he was a little kid, always wanted to make a farm where his kids or his grandkids could choose if they wanted to farm it or not....

Sixty years ago that meadow was a dairy farm, this meadow was a dairy farm – there were 1,000 to 1,200 cows here in this little meadow when my parents bought the farm. All these fields were corn.... My parents were living in Rhode Island and looking for a place to possibly farm, and this one came up on the market. It was ideal: close to

see SOLAR page A4

In Like A Lion, Out Like A Fool

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The Montague Reporter

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Speaking for the Trees

MONTAGUE – The Montague Tree Advisory Board has proposed a new bylaw to protect the town's trees, which may or may not be on the town meeting warrant this June. The group is holding a public forum next Tuesday via Zoom to discuss the proposal (*see notice, page A7*).

Our reporter Jeff Singleton caught up with tree committee member Michael Marcotrigiano to get the inside scoop. Here are his answers...

MR: *I understand that this is the first set of Tree Bylaws in the town of Montague. Why is this important?*

MM: When the Montague Tree Advisory Board (MTAC) was organized about five years ago, we realized we needed to assist the town in establishing policy to protect a valuable asset, namely town trees, so that the future would be greener.

The Bylaws establish tree protection guidelines (e.g. so that contractors do not cut limbs or park tractors on tree roots) and, on a more positive side, encourage planting so that necessary removals do not outpace the planting schedule and the inventory is stabilized.

MR: *What is one example of the impact of having the Bylaws in place?*

MM: When the MTAC was organized we managed to get a small grant to plant over 30 new trees in Millers Falls, which had a noticeably bare downtown. At the same time, we began writing the first tree Bylaws for the town. Bylaws make granting agencies comfortable with tree management strategies and confident that grant monies will not be wasted.

Since the Millers Falls planting, the town has been awarded a much larger grant which will enable 600 to 800 trees to be planted in Montague. You likely have seen the progress to date, despite an interruption due to the pandemic.

MR: *How will the Bylaws impact the public?*

MM: The Bylaws define how the public can request new trees or ask for the maintenance of town trees near their property. They clearly define the duties of the Tree Warden and give him great authority should a private citizen or company or utility damage town trees by being reckless, not asking permissions, or not going through the proper channels. Town trees are town property,

just as town buildings are town property. They have monetary value and should be considered in the same way as any inanimate object the town owns. There are Massachusetts General Laws that must be adhered to by the town, and this includes things such as rational, fact-based decisions on tree removal.

MR: *Do the Bylaws have "any bite"?*

MM: Yes. If procedures are not followed and a town tree is purposely damaged, cut, mutilated, etc., there are financial repercussions for the guilty party.

MR: *What is the biggest threat to the town tree inventory?*

MM: From an environmental standpoint, global climate change is causing extreme temperature fluctuations, inconsistent rainfall, and – as we have seen lately – some prolonged, extreme wind. But humans are also to blame.

Most people just don't realize that trees fail largely because their roots are not happy. This could be caused by drought or road salt, but most often is caused by permanent soil compaction from vehicles parking under trees or on tree belts, and construction materials being placed too close to them, compressing the soil around them. Compacted soil can never provide enough oxygen to the root system. The Bylaws address some of these avoidable causes of tree decline.

MR: *Do Bylaws decide what types of trees get planted?*

MM: Because we wanted flexibility in the future, a tree list was added as an Appendix to the Bylaws. As Emeritus Director of the Smith College Botanic Garden, I have studied urban and park trees for decades and have provided a list to guide the town in choosing the right tree for the right spot. This list can be easily updated without amending the Bylaws.

Street conditions are not friendly to many tree species, so we focused on what has been successful in similar urban conditions, such as New York City and Chicago. In the past, too many large species were planted under power lines, causing practical and political issues with the utilities. We now have a short list of trees that can be used under power lines, although our focus is on areas that can support larger species.

Our selection of trees suitable for large areas such as parks is much more extensive.



Franklin County Technical School senior Tim Agapov of Sunderland stands in front of a Haas CNC milling machine at the school's machine shop. He is holding his senior capstone project, an oil filter wrench.

Letters to the Editors

Calling All Montague Gardeners

Last summer, Drawdown Montague launched a successful garden surplus project to put locally grown food on our neighbors' tables. Are you interested in joining us this season by donating surplus fruit and veggies from your home garden? We welcome volunteers from the five villages of Montague to join us as gardeners or drivers.

Last year we developed a simple system with a weekly email reminder, several collection points, a washing/packing station, and a weekly pick-up and distribution

to the Turners Falls Food Pantry, in order to serve those in need, right here in our community.

Please consider being part of this Drawdown Montague project to share fresh, locally grown fruits and veggies with our neighbors, and which also reduces food waste and fossil fuel use. For more information, please email me at campbellsm3rd@gmail.com.

Susan Campbell
Montague Center

Local Author's Claims Rebutted

We at New England Public Media (the merged New England Public Radio and WGBY Public Television) applaud the work of the *Montague Reporter* and all of our regional news publications. They are greatly needed at a time when "news deserts" are expanding every day across our country. This problem has become so acute that our State Legislature has established a commission to investigate and recommend remedies for this in Massachusetts.

We understand that our newspaper colleagues know the value and importance of well-researched and edited fact-based journalism. It was therefore surprising to read portions of Chip Ainsworth's *At Large* col-

umn of March 25, 2021, where Al Norman claims that Walmart (an NPR corporate sponsor) has pressured NEPR to silence Mr. Norman on our airwaves. This is a blatantly false conspiracy theory which couldn't be further from the truth.

Mr. Norman also claims that our radio newsroom has refused to interview him about any issue since our beloved News Director and Morning Edition Host Bob Paquette passed away in 2011. Our current News Director, Sam Hudzik, did interview Mr. Norman about Walmart's now failed attempt to put a store in Greenfield.

NPR has done many stories about Walmart, even though it underwrites their network. NPR

and NEPM apply the highest journalistic and editorial standards (www.nepm.org/news-ethics-and-corrections-policy) which include a strict firewall between underwriting sponsorships and news.

Respected news sources like the *Montague Reporter* should be careful about spreading disinformation and conspiracy theories, which are currently tearing apart our society and our democracy. We hope that the editors, reporters, and commentators at the paper will adhere to the highest standards of journalism in the future.

Sincerely yours,

Martin Miller
President,
New England Public Media

Why We Make the Big Bucks

Once again, the *Montague Reporter* outshines major dailies across the country (including the biggies: *NYT*, *WaPo*, *WSJ*, etc.) in providing analyses of events.

The editorial "Running Aground" (March 25, 2021) launches a concise exposition and critique of market hegemony (AKA corporate capitalism) from the story of the *Ever Given*, the ship blown into the mud in the Suez Canal. Among the points made are: the fragility of "globalization" in the face of ecological reality, despite the fact that globalized forces appear to be invincible; the hollowness of "planning" based on short-term profit;

the deep contradiction between a "free" market in capital and an unfree market in labor; the problematic character of state boundaries; the role of violence in organizing and maintaining economic structures; and the character of political parties as "state apparatuses."

All of this is presented in smooth prose with a touch of wit, far easier to read and understand than my summary of points.

Thank you!

Peter d'Errico
Leverett

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LARKIN ROSSI ILLUSTRATION

LOCAL BRIEFS

By NINA ROSSI

Got poems rattling around your hard drive? *Silkworm*, the annual review of Florence Poets Society, is open for submissions. You are invited to **submit your poems** to be considered for *Silkworm 14: Rise* by April 8. The review will be published in the fall of 2021.

Silkworm 14 has an optional theme of "Rise." Submit up to three poems of no longer than 50 lines each, with a 30-word bio and contact information. Feel free to interpret the theme in any way, and remember that the theme is optional.

Only electronic submissions will be accepted. Email info@florencepoets.com with poems attached as a single file, saved in a standard format such as .doc or .pdf. There is no fee to submit, and all are welcome to enter. For more information, visit www.florencepoets.com.

Slate Roof Press is holding a reading by **Glass Prize winners Jendi Reiter and Armen Davoudian** on Monday, April 12 at 7:30 p.m. The reading will be followed by a craft talk by master letterpress printer Ed Rayher of Swamp Press and artist J. Hyde Meissner.

Davoudian and Reiter, winners of Slate Roof's Glass Broadside Contest, will read their winning poems and other work. Rayher and Meissner will describe the process of creating the woodcuts and printing the broadsides on a Vandercook Universal. The evening closes with an audience question and answer period.

Register at www.slateroofpress.com/events.html.

Village Neighbors is holding a Volunteer Appreciation Day at the Leverett Coop on Sunday, April 11 from 1 to 2:30 p.m. "We appreciate our generous volunteers who have helped our 60 and over members navigate and stay connected over this past difficult year," their

announcement reads. "This outdoor, masked, socially-distanced celebration will feature thank you t-shirts for volunteers, members showing support with applause, honking car horns, etc., and musicians The Diggers and The Wranglers."

Volunteers have helped senior residents of Leverett, Wendell, New Salem, and Shutesbury with transportation, chores, small repairs, learning to use technology, and navigating the pandemic. Volunteers will be formally recognized and there will be photos taken as the organization distributes t-shirts. Members can pick up thank you gifts.

The Village Neighbors nonprofit member/volunteer-run organization is dedicated to helping seniors stay in their homes in Leverett, Wendell, New Salem, and Shutesbury. Since October 2018 they have grown to include over 100 senior members and 100 volunteers. Find out more at www.villagenighbors.org.

The Dickinson Memorial Library in Northfield and the Libraries in the Woods present an online reading by local poet **Karina Borowicz** on Tuesday, April 13 at 7 p.m. Borowicz will read from her 2020 prize-winning collection *Rosetta*. Some themes of the collection include introspection and curiosity, history and language, science and the natural world, and time.

"I'm obsessed with time," admits Borowicz. "The way we experience it, measure it, and mark its passage; the notion of time travel and the braiding together of past, present, and future in our lives; and how writers and other artists express the passage of time in their work." To register, email dmemlib@gmail.com.

The Greenfield Alliance Church at 385 Chapman Street in Greenfield is holding a **monthly pantry** to give away products not covered by EBT and WIC. The next one is on Saturday, April 17 from 1 to 4

p.m. Items given away include body wash, soap, shampoo, conditioner, deodorant, toothbrushes, toothpaste, wash cloths, and other personal care items. All are welcome.

The 50+ Program and MassHire Springfield are offering **workshops and networking services to Latinos** over the age of 50. The program will include three monthly workshops presented bilingually in English and Spanish.

The first, on April 21 at 1 p.m., will cover "Skills Assessment and New Career Pathways." On May 19 the workshop is "Turn your Resume into a Marketing Tool," and on June 16, learn about how to "Network your way to a New Career."

The goal of the 50+ Latino Program is to provide people with the tools, resources, and strategies needed for successful career transition or job search, including English and technology skills, confidence, networking skills, and connection to age-friendly employers. The program is open to Latino residents of Massachusetts age 50+. Participants will have access to other virtual workshops, networking sessions, and guest speaker/panel events.

On April 8 at 10 a.m., a related workshop, "Volunteerism: A Pathway to Purpose and Employment," is open to all residents over 50. To sign up for these workshops and find out more about the 50+ program, visit www.50plusjobseekers.org.

Millers Falls Community Improvement Association (MFCIA) writes that there's quite a bit of spring cleaning needed along the streets, paths, and byways of the village. All the trash that has collected over the winter is starting to pop up.

To celebrate Earth Day they are asking volunteers to go out during the week of April 18 to 24 – or anytime between now and then – and collect the trash in Millers Falls. They ask folks to take a picture of what they collect and post it on the MFCIA Facebook page.

Also on Earth Day, April 22, the Montague Wastewater Facility invites families with elementary school aged children to **celebrate Earth Day at the Montague Wastewater**

Facility. "We will have a COVID-safe drive through for local families, where we will be handing out goodie bags that have Earth Day and Water Cycle themes!" reads the event invitation on Facebook.

The facility is at 34 Greenfield Road in Montague. Drive over between 3 and 5 p.m. on April 22 and be sure to follow COVID safety protocols.

The Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association (PVMA) is launching its **Big Read program** this spring, exploring themes in Emily St. John Mandel's novel *Station Eleven*. The program is in partnership with more than 40 libraries, organizations, and businesses in Franklin, Hampshire, and Hampden counties.

From late March through November, Big Read will explore *Station Eleven* during a full calendar of events, including a virtual conversation with author Emily St. John Mandel on Tuesday, April 27 at 7 p.m.

The novel, written in 2014, is set in a dystopian, post-pandemic world. PVMA chose it from a list of NEA Big Read offerings before COVID-19 hit. "What caught our attention about this book, as we were planning PVMA's 150th anniversary celebration, was a museum that started in an airport where a group of stranded travelers survived and formed a community," notes PVMA outreach coordinator Sheila Damkoehler. "PVMA's Memorial Hall Museum is, in a way, like the novel's 'Museum of Civilization,' with many objects from the past that have little or no use in our modern world..."

"Now that we're experiencing an actual pandemic, the NEA Big Read of this fictional story provides an opportunity for local communities to discuss our real pandemic experience, as well as the role the arts play in our lives (a central theme in *Station Eleven*)." PVMA is one of 84 communities nationwide awarded an NEA Big Read grant for 2020-21.

Learn more about the Big Read at www.deerfield-ma.org. For more information, contact sdamkoehler@deerfieldmuseum.org or call (413) 774-7476 x 100.

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SUSAN ELWYN PHOTO

OBITUARY

Ariel Jones

7/18/1946 – 3/26/2021

Ariel Jones died peacefully in her sleep from Alzheimer's in Sarasota, Florida on March 26. She was born in Missouri on July 18, 1946.

Ariel graduated from the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor and worked several years as a gallery director there. She became a well-known photographer in New York City, Boston, and Turners Falls. She specialized in portraits, and in New York she did head shots for aspiring actors. Friends can remember several times, watching television with Ariel, when she would point to an actor and say, "I did his head shot."

She was also a talented artist working in print and acrylics, and her works sold well in Provincetown at Hilda Neily's Gallery. She ran her own photography studio and gallery, Ariel Jones Studio, in downtown Turners Falls for several years. She wrote a column about her fly

fishing adventures for *The Montague Reporter*.

Ariel was an animal lover, and her survivors include her two cats Tommy and Nikki. She is also survived by her brothers Charles and Randy Berry, her sister Denise Poitier, many nieces, nephews, grand-nieces, and grand-nephews, many friends in Turners and everywhere else she lived, and Susan Elwyn, her girlfriend of 11 years.

She will be cremated and her ashes laid to rest next to her mother's. A special memorial gathering will be held in July at the home of Nina Rossi for her Turners Falls friends and all others. Condolences may be sent to Susan Elwyn, 4439 Narragansett Trail, Sarasota, FL 34233.

See page B4 for a memorial tribute to Ariel Jones.

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Week of April 5
in Montague



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SOLAR from page A1

300 acres, all contiguous, irrigation – it's a cool spot. There's a couple really big fields...Most of what you see here was sod when I was growing up. We rented those fields from the landowners to grow sod on them.

My mother's family had been growing sod for about 20 years in Rhode Island before that. My parents had grown it wholesale down there – they both had other jobs – and they grew the turf and sold it in the ground to my mother's sister, who owned a company, SodCo.

We've phased it out – the last sales to SodCo were this past fall. We went from growing 350 acres of turf a year, the last five or six years we've probably been growing 70 acres of turf, and we haven't planted any since the fall before last.

MR: And now solar will be roughly, you're talking about half the family's acreage?

NL: Um, no... On that side of the road is about 100 acres of farmland, there's nothing going there. That field will be 45 acres, and this one is only 20 acres of array – it's going to be about 65 acres out of 260 acres.

MR: I'm still having a hard time orienting to what I saw in the plans. All the long parallel lines –

NL: They'll go this way. Frequently in a solar array, the panels are in a row going east to west. In these arrays they go north to south, because the panel, even though it's going to tilt, is in a fixed spot – if the sun is moving way up there, if the rows were [east-west] as the sun moves you'd never have sunlight on that strip. But when the panels are ten feet in the air, as the sun moves all of the ground would get sunlight.

The dual-use regs require that no square foot of ground can have its sunlight reduced more than 50%, so across everything there has to be 50% of what it was for sunlight...

MR: Is that one of the areas that there's been some push and pull over the regs?

NL: Yeah, a lot of the push and pull has been around how much sunlight you need. Some folks say we don't want to reduce it at all; some folks say some crops can grow with a lot less sunlight.

Dual use impacts each square foot of ground less than single-use solar, but you've gotta spread it out – the less shading you want, the bigger a footprint it's going to occupy. Is it better to reduce the ag capacity of land by 30% over 100 acres, or to reduce the ag capacity by 100% over 30 acres? Do you want them small, or do you want to be able to do both things?

You can't have both – I mean,

you can farm under a traditional array that's very tight, but it's very limited what will grow under there, with a pretty limited market – they're pretty niche crops, like ginseng. No one's growing those under arrays yet. Ginseng does grow up here, and some folks grow it, but no one's doing the dual use with it.

Japan has actually embraced dual use; there's about 1,200 farms in Japan that do dual-use, across 150 different crops. They also pay a whole lot more for solar energy there than we do here, and that helps to drive some of the differences.

MR: Are they also a little further south?

NL: I don't know – Japan's a very long country...

MR: It's dawning on me that dual-use is an important issue in a state like Mass because there isn't a lot of wide-open space.

NL: Mass is weird. We're the seventh most densely forested state in the nation. New England is 80% forested – most of our land is open space – it's just very fragmented, it's small parcels...

This farm that we farm now goes up to the corn stubble there, it goes down to – you can see a little dirt line in the field before those houses – it goes up to where the river turns up there. It's 260 contiguous acres. But 150 years ago, this was eight different farms.

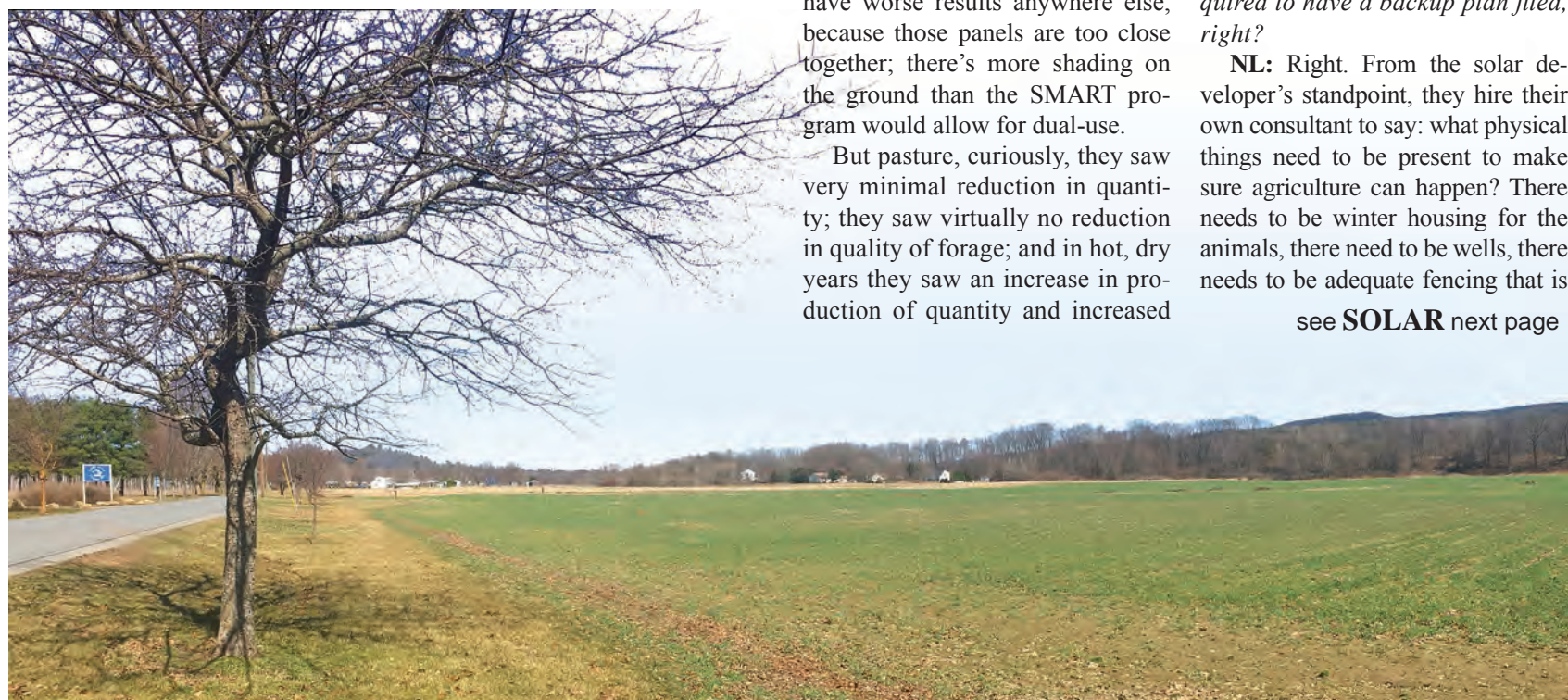
MR: Dual use is about two really big things coming up against each other.

NL: Yeah. And this is fairly relevant to that bigger picture: In the SMART program, [about 8%] of the total solar was allocated to be built in the Western Mass Electric Company ISO zone. A certain amount of capacity [was allocated to] in every ISO zone, and it was based on the usage of power in that zone, how much eligibility will there be for the SMART program. Western Mass doesn't use a lot of power – we had very low allocation out here.

Eversource bought the WMECo blocks. In the first round of the SMART program, they kept the "Eversource East" and "Eversource West," as they now refer to them, separate. Eversource East uses a huge amount of power.

Now they're merging them, and half the SMART capacity for the state can now be in the new, merged Eversource zone. What would have only [8%] of the solar in the state being in the Western Mass zone, now [53%] of it could be out here and still get the incentives...

MR: So that merger is actually going to push it west.



NL: Almost all of the development that was going to happen in Eversource East eventually, or just wasn't happening because it was too expensive – it was allocated capacity, but it was never used. We used up all of our capacity like that, because it was much cheaper to build out here.

That's going to come this way.

MR: See, I'm from eastern Mass, and I think those people should just be forced – the median strips of highways –

NL: The median strips of highways, DOT hates that because you've got the possible glare. And we've got all these big open spaces next to airports...

MR: Issue every driver free sunglasses!

NL: Rooftops, you've gotta have a 30-year warranty on your rooftop in order to put solar on it... Homeowners are saying "I'd love to do it – pay for a new roof and the solar and then I can afford it, but I need a new roof."

MR: So then the pressure is on forested land.

NL: The pressure is on forested land, the pressure is on farmland. And I'm a huge proponent of not sitting down and saying "nope, not on ours – figure it out somewhere else."

And for a while in Mass, Audubon was saying "you can't do it on any of the grasslands, we need those for birds; figure it out somewhere else." Forest folks were saying "put it on the farmlands; forests are too precious, they're sequestering all this carbon. Do it somewhere else." Farm advocates were saying "Mass is 80% forested..."

We talk about a half million acres of farmland in Massachusetts, most of that is forest owned by farmers. There's about 80,000 acres of cropland in Massachusetts, that's it.

Everybody is pointing to somebody else's.

MR: So at scale, if we're looking at forest or farmland, this is a way to keep farmland farming – to some degree.

NL: Exactly. Keep farmland farming. The science is limited as to what works right now – there's a lot of anecdotal stuff, there's a lot of stuff from other countries and other climates. UMass has done research on some vegetables, it was only a year or two long. They saw in dry years certain things did a lot better; in wet years certain things did worse. Curiously, the UMass facility wouldn't qualify as a dual-use array because they're too tight together. So the research that is there, we can have confidence that we shouldn't have worse results anywhere else, because those panels are too close together; there's more shading on the ground than the SMART program would allow for dual-use.

But pasture, curiously, they saw very minimal reduction in quantity; they saw virtually no reduction in quality of forage; and in hot, dry years they saw an increase in production of quantity and increased

quality...

What my parents will make on this array is no more than what they made on turf in good years, but at 70-plus years old, this is a much more secure stream of income for a period of time while they try to retire.

MR: And that's leasing to the solar?

NL: Leasing to the solar array, yeah. There's no ownership of the array itself for my parents – their only income stream from this is the land lease, and the farmer lease. They get to do both of those things: lease the land to the array owners, lease the land to the farmer. The lease to the farmer, we'll see what that generates – in the beginning, we're just trying to help somebody get started on an operation.

MR: So they lease to the farmer, but the array's owner has the stipulation –

NL: That if the land is not farmed, only then can they step in and either farm or find a farmer. But we own the first right to that in the lease.

MR: Are [the sheep] going to be on [arrays] A and B, and C?

NL: They're going to be on A, B, and C, as well as other places around here. These arrays will not be big enough for the grazing operation that Jesse intends to do.

So BlueWave hires a consultant, they say "what do we need to make sure is in this project so that if Jesse gets hit by a bus, or he decides to retire, what do we – we want to own everything that's needed to farm here." So BlueWave pays for the buildings; BlueWave pays for the wells; the solar project owns that necessary infrastructure...

On one of the arrays under planning in Massachusetts, the solar developer is just hiring a farming manager on their dime to make sure the farming is happening, because it's so critical.

I've gotta tell you, as somebody who's worked in farmland access – worked in trying to support farms for a while, figured out how to get more land in production – we've never found a formula that basically guarantees land will be farmed for any amount of time.

One of the weird side effects of this is it virtually guarantees it'll be farmed for 20 years, whether it's us or someone else. The contracts that are in place – it's generally Wall Street bankers who own the arrays in the end. Everything is planned out ahead of time, it's set up, it's incredibly secure. They will not tolerate risk in something like this...

MR: So what's the discussion about ensuring that – you're required to have a backup plan filed, right?

NL: Right. From the solar developer's standpoint, they hire their own consultant to say: what physical things need to be present to make sure agriculture can happen? There needs to be winter housing for the animals, there need to be wells, there needs to be adequate fencing that is

see SOLAR next page


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not designed for a solar array, but rather is designed for livestock.

When you do an intensively managed grazing system – it's not the grazing that's intensive, it's the management that's intensive, it's important where you place that word – you take a whole big field, and the animals are only on any individual portion for about a day, and then they move to the next one.

MR: *It's going to be winters here, and then they're moving?*

NL: Their spring grazing will be here, and all the lambing. The most labor-intensive time is when they're lambing, so you want them all in the same spot. Once they're done lambing, then you can put 100 sheep on this 20 acres a mile away, 200 sheep on that field three miles away. You can move them to less secure housing: they're a little bit bigger, you can put a guard dog with them and the coyotes will have no luck.

When you need somebody there 24/7 is when you have 500 sheep and they're lambing. Having the home base, not just for the over-wintering, but spring grazing and spring lambing will all be between these three arrays.... His goal is to have, between these arrays as the home bases, about 1,000 head of sheep based here.

One of the other really cool aspects.... So, there's about 400 acres of grazeable land within a mile of here that's not in production at all. And if Jesse is based here, he will do whatever it takes to try to get access to those 400 acres and get that into production.

So we take 60 acres, we reduce the ability to farm on it by 20 or 30%, but we create viability on 400 neighboring acres –

MR: *He can herd the sheep from one spot to another?*

NL: Literally with a dog, he can walk – the snowmobile trail goes through here, he can connect to about 400 acres of farm fields.

MR: *Because the putting all the sheep in and out of trucks sounds like a lot of work.*

NL: Actually, there's a few other arrays that are near here that BlueWave may have under development. And by "near here" I mean like a 20- or 30-mile distance.

But Jesse's going to have a large livestock trailer, and part of the business model will be other arrays in the area, if they get to that – once he has an operation that is big enough to have the management capacity dedicated to it. That can grow bigger, if need be, fairly easily....

The way the lease works, we retain the right to farm it; if we're not farming it or someone we assign it to is not farming it, BlueWave or whoever they sell it to actually has the right to farm it. Because if the farming stops, they're screwed.

MR: *Meaning, they don't get the dual-use adder, but they still get the base subsidy under SMART?*

NL: No – in Mass right now, really the only regulatory pathway is to be eligible for the SMART program on greenfields, which are forests or fields, is to do dual use. So if it doesn't qualify as dual-use, not only does it lose the adder, it loses the whole SMART incentive – all of it – and the whole project implodes, from a financing standpoint.

MR: *So there's a very large revenue stream resting on top of these sheep.*

NL: The dual-use adder is about a million dollars a megawatt over the life of the program, the 20 years. A million dollars a megawatt.

MR: *I wrote "hundreds" [in my March 25 article], but I went back and it's thousands*

– twenty-something thousand posts in the ground?

NL: It's big! Sixty acres of footprint.

MR: *So how much labor goes into running the array itself?*

NL: Running it is all automated – there's someone sitting in an office somewhere, looking at readouts. The ag side is going to take a lot more labor, but the solar side, there's somebody in an office monitoring. Techs come around once a month and do maintenance, and if something happens, an alert goes off.

MR: *What I'm standing next to now, this is going to be arrays?*

NL: This field will be arrays, but they start a bit further back....

This was the old Lake Hitchcock – the soil was here from floodings, but the clay is all here because it's the old lake bottom. At the back of the field, the clay actually surfaces....

Because we have irrigation, the front of this field is – this is New England river bottom soil, it's some of the best you'll find in the world for growing crops, so it's a relative term – but the front is better for growing crops than the back. So the back is where the array is, the front we're going to keep cropping.

MR: *In the '36 flood, would this all have been floodplain?*

NL: At that house, which was Whitney dairy farm at the time, their porch was dry but their yard was wet. There are pictures from the papers at the time with four or five cows standing on their porch. I think it was 500 cows drowned here during the flood....

MR: *Are part of the arrays underground?*

NL: There's a little bit of trenching underground, but underground conduit and wires are made to be waterproof....

All the panels are connected north to south in their line. Above ground, there's cables that connect one panel to the other. After a certain number of panels there's a junction box, all the wires go into that junction box, and out of that junction box is a bigger cable that continues along above ground right under the panels, until it gets to about the middle of the array.

At the middle of the array there's one trench, basically, that crosses the field and goes to where the inverters are.

The inverters are actually going to be back here, because from the planning board's perspective the views have been an incredibly important thing here, so [BlueWave is] putting that stuff in the back of the field with a little bit of shrubby screening, they will not be seen from the front. There'll be some shipping container-sized things with the battery storage.

MR: *So what it's actually putting onto the grid from here is smoothed out?*

NL: The interconnection is half the size of the capacity, so when the array is at peak production in August, it's producing twice what is going out onto the grid. It smooths out those peaks and valleys, yes....

They basically model for zero production in February when there's snow – but the batteries are still sitting there, so they can take part in market opportunities, just like the pumped-storage does. They can buy power off the grid when it's cheap, and they can sell power to the grid when it's expensive, out of the batteries. It's not just that it's smoothing out for the electrical generation on the solar array, it's able to participate....

MR: *Does every company do that, or does that stuff get aggregated through other companies that are making the actual calculations?*

NL: My understanding is the investors hire a company to run the array, and do the

operation and maintenance, and it's those companies who are integrating all of those control mechanisms. The market pricing really gives the indicators of when you want to be buying it because it's cheap, and when you want to sell it.

MR: *So at 20, 25, 30, 35 years, what are the mechanisms around taking this thing apart?*

NL: Part of the lease that my parents will have with the solar array owners is that the land has to be returned to the condition it was. A contract is not a guarantee – it's just an obligation – so decommissioning bonds, these kind of things, act as a backup if someone doesn't do what they're supposed to.

With dual-use, there's an I-beam that's driven into the ground – it has to go about 12 feet in the ground, because you're not allowed to have any concrete – just as you put them in, you can pull them out....

MR: *Is the sand in the trenches going to have an impact?*

NL: Part of the decommissioning is going to be taking that out. They dig up the first six to twelve inches, which is topsoil, and that goes on one side. They dig up the subsoil, that goes on the other side. There's a truck there, they dig out the sand, put it in the truck, put the subsoil back, put the topsoil back – sounds improbable?

MR: *What's the actual mechanism, the bonds? "Berkshire Hathaway, you gotta hire a guy to take the sand out of this trench?"*

NL: It's written in the contract, it's gotta be done. And it sounds really complex – but that's what we did for our main lines.

MR: *Thirty years out, they can scrape the sand out?*

NL: Yup. Now, whether or not two and a half feet down that sand layer would actually have an impact, I don't know – whether it's going to or not, the agreement says that comes out....

For these kinds of projects, it's just like if you're trying to build a housing development and you turn the road over to the town, or you start building houses before the road is done: the town says "you've gotta give us a bond." Somebody with way better credit is signing on the line to say "yes, we guarantee this – our faith and credit in 20 years. If they don't, we will." And they're charging the developer up front for the price of that.

MR: *This is big regionally, and statewide.*

NL: That barn right there, the left side of it has a 67 KW solar array on it. We put that up almost ten years ago. At the time, we think that was the biggest solar array in Franklin County. Roof-mounted, 67 KW, that sounds tiny and totally benign now....

The Massachusetts SMART program has a 5 MW cap, so we tend not to have a lot of really big projects – big is relative. AFT is engaged in some stuff in New York and New Jersey, where they're dealing with what they call "utility scale" instead of distributed-generation scale. Something in the 5 to 10 MW is within that distributed-generation scale, it's small as far as the grid goes. In New York, 100 MW, 200 MW, a thousand acres of solar panels on the ground.

We really don't get those here, because the only incentive we have is for smaller projects, spread out....

There's a real chicken-or-egg thing, for me, with the regulators. If they're only comfortable with what we know, and they'll only approve what we know, how are we going to drive something forward? That being said, I entirely understand not wanting to say "yeah, go put stuff on 60 acres of farmland and we'll see if it works." But that is one of the tensions

here – how do we figure out what works?

One of [our] proposals was to have two or three acres that would be experimental, and the rest of it be grazing, and even that didn't fly.

MR: *But they are doing that around the state at this time – a lot of the projects in the pipeline are smaller –*

NL: Yeah. Have different crops, and some experimentation.

UMass is involved a little bit, in their reviews. And I also get that. Because UMass are the scientists; they're getting asked to weigh and give a recommendation, so they're not going to on a whim say "oh yeah, that might work, go for it."

But figuring this out is going to take a balance – this is all about balance, right? That's what farming is about: when you plant, when you plow. There's tradeoffs to every aspect of it. What's going to lead to more disease pressure and less insect pressure, more weeds, higher yield, higher cost – it's all these tradeoffs.

And figuring out how to green our energy supply is similar tradeoffs, in where it's going to go. But we've gotta be a little innovative, we've gotta push forward.

MR: *How come it goes over the 5 MW cap that's been in the program?*

NL: It's the battery storage, because the cap is about the interconnection. Where it hooks up to the grid is only allowed to be 2 [MW] under the dual-use. Under the broad SMART program it's capped at 5 [MW].

The interconnection on this one is going to be 3 MW. In order for these projects to happen there had to be about 10½ MW of production down here, because – when you came up [Route] 63, just before entering Northfield, there's a substation on the left, that's the substation that this is going to connect to, and every pole and every wire between here and there has to be replaced. It's a hugely expensive proposition.

And so, it was within the 5 MW SMART cap generally; they got a waiver on this one to go above the 2 MW dual-use cap to go to 3 MW interconnection. BlueWave got that from the Department of Ag. Because without that extra megawatt of interconnection, none of these would happen at all.

MR: *Do you feel like you're on a vanguard here?*

NL: I think so. This is not in a vanguard for solar, this is in a vanguard for figuring out the balance between solar and agriculture – as opposed to just choosing between one and the other, which is what we've done so far.

It's also super important to me to do it right, because I think in a hundred years we're all going to laugh at what we used to do – putting these glass panels out in a field to capture solar?...

When those panels come off, what can happen next? Is the land only now suitable for houses and malls? Is it suitable for farming?

New England has lost 75% of its farmland in 50 years. The 50 years before that, we lost 50% of our farmland. If we do this right, in 150 years there'll be farmland here



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plans; providing bid support; and administering construction services.

Voters asked the selectboard and fin com about alternatives to repair or replacement of the bridge, such as making Church Street a local-access-only street or demolishing the bridge. They asked the town officials to study traffic patterns more carefully, and to consider the effect of changes at Church Street on traffic on North and High streets, and to ask Church and North Street residents for their preferences. One questioner asked for an estimate of the cost of repairing the Church Street bridge.

Responding to comments, selectboard chair Jacob Smith said the town “would want to consider all options,” with “every combination on the table.” He said the town already has engineering consultant Tighe & Bond “looking at traffic flow and traffic patterns – that’s happening separate from this.” However, he added that the traffic study was short term.

Smith gave a “wide range” estimate of the potential cost of repair at \$1.5 to \$2 million, and confirmed that “any funding decision will come back to the town.”

“Whatever we do on Church Street and North Street is going to need community involvement,” said selectboard member William Bembury.

Town administrator Bryan Smith told the meeting that high-

way superintendent Glenn McCroly and the capital planning committee had been working on planning repairs to the Church Street and Swamp Road bridges, with work scheduled within the next few fiscal years. He said the recent report from the state Department of Transportation (MassDOT) District 2 engineer saying that the Church Street bridge is in poor condition is “pushing the Church Street bridge forward.”

The town has not yet received a formal notice from MassDOT.

The motion to fund the engineering, permitting and consulting services passed with a majority vote.

The meeting unanimously approved \$122,000 for the police department, to cover the unexpected retirement of two officers and hiring and training new officers. It also gave unanimous approval to \$40,000 for repairing decorative street lighting on West Main Street, East Main Street, and Lillian’s Way; \$20,000 for purchasing a solar powered message board; and \$120,000 from the wastewater enterprise fund for replacing the emergency generator at POTW#1.

The meeting unanimously rescinded the authority for the town to borrow \$17.9 million for new sludge dryers at POTW#2, and unanimously approved acquiring the parcel at 17 Moore Street, the former library, to clarify the town’s title to the property.



NOTES FROM THE LEVERETT SELECTBOARD

Childcare a Barrier at Town Meeting

By GEORGE BRACE

A discussion on childcare at town meeting highlighted Tuesday’s Leverett selectboard meeting, with the consensus being that it was a good idea for the town to replace the current ad hoc system with a formal one. The topic was brought forward by members of the town’s social justice committee (SJC), which conducted a survey identifying childcare issues as a primary barrier to residents’ participation at town meeting, particularly among women and people of color.

As part of their mission to “Assess policies and practices of the Town of Leverett and recommend changes to address historic and systemic oppression and inequity,” the SJC conducted a “town government survey” to gather information on how well-informed residents feel, what they see as key barriers to attending town meeting (TM), what they feel works well, and what can be improved. 262 residents responded, and the need for childcare at the meetings was identified as one of the top three barriers to attendance, the others being “work” and “TM too long.”

The report’s three key findings were that “people report wanting more information about TM and town government; people report liking the *promise* of TM; but that the promise is often unrealized, especially for women and people of color.”

The report recommended that care should be taken in interpreting the results due to the small size of subgroups, and the likelihood that the respondents were those already “the *most* connected to and comfortable in town politics and governance,” but identified childcare as a barrier to participation in TM that disproportionately affected women (41%) and people of color (50%.) versus men (14%).

SJC member Josh Nugent connected the results to larger issues of barriers to voting, and said that “whatever we can do to improve the situation” would be positive. The committee asked for \$500 in funding for childcare at TM to address the issue this year.

Selectboard member Tom Hankinson said he thought there was “broad support” for setting up such a fund, but that the board didn’t “have a budget line” to approve such a request. Discussion turned to the practical matter of getting childcare in place for TM in May, and the need to come up with a formal system for the future.

Resident Jed Proujansky said he agreed an institutionalized system was a good idea, but there was not enough time to develop one for this year. Both board members agreed. Hankinson said no one was opposed to the idea, but it was just a “time-frame” issue.

Chair Julie Shively added her agreement: “We can’t just be winging it every year.”

Community Field

Members of the town’s recreation committee brought forth a draft article for town meeting which would have banned construction on the town’s athletic field in perpetuity, but after discussion, opted to change its wording to say any construction must be approved by a TM vote.

Committee members said the field was the only open recreation field of its kind in Leverett, and were concerned by proposals from town departments to use parts of it for other purposes, such as a recently proposed solar installation. Members were unsure how such proj-

ects were approved, and seeking to safeguard the property’s open space and recreational value.

Shively responded that she understood the sentiment, but “we just can’t foresee the future,” and that having the field “locked up” was not a good idea in case it is needed for a “dire reason” at some point. Citing the greenhouse on the field as a positive example, Shively said her opinion was that proposals for the field should be evaluated and approved at TM “one project at a time.”

Hankinson agreed, saying “the decision is for voters to make.”

Community Builders

Resident Aaron Buford reported that a community-building group was planning to hold a town-wide cleanup day on Saturday, April 24, coinciding with Earth Day on April 22. The group sought to have trash fees waived at the landfill, and to see if the highway department wanted to collaborate.

The idea was well-received. The board approved waiving the fees, and highway superintendent Matthew Boucher said his department would be more than happy to “cruise around with the one-ton” the following Monday to pick up the bags.

Other Business

The selectboard reappointed Roberta Bryant as dog officer, contingent on her re-certification for the position. Police officer Meghan Gallo, who has the certification and has been performing the service for Wendell, expressed interest, but Bryant’s ability to house strays locally rather than have them taken to Greenfield was seen as a significant factor in the decision.

Tim Field announced his plans to retire from his \$25 per year position in charge of Leverett’s emergency management system.

Michael Katz was appointed as animal control officer, and Timothy Shores to the tax relief committee.

Town administrator Marjorie McGinnis said she’s received tentative notice that the next round of COVID relief funding for the town would be approximately \$181,000, and qualifications have changed slightly.

McGinnis also reported that she was filing further grant applications for the Teawaddle Hill Road water line project, and is hoping construction will begin in June. She also informed the board of the need for \$2,000 to cover costs over the amount appropriated for legal expenses in a resolved matter.

The board addressed a complaint of a condemned house on Dudleyville Road by deciding to confer with the building inspector and draft a letter to the owner of the property seeking resolution.

The board approved a request from a resident to have a “candidates’ night” at the selectboard meeting immediately preceding TM. Each candidate for a town position will be given two to three minutes to speak.

Resident Sophia Buford’s comment that the audio-visual of the remote meeting had been “excellent” met with agreement. Shively said she was unsure when the board could return to in-person meetings, citing the recent COVID surge as a factor making it difficult to pinpoint dates and format changes. She also commented that the hybrid model of combining in-person and remote participation had been difficult.

NOTES FROM THE ERVING SELECTBOARD

Prep for the ‘Annual’

By KATIE NOLAN

At a short Erving selectboard, finance committee, and capital planning committee meeting before the March 27 special town meeting, the members reviewed the draft annual town meeting (ATM) warrant, making minor changes in charts, fonts, grammar, and numbering and adding to explanatory text. The fin com voted to recommend all of the articles reviewed, and the selectboard approved the draft warrant. However, they decided to hold the accompanying budget document for release until the next selectboard meeting, which will be held April 5.

The ATM warrant includes a general operating budget for fis-

cal year 2022 of \$5.07 million, \$5.35 for elementary, secondary and technical school expenses, and \$415,000 for capital improvement projects. The warrant also includes putting \$273,000 into the stabilization fund, and \$150,000 into capital stabilization.

Selectboard chair Jacob Smith appeared pleased to declare this meeting as a “wrap on fiscal year 2022 planning.”

The board awarded the bid for repairing the force sewer line between Route 2 and POTW#1 to R.H. White Construction and Service Solutions of Auburn, with a total cost of \$40,800.

The selectboard re-appointed Arthur Johnson as animal inspector.

GILL from page A1

at \$103,394, would remove loose or curled floor tiles, and encapsulate asbestos tiles in one “problem classroom,” the multi-purpose room, and hallways. A larger project estimated at \$263,297 would remove all of the asbestos by replacing the school’s flooring entirely, except for the kitchen and bathroom areas, which do not have asbestos-containing adhesives or tiles.

“I do not think it makes sense to try to encapsulate the areas that are bad, and push the rest of it down the road,” said selectboard chair Randy Crochier. “When I walked into the [school] rooms, you could feel the tiles that were coming up,” he continued. “It does not make sense to come back year after year to town meeting for flooring at the school.”

“I think that is the way everyone is leaning,” added selectboard and capital improvements committee member Greg Snedeker.

The larger project could potentially save the town money long term, Cummings told the board, not only by capitalizing on current lower interest rates, but also through a discounted price for the larger project. Conversely, the less expensive encapsulating project could end up

costing the town more as normal wear re-exposes the remaining asbestos.

“Even if the town did elect to go with a smaller amount, taking care of the multi-purpose room and the hallways – and that one problem classroom – there is no saying that for \$10,000 we could not do one classroom, and then another one,” offered Cummings. “We *would* be going back, but it would be to accomplish getting this room finished, and then the next.”

“It is a lot of money,” he added, “especially for a small town to put forward a project that is in six figures.”

“Disposal of asbestos is not going to get cheaper,” said Crochier. “If there is a way we can do it now, it might be for the best.”

“I will be happier either way because it takes care of a big problem we are trying to solve,” Cummings responded. “Other than the roof, I would say this is probably the biggest issue facing that building.”

The selectboard voted unanimously to include a Proposition 2½ debt exclusion question for the project on the May 17 town election ballot. The “yes or no” vote would allow

Gill to borrow funds for whichever project the selectboard chooses after members and town administrator Ray Purington review the forthcoming final estimates for each of the proposed projects.

Asked about applying for Massachusetts School Building Authority (MSBA) funds toward the project, Blier said that the accelerated repair program through the MSBA “is for roofs, windows, doors, and boilers – and that is all that program covers.”

“One of the things that has been on my wish list for this school is the insulation, which is very poor in that building, and in that roof,” said selectboard member John Ward. “That feels like throwing money away that we should not be throwing away.” He asked Blier if Gill could qualify for MSBA funding by including “a closet, or some addition to the building.”

Blier responded that Gill would have to be accepted into another MSBA program, and then it could be three to five years until the project completion – if the town were accepted. Blier and Purington both added that the town cannot wait that long to get the flooring project completed.

Other Business

Highway superintendent John Miner was unanimously approved to use FY’21 Chapter 90 roads funding for three crack-sealing projects.

An FY’21 street-sweeping bid from J.R. Sweeping Service, LLC for \$148.50 per hour, the only bid the department received, was also approved. Miner said it would be the same cost as the FY’20 contract.

A fire department purchase request on the agenda was tabled due to a lack of funding, and will be revisited at the end of FY’21.

The department’s comprehensive emergency plan was unanimously approved, and the selectboard also unanimously approved firefighter Tyler Richardson for re-appointment, as well as a slate of nine members for the board of fire engineers.

Agricultural lease bids were awarded for two Gill-owned properties, the Boyle Lot and Mariamante Field. Brian Peila bid \$250 to grow hay or corn on the Boyle property, while Everyday Farm bid \$350 to use the Mariamante parcel as pasture for grazing sheep, or for growing hay.



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PERSONAL INJURY, WILLS & ESTATES, WORKER'S COMP

MONTAGUE from page A1
change until the fall.

Town planner Walter Ramsey noted that certain fees and fines established by the bylaw would be transferred to a new special revolving fund for public shade trees, which must also be approved by town meeting.

The board voted to send the draft bylaw on to town counsel, but delayed a decision to put it on the spring town meeting warrant. The tree committee will hold a public hearing on the bylaw on Tuesday, April 6 at 6:30 via Zoom.

Ramsey then announced that the town had received a grant of \$10,642 for a “green infrastructure project,” which turned out to be a large rain garden behind town hall next to the bike trail. Ramsey said the rain garden, designed by local landscape architect Peter Wackernagel, will reduce the size of the parking lot behind town hall, but leave plenty of space for parking.

Wackernagel, who will be working with “youth from the Brick House” to construct the garden, showed a detailed map of the proposal. Some of the garden will be placed behind the so-called “Butler building,” currently used for storage by the public works department but soon to be removed. The board voted to accept the grant.

Ramsey and assistant town planner Suzanne LoManto presented a proposal to construct a walking trail extension at the end of Newton Street in Millers Falls. The 500-foot extension, which will be laid out to the southwest of a recently installed path along the Millers River, will be financed and constructed with the assistance of the Millers Falls Community Improvement Association.

LoManto said the path would be constructed of “geosynthetic material... that locks two different gravel sizes together in a membrane.” She called the material “eco-friendly and cheap.” The board approved the request for the use of town property for the trail.

LoManto also discussed plans for use of an annual \$7,500 grant to the Turners Falls Cultural District. The money will be used for planning spring and summer events, improvements to the RiverCulture website, and a signage incentive program for downtown businesses.

Rice Retirement

The selectboard accepted the resignation of building inspector Chris Rice. The meeting agenda said the resignation would be effective May 27, but Rice told the board that he

was willing to delay the retirement date in order to help a new inspector with the transition.

“I will stay on until they get someone,” he told the *Reporter*. “I will do anything they like.”

Rice, who has been the building inspector for three years, told the *Reporter* that he had been planning to retire for some time. He said his wife was retiring from the University of Massachusetts. “I still want to work part time, but not necessarily in the winter,” he explained. “I’m sad to go, but also ready to move on.”

Public Health

The board heard the weekly report from public health director Daniel Wasiuk on the local COVID-19 numbers, the progress of vaccinations, and new state pandemic guidance. Wasiuk said the two-week count of new cases in Montague had increased from 9 to 14, potentially moving the town into the state’s “green” or “yellow” status.

Wasiuk said vaccinations for home-bound individuals were moving forward through a statewide program operated by a group called the Commonwealth Care Alliance, and that the health department was taking names of home-bound individuals who qualify for this program, and may be administering vaccines.

Michael Nelson, who serves on both the board of health and selectboard, announced that the health director was recommending that the town nurse’s hours be increased to ten hours per week in the FY’22 budget.

Ellis said this would be a significant expansion of the position from four hours per week, but would not cover the nurse’s COVID-related activities. These are being covered by the federal CARES act and funds from the federal emergency management program..

The board did not take a vote on the issue, which will be discussed at a joint meeting with the finance committee.

Senior Center

Robert Potter, director of the Council on Aging (COA), who could not attend Monday’s meeting, requested that the board approve a partial reopening of the Gill Montague Senior Center on Third Street. The reopening may be contingent on the town’s most recent COVID metrics, which could move Montague into the state-designated “green” or “yellow” zones leading to more restrictive reopening policies.

Ellis reviewed a whole range of activities at the COA. Potter re-

quested that the center be allowed to host a chair yoga class, a knitting and craft group, a card group, and an outdoor knitting group.

Ellis said these programs were dependent on the town remaining in the state’s “gray” or “green” status. Both boards voted to endorse the “scope of services” recommended by Potter.

The board voted to award the contract for the Gill Montague Senior Center roof replacement project to LaRoche Construction Inc. The amount of the award was reduced to \$21,050 in the final motion due to a “convoluted” – in Ellis’ words – mistake in the original bid.

Other Business

The selectboard approved a request from the Eversource electric company to place a new telephone pole on the corner of Avenue A and Second Street to support a junction of two separate utility wiring systems.

The board quickly approved a host community agreement with the cannabis company Hydro Flower LLC, which is planning to open a cultivation and manufacturing facility in the old Southworth paper mill on Canal Street. Ellis said the agreement is virtually identical to one recently approved for a cannabis cultivation and manufacturing business in the industrial park named Flower Power Growers.

Ellis reviewed some “relatively small projects” that would be financed by federal CARES Act money, and gave a brief update on the progress of the state project to repair the General Pierce Bridge, which links Montague and Greenfield. He said the state had not made a final decision on the request of Northern Construction Service, LLC, the project manager, to close the bridge to pedestrian traffic and paint its upper portion.

Ellis said the work on the General Pierce should begin near the end of April, and that the structure should still be on target for completion by at least the fall of 2023, perhaps earlier.

At the end of the meeting, Turners Falls Airport manager Brian Camden announced that the airport had just reached a \$1.43 million purchase and sale agreement with the firm Pioneer Aviation. He said the closing date on the property would be April 15, and work on upgrading the newly acquired fueling system would begin immediately thereafter.

The next selectboard meeting will be held on April 5.



**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.

Login Link: <https://zoom.us/j/96535566651>
Meeting ID: 965 3556 6651
Passcode: 718504

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**PUBLIC MEETING NOTICE
MONTAGUE CONSERVATION COMMISSION**

In accordance with the Mass. Wetlands Protection Act, M.G.L. Ch. 131, Sec. 40, the Montague Conservation Commission will hold a remote public meeting to review the following Request for Determination of Applicability at **6:30 p.m. on Thursday April 8, 2021**: RDA #2021-02 filed by the Turners Falls Water Department to determine whether the removal of trees threatening the Lake Pleasant Bridge of Names is subject to the Wetlands or Riverfront Protection Acts. The property is located off Owasso Ave and is identified as Assessor’s Map 37 Lot 142.

Members of the public are encouraged to participate by using the following information:

Log in: <https://zoom.us/j/97647861388> • Passcode: 328393
Call in (audio only): 1 646 558 8656 • Meeting ID: 976 4786 1388

Mark Fairbrother, *Chair*

**PUBLIC MEETING NOTICE
MONTAGUE CONSERVATION COMMISSION**

In accordance with the Mass. Wetlands Protection Act, M.G.L. Ch. 131, Sec. 40, the Montague Conservation Commission will hold a remote public meeting to review the following Request for Determination of Applicability at **6:45 p.m. on Thursday April 8, 2021**: RDA #2021-03 filed by the Montague Selectboard to determine whether intersection improvements and the addition of new bridge and sidewalks associated with the Canal District Gateway Improvement Project is subject to the Wetlands or Riverfront Protection Acts. The work will occur at the intersection of 5th and Canal Street and over the Turners Falls Power Canal.

Members of the public are encouraged to participate by using the following information:

Log in: <https://zoom.us/j/97647861388> • Passcode: 328393
Call in (audio only): 1 646 558 8656 • Meeting ID: 976 4786 1388

Mark Fairbrother, *Chair*

CHIEF from page A1

Zellman has applied to an organization called Western Mass Emergency Medical Services, Inc. to award those involved in the rescue a “Pre-Hospital Save” citation. Recipients could include firefighters Mason, Currie, and Cogswell, Cathy Zellman, and Shelburne Control dispatchers Doug Patterson and Louise Kelley.

Mason gave the *Reporter* some background on the steps emergency responders often use to revive patients in Zellman’s condition, including CPR and “suction,” which both involve mechanical devices but run the risk of moving objects further into the air passage. He also said “back blows” are not always used, but were attempted in Zellman’s case “due to the position he was in.”

Mason stressed that the response to Zellman was no different from that involving any other resident in a similar situation. “It’s the procedure we follow all the time,” he told the *Reporter*.

Zellman, who is retiring as fire chief this year, agreed. “We do it every day, but sometimes it hits close to home,” he said. “I wouldn’t be here today if not for my wife and the group.”

He also noted that his granddaughter usually stays outside later, but had come in early due to the cold. “The stars lined up that day,” he said.



Basement Discovery Halts Remediation

By BRONA SILTZER

TURNERS FALLS – The ongoing environmental remediation project at the Railroad Salvage Building on Power Street, under the management of the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), was temporarily halted earlier this week after contractors discovered a sub-basement chamber not indicated on building plans.

According to two sources familiar with the project who spoke on condition of anonymity, the underground room, accessible by ladder under a recently sealed panel on a basement floor, contained “at least several” sets of remains that were removed for further analysis.

EPA spokesperson April Inocente confirmed that the project to remove asbestos-containing material from the site under the agency’s Emergency Response and Removal Program was put on temporary hold on Tuesday at the request of the state historic preservation office.

Attempts to reach the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) and state Attorney General’s office for comment received no response as of press time.

Though locals remember the building as the Railroad Salvage discount store or the Rockdale Store before it, the mill was built in the late nineteenth century and operated for years as the Turners Falls Cotton Mill.

Joseph Griswold, a Colrain-based cotton mill owner, purchased the lot in 1873, opened the mill in 1879, and died unexpectedly in 1883 at the age of 77.

Though the *Reporter* has received no confirmation that the remains on the site were human, the discovery may be linked to a string of disappearances among young mill workers between 1875 and 1882, officially attributed to drowning in the nearby Connecticut River.

Town administrator Steve Ellis said he had heard the contractors discovered a number of limbs, each preserved in cotton wrapping and arranged around the chamber’s circular dais. “The Town looks forward to the continuation of hazardous materials removal on Power Street,” he said. “This will provide an important opportunity for economic development in the Canal District. We do, however, understand the importance of pausing the asbestos remediation while MHC pulls our legs.”

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VACCINE from page A1

Comerford called the vaccine “a ray of hope and a way forward.” She said that she would be taking the vaccine not only to protect herself from COVID-19, but also to protect others in her community. The whole panel expressed the importance of “community immunity,” previously referred to as “herd immunity,” which is important to protect those unable to receive the vaccine, often due to a medical complication.

Dr. Jennifer Schimmel of Baystate Health echoed Comerford’s sentiment. “It helps you as an individual, but has a great effect beyond ourselves,” she said. “The overarching hope is that, as more people get vaccinated, we can get back to our normal life.”

Schimmel explained what a vaccine was and how vaccines have worked historically. She said that while she had heard many people were concerned that the COVID-19 vaccine had been produced too quickly to be safe, she did not share their concerns. She noted that the vaccine was produced so quickly because scientists were able to build on research and treatments explored when looking at other coronaviruses, such as SARS and MERS, which have been around for much longer.

“This outbreak has just been on such a large scale that there was a lot of support,” she said. “There was government funding, and no shortage of volunteers for clinical trials.” She also explained that manufacturing preparation for the vaccine was done at the same time as the clinical

trials, which expedited the timeline for its development and distribution.

Schimmel outlined the three different vaccines currently approved for COVID-19 treatment produced by Pfizer, Moderna, and Johnson & Johnson. “The important point to take away is that they have all been proven to be safe and effective,” she said. All the vaccines have already gone through three phases of testing, all three had over 30,000 participants in their Phase 3 studies, and all three were given an Emergency Use Authorization from the Food and Drug Administration and are undergoing continual safety monitoring.

Stephen Segatore, assistant chief medical officer at the Community Health Center of Franklin County, said that false campaigns of widespread misinformation are a challenge healthcare providers are facing in promoting the vaccine. “The vaccines are not designed to implant microchips,” he explained.

In an attempt to “mythbust” some of the misinformation, Segatore took time to answer questions from the community. When asked if the vaccine would alter an individual’s DNA Segatore stated, “No. COVID vaccines do not change or interact with your DNA in any way.”

Segatore was also asked whether being vaccinated would cause an individual to test positive for COVID-19, as many employers are now requiring testing. “None of the authorized and recommended COVID-19 vaccines contain the live virus that causes COVID-19,” he replied. “This means that the



The forum was hosted by FRCOG and held, like so many meetings, via Zoom.

vaccine cannot make you sick with COVID.”

Segatore went on to respond to questions around the vaccine’s impacts on fertility. “There is no data, or evidence, that the vaccine causes infertility in women or men,” he said.

Schimmel chimed in that those rumors had been tied to a letter from an anti-vaxxer group in Europe, and the claims have been largely debunked. Segatore said that any person interested in being vaccinated while pregnant, planning to become pregnant, or breast feeding should discuss the idea with their doctor.

Segatore also highlighted that vaccination will not impact one’s immigration status. No matter your immigration status you can get a vaccine, even if you do not have a driver’s license or Social Security number. Vaccination status will also not be used as an eligibility factor

for receiving state or federal benefits for housing or food.

Gina Campbell, vice president of clinical operations at Valley Medical Group, said that it usually takes a few weeks after a vaccine for the body to build immunity. “Most side effects we are hearing about are after the second vaccine dose, and are similar to getting a flu shot,” she said.

Campbell added that even after being vaccinated, individuals should continue to monitor CDC guidelines, wear a mask, and avoid close contact with others. “We are not sure how long it lasts yet,” she said. “Experts are continuing to learn more about the protections that the COVID-19 vaccine can provide.”

Schimmel added that one unanswered question is whether people who are vaccinated can still transmit an asymptomatic infection. She noted that research looked promising: “It may not be zero risk, but it

looks less likely.”

Phoebe Walker, director of community services at FRCOG, noted that while vaccination sites do not provide options for the different types of vaccines, the state website will tell you what vaccine you are signing up for. She noted that the website with the most openings is vaxfinder.mass.gov. Walker said that “it’s certainly been a lumpy rollout,” but that the state was slow in its rollout to make sure that the initial supply of vaccines reached those most at risk of dying.

For those without access to the internet, older individuals, and individuals with disabilities, LifePath can help register and transport individuals to their appointments, as well as help them to set up an in-home vaccine. LifePath community services director Lynne Feldman reported that the agency saw high demands for these services. “So far, we have helped 250 people register for vaccines, and provided transportation for 30 individuals,” she said.

Feldman also warned that it was important that individuals only share their information with trusted organizations: “At no point will anyone ask you for a banking or credit card number to sign up for a vaccine.”

FRCOG will host a similar forum later in April with a focus on the questions and concerns of community members who are Black, Indigenous, and People of Color, co-hosted by the Communities That Care Coalition’s Racial Justice Working Group.



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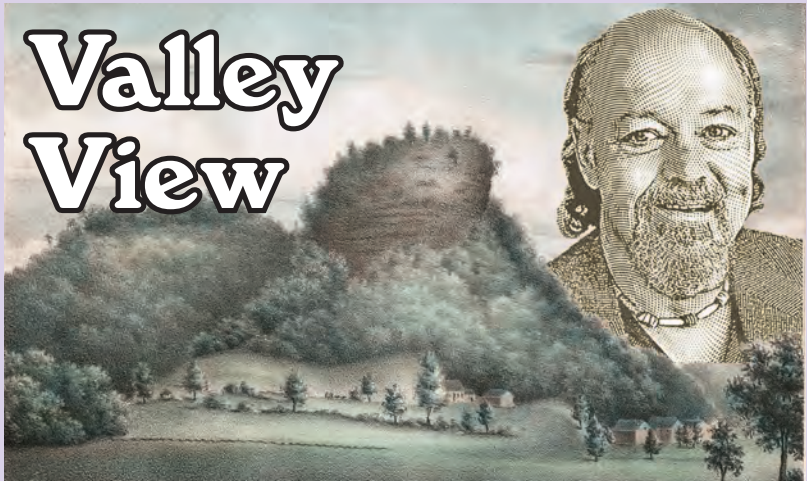


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OF THE MONTAGUE REPORTER

APRIL 1, 2021

Above: Crocuses returning, after all.



Valley View

By GARY SANDERSON

GREENFIELD – Although I’ve been a Greenfield taxpayer for nearly a quarter century, I will always consider South Deerfield my hometown. It’s where I learned to read and write, bike and skate, hunt and fish, explore swamps and ridges, pick night-crawlers, build forts and play ball. It’s also where my kids grew up through elementary school, and where a good many of my ancestors lay buried. So, yes, I can go back home. Mentally, I’m there.

The impetus for my most recent Deerfield research is the town’s looming 350th birthday. Scheduled for 2023, it has refocused my attention on the mercantile and industrial South Deerfield village and its surrounding neighborhoods known, east to west, as Pine Nook, Sugarloaf, Mill River, Sawmill Plain, Mill Village and Turnip Yard, all of them anchored around a railroad depot that arose in 1846, redefining South Deerfield as the mother town’s commercial hub.

No, I wasn’t there for the railroad’s arrival, which brought the big cities and seaports closer and accelerated incoming and outgoing trade. But I sure do remember the old railroad station; it stood off Elm Street on the way out of town. Traveling west, before the railroad crossing, the small building stood on the right, situated between the tracks and Railroad Street, across from the lumberyard. Whether from personal memory or what I have seen in photos, it’s hard to say, but I was there.

The exterior image in memory has a deep roof overhang facing the tracks, under it a bench or two for passengers. Inside, I recall dusty floorboards, more benches, convenient trackside post-office boxes and a wooden counter framing an open service window with a rounded crown.

My mother used to walk us there on nice days to watch the bustling railroad activity, freights picking up and dropping off cargo cars at the fertilizer industries and passenger trains stopping for exchanges. She even took us on a train ride or two for fun. I think before I was out of grammar school, the station was closed; by the Seventies, a dismantled memory.

Old “Nip” Peabody was the sta-

tion attendant I remember. Though I don’t remember his first name, it was probably Carlton, same as his son, mailman “Bud,” and grandson, basketball coach “Gus.” Anyone in South Deerfield who mattered back then had a nickname.

My fondest memory of Mr. Peabody places him seated in a lawn chair at the west end of wooden, first-baseline bleachers during Sunday afternoon American Legion Baseball games that drew big crowds to the high-school ball yard. Some of the players I recall were Jimmy Duda, Billy Burns, Skip Gerry, and Peachy Traceski. Mr. Peabody wore a small, tidy mustache under the bill of his Navy-blue Thomas Ashley Post 229 American Legion cap, and he’d give us Buffalo nickels for every foul tip we retrieved from the dense Jewett pinewoods behind the backstop. A childhood place for fort building, bushwhacking and many a partridge flush, we kids knew every abandoned bird’s nest in those young white pines.

We’d lean against the chain-link backstop to watch the ball games and race back into the woods for every foul tip. After the games, having acquired pocketfuls of nickels, we’d race on our bikes to Professional Pharmacy, Bill Rotkiewicz’s first downtown drug store in the Bloody Brook Block. It stood west of the common on the corner of North Main and Elm, between the Elm Street bar and the North Main market. There, we’d spend our earnings on Topps Baseball Cards – a nickel for a pack of five, with a wide stick of sugar-dusted bubble gum inside – and maybe even a five-cent ice cream cone. Ah, for the days of penny candy and nickel-a-scoop ice cream parlors.

Too bad my childhood baseball-card collections disappeared. They’d be valuable today. I used to store them securely in shoe and cigar boxes. The last I saw of them they were tucked away in an old Empire chest of drawers in the garage loft. When I sold that house, they had vanished. Someone must have thrown them out as clutter, eliminating any chance of an adult jackpot.

It may have been substantial. The sale of a 1950s collection by my softball teammate from see **VALLEY VIEW** page B3

BOOK REVIEW

Patti Smith, ed., *More Than Friends: Shaped by Flower Power: Women’s Stories from Brotherhood of the Spirit* (Butler, 2021)

By LEE WICKS

MONTAGUE CENTER – In *More Than Friends: Shaped by Flower Power*, fifteen women who joined the Brotherhood of the Spirit in the 1970s have assembled a collection of essays, commune history, then-and-now photographs, and whimsical illustrations to tell their stories. Love, respect, and their shared experiences at the commune bind these women together. The resulting book offers a women’s perspective on this intentional community (later known as the Renaissance Community) adding a voice that’s often missing in the retelling.

More Than Friends calls up powerful memories of the yearning that sent so many young people to reject their parents’ values and seek alternative ways to live. The assassinations of JFK, Bobby Kennedy, and Martin Luther King, the war in Vietnam, and a suffocating, materialistic, rule-bound culture led the children of middle-class Americans to revolt and search for meaning by living and loving in communes.

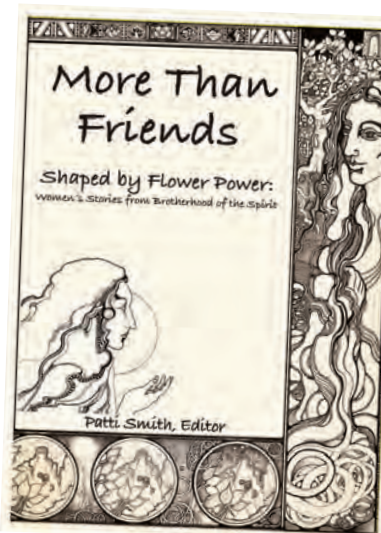
Unhappy with their own families, commune members formed new families of like-minded people and lived by their own rules, or the rules set out by the

commune’s leader. At Brotherhood of the Spirit, this was Michael Metelica.

At one point, Brotherhood of the Spirit was the largest commune in the Northeast, but it began at a humble tree house in Leyden, Massachusetts where Metelica lived and worked for free on local farms, bartering his labor for food. He attracted others to his vision of a simple spiritual life, and followers appeared. News spread, the numbers grew, and Brotherhood of the Spirit changed locations and revised its mission in response to new needs, sometimes financial.

The essays in *More Than Friends* describe these changes as commune members moved from a rambling house in Warwick, to Northfield, to Turners Falls, where it became an entrepreneurial enterprise, and then to Gill, where a sustainable village had been planned before the Brotherhood collapsed. This history is available online and in the book, and it’s enlightening to read about how the community reinvented itself, but the primary focus of *More Than Friends* is the women, how they adapted, the unbreakable bonds they developed, and what happened after they left the commune.

see **REVIEW** page B4



ArtBeat by Trish Crapo

Nothing Stable Under the Sun

NORTHAMPTON – “A society must assume that it is stable, but the artist must know, and he must let us know, that there is nothing stable under the sun.”

This quote from novelist, playwright, poet and essayist James Baldwin’s 1962 essay, “The Creative Process,” establishes the artist as what Baldwin called “the incorrigible disturber of the peace,” and serves as inspiration for a new exhibit opening April 1 at the Oxbow Gallery in Northampton. The exhibit features the work of eight Black artists: Andrew “Moon” Bain, Bobby Brown, Mars Champagne, John Hughes, Simone Johnson, Gloria Matlock, Beatrice Mitchell, and Emily Roman.

The show runs through April 25, with a reception on Saturday, April 10, from 3 to 6 p.m. Because of COVID-19, exhibit administrator Marjorie Morgan said the reception will be “view inside/chat outside.” Gallery entrants will be limited, and there will be no food or drink. Masks and social distancing will be required.

Morgan, who lives in Colrain and was most recently featured

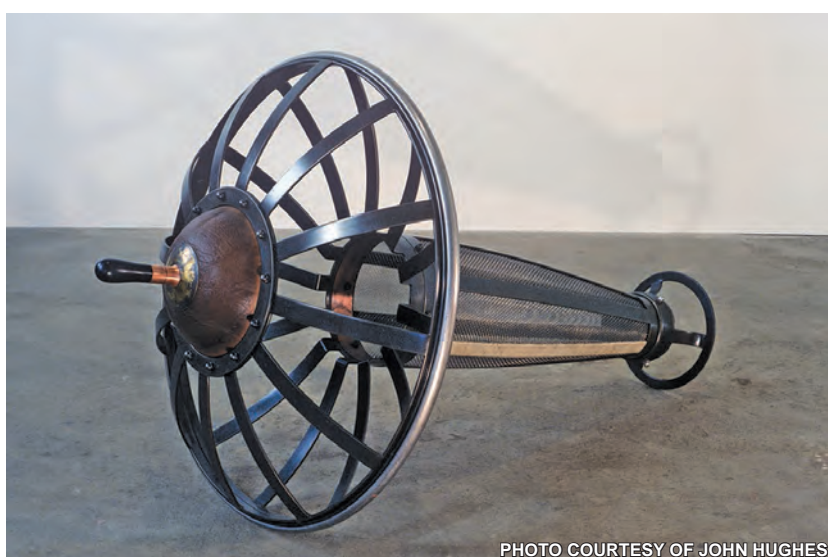


PHOTO COURTESY OF JOHN HUGHES

John Hughes wants his sculptures, which arise from the world of tools and toolmaking, to encourage viewers to ask questions of themselves and the world.

in this paper for her work making homemade inks, said she had become frustrated by what she saw as an inadequate response to the massive Black Lives Matter protests this summer. Morgan, who is white, decided to organize the exhibit during what would have been her solo slot at the collective gallery. She’s been a member of Oxbow for six years, she said, “and in that time, we’ve only had two members who were

not white. And only one presently. So, if we only show member work, we never change that dynamic.”

“It’s time to lean into change,” she urged.

And while Morgan asked that the focus of this column not be on her, I chose to say this much because it struck me that each of us might be able to find a gesture within our own lives that can begin to shift the

see **ARTBEAT** page B5

Pet of the Week



CARMODY COLLAGE

“LOVEBE”

Meet Lovebe, a young and playful guy whose favorite things to do are chasing after toys and curling up in your lap for some cuddles. He can be a bit shy at first, but it doesn't take him long to warm up! His foster says that he's "a morning person."

He's been crate trained and is 90% house trained – he may have the occasional accident while he

adjusts to a new schedule.

The adoption fee for Lovebe is \$550. Interested in adopting? 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.

THEATER REVIEW

Silverthorne Theater, *The Waiting Room*

By ELLEN BLANCHETTE

GREENFIELD – The Silverthorne Theater Company invites you to join them in the Bardo, where others are waiting to begin their next lives. When you enter, you will find that nothing in your life has changed. Often, as people arrive, they are confused because they feel like they are still at home, cozy in their private space, a bedroom, work space, living room. Just like the audience members who feel they are still at home in the comfort of their own favorite place, those in the Bardo take a little convincing that things have indeed changed for them.

The Waiting Room, written and directed by playwright Steve Wangh and produced by Lucinda Kidder and the Silverthorne Theater Company, has created a fascinating environment that captures much of this moment in time, while offering a completely different view of reality. In this written-for-Zoom play, we find ourselves immersed in an imaginative creation of a clever mind, contemplating the meaning of life and the choices we make, how we live our lives and face the undeniable reality of death.

In a world surrounded by death, this play about life and death manages to provide humor and empathy in a story with strong characters who speak of love, loss, and regret. It is an unusually thought-provoking theater experience. A wide range of characters appear, some with many lives behind them, others new to the Bardo.

Not a lot of theater has been created using Zoom in quite this way. We mostly see things that have been videotaped and then broadcast on Zoom. This play utilizes Zoom as the format for the production, and so is an integral part of the play. Just as in a Zoom meeting, each actor lives in a small frame, connecting with the other actors in their frames. Audience members also can be seen in small frames at the edges as the play proceeds.

A play entirely on Zoom does not require a theater, so we join them from where we are. Actors also remain where they are while still working together to create a completely cohesive theater production. Playwright Wangh has written a full-length play with powerful ideas and concepts worth spending time contemplating. In fact, the Stationmaster will from time to time invite audience members to join together in break-out rooms for brief discussions.

In an interview with *The Montague Reporter*, playwright and director Steve Wangh talked about the origins of this play. When asked what gave him the idea for the play, he said, "I've done a lot of time thinking about death, and a lot of thinking about Zoom."

He explained that some of that was about how people connect with each other on Zoom, and how it can bring a lot of people together. Wangh also spoke about how the form of a play relates to the content, and how the form is important to the impact of the production. In reflecting on this past year, he said both death and Zoom have been ever present in our lives, and so it was that he decided to bring these



Chaunesti Webb, playing Rosa, seen here giving heartfelt advice about love during a Zoom production of *The Waiting Room*.

two together.

In considering how serious the issues of life and death and reality are in this play, he said these are things that have long been of interest to him. "For me," he said, "theater needs to be entertaining and fun, even when it is about serious things. Finding the balance is the challenge."

Cast and Crew

Silverthorne prefers to hire local actors, and so the cast of *The Waiting Room* includes many professional working actors from our region.

Mark Dean, who has many impressive theater credits, took on the challenging role of Abbie Hoffman. The character, so well crafted by Wangh, is given depth with Dean's performance. Much of the humor in the play is brought forward in Abbie's refusal to leave the Bardo, and his natural cynicism that covers for great passion about and sorrow over the state of the world.

Jennifer Campbell of Holyoke is a fine young actor, playing the somewhat frightened Serenity with sensitivity and heart. She connects with Abbie in a surprising way and softens his cynical nature.

Barbara Cortez-Greig, who moved to Western Mass after living with her US diplomat husband in many parts of the world, plays Omara, a wise woman who offers advice on life and love to others in the Bardo as they struggle with their new reality.

Many discussions of life and death grow out of the philosophical debates between Abbie and Randall, played so well by Michael Garcia. Garcia is a Springfield-based singer, actor, husband, and father of two. Randall is smart, a math wiz who struggles with insecurity, but also a deeply caring individual.

Kevin Tracy plays Winston, who comes across as a slightly eccentric but opinionated macho guy with a strong personality. Tracy is one of the founding members of Ghost Light Theater and has performed, produced, built, and lit many area theater companies.

Chaunesti Webb plays Rosa, a warm, sensual woman who suggests she has lived many lives. Her performance is captivating, as she encourages all her companions in the Bardo to remember that love is the most important thing even as it

is also the cause of much pain.

Playwright, director, and author Steve Wangh currently lives in Brattleboro, Vermont. He is the author of two books on acting and fifteen plays. He has taught acting for forty years at several colleges, including Emerson College and New York University, and has directed plays in Boston, New York, and Graz, Austria. He recently taught acting workshops in Hong Kong, Taiwan, Myanmar, Thailand, and at the Freedom Theatre in Jenin, Palestine.

Associate director Chris Rohmann has worked with Silverthorne as director of several productions. He writes the "Stage-struck" column for the *Valley Advocate*.

Kyle Boatwright is a singer/songwriter, actor, musician, and writer based in the Pioneer Valley. She contributed the music for the production.

Technical director John Iverson has outdone himself with making everything work on Zoom as planned. Even as they approached opening day, the kinks were being worked out in this most complicated production.

Zoom technician Maggie Donovan is from Pennsylvania, but is currently living in Western Mass. Pausing her usual life as student at Mount Holyoke, she's been part of several theatrical productions. She recently worked as technical moderator and organizer with Silverthorne Theater for Survivors' Voices.

Ethelyn Friend serves as the Stationmaster, holding a central part in the show, introducing and inviting out visitors to the Bardo. She has worked with Wangh on several theatrical projects in many places around the country and abroad.

Performances of The Waiting Room continue this coming weekend on Friday, April 2 and Saturday, April 3 at 7:30 p.m. and Sunday at 3 p.m. Tickets can be purchased online at silverthorne-theater.org. All tickets are at the general admission price of \$15.

The performance is on Zoom and requires certain computer technology, which is explained on the website. There will also be a talk-back with playwright/director Steve Wangh on April 6 at 7:30 p.m. Register for this on the theater's website.

Senior Center Activities

APRIL 5 THROUGH 9

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-bettters@erving-ma.gov.

LEVERETT

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

WENDELL

Wendell Senior 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, 2020; hours and accommodations are still changing.

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

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

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

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

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

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PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

Take a Walk with Eggtooth

GREENFIELD – Eggtooth Productions and John Bechtold have created a series of “Audio-Curated Promenades” in specific locations in Greenfield and Amherst. The walks offer poetry, theater, and music to listeners on paths in Highland Park in Greenfield and Larch Hill in Amherst.

Designed as a response to making theater in the COVID-19 era, all walks are designed for solo walkers in open, outdoor spaces. Group walks are welcome, but visitors should always stay mindful of COVID safety and gathering restrictions.

Eggtooth has partnered with a developer to make an app for these promenades. The Eggtooth app is free and currently available for both iOS and Android. Once participants download the app, they will find a collection of “walks” that can only be activated when visiting one of these two carefully-selected outdoor locations. Once there, audience members put on their headphones, start the app, and step into the world of the show.

While each Promenade works as a stand-alone piece, all share the themes of walking through beau-

tiful, wooded spaces and letting imagination weave a relationship between the audio and the inspiring environment.

John Bechtold had this to say about his work, “Like many people, when COVID closed everything down last spring, I found myself going for frequent walks around the Valley. It didn’t take long for the landscape to inspire a way to bring an audience into a theatrical world while their body was in motion and outdoors.”

Linda McNerney of Eggtooth Productions says, “It’s been a long, cold, lonely winter in a lot of ways and we wanted to give a gift of theatrical art safely that could offer uplift, joy, and connection with the outside world and this is what our resident genius, John, came up with. Now that spring is finally here, what better way to forest bathe than with a curated sound tapestry to soothe and engage us along the way.”

Eggtooth will also use its app to offer a new audio walk celebrating Bee Fest in downtown Greenfield on May 22.

Visit the Promenades website at bit.ly/eggtoothpromenades.

REVIEW from page B1

I am of their generation and recognized the curiosity that drew these women to the Brotherhood, but I never followed through, and in this book I learned that I never had what it takes. The chapter about sharing a two-hole outhouse with a stranger after an afternoon of apple picking had loosened everyone’s bowels stopped me cold. I wouldn’t have lasted long there.

Also, I do not have the spiritual underpinnings to endure some of the hardships in a quest for enlightenment. It is clear in every essay that these women and the other members of the commune were and are on a spiritual journey that combined meditation, Buddhism, and reincarnation. Joining the Brotherhood was not about sex, drugs, and rock and roll. In fact, a sign at the end of the driveway prohibited the use of alcohol, cigarettes and drugs. Living on the commune, which was open to all who wanted to join, was an effort to change the world and make it better by living a life of intentional simplicity, sharing, and love.

Members wrote songs and sang as they worked, and they worked hard. The logging crew cut the trees and split the wood for the fires that heated the drafty old houses. People shared rooms and sometimes beds as one person ending a night shift crawled into the warm bed of someone ready for morning work.

When the commune began to run out of funds, members were ordered, by Metelica, to find jobs.

The Belchertown State School hired a number of commune members, and in some of these essays, the women write about the compassion they gained there, and the careers in human services and education that began while they helped care for underserved people living in terrible conditions.

The men and women who went to work outside the community turned their salaries over to Metelica, who later changed his name to Michael Rapunzel. He controlled everything, made all the important decisions, abused the community rules, and in 1988 had to be banished with a ten-thousand-dollar settlement. This was ironic since all the other commune members, who donated everything they had when they joined, left with little more than the clothes on their backs. Not Michael, who ended up with a Mercedes, a plane, and an expensive cocaine habit. He died in upstate New York in February 2003.

Though the community he formed was called Brotherhood of the Spirit, *More Than Friends* makes an argument that sisterhood held the spirit of the community intact. Women worked just as hard as the men while bearing children whom they nurtured and educated.

The book presents each woman’s individual story of how she came to the Brotherhood, why she left, and what happened afterwards. To keep the book to a reasonable size, the essays are not long, and I found myself unsatisfied at times. Statements

such as, “By then we had our own children and it was time to leave,” left me wondering, *why?* I thought the whole point of the commune was to become a family and raise children together.

I wanted to know what kinds of conflicts arose, other than Metelica’s behavior, that made these families leave, and I wanted to know more about these transitions. Some moved into homes with other former commune members, some lived with their parents while they reestablished themselves. But it’s not easy to step back into the world with a couple of kids, return to school, and find a job and housing, and the essays didn’t give this reader enough information about such financial and emotional struggles.

More than Friends does what it set out to do. It demonstrates the power of shared experience and the resilience of women. All of them found rewarding careers and carried their memories and their spirituality into the rest of their lives. Anyone who is curious about that time or wants to remember a younger version of themselves should read it, maybe with Simon and Garfunkel’s “Time it Was” or the music from the rock musical HAIR playing in the background.

The book can be purchased online at www.butlerbooks.com/more-than-friends.html.

You can learn more about the writers, their history, and the book at www.mtfriends.org.

SCENE REPORT

‘Gitmo At The Garden’

By MELISSA WLOSTOSKI

GREENFIELD – The new owner of the Garden Cinema in Greenfield seems to love having special events in connection with certain movies at the theater. One example was a WWI reenactment by the 104th Infantry Color Guard before a showing of the movie *1917*.

Now that has happened again with *The Mauritanian* being shown there. The event featured Stewart “Buz” Eisenberg, Esq., a Guantanamo detainee attorney. The man has represented clients at Guantanamo Bay.

But before the event, and before the movie even officially premiered on March 26, there was a message on the Garden’s website from Nancy Hollander, one of the lawyers who defended the Mauritanian himself, Mohamedou Ould Salahi, speaking about the movie. Hollander, who was played by Jodie Foster in the movie, mentioned that Salahi’s book *Guantanamo Diary* was published while he was still at Guantanamo. The question & answer event was called “Gitmo At The Garden.” I decided to see *The Mauritanian* in a theater and then attended the Q&A event.

Apparently, before doing the Q&A, Eisenberg decided to watch a showing of the movie. During that showing, there was a large number of people, instead of just me in there like when I saw it earlier in the day, which was March 27.

I learned through an introduction by the Garden’s owner that Eisenberg represented eight guys at Gitmo. Buz, as he talked, mentioned how things were very accurate in the movie. His exact words about the accuracy of things in the movie were “the sets were breathtakingly accurate. I got chills.”

He was very gracious when answering the questions from people in the audience. He talked thoroughly about how it was with these guys’ situations and what they went through. He also spoke about justice.

I asked if any of the evidence in their cases was similar to what they had on Salahi. His answer was “eight of my guys were innocent.”

“The last of my clients were released in 2017, and I think he was brought there in 2002.” That was his answer to me asking if some of his clients were there as long as Salahi was, which was 14 years and 2 months.

An answer to someone else’s question from him was to point out how zealous people are about 9/11. Quite a lot of people stayed in his seats after to ask this guy questions. The last question asked was, if what they did violated the Constitution, how were government officials protected from prosecution? That answer, I believe, was the “classification system,” which I assume meant because information was classified, they weren’t prosecuted.

People appeared to enjoy the Q&A very much. Buz certainly did, and I observed that he was happy the theater showed *The Mauritanian*.

I believe because of some of that it will be right to call the event a success. At the very least, it got some positive responses from people. The owner of the theater was able to set this up because he knows Eisenberg personally.

This special event was very fitting in connection with *The Mauritanian* playing at the Garden. It can be added to a list of good special events the theater has had. Hopefully, their lucky streak with that will continue. I would certainly like that.



The new book’s 15 co-authors. Back row, left to right: Elaine Turrentine, Ronnie Tropper Coates, Alaina Snipper, Carol “Chi Chi” Graham Carson, Betty Hottel, Joyce Yaeger-Rubenstein, Bernadette O’Brien, Donna Stackhouse, and Heidi Johnson. Front row: Lois Sellers, Linda Ladd, Sandy Jaquay-Wilson, Debbie Edson, editor Patti Smith, and Robin Paris.

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

Turners/Montague: Water Rate Increase

MONTAGUE – The Turners Falls Water Department Board of Commissioners has voted to revise the water rates for an increase of ten cents per thousand gallons. The new minimum charge will be \$32.

Rates outside of the Turners Falls Fire District will remain the same.

Water usage is billed semi-annually and based on a six month period, approximately April 1 through September 30 and October 1 through March 31.

The new billing period will start after the readings in April and will be reflected on the November 1, 2021 bill.

The new rates are as follows:

For These Gallons Used:	Within the Turners Falls Fire District:	Outside the Turners Falls Fire District:
0 to 12,000	\$32 minimum charge	\$75 minimum charge
13,000 to 200,000	\$2.60 per 1,000 gallons	\$4.90 per 1,000 gallons
201,000 to 400,000	\$2.80 per 1,000 gallons	\$5.10 per 1,000 gallons
401,000 to 600,000	\$3.00 per 1,000 gallons	\$5.30 per 1,000 gallons
601,000 to 800,000	\$3.20 per 1,000 gallons	\$5.50 per 1,000 gallons
801,000 to 1,000,000	\$3.40 per 1,000 gallons	\$5.70 per 1,000 gallons
1,001,000 and above	\$3.60 per 1,000 gallons	\$5.90 per 1,000 gallons

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ARTBEAT from page B1

dynamic of racism, even just a little. And many gestures over time might begin to add up.

I spoke with two of the artists, G.D. Matlock and John Hughes, over the weekend. Here's a little about them, and some of what they had to say about their work.

G.D. Matlock

Gloria Matlock, who signs her artwork G.D. Matlock, collaborated with Beatrice Mitchell, an elder from the community in Ravenna, Ohio in which Matlock grew up, to create a book entitled *Rote Learning*. Mitchell, 91, still lives in Ravenna; Matlock left when she was 18, and has lived in Greenfield since 2004.

Matlock's family moved to Cleveland during the Great Migration when, hoping to escape racism, and in search of jobs, Black people relocated from the rural South to cities in the North, Midwest, and West. In 1961, when she was five, Matlock's family moved to Ravenna and settled in an area called the Allotment, a neighborhood created for Black families on the marginal wetlands of a former dairy farm.

Even in the 1960s, conditions were primitive. "It was a lot of mud and woods," Matlock said. "It was flood-lands. We weren't expected to survive there."

The simple shacks had no electricity, so people burned coal or wood for heat. Matlock, who had been aware of Mitchell as an advocate for those living in the Allotment, got to know her much better after a fire in Matlock's home made it necessary for her to go and live temporarily with "Mrs. Mitchell," the name Matlock still uses out of respect for her elder.

The two developed a bond and remained in contact. Several years ago, Matlock began to make a documentary film about the Allotment, which she titled "Just Another Mile." During an interview for the film, Mitchell recited *Rote Learning*.

"I loved it so much," Matlock said.

She brought some of her artwork to Mitchell and said, "I want to make a book with you."

Matlock's bright drawings and Mitchell's seemingly simple words interact to bring life to the uprooted experience of the poem's narrator, who moves from the "warm red earth" of the South to "a cold Ohio winter / On a grey day in November."

The narrator misses the warmth and the community of her southern homeland. But she also can't forget the "deep dark woods/ And horsemen riding under hoods."

Throughout the poem, the childlike innocence of rhyme provides a counterpoint to the brutal acts of racism the child



IMAGE COURTESY OF G.D. MATLOCK

G.D. Matlock's colorful drawings interact with the words of Beatrice Mitchell's poem in their collaborative book, *Rote Learning*.

witnesses.

Matlock's drawings act not as mere illustrations but as further openings into the subject matter, providing a way, as she puts it, for the reader "to see through imagination."

Matlock teaches dance, singing, and drumming through Musica Franklin and volunteers with Racial Justice Rising. From her home she runs a program, "Twice as Smart," that teaches children about Black History. The program is open to any child ages 6 to 13, of all races and cultures, but Matlock's initial impulse was to help children who were struggling in school.

"I believe in being proactive rather than sitting back and watching people waste away," Matlock said, "especially educationally."

John Hughes

John Hughes of Brattleboro has two sculptures in the exhibit. His sculptures derive from the shapes and materials of

tools and instruments (which he also considers tools): metal, felt, paper, wood. Contemporary culture, and particularly our dependency on computers and cell phones, has separated us from the "quintessentially human experience" of being a toolmaker, he told me.

Most people buy what they need rather than making it, and in the process "become estranged or disconnected from, fundamentally, what it means to be human."

"There's something fundamentally grounding, safety-creating and comforting about having a physical relationship with the world," he explained.

Expanding on a comparison I'd made between writing on a typewriter versus on a computer, he said, "When you press the key on your typewriter, in a pretty basic way, your body has an understanding of levers, and pivot points, to make that key move a lever and whack a letter through the ink onto the paper. When you hit a key on your computer, there are so many metaphysical things going on. We don't have a clue, most of us, how that works."

Hughes said his sculptures all have multiple functions. "They have a function in the very strict tool sense, but they also have the function of inspiring the viewer to ask questions," he said. "Not questions of me - I've given the answers I want to give in the pieces. But questions of themselves or of the world."

Because he wants to encourage questioning, his work isn't usually titled.

"As a culture, we tend to privilege the written word over our own bodily experiences of the world," Hughes said. "I'm trying to subvert that trend. I don't think it's healthy. I'm a fan of the written word, don't get me wrong. But it's not the only way to know things. I'm trying to create a different kind of experience that invites a different kind of inquiry, a different kind of listening."

Listening is as important as seeing is to Hughes, who is also a musician and dancer. He teaches drumming, performs for concerts, weddings, and other events, and builds and sells jembes, traditional West African drums, in collaboration with artisans in Guinea. In addition to drums, he plays the kora, a West African stringed instrument similar to a lute. You can find out more about him and see photos of his work at johnhughesmusic.com.

At *Oxbow Gallery*, 275 Pleasant Street Northampton, Thursdays through Sundays from noon to 5 p.m. Reception on Saturday, April 10, 3 to 6 p.m.; rain date Sunday, April 11. Virtual exhibit at nothingstableunderheaven.weebly.com. For more information, see oxbowartgallery.com or call (413) 586-6300.



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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.

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 HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATOR

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Remembering Ariel Jones

Ariel gave her talents generously to enrich life in Turners Falls while she was here. She produced several photo series of local people and places, with a special focus on Williams' Garage, the Northfield Mountain pumped storage station, and portraits of local artists. She had a way of putting everyone at ease who posed for her, be they children, adults, or canines. I treasure the two sets of portraits she did ten years apart of my sons, as boys and then as young men. She was truly gifted!

Ariel initiated a monthly artists salon at her studio when it first opened in 2000. It was a light in the darkness of a deserted main drag on the one evening a month that the "art gang" would meet. Many friendships were spawned at those meetings.

Delving into doing dog portraits inspired Ariel to organize the Dog Days of August dog parade down Avenue A in 2002, complete with celebrity judges and an exhibit at her studio of dog art.

Ariel left, and then returned to the area several years after closing her studio to buy a house in Athol with her partner, Susan Elwyn. I was happy to collaborate with her once again and hosted two shows of her work at Nina's Nook. By that time, her interest had turned from portraits of people to Cape Cod and Florida landscapes, buildings, and other scenes.

Her method of painting into photographs created a striking hyper-realism. People often stood in front of one of her images at my gallery and asked, *Is it a photo, or is it a painting?* Later, Ariel switched to working with acrylic paint on canvas to make abstract water images inspired by her new hobby of fly fishing.

Ariel also came up with the idea for the first "A Wonderful Night in Turners Falls" holiday shopping event in 2011. Her enthusiasm for the town never went away – she had a genuine love for this place and for her friends here, as we did for her.



ROSSI PHOTO

Ariel Jones with work in her exhibit at Nina's Nook, taken by Nina Rossi, 2011.

Nina Rossi

There's so much to recall, we were friends from the near beginning. I bought Williams' Garage in 2001, and I think Ariel was in town very near to that time, but I don't remember exactly when.

Over time I got curious about the "poster" in her window, a large image of a woman's head in a fairly dated seeming graphic style that actually kind of gave me the creeps. I couldn't figure out what the storefront was about, was it the current tenant or something left over from the '70s?

I eventually met her but I'm not sure how, I probably saw her from an open door and said hello. We became friends rather quickly, two artists in a strange community we were trying to comprehend. In a way we were buoys to each other, supporting one another in our isolation.

We would talk and talk. We became very good friends. We were very much swept up into the local development efforts in those days. Going to selectboard meetings, giving our "artist's" two cents worth to the town planner, etc.

And then there was the Dog Parade, of course. I asked Ariel to be my best man when I married Kathy Service, on stage at the Really Big Show in Northampton.

Ariel photographed a lot of my work for me. Images I still use in my portfolio.

We had a close and sometimes tangled relationship, both headstrong individuals in our own ways. But she was a dear friend and it is hard to realize she is gone.

Tim DeChristopher

Her groundbreaking poster – The Doors of Turners Falls – still hanging prominently on my wall, has yet to achieve the notoriety of Old Deerfield's equivalent – but it will someday, I hope.

Her novice appreciation for the high art of fly fishing – of which she knew nothing – did not stand in her way of producing a cheerfully madcap column on the topic for the *Reporter*.

Her brilliant conception of the first Great Falls Dog Parade (was it a ruse to promote her languishing photo studio?) led the first RiverCulture director to propose an alternative Cat Parade – an event we are still yearning for as quarantine drags interminably on.

And her poignant portrait seated on a hard metal cot in an old jail cell in the basement of Town Hall (to promote plans for a new police station) graced the cover of one of the earliest color issues of the *Reporter*, and still serves as a metaphor for the imprisonment of consciousness in which we all have become immured.

I am so sorry for her passing, but grateful she has found release.

David Detmold

Patricia Pruitt and I helped Ariel move out of her studio. It was a decision she'd been contemplating for a while, but she finally knew that it made no sense for her to continue on. As I recall it, her mother was not well, and she had decided to go "home" for a while to take care of her.

It was a difficult time for her. She had tried so hard to make so much happen here, and she did, but the dollars didn't follow her dreams, her ambition, her talent, or her hard work.

Patricia and I helped her pack up a couple dozen boxes for storage at our house. In the middle of her large emptied front room was her iconic pink love seat. Ariel sat down for the last time on the couch, her bowed head cradled in her hands. "I guess I was just ahead of my time," she said.

"Real artists are always ahead of their time," said Patricia.

Ariel looked up and smiled. "Thank you," she said, "but it sure would have been nice if time had caught up with me a little faster." For some reason we all laughed, then hauled the boxes and the couch, which we had bought, into the station wagon.

Lisa Davol

Christopher Sawyer-Lauçanno

ARIEL JONES PHOTO



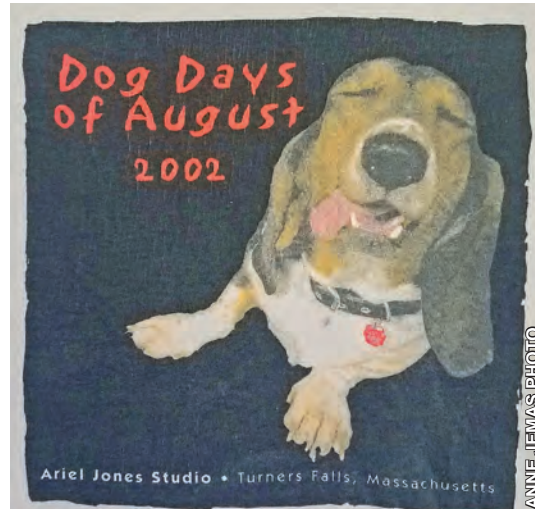
Part of a series of photos Jones took at the old Williams' Garage (now Nova Motorcycles).

When Sita and I first moved to Turners, what we found was a beautiful but very sleepy downtown. Ariel's storefront photography studio with the fabulous basset hound portrait in the window stood out like the first crocus in early spring.

Especially these days, I am being reminded of the importance of knowing history and acknowledging those who paved the way. Ariel was one of the early artists of that period to lay the groundwork for the kind of creativity and outside-of-the-box thinking for others coming here to build upon.

We acknowledge and celebrate her. As we say in the Greek tradition, "May Her Memory Be Eternal."

Anne Jemas



This t-shirt was designed by Ariel Jones for her "Dog Days of August" parade and art show in 2002.

ANNE JEMAS PHOTO

ARIEL JONES IMAGE



Ariel began making abstract, colorful acrylic paintings inspired by the rivers where she went fly fishing.

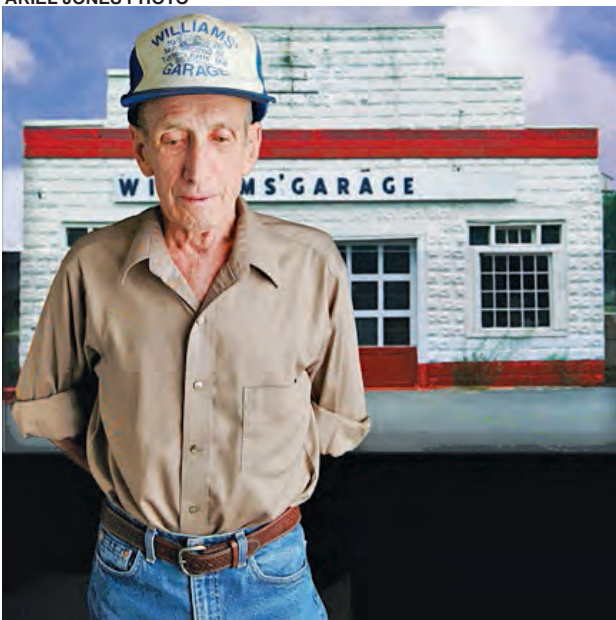
I think we arrived a little late on the scene but I remember thinking that Ariel Jones was the angel of the nascent art world in Turners Falls.

When I saw the "Doors of Turners" – I had to have a copy! With family that went to Deerfield Academy I knew about the Deerfield Doors and was thrilled to have a wonderful image of Turners Falls as well as a gentle jocular jab at a certain school and town. Every time I look at that image, I am struck by the vibrancy of the colors as well as the underlying stories of the town as well.

Turners Falls has lost quite a few great supporters and visionaries recently, and Ariel Jones is certainly in that outstanding group of people.

Pat Allen

ARIEL JONES PHOTO



A portrait of Harry Williams in front of his Second Street garage.

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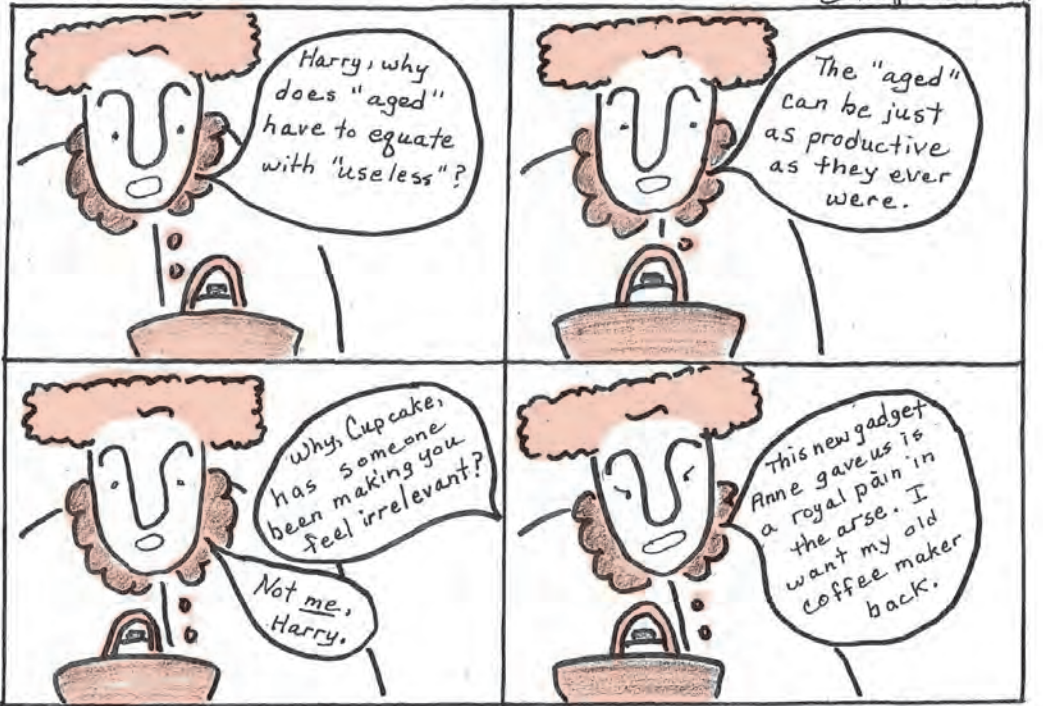
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NOTES FROM THE HEARTFELT CAFE

BY TROUBLE MANDESON

GREENFIELD – Whether it’s hard, soft, gooey, stinky, creamy, savory, salty, or sweet, no matter how you slice it, shred it, or grate it, there’s nothing like the flavor and texture of cheese to add pizzazz to meals. Lasagna without cheese is just a pile of ingredients with nothing to bind it together; grilled cheese without the cheese is just toast; and broccoli covered in cheese sauce ensures millions of kids will eat their veggies.

The origin of cheese – made to preserve perishable milk – is unknown, although it’s been in use for 8,000 to 10,000 years. Early humans used animal stomachs to store milk, discovering that naturally occurring rennet, an enzyme found in ruminant animals, caused the milk to solidify and last longer. The earliest evidence of cheesemaking has been found in Poland and Croatia, and pottery shards with holes in them that were unearthed in Switzerland are thought to be cheese strainers.

During the Holy Roman Empire, hundreds of varieties of cheese were produced and traded. While cheese was flourishing in Europe and the Middle East, Tibetans and Mongolians had their own long history of cheese, although it is not a regular staple of most Asian countries. The Americas were devoid of cheese until European immigrants arrived in the seventeenth century.

Most cheese was produced in New York and Ohio until Swiss immigrants brought their cheese-making skills to Wisconsin, which now has more licensed cheesemakers than any other state and produces over 25% of all domestic cheese in the US.

Until the nineteenth century,

when large-scale cheese production began, it was a local product made in small batches on farms. Since then small batch artisanal cheeses have had a resurgence and can now be found in suburban farmers markets and gourmet stores, a trend that began with several women artisan cheesemakers, most notably Mary Keehn of Humboldt Fog cheese and Cindy Major of Vermont Shepherd cheese.

The introduction of cheese served at the end of a meal was said to originate at the Café Voisin in Paris in 1870, where meals concluded with *fromage Gruyère*; in 1910 the Waldorf Astoria in New York City ended a luncheon with camembert and figs; and in 1916 the final course on yet another Parisian menu listed Roquefort, Port Salut, and Gruyère. Since then, cheese boards have evolved to include charcuterie (cold cooked meat), terrines (cooked meat in a loaf), and caviars (fish eggs).

During the opulence of the Roaring Twenties, the high fat and protein of cheese slowed the absorption of ethanol, allowing for more food to be eaten before intoxication. And in the Betty Crocker years, 1924 to 1953, markets were flooded with commercially produced, smartly packaged cheese options which, while often lacking in taste and quality, offered convenience for the modern housewife.

With so much cheese available for our consumption, specialty equipment has been invented to aid in the preservation, preparation, and presentation of cheese. Have you ever seen that funny curved knife with the row of holes down the blade? It was invented in the 1940s by engi-

neer Harold Joseph Fairchild, who designed it specifically to cut his favorite cheese, Velveeta, without it sticking to the knife. There’s also a knife for slicing hard and semi-hard cheeses. Finally, for storing cheese, wax or parchment paper works well, as do specialty cheese storage bags. It can also be stored under a glass dome to maintain freshness.

Did you know that cheese is a living thing that sweats, ages, and even breathes? When it’s wrapped in plastic it cannot take in oxygen and actually suffocates, resulting in that unpleasant ammonia smell, and even fostering potentially harmful bacteria. Cheese never really goes bad: mold can be scraped off, and unless it gives off that aforementioned ammonia smell, you’re good to go for your cheese omelet, mac ‘n cheese, or cheeseburger. My wife likes to say, “cheese doesn’t go bad, it just goes strong.”

Cooking with cheese offers an unending array of choices. Some recipes pair specific foods to specific cheeses, such as French Onion Soup made from melted yellow onions topped with Gruyère, a schmear of cream cheese on a bagel, crumbly feta or blue cheese added to a green salad, or a slice of fresh mozzarella garnished with tomato, basil, and a drizzle of olive oil. Other recipes might call for cheese, but the specifics can be left up to the cook.

Whenever I make cheese sauce for macaroni and cheese, I generally start with cheddar but end up adding in the rest of a block of gouda, a square of cream cheese, or a handful of feta, which changes this typically mild and creamy dish to something with a salty, tart bite. For vegetarians craving meat

CHRISTMAS CHEESE CHOWDERS

- 1/4 cup chicken broth
- 1/2 cup diced carrots
- 1/2 cup diced celery
- 1/4 cup chopped onion
- 1/4 cup chopped green & red bell peppers
- 3 Tbsp flour
- 3 Tbsp butter
- 2 cups milk
- 1 cup shredded Gruyère cheese
- 1 cup shredded cheddar cheese

Add carrots and celery to broth and simmer until tender.

Meanwhile, add butter to a pan and sauté the onion and peppers until tender. Make a roux (a mix of fat and flour for sauces) by blending in the flour with a whisk, then adding in milk.

Cook while stirring constantly until it thickens and begins to boil. Add in the broth mixture and bring to a boil. Reduce heat, add cheeses, stir until melted. Season with salt, pepper, and tabasco.

Makes 6 to 8 servings.

CATHY GOUGH PHOTO



A plate of local and imported cheeses, with nuts and dried fruit.

flavoring, smoked gouda adds a lovely bacon-like flavor, and with today’s keto and vegan diets, non-dairy cheese substitutes are now being made from ground almonds to create a slightly tangy, sweet, and creamy cheese-like spread which is surprisingly good.

Now that you have some good cheese ideas, I’ll leave you with this marvelous warming and filling soup called Christmas Cheese

Chowder, named because of the chopped green and red bell peppers added to it. It makes 6 to 8 servings and you’re going to want to double or triple the recipe. Enjoy!

Trouble lives in Greenfield with Wifey and Mama Catt Elliott and volunteers at many local agencies working with food-insecure populations. She loves to talk, read, write, garden/farm, cook, and make art.

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