

The Montague Reporter

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also serving Irving, Gill, Leverett and Wendell

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EDITOR@MONTAGUEREPORTER.ORG

THE VOICE OF THE VILLAGES

APRIL 29, 2021

Baker Eases Mass's Mask Edict

By REPORTER STAFF

BOSTON – Governor Charlie Baker's administration announced a new statewide reopening timeline this week, beginning with a relaxation of public mask rules. As of this Friday, "[f]ace coverings will only be required outside in public when it is not possible to socially distance," and "recommended but not required" at small gatherings at private residences. They are still required at indoor public places and outdoor "events."

On May 10 the state plans to move to "Phase 4, Step

2" of reopening, which includes stadiums at 25% capacity, theme parks at 50%, and permission to engage in road races, youth sports, and indoor singing.

If COVID-19 cases continue to drop, May 29 will bring back parades and street fairs at half capacity, bars and beer gardens with restaurant rules, and a gathering cap of 200 indoors, 250 outdoors.

Everything else, including dancing together in the ball pit at the sauna, is scheduled for August 1.

As of Wednesday, about 35% of the state was fully vaccinated, and 54% had received at least one shot.

In Two Villages, A Tale of Two Bridges



ED GREGORY PHOTO

Work began this week on the General Pierce Bridge. The removal of the aluminum Jersey barriers is the first step.

By JEFF SINGLETON

MONTAGUE CITY & LAKE PLEASANT – One can barely enter the town of Montague without crossing a bridge, and in an era of decaying infrastructure, bridge closings and expensive reconstructions have become a way of life in town. But two projects on historic bridges have commenced this week which could be said to represent the yin and yang of the infrastructure crisis.

One bridge, the General Pierce, is a major thoroughfare connecting Montague City and Greenfield across the Connecticut River. The other, the Bridge of Names, is a wooden footbridge that links the eastern and western sections of an obscure village within Montague called Lake Pleasant. It crosses a small stream in a steep valley affectionately known as "the Dingle," apparently an Irish word for a small stream in a steep valley.

The General Pierce Bridge was built in 1947, over a decade after two previous bridges near its current location were destroyed by the hurricane of 1936. One,

a trolley bridge, sank to the bottom of the Connecticut River, while the other floated downstream, destroying two more bridges on its way past Sunderland.

The reconstructed 1947 bridge was named after a veteran of the Spanish-American War who retired from the Army in 1912. The bridge in Lake Pleasant, meanwhile, is named for numerous people who have purchased "pickets" that line the deck. They then get their names on the pickets, creating a small tourist attraction in the village.

According to an account provided by local historian Ed Gregory, Frederick Pierce served in the Spanish American War of 1898 as a captain of the Second Massachusetts Volunteer Militia. He returned from the conflict, along with literally hundreds of his fellow militia members, seriously ill with malaria. After his return he was promoted to Major.

Pierce became the postmaster of Greenfield but continued to serve in the militia, being "elected" to the

see **TWO BRIDGES** page A8

Swift River School Drinking Water Now Legally Violates PFAS Limits

By SARAH ROBERTSON

NEW SALEM – The state will soon issue a drinking water quality violation to the Swift River School over PFAS contamination found in the elementary school's water. Monthly tests have shown that the man-made chemicals are present in the school's well water at twice the safe limit set by Massachusetts last year.

According to Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) spokesperson Kathleen Fornier, the state has completed a draft public notification to be distributed to Swift River School students, parents, and employees in the coming days.

"The school has been notified of the requirement to provide public education / public notice and is expected to provide that in the near future," Fornier told the Reporter. "The school will be required to provide alternate water for sensitive subpopulations."

According to Swift River School administrators, the school learned about the official drinking water quality violation on April 16.

"At this point, the school has not made any action to address this issue, since we are awaiting guidance from the DEP," school officials said in a statement. "So far the DEP has only sent a draft of the no-

tification for families and community members, which we reviewed and approved. We are awaiting the official notification from the DEP. Once we receive it, we will post it and distribute it."

While the source of the contamination is still unknown, it is possible the cost of fixing the school's problem will fall on the towns of Wendell and New Salem, according to Wendell board of health chair Barbara Craddock.

"There are several ways that water can be treated at the point of entry or at the point of use," Craddock said. "The school is shared by

see **WATER** page A5

MONTAGUE SELECTBOARD

Town Plans Summer Events, Will Opt Out of Bug Spray

By JEFF SINGLETON

April is the cruelest month, breeding Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing Memory and desire, stirring Dull roots with spring rain.

The iconic lyrics of an often incomprehensible American poet do not appear to have stirred the Montague selectboard at its April 26 meeting. The board approved numerous outdoor activities for the coming spring and summer months, applauded progress on recent work at a downtown Turners Falls park, and heard a dramatic reading of the warrant for the upcoming annual town meeting, which will take place on May 22 at an outdoor location.

The only issue on a crowded agenda that might be said to have mixed memory and desire was the revelation that the state may not be painting the upper portion of the General Pierce Bridge, which closed for reconstruction that very

day. But the board did not channel TS Eliot during that discussion, perhaps because town administrator Steve Ellis hinted that the Department of Transportation might still be considering offering a paint job.

Monday's meeting began with the usual report from public health director Daniel Wasiuk on the latest COVID-19 metrics. Wasiuk reported that the total "two-week" count of new positive cases from April 11 through 24 in Montague was 20, up from the previous week's report of 17.

"Going up a little, but reaching kind of an average," said selectboard chair Rich Kuklewicz.

With regard to vaccines, Wasiuk noted that the previous week the state had expanded its eligibility list to all residents over the age of 16, which he said comprised "80 to 90% of the population."

Wasiuk said there are "still some struggles obtaining the vaccine," see **MONTAGUE** page A7

LEVERETT SELECTBOARD

Competitive Races To Top Saturday's Town Meeting

By GEORGE BRACE

The Leverett selectboard provided a forum at their Tuesday meeting for candidates for town office, ahead of elections at the annual town meeting this Saturday, May 1.

Two selectboard seats and two school committee seats are up for election, and each body had three candidates announcing for the positions. The board of health and finance committee each have an open seat, but no announced candidates.

Selectboard chair Julie Shively is running for reelection, and she began the forum with a very brief statement

saying she is devoted to the volunteer nature of town government, and wants to see through projects she's currently working on.

Melissa Colbert spoke next, saying she grew up in Leverett and has been a practicing physician for ten years. Colbert said the town can benefit from her skills and experiences as a parent, doctor, and person of color. She said she already works with town officials, citing her ongoing work with state representative Natalie Blais as relationship-building which can benefit the town.

Colbert said that Leverett faces see **LEVERETT** page A5

Pumping Concerns Aired During "Unnatural" Walk



SARAH ROBERTSON PHOTO

Local environmental journalist Karl Meyer presented on the pumped-storage facility's impacts on river habitat.

By LILY WALLACE

ERVING – Dozens turned up on Dorsey Road last Saturday to attend the Great Earth Week Walk for River Justice hosted by the Traprock Center for Peace. Billing the event as an "unnatural history walk," the Traprock Center partnered with local environmental journalist Karl Meyer to host the educational three-mile walk through Erving and Northfield, raising awareness of the impact of the Northfield Mountain Pumped Storage Station on the Connecticut River.

The Northfield Mountain project is managed by FirstLight Power, and is currently undergoing relicensing with Federal Energy Relicensing Commission (FERC). FirstLight describes the operation as "a giant water battery capable of powering more than 1 million homes for up to 7.5 hours each and every day." River water pumped up through the station generates electricity when it is released back down the mountain.

If FirstLight's application is approved, FERC will grant the station a 30- to 50-year operating license. see **PUMPING** page A6

Normal Was Also Kind Of Weird Though Right?

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The Montague Reporter

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The Wreckers

We can expect natural disasters of all sorts to increase in the coming decades. It has already been happening; we are most likely in the tipping point. The record cold that knocked out Southern US power grids in February was linked to the planet's weakened jet stream buckling and allowing the polar vortex to slip down over our continent. You can deny the data, but long-steady patterns are going haywire.

Heat and cold, drought and wildfire. Pandemics, too – the one-two punch of habitat loss and climate disruption are bringing animal populations into contact with each other in new and unpredictable ways, increasing the odds of mutant germs hopping species. The coronavirus may be the first large-scale global outbreak in our lifetimes, but our younger readers should know that it will not be the last in theirs.

The fact that it is dangerous, but not immediately deadly to most, should have been seen as a gift: this might all be a dress rehearsal for something worse. Human ingenuity is real, but allowing it to thrive and turning our insights into action both hinge on our ability to coordinate our action at a scale that meets the problem. All the lessons we are learning now – how to ensure everyone survives while minimizing gathering; how to implement a mass pharmaceutical response on short notice – will be applied again.

It plays out differently in different countries, but we can discern commonalities. In the US, state power is a conflict between two adversarial forces, which concentrates automatic backbiting and sabotage under every initiative that requires governance.

"They're the aggressors. It's our job to brush them back and restore the society we were born in," *Fox News* commentator Tucker Carlson instructed his viewers this week. "So the next time you see someone in a mask on the sidewalk or on the bike path, do not hesitate: 'Would you please take off your mask? Science shows there is no reason for you to be wearing it. Your mask is making me uncomfortable.' We should do that and we should keep doing it until wearing a mask outside is roughly as socially accepted as lighting a Marlboro on an elevator."

The incentives guiding Carlson's ghoulish strategy are simple. Wealth is now highly concentrated, which means he only needs a critical number of rich backers to

maintain his platform and lifestyle, even as his mainstream advertisers have backed off in horror one by one. He must summon culture-war sandworms, mount the beasts, and ride them into battle.

Since there are many instigators like him, their efforts tend to synchronize over time, and the social controversies that divide us grow in uniformity. A study released last month by the Center for Countering Digital Hate traced roughly 689,000 instances of anti-vaccine disinformation posted on social media, and found that a whopping 73% of the content could be traced back to websites controlled by just 12 influencers.

Mercifully, the US government believes COVID-19 is real and is taking the threat seriously, and we are well into a mass vaccination program that will end it domestically. One or two fluke events during the last election might have put us on a much worse trajectory.

Anyone who doubts this need only take a look at the devastating outbreak now tearing through India. A perfect storm of ruling-class apathy, ruling party cynicism, poor preparation, slow vaccination, relaxed vigilance, and mass political and religious gatherings caused a tenfold explosion in the disease in the course of a few short weeks. The country's medical system has been completely overtaken, and the dead are now being burned in the street and buried in mass graves.

Please take a moment to hold them in your thoughts.

COVID-19 is now at its worst extent, and it requires the most action yet. Yes, if we stay the current course we can eradicate it in our own county, our own state, maybe our own country. But if we don't follow through and eradicate it globally, even the selfish will come to regret it, because it will mutate and return. This is no time for patriotism.

And for those of us who hope to live into the mid-century: There will be more challenges like this, requiring universal coordination guided by careful, transparent scientific consensus. And every time there will be people like Tucker Carlson and Narendra Modi taking advantage of the situation, feeding on doubts and weaknesses and hatreds, sowing discord to their own ends.

How do we beat them? How can we show that solidarity is not only necessary for survival, but a more desirable way to live our lives?



Paula Betters, director of the Erving Senior and Community Center, with a few of the many treat baskets the center has been delivering to cheer up elders who have been isolated at home during the last year. The center hopes to open sometime in early summer so that seniors can come back and enjoy group activities once again.

Letters to the Editors

Colbert for Leverett Board

The physical beauty, outstanding school, and of course our fascinating people make Leverett a remarkable place to live. But if we hope to preserve this quality of life we need to make the most of opportunities that come knocking at our doors.

Melissa Colbert's candidacy for Select Board is such an opportunity. Could there be a more qualified candidate? She is very smart and highly credentialed (faculty at Harvard Medical School, community organizer in Leverett, medical director of a large clinic, etc.). She is committed to the well-being of Leverett and experienced in the ways of politics. When a large corporation wanted to expand its gravel pit operations into our back yards, she helped organize and lead our neighbors.

Just as important as Melissa Colbert's great intellect and knowl-

edge base, I have personally witnessed extraordinary acts of kindness – whether it comes in the form of a willingness to listen to those who need to have their voices heard or hands-on expert medical care.

I may be a Leverett old timer myself (does 30 years begin to qualify?) but I know we badly need new blood. Ms. Colbert is the mother of young children and has the well-being of our youngest citizenry in mind. Yet she understands that these interests must be weighed against the burden that property taxes can pose for so many of us.

Compared to many of those who serve our town, Melissa Colbert is young in age – but she is no newcomer to the area. Her interests in our community are very longstanding. She grew up in the area, was educated in our local schools, and

her extended family lives nearby.

Leverett is a great town, but like anything special, we all need to do our part. At a minimum, I hope you will come to the town meeting (outside Leverett Elementary School) this Saturday, May 1, and vote. Town meeting begins at 9 a.m. and voting for the Select Board is the first order of business.

If you simply can't make it then but want to vote for Melissa Colbert (or anyone else), you can still vote by finding Lisa Stratford, the town clerk, before the 1 p.m. deadline and letting her know of your intentions.

Important note: On average, less than 200 votes are cast at our town meeting. This means that *your vote will matter!*

Paul Roud, Ph.D.
Leverett

A Friend of Leverett Pond

"It takes a village to support a pond." OK, the truth is no famous person said this, but it is the mantra of Friends of Leverett Pond, a collection of 80 or so households committed to supporting the ecological diversity of Leverett Pond while maintaining it as a recreational jewel – one of our town's natural treasures. Boating, swimming, picnicking, fishing, ice skating, hiking, bird watching, or just hanging out with nature the pond serves as a reminder to all why we live in this area.

After an aggressive two-year fund drive FLP was able to raise enough money to replace our old, failing dam, a heavy financial lift for a small town. The whole town pitched in as well as the state, a testament to the local support for maintaining the pond.

Along with our role as stewards of Leverett Pond we have reached out to support the community – a turbo-pump for the fire department for rapid filling of trucks, life-saving "throw bags" located strategically around the pond, a boat rack filled with canoes and kayaks available for free to town residents. We feel a

responsibility to do these things.

As with all treasured assets, some care is required over time. Leverett Pond has been in danger of being overrun with non-native invasive weeds which crowd out native plant life and degrade fish habitat as well as some of the recreational activities.

Working with the Leverett Conservation Committee, we have used a variety of techniques to control this menace, while letting science from the state Department of Environmental Protection and the experience of other lakes and ponds in the area guide us. Maintaining the ecological health of the pond is critical to us.

A small group of people working together can make a difference. We feel proud to play a role in keeping Leverett's natural beauty intact and available for all to enjoy.

Steve Freedman,
The Friends of Leverett Pond
Leverett

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By NINA ROSSI

Republic Services, Montague's trash and recycling handler, announces it will **change the pickup days from Friday to Wednesday** on several streets in town effective May 2. They are Maple, Pleasant, Chestnut, Worcester, and Grove streets; Hillside, Goddard, Madison, and Wrightson avenues; Broadview Heights; Riverside Drive; and the odd-numbered homes on Unity Street.

If you are retired and still want to continue learning, courses are available through **Five College Learning in Retirement**. The non-profit organization will give a preview of upcoming fall seminars in a Zoom webinar this Sunday, May 2, from 2 to 4 p.m. Registration is required at www.5clir.org.

Weekly classes will start in mid-September, and run for eight to ten weeks. Topics for the fall include the Wild West Era, Ancient Egypt, US Supreme Court cases, the Beatles, and "Social Media: Its Problems and Solutions."

Members can also participate in short summer programs as well as special interest groups such as book, movie, and current events discussions. Registration for classes opens May 3. There is a yearly membership fee.

A livestream **benefit concert by the Performance Project** this Sunday, May 2 called "Shout! Elevate! Inspire!" will feature

many great local artists including I-SHEA, Samirah Evans, Stompbox Trio, Tony Vacca, and the Gaslight Tinkers.

The concert benefits the First Generation and Ubuntu Arts Community, two model programs doing vital work with Springfield and Holyoke youth in under-resourced and underrepresented communities. There is an online auction component of the event as well. Visit the website to get tickets and details at performanceproject.org. The fun starts at 5 p.m.

On Mother's Day, Sunday, May 9, consider tuning in for some **Mother (Earth) Day poetry and prose** with poets Cheryl Savageau, Kristen Leigh, Susan Glass, Dina Stander, and author Jane Caputi. The free reading will start at 1 p.m. Register at nature-culture.net.

Assets for Artists sends a reminder that Payroll Protection Program funds are going fast, but there's still time to apply for a first (or second!) PPP. If your self-employed or freelance creative business brought in at least \$5,000 of income in 2019 or 2020 – even if that income was offset by expenses, and even if you made more in 2020 than in 2019 – you may still qualify for funds to pay yourself with a forgivable loan.

Assets for Artists has been helping dozens of artists receive these funds, and their help is free. Learn more about qualifying for PPP at assetsforartists.org.

Also from Assets for Artists is an upcoming webinar on **Crowdfunding for Artist Projects** with Laura Christensen on Thursday, May 13 at 4 p.m. This offering is for artists in Massachusetts only. Find out more at assetsforartists.org.

If you have ever searched Google images for **pictures of Turners Falls**, you know that the town is sadly under-represented online. RiverCulture director Suzanne LoManto has put out a call for photos that show the beauty of Turners Falls. RiverCulture wants to boost the town online using your favorite images, be they wildlife shots, sunsets, businesses, historic buildings, bike rides, river scenes, drone shots, restaurant scenes, performances – you name it!

LoManto will make sure fabulous scenes pop up online in searches for Turners Falls. "Let's let the world know everything there is to love about Turners Falls," she writes. Email your pictures to riverculture@montague.ma.gov or send them from your phone to (413) 835-1390.

The Gill Montague Council on Aging has grant money available to help low- to- moderate income **seniors repair their homes**, particularly if the repairs are safety-related. Call (413) 863-9357 for details.

Paula Better at the Erving Senior Center sent us details of a wonderful **bag and basket delivery program** they are implementing to combat COVID isolation and loneliness among seniors. Staff have been calling seniors and asking what favorite things they would like to receive, and then shopping for those items.

Along with the hand-delivered goodies, seniors receive a response form to fill out and a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Their responses will be entered into a drawing for a Big Y gift certificate.

Another effort to **cheer up isolated seniors** is being helped along by the Art Garden in Shelburne Falls. The idea is to decorate brown bags which are then filled with nutritious food and distributed to hun-

dreds of seniors by the Food Bank of Western Mass.

The Art Garden invites artists of all ages to pick up some bags – and even markers and crayons, if you need them – at their location and then return them with decorations relating to food, nature, and community. The more colorful and cheerful, the better! To arrange a pickup, email csartgarden@gmail.com or call (413) 625-2782.

The Salmon Falls Gallery is hosting a show of the work of **ten clay artists**, curated by member artist David Ernster, during May and June. Ernster has worked in clay for 30 years, and has selected artists whose work has the necessary fluency in this medium to express the human condition. Visit the gallery website for details at salmonfallsgallery.com or call (413) 625-9833.

If you have concerns about where the boundary is between a healthy relationship and one that is abusive, either for yourself or someone you know, a **relationship hotline** is available for you to discuss the issue with complete confidentiality. Help is available every day from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. at (877) 898-3411 or thehelpline1010@gmail.com.

The Northampton Arts Council is searching for a middle- or high-school student for a one-year term as the inaugural **Youth Poet Laureate** of Northampton. The deadline to nominate or apply is June 15. Applicants must be entering 7th to 12th grade next September and be a resident of Northampton, Florence, or Leeds, or attend school in those towns. They must "have a deep love of poetry and a willingness to be an advocate for poetry," according to the Council.

The recipient will receive a \$500 stipend and have the option to publish a chapbook of their poetry, as well as ongoing opportunities to participate in various readings. For more information visit northamptonartscouncil.org, email admin@northamptonartscouncil.org, or call (413) 587-1069.

Send your local briefs to editor@montaguereporter.org.

OBITUARY

Jenny Alstrup Marshall
5/17/1933 - 4/18/2021



MONTAGUE – Jenny Alstrup Marshall, born in Copenhagen Denmark May 17, 1933, passed away at home in the early morning of Sunday, April 18, 2021, from congestive heart disease.

She was most recently a resident of Montague, Massachusetts,

having previously lived in Leverett, Amherst, and Cambridge since coming to the US from Denmark in 1956 to work as a lab technician.

Jenny's life was centered around commitment and graceful generosity to her family and friends in Denmark and the US. She was compassionate, generous of her time and resources, often mischievous, and never shy about sharing her beliefs or opinions. Possibly because English was not her native language, she had a love of language and the many meanings of words and how they were used.

She was loved and cherished by many, and she lived and died on her terms with grace and dignity. She is survived by her three children, George Marshall, Lars Marshall, and Lise Coppinger, and six grandchildren, Nicholas, Carson, Isabelle, Lillie, Josephine, and Tai.

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AT LARGE

Colrain Water Battle Heads to Court

By CHIPAINSWORTH

COLRAIN and LEYDEN—Red Bergeron was born and raised in Québec and worked in the forest industry. His job was to ride the logs downstream to sawmills, and the work brought him to the Holyoke paper mills.

Tired of the hazardous labor, he took a job with the electric company and built a cabin on the Green River in Colrain. In 1942 he got permission from the property owner across the river in Leyden to dam up a small stream. He strung a pipe over the river and over the years other homeowners began to rely on the dam for their plumbing and fire prevention.

That's about to change, if a Leyden couple has its way.

Attorneys will be in Massachusetts Land Court on May 4 to argue that the property's new owners can order their neighbors to cease and desist from using the dam. Attorney Michael Pill of Northampton filed the case in January on behalf of Carmen Elsa Abramson and Evan Abramson.

It's their property and ergo their dam, but as retired Greenfield attorney Frank McDonald said, "The pleadings do not represent the facts." McDonald's family has a house on the river and is one of 37 defendants named in the lawsuit.

The Abramsons live at the end of George Lamb Road, a dead end dirt road off of West Leyden Road. They moved there from Pelham three years ago and paid \$670,000 for the house and 65 acres of forestland. ("Cash," says one neighbor. "There's no mortgage.")

The dam is located between the Abramsons' house and the river, on a brook that wends down the slope and spills over a 200-foot waterfall and into the rapids. It was built from stones and boulders, and buttressed years later by a concrete wall.

Bergeron and his friends used a pulley system to transport the cement one pail at a time.

"It took two days," remembered McDonald. "I was the beer shagger."

Nowadays McDonald and Bergeron's grandson Art Belanger serve as the dam keepers. On April 23, they trudged over a suspension bridge and plugged the hole in the bottom of the wall so that the reservoir would fill up for another season.

"It's all gravity-set, a unique piece of engineering and you wouldn't believe the pressure coming out of it," said Belanger. "The bottom line is they want us to shut it off."

The water is used to flush toilets, wash dishes, and take showers. "Everything but drinking," said McDonald. "As a tradition I'll take a drink off the hose in May and June, but not in July and August."

Every late spring through summer until the autumnal leaves fall, Green River Lane is a respite and Shangri-La for generations of families and friends who come to celebrate the Fourth of July or for weekend get-togethers, picnics, and barbecues, to fish or to drink beer after 18 holes at the Greenfield Country Club.

The spur off of Green River Road is about a half-mile from what's called the ten mile bridge. Drivers see a "Dead End" sign, followed a few yards further by another that says "Dead End Sign No. 2."

There are picnic tables and hammocks, a US flag is painted on a boulder midstream in the river, and a "0" mile marker denotes the last house on the road. There's a "hummingbird crossing" sign, moose antlers are tacked to a pine trunk, and the annual "Great Duck Race" scoreboard hangs from an old shed called the Blue Room.

A visitor notices that most of a "No Trespassing" sign has been covered over by cardboard. "That's



No-trespass signs and surveillance warnings line the road leading to reservoir.

so the trout will get stocked," said McDonald. "The truck won't come onto posted property."

On the other side of the suspension bridge, there's no such sense of mirth and frivolity. Signs warn curious wanderers to stay away. Bright yellow keep-out signs are posted, together with warnings that surveillance cameras are delivering live feeds to the state police or the FBI or wherever live feeds are transmitted.

"The basic dispute is he doesn't believe we have rights and we do believe we have rights," said Belanger. "We've run around on that property our whole lives, but now this guy's saying 'I don't want you guys here.'"

Asked for comment, Atty. Pill replied: "My clients and I have decided that both they and I will follow my standard advice to clients. Rather than make any public comment we rely on filed court documents which are a matter of public record."

Who is Evan Abramson, and why does he want to spoil the party? His contact number lists a Bronx/Manhattan area code and his Landscape Interactions company claims he creates "functionally diverse and ecologically resilient landscapes." According to its website, Abramson is a "results-driven designer and planner on a mission to rebuild biologically diverse ecosystems through pollinator-plant interactions."

Translated, that means he helps bees and butterflies pollinate. Yes, Evan Abramson is a pollinator.

According to the US Forest Service, a pollinator landscaper uses native plants that bloom from early spring to late fall, and avoids planting hybrid flowers or using pesticides.

He acquired his landscaping skills at the Conway School of Landscape Design where he earned a Master of Science in Landscape Planning and Design. The ten-month course augmented his BA in English from Vassar College.

But wait, there's more. He describes himself as having "diverse experience as a regional planner, landscape designer, farmer, community organizer, documentary filmmaker, and photojournalist."

"Evan designs landscapes and regional corridors that build biodiversity and strengthen ecological resilience to a changing climate at the ecosystems level, through the (re)creation of native pollination systems and individual pollinator-plant interactions."

Don't blame me that you had to read that.

Evan worked briefly – seven months – with the Franklin Regional Council of Governments. He opened an art gallery in New Milford, Con-

necticut, that's permanently closed, he has "certificates" in Permaculture Design and Biodynamic Gardening, and he is the co-author of the Great Barrington Pollinator Action Plan.

Prior to that he and his wife co-founded a production studio they named Cows in the Field. *Last Stand on the Island* is a compelling 11-minute documentary about residents of Isle de Jean Charles struggling to exist in southern Louisiana; *When the Water Ends* describes the plight of Ethiopian tribes up against a government-funded dam on the Omo River.

Perhaps he'll film a documentary about how Red Bergeron's reservoir parallels the famous line written in 1797 by Samuel Taylor Coleridge: *Water, water everywhere, nor any drop to drink.*

"Several places have no well," said Belanger. "The Conants got a quote for a well at like \$14,000, so they are going to fight it. I'm fighting it, and the Bergerons are fighting it. All of our deeds entitle us to draw the water. We have an easement and a right of way that says we have a right to take water from the brook."

The bane of any property buyer is sellers who aren't forthcoming about the fine print. "I'm not sure he read all his paperwork before the closing," said Belanger. "We had the same problem with the guy before."

The "guy before" was Caleb Kissling, who also tried to empty the reservoir, and his attorney was Michael Pill. Pill's opening salvo in the current suit is boilerplate: "Defendants in this action have repeatedly trespassed on land of plaintiff's Abramson, destroying wildlife, hunting, and otherwise presenting what plaintiff's Abramson perceive to be a potential threat to the safety of themselves and their children."

McDonald said they've made overtures to the Abramsons. "He's been invited down, but he has no interest in it," he said. "He does have some legitimate complaints. The first week of hunting season, about ten hunters came out of his property while he was snowshoeing with his kids. It wasn't us. It was people who'd been doing it for years."

Pill and his assistant John McLaughlin are seasoned land attorneys who are likely to claim various code violations. Despite turning down my request for comment, Pill's email did provide a glimmer of optimism when he concluded, "We share your hope for an amicable resolution."

And we can all drink to that.

Chip Ainsworth writes sports for the Greenfield Recorder and commentary for the Montague Reporter. He lives in Northfield.



Top: Old Glory painted in a rock near the finish line of the annual great duck race.
Bottom: Initially made of rock, the dam holding water was later reinforced with concrete. A pulley system was devised and the cement delivered bucket by bucket.

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LEVERETT from page A1

complex challenges and needs creative problem-solving, which she can help provide. “People who know me know I care about the town and service,” she said, and “I get along with everybody.”

Jed Proujansky introduced himself as a resident of Leverett for three years, after living in Northfield for the previous 20, and Greenfield before that. He served on the Pioneer Valley Regional school committee for 13 years and the Northfield selectboard for three, and currently serves on the Leverett’s fin com.

Proujansky said he has been a social activist since 1964, and served on the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee back then and in the coalition against the Kinder-Morgan pipeline more recently. He also has managed and owned small businesses. Along with both other candidates, he said he was concerned about the town’s finances and school funding, and that his experience in managing those issues will be helpful. Proujansky said he was committed to bringing people with different views together, and all voices being heard.

All three candidates listed budgetary issues as a primary concern, and pointed to school funding as a critical issue.

Shively said she “feels for residents who grew up here whose families can’t afford to live here.” Proujansky spoke of financial insecurity leading to food insecurity, and said he felt social justice issues affect everyone, and that the town should maintain a presence in this sphere. Colbert said she wanted to foster interconnectedness and build bridges so that all community members can feel safe sitting around the table.

On the topic of police regionalization, Shively said Leverett is working on a draft agreement with Wendell that includes an “on-ramp” provision for additional towns to join, and that the fin com is interested in looking at that possibility.

Proujansky noted that the Pioneer Valley school district faced a parallel situation during his tenure, and emphasized that communication with other towns is important for decision-making. Colbert agreed that these would be important decisions for the towns to navigate together.

School Committee

Becky Tews, Aaron Buford, and Jessica Rocheleau announced their candidacies for school committee.

Tews said she grew up in Conway, went to UMass, and has lived in the area most of her life. She said she moved to Leverett six years ago

with two young kids to be part of the school, and has not been disappointed with the school or town.

Tews helped found the Leverett Education Foundation, and said she was inspired to run by that experience. She said she wanted to raise awareness of budget issues and work on funding, and added that she has been inspired and motivated by other parents, and helped draft the school’s anti-racism provision.

Buford said he was a seven-year resident and the father of three children, one an LES graduate and the other two currently enrolled. Buford teaches in the Springfield school system himself, and said that his personal journey has helped him understand the power of education has to help children to build the skills and mindset needed to thrive as adults.

“I want to keep LES a thriving little country school,” he said.

But Buford added that while education can be transformative, it can contribute to inequity. “I’m also aware of the moment,” he said, and shared that while he wants his children to have the good foundation LES provides, he knows their peers are equally deserving. Buford said he wants to bring this energy, desire to understand, and perspective to the table in problem solving with other community members.

Jessica Rocheleau said she has been in Leverett for almost eight years and has two children, both at LES. She has been filling a vacancy on the school committee for the past year, and has worked as an educator at the college level.

Rocheleau said she went to a school in Canada that felt like LES, and wants to support the school and its relationship with the town. She said she has experience in leadership, working in teams, problem-solving, and managing budgets. Rocheleau added that she has learned a lot in the last year, and is looking forward to continuing.

Other Boards

Tim Shores and Richard Nathhorst are running for the two planning board seats.

Shores said he has been in Leverett for three years, previously living in Northampton and California before that, and that his wife grew up in Shutesbury and Amherst.

Shores, who is currently co-chair of the revenue committee, said planning is technical work but that he starts from a point of humility, setting aside his opinions and biases. He said his goal was to contribute to Leverett’s prosperity and sustain it in an accessible and fair manner. He

pointed to land use as one of the most important elements of that goal.

Nathhorst, running for his third term, said he is still studying and learning under longtime member Ken Kahn and others despite his own extensive experience and resume, which includes work on other town committees and outside agencies.

To promote equality and diversity, Nathhorst said, land use needs to be affordable for everybody – including the elderly – and the town needs to make it possible for people with kids to move in, as well as commercial development that can bring jobs.

Two current library trustees announced they’d like to continue.

Lisa Sullivan Warner said she moved to Leverett in 1998, and has been a trustee for most of the time since then. She described herself as a “lifelong heavy library user.” Rachael Flint said she’d lived in Leverett for 22 years, and works as a special education teacher in Holyoke.

Asked about recent library proposals for a solar array funded by a bequest, both said the trustees were opposed to choices that would cause dissension on town boards, and that the site must work for everyone.

Jim Staros put his name in the hat for a seat on the board of assessors. Staros said he was a 12-year resident, and was vice chancellor for academic affairs at UMass before retiring in 2019. He said he wanted to use his new freedom to work for the town, and has the necessary certification for the position.

No names were put forward to fill an open three-year term on the fin com, despite current member Anne Delano’s assertion that it is “the most fun committee.”

Two positions are open on the board of health, with only one candidate. Selectboard member Tom Hankinson commented that the board of health is very important, and if anyone knows of a good prospect, send them to the board.

“Think about it, folks,” added town clerk Lisa Stratford.

Other Business

A grant application for a hovercraft appeared not to have gone through a normal review process. Shively said it took her by surprise, but signed it anyway due to an impending deadline. It was noted that the hovercraft could be declined if necessary, but all agreed that it would be better to keep the selectboard in the loop on such pursuits.

The board voted not to exercise the town’s right of first refusal on a property coming up for auction.

**ADVERTISEMENT FOR BIDS**

The Town of Leverett, shall receive General Bids at the Town of Leverett Town Hall, 9 Montague Road, Leverett, Massachusetts for the Construction of the **East Leverett Road Water Main** Contract No. 1, CWSRF No. 6841 until 1:00 p.m. prevailing time, Wednesday May 19, 2021, at which time bids will be opened and publicly read aloud. Bids submitted after this time will not be accepted.

The Work of this Contract generally consists of furnishing and installing approximately 8,100 linear feet of 12-inch water main in East Leverett Road, directional drilling of 12-inch HDPE under Mountain Brook and 1,000 linear feet of 12-inch water main in Teawaddle Hill Road from the intersection of Leverett Road and East Leverett Road to Doolittle Brook on Teawaddle Hill Road in Amherst and Leverett, MA with associated service connections, valves, fittings, hydrants and appurtenances. The project includes Additive Alternate A for directional drilling of 2-inch HDPE under Doolittle Brook on Teawaddle Hill Road and all associated service connections, valves, fittings and appurtenances. It should be noted that Project Management shall be completed by the Town of Amherst.

Contract Documents may be obtained electronically through the Town of Amherst by contacting publicworks@amherstma.gov. The Contract Documents may be examined at the following locations: Town of Amherst DPW, 586 S. Pleasant St., Amherst, Massachusetts 01002.

WATER from page A1

Wendell and New Salem, so logically the cost would be shared between the two towns, but I’m not certain that is how it will work.”

In addition to regular monthly testing at Swift River School, DEP is offering free well water testing to private residents in Wendell, New Salem, Leverett, Erving, and other rural towns across the state in partnership with the University of Massachusetts.

“To date we have not received any lab results, but they should be coming,” Craddock said of the private well testing program.

“We are working in partnership with DEP on this issue,” Tim Newton, New Salem’s public health agent, wrote to the *Reporter*. “DEP is the regulatory authority for public water supplies. At this time DEP has recommended continued monitoring of PFAS levels at Swift River School.”

PFAS have been known to cause an array of health problems in the liver, thyroid, blood and reproductive organs. The contaminants have also been linked to types of cancer and learning disorders. Some studies have shown that high levels of PFAS detected in COVID-19 patients’ blood correlates to more severe symptoms.

There is no federal standard for the maximum allowable concentration of PFAS in drinking water, but the EPA suggests a “health advisory” of 70 parts per trillion (ppt). In Massachusetts, PFAS levels over 90 ppt are considered an “imminent hazard” requiring immediate action.

In October 2020, officials signed into law the state’s first-ever safe drinking water standard for PFAS chemicals in drinking water, at 20 ppt. DEP has been testing PFAS levels at Swift River School since then.

The combined “PFAS6” level came in at 53.8 ppt in November, 33.7 in February, 44.1 in March, and 34.6 in samples collected on April 14. (A January sample, which tested at 48.1 ppt was not considered valid due to a laboratory error.)

“Students may wash their hands with the water, and we have already encouraged all families to send in water bottles from home,” Swift River administrators wrote.

After initial tests showed high PFAS levels at the school, but before the quarterly average of these monthly tests triggered the drinking water violation, Swift River School officials alerted parents of the situation in a “public education notice.”

The January 29 notice suggest-

ed that students bring their own water bottles to school, and that “sensitive subgroups” like pregnant women, infants, and immunocompromised people should not drink the water, per DEP guidelines.

“[W]e are required to provide you with these materials to make you aware of the elevated levels so you can make informed decisions about your drinking water while we continue to monitor the water supply,” the notice read. “If you are not in a sensitive subgroup, you may continue to consume the water because 20 [ppt] value is applicable to a lifetime consuming the water and shorter duration exposures present less risk.”

But while school officials called the water “potable” last month, DEP’s director of public affairs Edmund Coletta would not make the same claim. DEP has met with Wendell town officials to discuss potential sources of contamination, and target private wells for testing where further contamination is suspected.

The term “PFAS” refers to a class of thousands of similar chemicals used in industrial and consumer goods like nonstick pans, construction materials and fire suppressants.

The emerging contaminant has been found in water supplies in cities like Westfield, where fire-fighting foam used on the Barnes Air Force Base leached into the groundwater supply. The Air Force has so far paid \$1.3 million towards the \$13 million in filtration and remediation costs.

The state now tests for the combined presence of six of the chemicals, which it refers to as PFAS6: perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA), perfluorooctane sulfonic acid (PFOS), perfluorononanoic acid (PFNA), perfluorohexane sulfonic acid (PFHxS), perfluorodecanoic acid (PFDA), and perfluoroheptanoic acid (PFHpA).

According to test results reviewed by the *Reporter*, PFOS was by far the most prevalent of the PFAS6 chemicals detected at Swift River School. The chemical was widely used in products like fire-fighting foam until 2002, when the Environmental Protection Agency began a voluntary program urging major manufacturers to phase out PFOS and PFOA.

Since then, thousands of new PFAS variants have been produced for industrial and consumer goods. All of them are molecularly similar and resistant to breaking down in the environment, leading some experts to call PFAS “forever chemicals.”

**NOTES FROM THE ERVING SELECTBOARD****Sergeant Appointed; Aqua Line Hired**

By KATIE NOLAN

On Monday night, the Erving selectboard appointed officer Adam Paicos as police sergeant, to fill the position vacated when Robert Holst became chief.

Paicos has been an Erving officer since 2016. Selectboard member William Bembury said he “will definitely be an asset to the department.”

Because this promotion opens up an officer position, the board asked Holst to provide recommendations for hiring a new officer, considering qualified applicants who applied for an officer position and were interviewed this winter.

The board also voted to approve revised police department policies on use of force and bias in policing.

The board began the meeting with an executive session to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining with the New England Police Benevolent Association.

The board accepted a \$1.26 million bid from Aqua Line Utility, LLC to repair the Arch Street force sewer main. Three other companies bid on the project.

Town consultant Tighe & Bond had estimated the project could cost up to \$1.75 million, and the May 2018 annual town meeting authorized the town to borrow up to \$1.57 million to cover its cost.


Force mains are pipelines that convey wastewater under pressure; the Arch Street force main carries wastewater from the Arch Street pump station to POTW #2.

The board accepted a \$7,990 firefighter safety equipment grant from the state Executive Office of Public Safety and Security and the Department of Fire Services to purchase ten hand-held thermal imagers.

The board accepted Elizabeth Bazler’s resignation from the conservation commission.

The board approved town clerk Richard Newton’s recommendation to continue with a single voting precinct in Erving.

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NOTES FROM THE GILL SELECTBOARD

Hazards and Pests

By JERRI HIGGINS

A light agenda for Gill's selectboard meeting Monday night dealt mainly with the fire department's hazard mitigation plans, the town's mosquito control options, and the Gill Elementary School lease renewal, among other business.

A discussion on the estimates of encapsulating asbestos floor tiles in two of the Gill Elementary School classrooms and a hallway, or replacing those floors entirely, was tabled because there were no updates in time for the meeting.

Hazard Mitigation

Fire chief Gene Beaubien told the selectboard about an email from Northfield Mount Hermon (NMH) assistant director of safety Jay Sparks, who expressed NMH's willingness to offer an as yet undetermined campus building as a back-up emergency shelter for Gill.

"The only time it would be beneficial to use NMH as an emergency shelter is if an incident happened in just the town of Gill," said Beaubien. "Otherwise we would use the Greenfield or Turners Falls shelter – depending on whose turn it is to host it."

"I think it would be important to have an emergency shelter on our side of the river," added selectboard chair Randy Crochier.

Town administrator Ray Purington was unanimously approved by Crochier and selectboard member John Ward to send a memorandum of understanding, or MOU, to Sparks for the NMH shelter agreement. Selectboard member Greg Snedeker was absent from the meeting.

Mosquito Control

Energy commission member Claire Chang joined the remotely held meeting to discuss information on aerial, and other, mosquito spraying conducted by the State Reclamation and Mosquito Control Board (SRMCB).

Chang said she had asked for the issue to be placed on the night's agenda after hearing a presentation about the state's mosquito control program at a recent Montague selectboard meeting.

Citing potential health risks to pollinators, and other insects – as well as humans – that "massive aerial spraying" might create, Chang said she felt that the town should at least be given the choice to participate or not.

According to Massachusetts regulations, municipalities can opt out of the new statewide pesticide spraying program by submitting their own plans incorporating the SRMCB requirements to the state for approval.

An alternate program through the SRMCB is the membership-based Pioneer Valley Mosquito Control District, which uses suppression methods such as trapping, and reducing mosquito breeding areas.

Crochier cautioned that after the state's May 15 deadline, Gill would not have the choice to get back into the state spraying program until next year. He also said that if Gill does opt out, and does not partner with PVMCD, he fears that the town will not have the ability to adequately treat for mosquitoes.

Crochier said that PVMCD "is

not cheap to join – it is about \$5,000 a year," but also added that the town might be able to negotiate the membership fee with them, or that there could be other state monies to offset the membership cost.

"I think spraying is a very low risk. It does not mean we should not opt out, or that we should," he said.

"I have spent countless hours on this issue over the last week or so, because I am trying to answer these questions for 11 towns," Crochier said, referring to his position as a regional health agent at the Franklin Regional Council of Governments.

A public hearing on opting out of, or staying in, the state aerial spraying program will be presented at the May 10 selectboard meeting.

20-Year Lease

Purington said he had made some suggestions for changes on the lease renewal between the Gill-Montague Regional School District (GMRSD) and the town for use of the Gill Elementary School.

The current lease expires May 31, and Purington's round of additions and changes to the lease language "affirms the right for public access to outdoor facilities when the school is not in session," as well as clarifying that GMRSD is responsible for routine operations, maintenance, water testing and treatment, and septic system maintenance. Snow removal would also remain the district's responsibility, with Gill offering its help, if needed, and if the town is available to do so.

Purington said that "the last significant change" he suggested, was that the lease would terminate "in the event that the GMRSD is dissolved."

The new lease would last for 20 years, and there is a potential for local school regionalization changes within that time, which led Purington to feel it wise to insert a termination clause in the new lease.

Other Business

Because the Gill town hall continues to be closed to the public in accordance with COVID-19 guidelines, the assessor's office was approved to open for the employment interviews for the position of assistant to the assessor.

Purington said that he was "not quite ready" to recommend opening the town hall on a broader basis, but would feel more comfortable once all town employees are fully vaccinated.

After hearing from state senator Jo Comerford's district director, Elena Cohen, that the senator is seeking support letters to get the French King Bridge safety barrier project in the queue for state capital funds, Purington was unanimously approved to draft a support letter for inclusion with the town's capital plan.

Purington asked if either selectboard member present had any talking points to include, to which Crochier quipped: "You have a history of hitting the right points."

Asked when the town will hold its 2021 annual town meeting, Purington said the meeting would likely be held in late May or June. Crochier added his hopes for another outdoor meeting in mid-June.

Approval of the May 17 town election warrant passed unanimously.

PUMPING from page A1

The company has requested a 50-year license.

While FirstLight's website highlights that the project can help "decrease greenhouse gas emissions in the region" by storing renewably generated energy, speakers at the event voiced concern that its operation has adverse impacts on the environment and inhabitants in and around the river.

"This is the deadliest, most abused stretch of the Connecticut River," said Meyer, who has been writing about the river as a journalist for over 25 years. "They are sucking the river up that mountain, so the Connecticut River flows in reverse. They suck in a living river and it comes out dead... 24 species are subject to that suction. We have failed our kids, this is an abomination. Millions of fish are being shredded."

Meyer called upon participants to submit comments to FERC about the license's impact on the river.

"We hope that everyone on the walk will talk to other people about this and feel close to the issue," said Anna Gyorgy, the event organizer with the Traprock Center, whose mission includes promoting peace and environmental justice. "We wanted to help people know how dangerous this project is. We thought for Earth Day – and after a year this winter of staying home and in isolation – it would be great to do something outside, not on Zoom. People don't realize the threat to the river, and when you are next to it you get more of a physical relationship with the river."

"The fact that the licensing is happening now to commit for 50 years, in a time of climate crisis and biodiversity crisis – the wildlife that is being killed – is terrible," added Gyorgy. "We need to rethink every type of energy production and conservation, and our relationship with nature."

As the walkers continued up the river road to the pumped storage facility, Claire Chang, a co-owner of the Solar Store of Greenfield, spoke to the group about the importance of solar and offshore wind.

"Governor Baker finally signed the climate bill," Chang said. "It's not enough. We need to move at lightning speed to get renewables on the grid. Call your representatives, and tell your friends that live in other states. The more people that say something, the more

they hear... We must move faster to renewables."

Reached for comment, FirstLight Power said it planned to remedy issues raised by the walkers.

"As part of our ongoing relicensing process and in coordination with credible stakeholders, we have conducted more than 40 different expert studies to assess environmental impact, recreational opportunities, and possible impacts to the region's heritage," said FirstLight government affairs director Len Greene. "As part of our formal application, we have committed to \$130 million worth of new investments to restore fish passage beyond the Turners Falls dam, eliminate the entrainment of fish into the Northfield Mountain upper pond, improve recreational opportunities, and better support our host communities."

The company's final application, filed in December, proposes spending \$42,453,000 to install a "Barrier net in the Northfield Tailrace/Intake," intended to protect migrating shad and eel.

"While this won't happen overnight," Greene said, "the improvements will ensure that Northfield Mountain continues to provide incredible value to the Commonwealth by addressing climate change while simultaneously investing in the future of our communities."

As Saturday's walk neared its end, the group looked out at the rusty pump intake seated in the Connecticut River. "If you think you have been getting a good deal, and people have been protecting the river, you're wrong." Announced Meyers, "Unless they close the mouth of this beast, they do not deserve another year."

Molly Freeland of Gill said she jumped at the opportunity to stand up for the river and its biodiversity when she heard about the event. "I knew about the fish [dying], but didn't realize the sheer number that were being sucked up," she said. "This river bums me out."

Wendell resident Nina Keller said that after hearing Meyer speak, she and her young grandson Solomon both came to the same conclusion: "It needs at least a strainer to keep the fish out."

Keller added that she had been invited to the walk by a friend, and did not previously know about many of the issues covered. "We have to protect the river," she said. "It's not their river to suck to make power."



The walk's destination was the Connecticut River intake of the Northfield Mountain project.

NOTES FROM THE WENDELL TOWN CLERK

Wendell Town Election Monday 5/3

Wendell's Annual Town Election is scheduled for Monday, May 3. Polls will open at noon and close at 7 p.m. The polls will be arranged so that no more than two voters are in the room at the same time. The path to the voting booth will be marked with floor tape. The way in and out of the building will be set and enforced by the Constable and/or Election Warden.

Voters are encouraged to bring their own pens/pencils and gloves. Masks must be worn at all times inside the building. Physical distance between poll workers and voters will follow the six-foot rule. Voting booths will be disinfected after every use, and the single use pencils dropped into a container at the check-out table.

As always, please review the posted ballot and get answers to any questions you may have before entering the voting booth area.

Wendell's 2021 Town Election ballot candidates are:
Selectboard, three-year term: Laurie DiDonato, incumbent.

Board of Assessors, three-year vacancy: Martha Senn, nominee.

Town Clerk, two-year vacancy: Anna Wetherby, nominee.

Board of Health, three-year term: Barbara Craddock, incumbent; three-year vacancy: Shay Cooper, nominee.

Cemetery Commissioner, three-year vacancy: Florence Blackbird, nominee.

Planning Board, five-year term: Christopher Parker, incumbent.

Town Moderator, one-year term: Kathleen Nolan, incumbent.

School Committee, three-year vacancies: Two write-in candidates possible.

Road Commissioner, three-year term: Michael Gifford, incumbent.

Library Trustees, three-year term: Mara Bright, incumbent; three-year vacancy: Jess Mynes, nominee.

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MONTAGUE from page A1
noting that his department has had difficulty securing doses for homebound individuals. He said the Franklin Regional Council of Governments would provide the department with ten doses for this group, though at previous meetings he had reported 20 such individuals on the town health department's waiting list.

Vaccination slots for first doses are still available at Greenfield's John Zon Community Center and a drive-through clinic at Greenfield Community College.

Don't Spray It!

Next the selectboard, after a brief discussion, voted unanimously to opt out of any state aerial mosquito spraying program, as recommended by both the health board and town conservation commission in recent weeks.

Montague's discussion of the new Massachusetts law, which appears to encourage state spraying but was amended to allow local communities to opt out, was initially spearheaded by local resident Jane Alessandra. At this week's meeting several beekeepers spoke in favor of Alessandra's proposal, arguing that spraying could endanger local bee colonies, which are already at risk due to varroa mites and other causes.

One beekeeper, ironically named "B Kline" on the Zoom screen (first name Brian), said he kept 100 bee colonies in the town of Montague.

According to selectboard and health board member Michael Nelson, Wasiuk will develop a local mosquito control plan and present it to the selectboard on May 3 for input, with a final plan to be approved on May 10. The local opt-out plan will also need to be the subject of a public hearing under the new law. The deadline for submission of the local plan to the state is May 15.

Wasiuk said he would need assistance from the public works department to address water in culverts and "ditch maintenance." He added that he would also consult with the conservation commission because "we want to know more about these freshwater habitats."

Town Meeting

Kuklewicz entertained the board with a preliminary reading of the warrant for the annual town meeting.

The warrant contains a grand total of 27 articles. These include the operating budgets for the town of Montague and its water pollution control facility; assessments for the Gill-Montague Regional and Franklin County Technical school districts; several addressing capital needs; one allocating funds from the new cannabis stabilization account to a variety of programs; a complex article on easements needed to construct a new pedestrian bridge over the power canal; an appropriation of \$5,000 to join the Pioneer Valley Mosquito Control District; and a petitioned article to support ending state subsidies for biomass plants.

The final pair of articles are a proposal by the town tree committee to add a tree ordinance to the Montague bylaws, and the establishment of a revolving fund for trees. Kuklewicz said he would prefer to see the bylaw discussion delayed until a fall special town meeting, but it appears that a motion will still appear on the May 22 warrant. According to town counsel, the motion can not legally be tabled, but a "no" vote

this spring would not undermine the proposal's status in the fall.

The board did not vote on the warrant, which will probably be subject to a final vote at its next meeting. Ellis said that except for the "late arrivals," most of the articles had already been endorsed by the selectboard and finance committee. Fin com chair Jen Audley said her committee had voted to recommend all financial articles.

Public Works

The board executed an agreement with the engineering firm Wright-Pierce for assistance with "High Flow Management and Effluent Limits Compliance Plans for administrative order CWA-AO-RO1-FY21-14..."

What this apparently means is that Wright Pierce will help implement and monitor a plan for reducing excessive discharge from the town wastewater plant into the Connecticut River during major rain events, recently documented by the federal Environmental Protection Agency.

The total cost of the agreement, which will be funded out of the facility's operating budget, is "not to exceed \$26,500."

An even more complex item involved a series of amendments to agreements with Kearsarge Montague LLC, which is capping and constructing a solar array on the old burn dump on Sandy Lane. The board also executed a "notice of ground lease" with the company and a related affidavit with a firm called the Commonwealth Land Title Insurance Company.

Ellis explained that the documents gave Kearsarge a right of way to access its existing solar arrays (Phase 1) from the new array on the burn dump (Phase 2). "We look at [the proposed amendments] as very administrative and procedural, and not generally consequential," he said.

Kearsarge vice president Everett Tatelbaum said Ellis had described the rationale behind the documents "really well," and added that they were designed "to memorialize the shift in the access road that goes west to east from Sandy Lane."

The board then voted to execute each of the documents individually.

On a simpler note, the board approved a \$220 payment to the Berkshire Design Group for a meeting at Spinner Park last March. Brian McHugh also reviewed the progress of the park restoration project, scheduled to be completed in the coming months.

A \$3,000 agreement with Harold Eaton and Associates to survey Montague Center Park was also executed. The survey, previously approved by Montague town meeting, may be a preliminary to an eventual renovation of that park.

Personnel

The selectboard accepted the retirement of long time plumbing/electrical inspector Herb Hohengasser and voted to replace him with John Letourneau until June 30. Board members were effusive in their praise of Hohengasser, and Kuklewicz told this reporter that the retiring inspector would be "a worthy subject for research."

Again acting as the personnel board, the board executed an agreement between the town and the National Association of Government Employees to "reactivate the position of Assistant Treasurer Collector." Ellis called the negotiations with the union on this

issue "amiable."

Ellis updated the board on the progress of hiring a new building inspector. He said the hiring committee will begin evaluating resumes this week, and hopes to schedule interviews in the next two weeks.

"All of this makes hiring a new inspector by May 27 something of a challenge to conceive of," said Ellis, referring to the announced retirement date of current inspector Chris Rice. Ellis also noted that Rice was "flexible as to exactly when his end date would be."

Other Business

The board approved the use of public property for a number of spring and summer events.

These included "story walks" in Montague Center (May 8), Lake Pleasant (May 15), and Millers Falls (May 22) organized by Hillcrest Elementary School Council; a music and performance event at Peskeomskut Park presented by the School For Contemporary Dance and Thought of Northampton, supported by Shea Presents (May 8); and a puppet show at the same park sponsored by Montague Public Libraries (July 30).

Kuklewicz read aloud a proclamation submitted by tree committee chair David Detmold. The proclamation memorializes Arbor Day, which was initiated by J. Sterling Morton in 1872 in Nebraska and will be celebrated in Montague this Friday.

The board endorsed the proclamation. Though it was not mentioned in the statement, the tree committee will celebrate Arbor Day by planting trees in four villages this Friday and in Montague Center this Saturday.

Ellis gave an update on the progress of the General Pierce Bridge renovation project, with the bridge closing for work that very day. He said that he had no information about the progress of discussions with the project manager, Northern Construction, which has presented a proposal to paint the upper portion of the bridge, and also close the structure to pedestrian traffic in exchange for an earlier completion date.

The board discussed the possibility that automobiles from Greenfield being rerouted from the General Pierce to the Fifth Street bridge should be directed to make a right-hand turn onto Canal Street to avoid congestion. They decided to consult on the issue with the police chief, the department of public works, and the transportation engineer currently evaluating that intersection under a state grant.

Town planner Walter Ramsey discussed a request by state senator Joanne Comerford to put the funds for a partial demolition of the Strathmore complex, which had already been inserted in a previous legislative bond bill, into this coming year's annual capital plan. Ellis explained that the previous earmark did not authorize the actual expenditure of the funds.

The board endorsed the request, which has a price tag of \$5 million.

As the meeting was adjourning, Kuklewicz announced that the two committees evaluating Montague police policies, created last year in the wake of Black Lives Matter protests, will issue their reports this week. The reports will be posted on the town website.

The next scheduled selectboard meeting will be on May 3.



**LOOKING BACK:
10 YEARS AGO THIS WEEK**

Here's the way it was on April 21 and 28, 2011: News from the Montague Reporter's archive.

GCC Ribbon Cutting Revelations

The shakers and movers who made the \$31 million renovation of Greenfield Community College's main building a reality gathered in front of the newly renovated, spacious, glass windowed 'core' section of the college for a ribbon cutting on Thursday, to expound on their views.

The renovation converts a building designed for the California desert to one more suitable for the New England climate.

The light and airy 89,000-square-foot renovation, glistening with glass, is a beauty to behold. The entrance is now at ground level, doing away with the 44-step Aztec temple stairs that formerly intimidated as well as blocked the handicapped. Access from one section of the building to the other is now possible without going through outside courtyards.

Thursday's ribbon cutting saw no shortage of speakers. State senator Stanley Rosenberg, senator Stephen Brewer, representative Stephen Kulik and sheriff Christopher Donelan, as well as a plethora of state officials from Boston each told of their part in bringing this project to fruition, beginning in 2009.

GCC president Robert Pura enthusiastically introduced speakers and applauded the completion of improvements, such as the level walkway to the entry, the Green heat source from geothermal wells replacing expensive inefficient electric heating, and the energy conserving construction.

Great Falls Farmers Market Granted Permit

The Montague selectboard voted on Monday to approve the opening of the Great Falls Farmers Market, on Wednesday, May 4.

The market will take place every Wednesday afternoon through

October 26, from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m., on the corner of Avenue A and 2nd Street. Residents and visitors can look forward to local produce peddled by a variety of vendors.

Market coordinator Don Clegg reported that although there had been some delay in obtaining the needed insurance this year, he had received a letter from the Montague Economic Development and Industrial Corporation (which owns the land in front of the former Cumberland Farms building where the market takes place) at the last minute confirming that coverage would be secured.

Clegg said the market has already confirmed ten vendors, and two community groups to kick off the season.

Montague's First Renaissance Faire Approaches

About two dozen minstrels, wenches, merry men, and townspeople from a shire town not unlike Nottingham gathered at the Montague Grange on Sunday to rehearse their parts for the upcoming Mutton and Mead Medieval Festival, to take place Saturday, June 18 on the grounds of the Millers Falls Rod and Gun Club.

The sheriff was there, and Robin Hood too, along with divers characters like a tavern keeper, his family and a village blacksmith. Of course, wherever people in these parts are dressing up in period costume and assuming broad Midland accents, Kim Gregory, ye Olde Town Crier from Erving, is never far from the action.

Gregory said he had been spending a good bit of time in the local tavern, merely to gather news of Robin and his Merry Men, mind you, in advance of Sunday's rehearsal, which was preceded by a banquet laid out on a groaning board in one corner of the Grange hall, of which one and all partook.

The whole event is a fundraiser for the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts. If you bring three non-perishable food items to the festival, it will get you two dollars off the ticket price.



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TWO BRIDGES from page A1

position of General in 1911. He retired from the militia the following year, but continued to be called "General," and wore his uniform at numerous public events.

By the time the bridge at Montague City was being rebuilt, Pierce had become a member of the Republican majority in the state legislature, the body that bestowed the bridge his name. The decision was opposed at the time by veterans' organizations in Greenfield and Turners Falls, who suggested instead the names of two deceased veterans. Their efforts failed to garner sufficient support on Beacon Hill but Pierce, having lost the veterans' support, was subsequently voted out of office.

Age and Nature

The current Bridge of Names in Lake Pleasant seems to have avoided this problem by using the name as a device for fundraising. According to village historian David James, the original footbridge was built in 1882, the "heyday" of the Spiritualist encampment era, by a summer resident and builder from Greenfield named Frank Bickford.

This first bridge, whose name was not in a document provided by James, seems to have survived the 1907 fire that destroyed half of the village's structures. But its "best days were long behind it" by the late 1920s, so it was reconstructed with funding from a wealthy Spiritualist from New York to honor her son who had died in an auto accident. Thus it was named the "Fred Rutter Memorial Bridge."

By the 1960s the Rutter bridge had either collapsed naturally or because it had become a "menace to any human traffic," depending on which source the historian prefers. In the early 1970s, a new organization called the Lake Pleasant Village Association (LPVA)

began a campaign to construct a third bridge across the Dingle.

This time pickets with names were sold to raise construction and maintenance funds. These adorned the sides of the bridge, and lend it its name.

In the current century, both the General Pierce and the Bridge of Names have continued to be challenged by age and nature. The General Pierce has frequently been closed during the past decade to repair large holes in its deck. These well-publicized closings have caused some local residents to take extreme measures, such as opening the windows when crossing on the theory that a car falling into the river will fill up with water more quickly, making escape easier.

In 2019 the state ordered the bridge reduced to one lane, with cars coming from alternate directions regulated by stop lights, after gaping holes in the deck kept appearing on the front pages of local newspapers. The state also announced that a renovation project was being considered.

The Bridge of Names was struck by a falling tree during heavy winds in October 2020. (The tree and collapsing bridge briefly trapped a resident crossing the bridge.) The LPVA began a new fundraising campaign to pay for the repair, but also approached the town for potential assistance.

Town officials, fearing that grant assistance might require a state-approved design proposal, warned of the exploding cost of bridge repairs. They also expressed concerns about the structure's legal status. "We could never find anything in the deeds that would give the Village Association a right-of-way, or that we owned the bridge," Mike Brown, superintendent of the Turners Falls Water District, told WBUR. "I just think it was a handshake deal back in the late 1800s."

An undated newspaper article in the LPVA



Work was underway Wednesday to rebuild the section of the Bridge of Names destroyed in an October windstorm.

files – probably from the 1970s – references a water district official as saying the district had given the LPVA an easement when they purchased the Dingle area from the Association, but any documentation of the easement seems to have disappeared.

Differences of Opinion

There is no controversy over who owns the General Pierce Bridge. It is a state structure, and in 2019 the state announced that it would fund significant repairs. Months went by as local officials inspected the state "bridge list" in an attempt to guess a time frame. Finally

the state announced that it would begin a design process soon, and slated the beginning of the project for some point in 2021.

At a packed public hearing in February 2020 in Montague, MassDOT announced that it would focus on fixing the bridge's deck and bottom structure, at a cost of nearly \$18.6 million. Much to the consternation of those attending the hearing, the fix was projected to last only 20 years. The failure to address the "ugly" peeling paint and rust on the bridge's upper portion came in for almost universal criticism, but apparently to no avail.

Last December Northern Construction Service LLC, which was awarded a \$13.8 million contract to manage the work, proposed a \$6.7 million change order to paint and remediate structural problems with the bridge's upper section. The company pointed out that the change order would only bring the cost to \$20.5 million, given how low its winning bid was. The company also suggested it could reduce the time frame for reopening by six months, if it could close the bridge to pedestrian traffic.

MassDOT issued a press release last week announcing the closure of the bridge, citing the original reopening date (December 2023) and cost (\$13.8 million), so the agency appears to have rejected these proposals. An agency spokesperson told the Reporter that it had not received a requested proposal for the total-closure option, and that the proposed paint job was "beyond the scope of the current project."

This Wednesday, Matt Atwood of the LPVA sent out an announcement stating that "The Bridge of Names renovation is not complete but the bridge is open!"

The Lake Pleasant repair was primarily funded by an online "GoFundMe" campaign and individual donations, not through selling new named pickets. The final cost will probably not exceed \$30,000.



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OF THE MONTAGUE REPORTER

APRIL 29, 2021

Above: "Without the orange vest and paved road, it could all almost be 100 years ago," says Sally Pick, who captured this recent Montague Center scene. Thanks, Sally!

ArtBeat by Trish Crapo

Love at First Sight

GOSHEN – "I fell in love with Goshen, and Goshen fell in love with me," said Richard Richardson, speaking to me by phone over the weekend.

Richardson is the mind – and muscle – behind Three Sisters Sanctuary, an unusual destination near the top of a rise on Route 112, heading south from Ashfield.

The first thing you see when you pull in is a large wooden building lavishly decorated with colorful folk-art cut-outs. An archway formed of old bicycles frames a small gravel yard that holds – more old bicycles. Beautiful, rusted vintage tricycles, and a child-sized airplane on wheels are parked atop a shed roof overhanging the windows of what you learn soon enough is the Good Time Stove Company, a stove restoration business Richardson started when he moved to the property in the 1970s.

Oh, and the Goshen Tin Man – a towering sculpture, taller than the building, based on the Wizard of Oz character, complete with a red heart. Heart is what the Three Sisters Sanctuary is all about.

Astonishment

As you walk through the gate into the Sanctuary, you can stop and ring a bell, which one visitor said made her body reverberate,



CRAPO PHOTO

The Tin Man of Goshen stands watch over the Good Time Stove Company at Three Sisters Sanctuary.

just as the bell had. Once you're through the gates, there's so much to look at, it's hard to know where to begin. Astonishment might be the right word to express the sanctuary's first impact.

To the right, straw figures dance in a grassy alcove. The day I was there, a young boy paused to study, then mimic, their gestures.

Ahead, a massive stone fireplace, its stones interspersed with thousands of tiny glass pebbles, shells, beads, and figurines, is topped by a mosaic dragon head which leans back as if to roar. And,

while I didn't see this happen, photos on the website show the dragon spouting fire.

To the left, mosaic mannequins sit on stones, their faces glittering with unknowable emotion. Beyond them is the Fairy House, a small shed you can sit inside and look up to see Barbies transformed by scraps of fabric, cloth flowers, feathers, beads, and other finery into fairies that float above you.

To resist being overwhelmed by the sheer abundance of decoration, I found I had to slow down. Take

see **ARTBEAT** page B2

GREAT FALLS APPLE COLUMN

By ANNABEL LEVINE

TURNERS FALLS – Growers wanted! Thousands of seeds need homes. The Great Falls Apple Corps is currently in possession of an abundance of seeds, and we need help distributing them!

First, we'd like to see low-to-no-budget gardeners get to grow their choice. We think food is a human right, and therefore we want whoever wants to grow their own to be able to, regardless of finances. We have been giving out packets of seeds at our weekly free table, so come on by and see what we've got this Saturday, May 1, at the Shea Theater from 12 to 3 p.m.

Next, we want to encourage gardeners who are al-



Some of the many seeds that the Apple Corps has available.

ready growing food to expand their garden just a little and plant these seeds and then harvest some for donation. For inspiration, look no further than local group Drawdown Montague. They started collecting excess garden produce last summer, and ended up donating weekly carloads of food to our neighbors through the Survival Center.

They are gearing up for their second year right now, so get in touch with them if you want to find out more at info@drawdownmontague.earth.

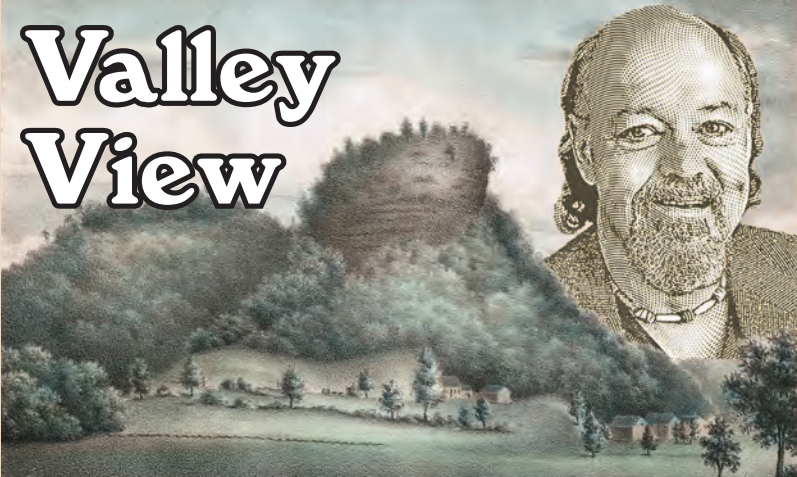
Lastly, we have enough of some seeds for larger plantings. For those who have small farms, or are already cultivating acres, we would be happy to provide seed to grow for donation. Perhaps you don't want to grow them in the field, but you could start them in a greenhouse for us to distribute? Sharing resources is how we make our community stronger!

Once there is food to donate, we here at the Great Falls Apple Corps can distribute fresh produce at our weekly free table, and through prepared food made through community partnerships with local restaurants. We are working on scaling up these operations, and increasing our capacity to receive, keep, and process donated food. More exciting details coming soon...

For now, we've shared a link to our current seed inventory on GFAC's Facebook and Instagram so you can

see **APPLE CORPS** page B4

Valley View



ORRA WHITE HITCHCOCK PRINT

By GARY SANDERSON

GREENFIELD – Just curious, do kids still play stickball?

Probably not. They say it's bad for the arm to fire a light tennis ball day after day at a strike zone drawn in chalk on a brick wall.

Hmmmm? Maybe so. But playing stickball is what we did whenever we couldn't round up enough players for a diamond game, and never did I experience significant arm trouble. Early-season tendonitis? Yeah, of course. I think we all battled a touch of that at some point. But nothing serious. That's what those pungent tubs of greasy Red Hot and liquid Bengay were for. Just rub it liberally into the affected area, work out the kinks warming up and let her rip. The tenderness would linger for a few days, then vanish.

So here I sit, closing in on 70, away from the game I loved for 30 years, pain free and still capable of throwing. No, not like I once could; and, yes, it takes longer to loosen up the cranky old right wing. Plus, my balky left knee complicates matters, altering my landing and follow-through. But once loose, I'm confident I could still sink the carnival dink on a cool autumn night.

Our favorite stickball court was up against the shop-classroom wall in the parking lot behind the high school. The hitter faced the high-school diamond from deep left field. All we needed was three players – pitcher, batter, outfielder – for daylong, round-robin competition. One strike zone fit all, and trust me, it was much bigger than the one you see in hi-def on flat-screen TV these days. That was a negative. It's always best for a hitter to narrow his or her strike zone. The positive was that a tennis ball is smaller than a baseball and tougher to hit sweet.

I wish I knew that tiny major-league strike zone we see on TV, and, more important, was disciplined enough to make the pitcher hit it during my years as a free-swinging, free-wheeling ballplayer. So, yes, that big stickball strike zone did give us bad habits. Either that or we developed into decent bad-ball hitters. I always thought the strike zone extended higher than the one we see on TV.

The three-man rotation in those

old, round-robin stickball contests went from batter to outfielder to pitcher, and we each kept our individual tally of runs. Outs were recorded by strikeouts, anything caught in the air, and ground balls fielded on the pavement by the pitcher. We used salvaged, cracked, wooden bats with taped handles, saving good bats for real games. Impoverished city players were said to use broomsticks, which I never saw.

Our batters were protected from rainy weather under the flat-roofed building's deep overhang. Far behind the pitcher loomed the high-school diamond's backstop, way out of reach for us. To the left stood a basketball hoop with a galvanized backboard and metal net. To the right was the "Aggie building," and behind it the garage, where tractors and other grounds-maintenance equipment was stored. We'd drop a marker in short left field to establish a foul line. The right-field line was marked by a lilac bush two-thirds of the way down the Aggie building's west wall.

The ground rules were simple: groundballs past the pitcher were singles; to the lilac bush in the air was a double; past the Aggie building was a triple, and to the garage was a home run. Walks and errors also put imaginary runners on base.

Round and round we went, games lasting all day. On nights of little league games, we'd rush home around 4, get a quick bite, dress in our white, woolen, South Deerfield uniforms with red trim, and head to the little league field at the base of Sugarloaf for a game against Sunderland, Hatfield, Whately, Conway, or Old Deerfield.

Our seasons didn't end with the school year, just after the summer solstice, as they do today. We played all summer, savoring hot, sticky weather made for baseball.

I never could understand it when, working on the *Recorder* sports desk, scribes were taking youth-baseball scores for league-championship series before the Fourth of July. Why, I thought out loud, would anyone complete a youth-league season before the best baseball weather arrived?

The answer was that parents didn't want the season to interfere with their summer-vacation plans. Sad. Who's youth baseball for, see **VALLEY VIEW** page B8

Pet of the Week



CARMODY COLLAGE

“SPECKLES & BOINT”

Hi there. We are pint-sized cuties with adorable ears and perfect little white noses. We'd love a home that is able to let us out for a lot of explore time and keep us well supplied with veggies!

We are really excited to go to a new home but change in environment is pretty stressful for small animals like us. If you're the lucky family who takes us home please give us several days to settle in before taking us out of our enclosure.

The adoption fee for rabbits is \$75 for a single or a pair. Rabbits are easy to litter-box train, and we've begun that at the shelter!

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.

Senior Center Activities MAY 3 THROUGH 7

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 Betteres 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

ARTBEAT from page B1

a closer look. As I walked a labyrinth overlooking a watery marsh, the gravel exerted a slight drag under my boots and I realized I could either be impatient, or consciously put that impatience aside. It was going to take however long it took.

And as I wandered from there toward the grassy amphitheater, where live music was often held before COVID, winding paths lined with cedars slowed me down, too. I found myself just as engrossed in the massive boulders as by any human-made object (and there are many!) in the sanctuary.

In addition to the work Richardson has done himself, there is artwork by others, organized in separate outdoor galleries. Look on the website to see examples of work by John Stritch, James Kitchen, Dana Salisbury, Robert Markey, Montague sculptor Jon Bander, and others.

Decades-Long Dream

Richardson laughed when he recalled what the land was like back in 1976.

“I bought a stone dump,” he said.

The town had unloaded unwanted stones on the property during road building projects, and used them to fill in the adjacent wetland, which back then was considered an acceptable, even desirable, thing to do.

“I knew when I bought it, there was something out of whack with the property,” Richard said. “It felt like it didn't have a soul, that it didn't have a life.”

Richardson's daughter Sara LaBonte, the middle of the three sisters the sanctuary is named to honor, said that when she was growing up, the property was more of a homestead, with a garden and some goats. Richardson began the first gardens and stonework with his brother Chuck and continued the work after his brother died in 1993. Working on the sanctuary was a way to heal his grief and help him through the loss of his brother, Richardson said.

In 2003 the unexpected death, due to aneurysms, of his oldest daughter Tina Marie deepened his commitment. Just a month before she died, Richardson said, Tina Marie had stood in one of the outdoor spaces he'd created and told him: “Something is going on in your life. You're becoming an artist.”

“I never thought of myself as an artist,” Richardson said. “I just thought of myself as a landowner who was obsessed.”

The amphitheater, one of the sanctuary's largest single projects, was built to honor Tina Marie, because she loved outdoor music. It took six years and \$14,000 worth of stone and other materials donated by Tina Marie's classmate Gary Warner from the Goshen Stone Company to complete the project.

The day I was there, a group of friends from Holyoke had scheduled time to gather there for a *Hobbit*-themed birthday picnic, complete with costumes and props.

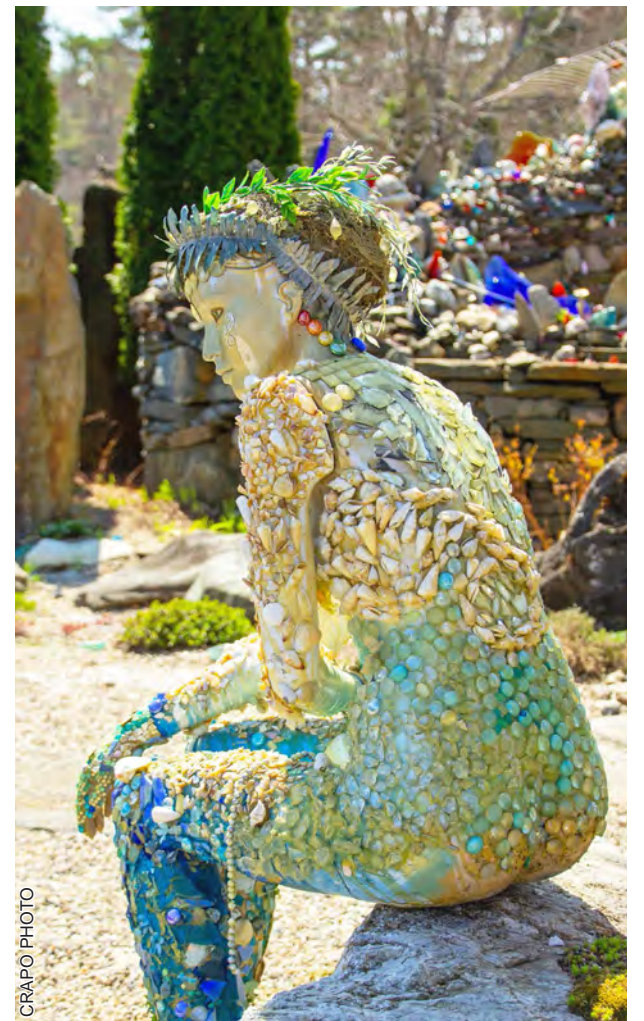
Destiny

Richardson said the process of creating the sanctuary still amazes him.

“One tree goes in, another tree goes in. Two hundred trees later –”

Richardson paused and laughed. “Two hundred trees later,” he repeated, “I'm asking myself, ‘How is this happening? Why is this happening? Where is this talent that comes naturally to me coming from?’ I grew up in the suburbs. We lived on a 100- by 150-foot lot.”

“This is someplace that was meant to be,” Richardson continued. “I am the lucky one. Because I was chosen to



CRAPPO PHOTO

One of two mosaic “greeters” who sit inside the Sanctuary.

be the one to do it. When I take my last breath, you will not hear me say, ‘If only.’ I'll be saying, ‘Thank you.’”

On the way back to my car, I stopped to look again at all the colorful works of folk art on the stone building that create what Richardson later described as “organized chaos.” They were made by veterans, Richardson told me. An arts therapist at the Veteran's Administration who used to bring veterans to the sanctuary for tours began to talk with Richardson about projects that might give them a chance to be creative.

Richardson chuckled as he related the story. “I told her, ‘The most challenging project is I have over a hundred Barbie dolls that I would like to transform into fairies.’”

“And she goes, ‘These are vets, man. These are guys who are here because they've had some trauma in their lives.’”

Richardson paused before continuing as the art therapist, clearly relenting, “I guess I'd have to find the right guys...”

And she did.

Next time I go to Three Sisters Sanctuary – and there will be a next time – I'll sit a little longer in the Fairy House, imagining veterans at the VA Hospital transforming ordinary Barbies into magical beings. Because this, too, is what the Sanctuary is all about.

Three Sisters Sanctuary is located at 188 Cape Street (Route 112) in Goshen. It is open daily from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Adults are \$10, kids are free, and no one will be turned away for lack of funds. Masks and social distancing required. Call (413) 268-3677 or see threesistersanctuary.com for more information. Scheduling for events, or for stays in the art-filled Airbnb on site, can be accessed through the website.



CRAPPO PHOTO

A view from the far side of the Sanctuary's amphitheater, looking towards the dragon.

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Montague Community Television News

Meetings & Sports!

By HANNAH BROOKMAN

TURNERS FALLS – The Montague board of health met on Zoom on Wednesday the 21st with updates on vaccines, clinics, mosquito spraying, and more! The town's police equity and use of force committee met on Thursday the 15th, and their Zoom meeting is available to watch as well.

And in Sports, the final games of the Turners Falls High School Volleyball season are available for viewing, on Vimeo and on Channel 17.

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

well as featured on Vimeo.

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

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

Something going on you think others would like to see? If you get in touch, we can show you how easy it is to use a camera and capture the moment. Contact us at (413) 863-9200 or infomontaguevtv@gmail.com.

Learning to Fly Fish: Part III

Ariel Jones, a pioneer of the Turners Falls art scene who passed away recently, penned a series of 14 articles in the MR in 2005 on her experiences learning to fly fish. This is the third in the series.

By ARIEL JONES

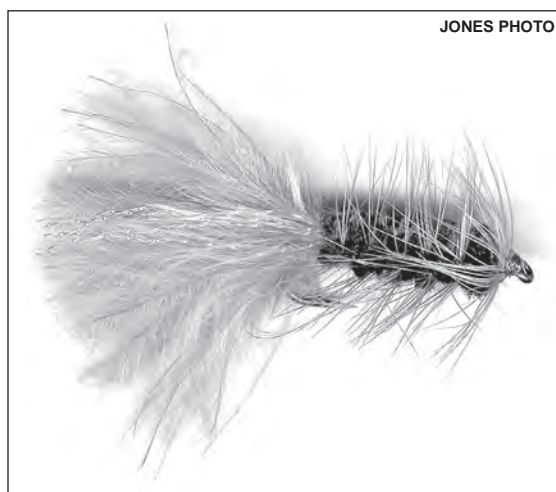
MONTAGUE – It was a perfect day. My friends gave me a box of flies for my birthday, which thrilled me. They were beautiful!

Tom and I set off in the afternoon. This time we went to the Swift River, and it was very different from my experience in the Ware River. First of all, I was wearing waders, the water was shallower and clearer, and I did not feel so vulnerable. From practice, the rod and the line had become more familiar. I was beginning to feel more committed to really learning how to fly fish, and stopped trying to remember everything all at once. And the clarity of the water allowed me to actually spot trout!

This was an amazing experience, completely different from wading and casting in the murky Ware: seeing the fish, not just assuming they were in the water somewhere. (My feelings about the Ware River are very different now, but that is for later.)

I had barely begun to cast when I felt a pull on my line and realized that a trout had struck and was hooked. I was so stunned that it took a moment to figure out what to do. I had been preparing to try to learn to fly fish and had lost sight of the possibility of catching an actual fish!

I managed to bring him in, remove the hook, and admire this lovely little rainbow who had offered



"What fish think they are biting when they hit a Woolly Bugger is somewhat a mystery." (Cameron Larsen, fly tier.)

himself up to me for my birthday. Holding him gently in the water while removing the hook, we released him back into the river and he swam off.

There was no escaping it now. I was hooked, and not to be released. I didn't catch another that day, but I had a great time. Learning to fly fish became much more real, not so overwhelming. It is impossible to learn everything at once. You just keep going out, and each time is different from the previous one. Each time you learn something else, get a little more comfortable with the environment of a river, how to walk safely in it, and eventually, how to read the water.

To be continued...

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

Put a Poem in Your Pocket

TURNERS FALLS – The Sheffield School is taking the lead in introducing National Poem in Your Pocket Day this Thursday, April 29 to the local area. Last year the school's efforts led to fifth-grader Genesis Rios being invited to read her original poem over the air on New England Public Radio.

Second grade students and teachers, along with principal Melissa Pitrat, art teacher Jocelyn Castro-Santos, school librarian Jessica Nadeau, and the Friends of Sheffield will work on a school-wide community outreach activity inspired by Shel Silverstein's poem "Poet's Tree."

They are encouraging students, staff, and local community members to select a poem that is special to them and hang it from a Poet Tree set up out front of Sheffield School. Everyone is invited to take a poem, as well as share a poem, by leaving a bagged poem on the trees.

Nadeau has been leading students in a month-long study of poetry during April, studies from which they may choose to select a poem that speaks to them. Students and staff may also choose to write

their own poem if they are so inspired.

Ziploc bags to shield pocket poems from the weather have been provided by the Friends of Sheffield. These will be hung on the Poet Tree branches with ornament hooks on either April 29 or 30. Poet Trees will remain standing for one week, coming down the afternoon of Wednesday, May 5.

The Sheffield school community invites everyone to share a poem by visiting the Poet Tree! Be sure to follow COVID social-distancing guidelines and masking when you do so.

Poem in Your Pocket Day was started in 2002 in New York City as part of the National Poetry Month of April. Six years later, the Academy of American Poets spread this holiday through all 50 states, encouraging the entire nation to carry a poem with them that inspired their hearts and called them to greatness, and then to share that poem with others.

Other ways to participate in this national Poem in Your Pocket Day include sharing poetry on social media with the hashtag [#pocketpoem](https://twitter.com/pocketpoem). More suggestions are online at poets.org.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE MONTAGUE POLICE LOG

Truck On Bike Path; Neighbors Harass Wheelchair User; Brush Fire At Train Tracks; Man Walks Back And Forth

Monday, 4/19

8:50 a.m. Caller from Grove Street states that as he drove into the downtown area, he could smell it in his car. Control notified to dispatch fire department. Officer on scene advises it looks like a vehicle spilled fluid over approximately 50 yards. FD put down Speedy-Dry.

12:42 p.m. Report of a disturbance between drivers which started on the canal bridge and may be mobile now. Caller observed a male in a small car yelling and swearing at a female in an older black sedan, demanding she get out of her vehicle while at the stop sign. Female turned left uphill toward Third Street; male accelerated his vehicle after her. Officer checked downtown area at length; did not locate any disturbances or vehicles following each other.

1:06 p.m. Report of syringe behind the bench in front of Dolan and Dolan on Avenue A. Item disposed of.

1:16 p.m. Report of two or three teenagers under the tent closest to the Hillcrest Elementary School building; caller advises the tent was vandalized overnight; unsure if the teens there now were involved, but they are not supposed to be there. Teens moved along; no damage observed.

1:36 p.m. Report of a truck driving on the bike path. Was seen heading toward Depot Street, drove on the grass for a period of time, then back on the bike path and onto a dirt path that leads to Cabot Station. Officers searched area at length. Spoke with parties who advised vehicle exited the bike path. Spoke with operator of vehicle, who advised he works for FirstLight Power.

2:05 p.m. Report of wires down or hanging in/over the road on G Street. Verizon line; TFFD coiling up the wire.

2:14 p.m. Report of wire down in driveway at Highland School Apartments; unknown if it is affecting travel on Millers Falls Road, but caller only observed it in the driveway. Officer advises Verizon lines; will coil them up; advises FD can cancel. Verizon advised.

6:06 p.m. 911 caller reporting a young male party riding a four-wheeler on Randall Wood Drive without a helmet. Party gone on arrival.

Wednesday, 4/21
12:15 a.m. Caller from Avenue A states that the person in the apartment above him is dragging furniture around and stomping, making a lot of noise. Received call from involved male upstairs, who stated the caller had just gone up

Street; unsure where it is coming from, but as soon as he drove into the downtown area, he could smell it in his car. Control notified to dispatch fire department. Officer on scene advises it looks like a vehicle spilled fluid over approximately 50 yards. FD put down Speedy-Dry.

4:06 p.m. Report of wires and a tree down that are blocking River Road in Gill. Shelburne Control advised.

8:20 p.m. Caller requesting officer to stand by while he collects a few items from a residence on Montague City Road. Resident of that location texted caller stating he can come now. Officer reports female party very uncooperative, verbally aggressive toward both parties. Male was able to collect his belongings.

Thursday, 4/22
7:55 a.m. Multiple harassing phone calls received by dispatch.

2:45 p.m. Caller reporting that someone posing as her cousin messaged her asking her to send them multiple gift cards in \$100 denominations and send them photos of the cards. Caller realized it was a scam and did not purchase any cards.

6:59 p.m. 911 caller states that a male tried to punch him in the face after an argument at Carroll's Market. Officer advises that nothing physical occurred and the caller just wants it on record.

Friday, 4/23
11:59 a.m. Caller playing news recordings in background; no voice contact.

1:40 p.m. Report of syringe on Old Northfield Road. Caller will mark the spot with an X so it will be easier to locate. Item retrieved.

2:02 p.m. Report of brush fire near train tracks at Turners Falls and Ferry roads; train currently passing through; approximately 100 feet from a residence. Conferenced with Shelburne Control. Officer advises fire is approaching the road in the area of the dry bridge. Officer advising railroad tracks are on fire. Shelburne Control advised and contacting Pan Am. Officer advising Turners Falls Road closed between Old Northfield and Swamp roads; requesting DPW with barricades. Road reopened.

2:13 p.m. Caller advising that he received information that a runaway from his group home may be at a G Street address. Advised caller to contact Greenfield PD.

4:10 p.m. Caller from Federal Street states that somebody hit his rock wall today and left, leaving significant damage to the wall. Report taken.

Saturday, 4/24
3:09 p.m. Caller request-

ing to speak with officer re: an ongoing issue with people speeding on Country Club Lane. Officer spoke with senior board member of golf course, who advised they will look into ways to get the traffic issue taken care of.

3:54 p.m. Caller from Montague City Road would like it on record that two water barrels were taken from his farm.

8:41 p.m. Report of loud party on Third Street. Noise coming from a male party playing music from his vehicle. Advised he will turn it down.

10:23 p.m. Report of motorcycle accident at East Main and Bridge streets, bike vs. unknown. Caller states operator is unconscious. Shelburne Control conferences; units advised. Per officer, not as reported. Operator slid in the sand. Request to cancel EMS. Operator signed a refusal and is getting a ride home; will make arrangements for bike to be towed. No signs of intoxication from the operator.

Sunday, 4/25
7:40 a.m. Multiple calls from party playing recordings and talking over the recordings, nonsensical speech and baby talk.

11:45 a.m. Report of female yelling and swearing on Power Street between Railroad Salvage and the Patch. Caller cannot make out what she is yelling about. Appears to have a male party with her. Nothing physical observed. Caller not close enough to provide a description. Officer advises units are attempting to make contact with two parties who are believed to be the involved parties on the dirt path to Railroad Salvage/G Street Extension. Parties advised they were looking for something and were being loud, but were not arguing and did not need any assistance.

2:57 p.m. Caller reporting male walking back and forth on Fourth Street; speculated that he may be involved in drug activity; no other observations reported. Referred to an officer.

6:02 p.m. Walk-in party reporting an ongoing issue with a vehicle that trespasses on the Montague Retreat Center property to turkey hunt. Advised of options.

11:05 p.m. Report of vehicle traveling in wrong lane on Gunn Road and almost striking multiple vehicles and a pole. Reported vehicle went onto Route 63 heading toward Leverett. Control advises MSP has the vehicle pulled over in Leverett at this time. Multiple MSP cruisers on scene; they are all set.

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HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE GILL POLICE LOG

Downed Wires; Loose Dogs; Bad Lights

Monday, 3/1

2:02 p.m. Removed unwanted subjects from Main Road residence. Left area without incident.

10 p.m. Caller reported an issue with power lines "putting on a light show" behind his house on West Gill Road.

10:14 p.m. Boyle Road caller reported tree and wires blocking the road.

10:21 p.m. Tree on wires, Dole Road.

10:27 p.m. Trees down on Main Road.

10:36 p.m. Power line down on the French King Highway, blocking east-bound lane. Caller reported he drove through some lines and they took the side mirrors off his Walmart tractor trailer unit, and smashed out the truck's passenger side window.

Tuesday, 3/2

4:58 a.m. Tree and wires down, French King Highway. Eversource on scene, advising wires belong to Verizon.

5:24 a.m. Boyle Road caller very upset that the tree and wires across his driveway have not been removed.

5:41 a.m. Report of a tree or large limb blocking part of Main Road.

7:38 a.m. Caller reports tree blocking Hoe Shop Road, power lines involved, near the Otter Pond Trail.

10:59 a.m. Main Road caller has found a pitbull puppy running around.

11:55 a.m. Tree and wires down on Center Road. HD cleared roadway.

4:41 p.m. Tree and wires still down on Boyle Road, blocking the roadway.

5:18 p.m. Assisted Bernardston PD, South Street.

Wednesday, 3/3

1:24 p.m. Caller from Barton Cove reported unsafe ice fishing.

1:51 p.m. Caller from the French King Highway advises he passed a car transport tractor-trailer unit dragging one of its ramps.

Thursday, 3/4

11:04 a.m. Assisted Erving PD in disturbance on the French King Highway.

Friday, 3/5

7:39 a.m. Responded to a suicide threat on the French King Highway. Subject taken for evaluation.

1:51 p.m. Motor vehicle accident reported, French King Highway. No personal injuries, no fluids.

Saturday, 3/6

12:43 p.m. Caller from Walnut Street complained of a neighbor continually walking a dog on their property.

5:48 p.m. Disabled Jeep reported on Main Road. Tow en route.

7:35 p.m. Welfare check on subjects fishing off the French King Highway. No services needed.

Sunday, 3/7

11:38 a.m. Parking complaint from French King Highway.

2:24 p.m. Pine Street caller

complained of noise from neighbors' generator.

2:50 p.m. Six parking tickets issued on the French King Highway.

6:06 p.m. Montague dispatch took a call from a concerned female at Unity Park who can see kids skating near the boat dock on Riverview Drive.

6:45 p.m. Caller from Walnut Street requested a call regarding neighbor issue.

Monday, 3/8

8:23 a.m. Assisted citizen on Main Road.

10:37 a.m. Ongoing animal complaint, Walnut Street.

10:39 a.m. Assisted citizen on Main Road with noise complaint.

7:18 p.m. Boyle Road caller reported wires down, two small fires.

Tuesday, 3/9

3:57 p.m. Animal complaint on Main Road. Transported dog to regional shelter and met with ACO.

8:13 p.m. Received reports of side-by-side ATVs driving on snowmobile trails again.

Wednesday, 3/10

12:29 p.m. Main Road caller reports two dogs, a pit bull and a boxer mix, running around in the road.

3 p.m. Unattended vehicle, French King Bridge. Located owner; no services required.

7:33 p.m. Main Road caller reported lost dogs. Both are at shelter.

Thursday, 3/11

8:16 a.m. Medical emergency, Mountain Road.

12:04 p.m. Barton Cove Road caller advised he could see a person on the ice through binoculars.

Assisted FD in searching along banks.

2:18 p.m. Assisted Bernardston PD on Deer Run Lane.

3:11 p.m. Several calls of a male party on the Turners Falls-Gill Bridge sitting on the railing, armed with a knife. Subject later taken into custody for evaluation.

4:31 p.m. Caller from River Road advised gunshots have been going off for about an hour.

Friday, 3/12

10:38 a.m. Report of a large rock in the roadway, French King Highway.

5:11 p.m. Responded to River Road for house fire. Road temporarily closed.

Saturday, 3/13

11:55 a.m. Suspicious vehicle reported, French King Bridge. Located operator out for a walk.

Sunday, 3/14

9:52 a.m. Assisted Northfield PD with search on Main Street.

2:08 p.m. Caller reports her kids were trying to cross Route 2 at the Turners Falls-Gill Bridge. After pressing the walk button, the light turned green quickly, causing traffic to start before they were across the road. MassDOT given info.

5:57 p.m. Conducted a wel-

fare check on the Turners Falls-Gill Bridge.

Monday, 3/15

7:38 p.m. Received a complaint about burning trash from Main Road.

Tuesday, 3/16

3:11 p.m. Caller from North Cross Road reports his wife picked up two dogs running down middle of the road and brought them home.

7:52 p.m. Report from French King Highway of erratic driving, stopping in travel lane, and texting.

9:02 p.m. Assisted Montague PD on a car stop on the French King Highway.

Wednesday, 3/17

3:17 p.m. Call from the French King Highway advised there may be a malfunction with the lights.

4:01 p.m. Assisted ACO on Main Road with dog issues.

Thursday, 3/18

12 p.m. Responded to two unwanted subjects on Ben Hale Road. Subjects in a white Chevy pickup truck being threatening.

3:18 p.m. Caller from Main and West Gill roads reported brown-colored dog loose in area.

Friday, 3/19

8:15 a.m. Conducted a welfare check on the French King Highway.

2:31 p.m. Responded to two-car motor vehicle accident at Oak Street and Riverview Drive. No injuries or fluids.

7:57 p.m. 911 misdial from Oak Street. Caller states he was trying to dial 411.

Saturday, 3/20

10:08 a.m. Caller from the French King Highway reported erratic driving, passing in a no passing area, speeding and marked-lane violations.

3:49 p.m. Received burglar alarm from Conference Road. Alarm company called back to cancel.

6:14 p.m. Assisted Erving PD on Lester Street. Caller reported a sedan with NH tags parked on the wrong side of the road. Male subject is outside the vehicle yelling and screaming.

Sunday, 3/21

12:23 p.m. Responded to a medical emergency on West Gill Road. Assisted FD and AMR.

6:53 p.m. Party called Montague PD from French King Highway to inquire if they could unlock her vehicle. Same advised her dog was in the vehicle and locked the door. The dog is inside and the window is cracked open. 7 p.m. Entry gained.

Monday, 3/22

1:07 p.m. 911 misdial. Caller said her phone screen is shattered and she was unable to stop from dialing 911.

2 p.m. Call from South Cross Road to report a loose shepherd mix. ACO located dog, transported it to shelter.

6:07 p.m. Caller from Main

Road reporting a boxer-type dog with no collar headed onto Main Road, appeared to be foaming at the mouth and in distress.

6:30 p.m. Caller from West Gill and Main roads located canine from previous call.

Tuesday, 3/23

8:19 a.m. Medical emergency, Riverview Drive. Assisted FD and AMR.

1:07 p.m. Caller from Main Road reported a brown boxer mix running around, and running away when approached. ACO contacted.

Wednesday, 3/24

11:06 a.m. Caller from Franklin Road reported two pitbull-type dogs in her yard. Located and turned over to ACO.

12 noon. HD located two beagles on Main Road. Placed into cruiser.

11:18 p.m. Caller from Chappell Drive states he was "just rocking out" when someone came by and banged on the side of his house ten times, then sped off. Nothing located.

Thursday, 3/25

2:31 a.m. 911 call from Chappell Drive about the earlier incident.

7:55 a.m. Caller from West Gill Road reported loose cows heading toward Main Road.

3:15 p.m. Assisted Bernardston PD with motor vehicle accident.

4:14 p.m. Disabled motor vehicle at French King Highway intersection.

4:46 p.m. Report of past suspicious activity on Munn's Ferry Road.

4:50 p.m. Assisted citizen on Main and West Gill roads. Moped rider asked questions about recording traffic violations with his helmet-mounted camera.

Friday, 3/26

4:47 p.m. Received report from the Gill side of the French King Bridge of a disabled pickup with yellow light on top. Two males were changing a flat.

6:13 p.m. Assisted Bernardston PD with motor vehicle accident on Fox Hill Road. Party called to report trucks speeding up and down the road; one just crashed. No injury.

7:43 p.m. Assisted Main Road citizen with fingerprinting.

Saturday, 3/27

3:44 p.m. Assisted Erving PD with traffic control at a brush fire on East Main Street and Mountain Road.

Tuesday, 3/30

4:57 p.m. Welfare check at Main and Mountain roads. Possible person lying on the road. Unable to locate.

Wednesday, 3/31

12:23 p.m. Medical emergency, Boyle Road.

1:04 p.m. Medical emergency, West Gill Road.

9:47 p.m. Caller from Stonecutter Road asked for an officer in reference to harassing telephone calls.

APPLE CORPS from page B1 see what kinds of seeds we have, and make requests.

Here's just a sample of the seeds we have on hand:

Cucumber: Collier, Double Yield, Early Fortune, Bushy, True Lemon, Poinsett 76, and Garden Sweet Burpless Hybrid.

Pepper: Jalapeno, Traveler Strain, Peach Habanero, Sweet Kaleidoscope Blend, Beaver Dam, and Purple Beauty.

Herbs: Dill, astragalus, and cilantro.

Tomato: Cherry Roma, Black Krim, Peach Blow Sutton, Fox Cher-

ry, and Nebraska Wedding.

Watermelon: Petite Yellow, Sweet Siberian, and Nancy.

Lettuce: Prizehood, Amish Deer Tongue, and Merveille des Quatre Saisons.

Flowers: Snapdragon Tetra Mix, Johnny Jump-Up, purple coneflower, and marigolds (yellow, orange, and Queen Sophia).

Also: beans, eggplant, sorghum, black sesame, and more! Do you know of someone or of a group that could use seeds? Please get in touch with us at greatfalls-applecorps@gmail.com.

Happy growing!



A seedling sends up its first pairs of leaves.

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS

Celebrate Arbor Day In Montague's Villages!

MONTAGUE – Once again, the Montague Tree Advisory Committee, working in cooperation with the Montague Tree Warden and the Town of Montague, will plant trees in each of the five village centers to celebrate Arbor Day:

At 11 a.m. this Friday, April 30, we will plant a Kentucky Coffee tree in the tree belt in front of 370 Montague City Road.

At noon, we will plant a crabapple tree by the Fourth Street Alley on Avenue A.

At 1 p.m., we will plant a Horse Chestnut tree at Highland Park in Millers Falls.

At 5 p.m., we will join with members of the Lake Pleasant Village Association to plant a cherry tree in Rutters Park.

And on Saturday, May 1, at 10

a.m., we will plant an Amur Maple in front of the post office in Montague Center.

We invite residents to join us for any and all of these tree plantings in honor of Arbor Day (masks will be worn, social distance maintained). As the pandemic wanes, we are all looking forward to the rapid reopening of community life and the flourishing of commercial districts in Montague.

We plant these young trees in hopes they will grow to provide shade, beauty and enjoyment in our village centers for many years to come.

If you would like the town to plant a new tree on the tree belt in front of your house, please call (413) 863-9296, and we will add your location to the list.

Immigrant Voices Performance on Sunday

TURNERS FALLS – *Immigrant Voices: A (Digital) Celebration of Arts* returns as a virtual performance this year in collaboration with the Shea Theater on Sunday, May 2 at 7 p.m.

The event showcases the rich and varied artistic traditions represented by immigrants living in western Mass. This year's performances include singers from Haiti, a violinist from Russia, and dancers from Ecuador, Venezuela, and Mexico, among others.

Immigrant Voices was launched at

the Shea Theater several years ago as part of the newly revamped theater's mission to be a community performance space. The Center for New Americans presents the show each year as a showcase of diversity.

Tickets are available through the Center for New Americans' website, www.cnam.org. Tickets are \$10 and proceeds benefit the Center's programs for new immigrants, which include free English lessons, job preparedness workshops, citizenship and immigration legal services, job training, and more.

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MOVIE REVIEW

Nomadland: A Sundance Kid Takes a Poverty Road Trip



By JOANNA JUREWICZ

GREENFIELD – After Bernie’s defeat by HRC in the 2016 primaries and the subsequent revelations of how DNC conspired against him, I have maintained that DNC is to the Democratic Party what the Sundance Institute is to film in America: the status quo presenting itself as the progressive alternative.

It is then no surprise that the insufferable *Nomadland* comes from Sundance-nurtured writer/director Chloe Zhao. Zhao made a name for herself by exploring (or exploiting?) the Pine Ridge Native American Reservation in her debut *Songs That My Brother Taught Me*. Like so many other filmmakers nurtured by Sundance, before becoming a filmmaker Zhao was bred for success at elite boarding schools and premier colleges culminating with NYU Tisch.

And so the defining event of my generation – the Great Recession – gets commemorated in this condescending and bland movie which confuses formlessness with lyricism.

But what is unforgivable is how smoothly *Nomadland* glosses over the poverty which is its *raison d’etre*. It makes it seem as though people’s decisions to put themselves in these totally insane living situations are based solely in their grief and inability to let go of the past. Really, it makes it look like living in a van while dying of cancer is a *choice*.

There is barely a story, just a loosely sketched lukewarm possibility of a love story. The only people in the movie that get to have any kind of an arc are the two lead actors whose characters, unlike seemingly any of the other nomads, have options. And what options! The first option, which Fern dismisses out of hand – “I can’t stay here” – is a tasteful suburban two-story dwelling on a tree-lined street, owned by her sister and her real estate agent husband. There are some vague gestures toward sisterly estrangement, but the fact remains, Fern has someone to front her cash when her van breaks.

Next, suddenly in a film which purports to be about poverty, we find ourselves in Fern’s vague love interest’s son’s “modest” Sonoma county millionaire’s house – picture perfect, a back-to-the-land fantasy with extra bedrooms, an in-law cabin, horses, peacocks, and ocean air.

The other “characters,” who contemplated suicide or who live with the memory of someone who did, don’t get any story at all, rarely more than one-liners. They are like

the reptiles in the Badlands zoo – exotic creatures to be looked at, not to get to know nor connect with.

To call this some kind of failed experiment of mixing documentary with narrative would be the kindest assessment. (It’s not like mixing non-actors and actors hasn’t been done before... Italian neorealism, anyone?) Or maybe this is simply bad filmmaking with cynical calculation at its center: mixing a Hollywood star into a superficial “issue” movie equals guaranteed festival success, and maybe an Oscar?

The filmmakers seemingly can’t make up their mind if they made a political movie or a “universal” one – as if the political can’t be universal – and are still trying to decide which makes for the best PR. This movie is a neoliberal wet dream. By its logic, people *choose* poverty in motion and they are having a good time living it, better than poverty at rest. Everything goes back to personal responsibility, and remaining flexible and adaptable and ready to have several “careers” in one calendar year, from Amazon packer (“money’s good!”) to beet picker to campsite cleaner to – you name it.

Oh, and offhandedly blaming the entire sideshow on the people who borrowed money on houses they couldn’t afford, with the help of real estate sharks like Fern’s brother-in-law.

Nomadland is justifiably generating controversy over its whitewashing of Amazon labor conditions. But the movie’s class problem only begins there, and is in fact embedded into the very structure of the narrative – to the extent that one exists. What else can one expect from a filmmaker as removed from the struggles of poverty and homelessness as it is possible to imagine? Zhao’s father is a *steel magnate*, for fuck’s sake.

I don’t think you necessarily have to have lived an experience to make a film about it, but it really does help. If there are people who can address an issue from a more informed perspective who are at least as talented, why not let them?

But that would take a desire for the Hollywood feeding machine that is Sundance to nurture an actual diversity of voices and experiences, not just a faux diversity which can be photographed. (Skin color shows on promo photos; class background does not.) In any case, works based in lived experience and not mere research are almost always richer. Take Bery Jenkins’ *Moonlight*, and compare it to *Nomadland*. Can the Academy really not see the difference in authenticity, reality, and depth between these two films?

Apparently not.

Joanna Jurewicz is a filmmaker from Poland. She graduated from NYU Tisch School of the Arts, Graduate Film Program. Her first short film Shave was nominated for a Student Academy Award in alternative category in 2004, her thesis film Goyta was selected for the 2008 Cannes Film Festival, and her short Rooms, starring Academy Award-nominated Marianne Jean-Baptiste, won Student Visionary Award at the Tribeca Film Festival in 2011. She lives in Greenfield.

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Olivia Cushing, Michael Klempler-Siano, Kimberl Ramirez Martin, Lila Scott
- THIRD HONORS**
Jakob Gould

– Grade 7 –

- FIRST HONORS**
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- SECOND HONORS**
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Khalifa Seck, Kailey Steiner

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- SECOND HONORS**
Zachary Malcolm, Abigail Moore, Haley Randall, Adeline Riley, David Stowe

– Grade 11 –

- FIRST HONORS**
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- SECOND HONORS**
Olivia Delisle, Brendan Driscoll, Bryce Finn, Maria Romashka, Dylun Russell, Melany Sanchez Abarua
- THIRD HONORS**
Farrington Oliver

– Grade 12 –

- FIRST HONORS**
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the
poetry
page

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

- William Carlos Williams

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

Our April Poetry Page

Highland Cemetery, Setting Sun (with apologies to Lawrence Ferlinghetti)

Airport bus from Orange
cruising through Millers Falls
passing huge endless cemetery
by Mohawk Trail expressway
(the final restless place of Turner Falls Indians)
myriad small manitou stones tilted up
red lights on a one lane runway
small single engine airplane, wings upraised
lost among illegible town meeting instructions
promises to never cost the town a single penny
again
janel knockleby and her sheep
abandoned in absurdity
finance committee maunderings
the town has to do this, has to do this
baah, baah, baah
beyond further deliverance
in an America flying past them
and disappearing oblivious
into the Millers River's echoing runnels
as the road slides down from Montague Plain

- David Detmold
Turners Falls

For the Seventh Generation

At Leverett Pond:
Breathing in, I am at Peace ~
Breathing out, I am at Peace ~
But there is sadness...
They put poisons into our Pond
Herbicides are harmful to Life!
Truth is Beauty, Beauty is Truth
Those with ears to hear
And those with eyes to see
Will hear and see:

The secrets of Life in the still waters
The swimming and the scurrying
The joy of all creatures
In the gift of pure waters ~
When the sun rises and sets
There are Higher Laws
Beyond the Rule of Man...

The Animals Speak:
In their own tongues-
The water tastes strange today
Say the beaver, deer and rabbit
I feel sick in my tummy...
What will become of my babies?
I left my nest, said the goose
The boats are everywhere now!
My eggs will not hatch, said the duck
And my mate has not returned...
We will look for another place
Where the waters are Peaceful-
Where the waters are Pure ~
Where the Earth is still honored
For the Seventh Generation...

- Sarah Greenleaf
Leverett

Irreplaceable

I am sorry,
so sorry
to have not let this go.
I know that's inconvenient,
awkward at best.
It's just that
no matter where I turn,
she is there.
Not as a ghost, no,
nothing so substantial,
but as wish,
memory,
thought,
desire,
pain.

Please;
do not
suggest I move on,
an idea I find
viscerally repellent.
Don't tell me
she would want me to be happy,
the assumption close
behind the notion
of finding her replacement.
She is not subject to
replacement,
just as a missing
limb
can't be replaced with
anything more than
an unfeeling facsimile
that causes onlookers
to think,
"How hard that must be."

I haven't lost
a beloved pet
or childhood teddy
that can be substituted,
affections transferred
to a new host,
past life dimmed
in remembrance,
like the red-rimmed sun
curtained behind the smoke of a
forest fire.

And I am so sorry
that my situation
may insist you consider
what may await you,
your own trial.
That much,
at least,
is not my fault.

- G. Greene
Greenfield

HOPE Is Where I Parked My Car

I park in the lot beneath the rusted water tower
Not far from the bridge.
The bridge that spans a river
Colonists renamed Connecticut.
The river was called Kwenitegok
By the Algonquian people.

I was born in the North,
Not far from the mouth of the river called
Mississippi.
The Anishinabe people (Ojibwe) called that river
Miessipi
Or
Mee-zee-see-bee.

As children we learned the river song -
"M-I-SS-I-SS-I-PP-I"
I grew close to the river,
Swam in her dirty water,
Almost drowned, once.
She pulls me home again and again.

I lean over the railing to watch a small family of common ducks.
They swim together, have a brief scuffle,
And come back together.

The air is frigid as I trudge through the crusty snow.
My toes and fingers go quiet.
I think of Texas and freezing people.
We learned in Minnesota that freezing to death was comfortable.
Drowsiness overwhelms
And then warm sleep relieves.

When I return to my car
I look up to see a yellow word painted on the water tower -
H O P E

- Sita Lang
Turners Falls

Contributors' Notes:

Gary Greene, our featured January poet, recently published *Poems In A Time of Grief*, available through local bookstores and in a Kindle edition at Amazon.

David Detmold is an activist, writer, and founder of the *Montague Reporter*.

Sita Lang writes: "Sita is grateful to have landed in Peskeompskut in the Spring of 2003, the year of transformation created by a reconciliation ceremony on the river's edge on May 19. Apologies for any misrepresentation in the poem. Names and spelling were brought forth through Google. Hope is a verb. Water is Life."

Sarah Greenleaf is a trained herbalist who has worked at fundraising and information sharing for various environmental organizations and non-profit progressive groups. She grew up in Leverett, is of Native heritage and is a member of Mt. Toby Friends Meeting. She has lived around this area for many years and has often enjoyed the peace and beauty of Leverett Pond, and is very concerned about the use of toxic chemical herbicides which endangers the life of the pond: its ecological balance, and the native species and the wildlife that depend upon its waters. She would like to encourage people who share this concern about the use of toxic herbicides in local waters to email the Leverett Conservation Commission at concom@leverett.ma.us before their May 3 meeting, in which they will review and decide upon water management plans.

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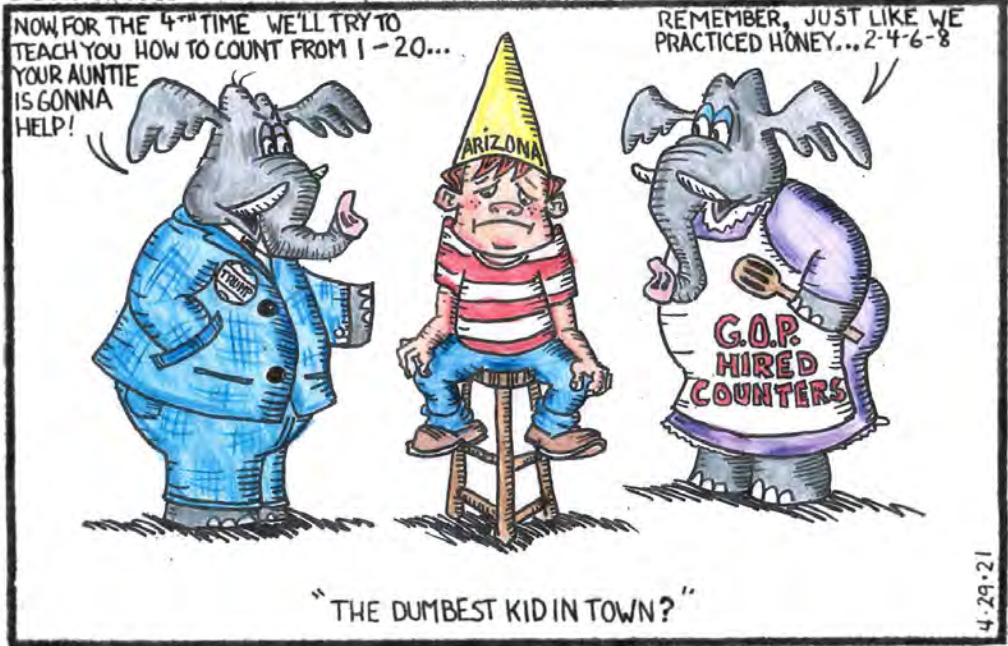
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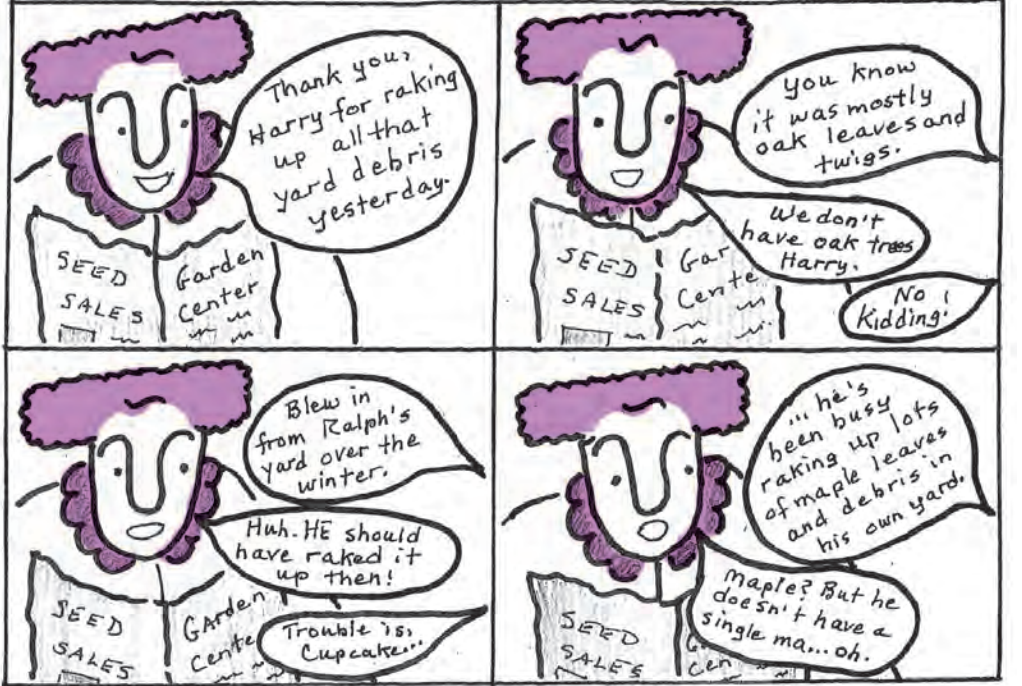
BORDEAUX WHINE

by denis bordeaux



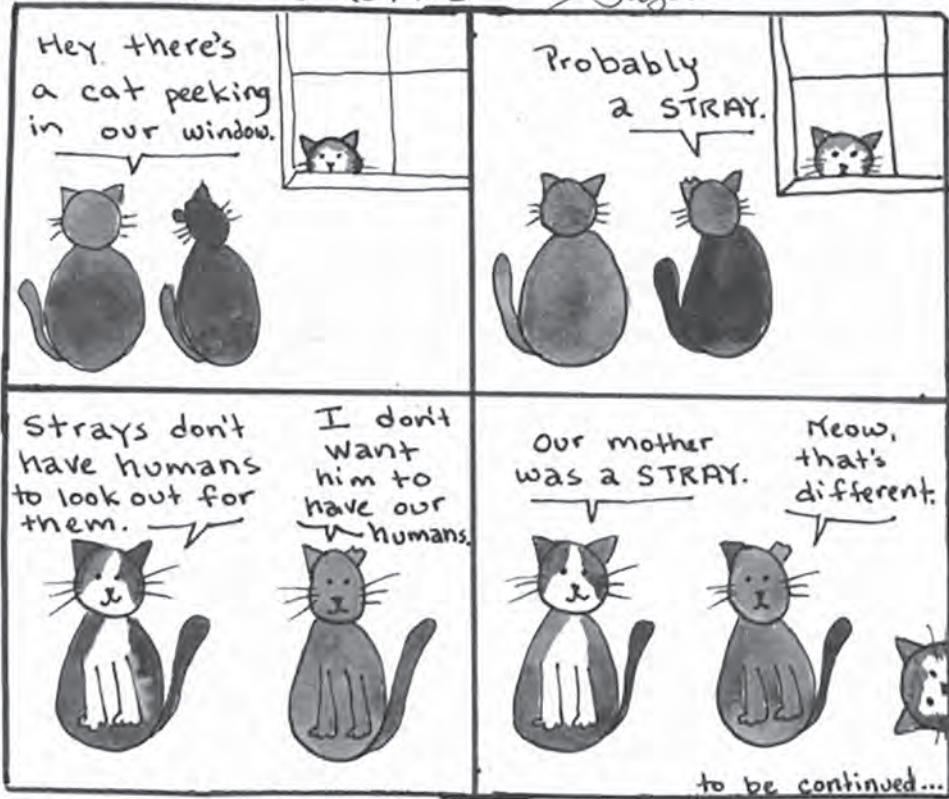
OVER THE HILL

Carolyn Clark



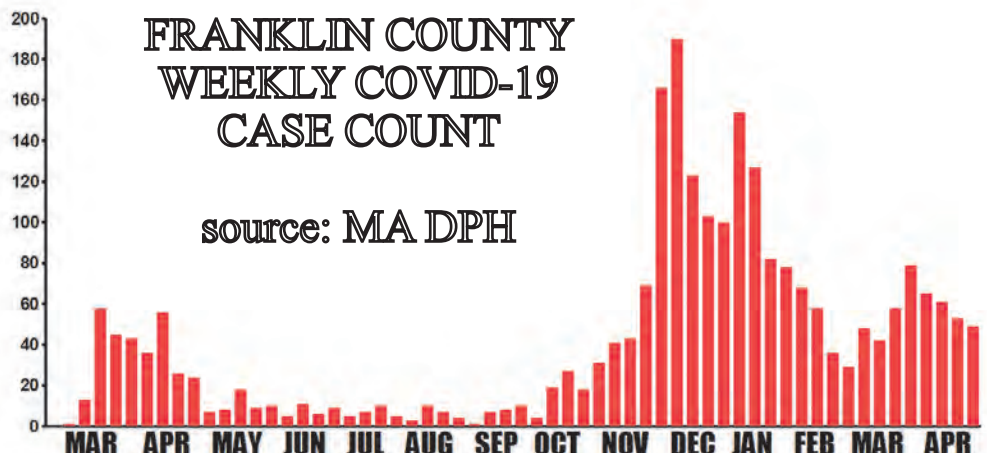
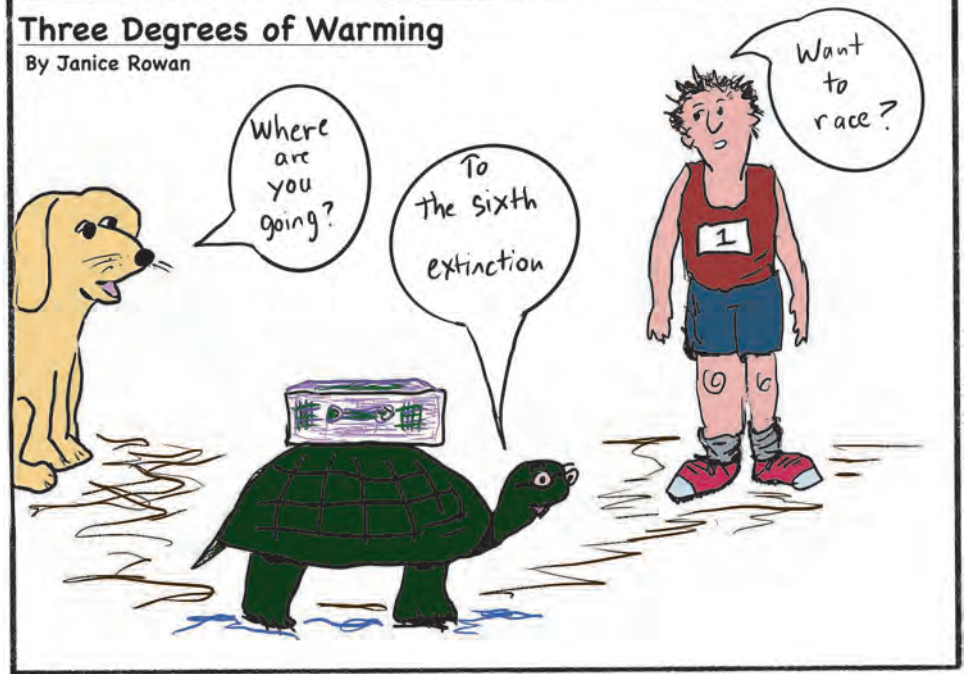
Cool Cats on the Ave

Justin



Three Degrees of Warming

By Janice Rowan



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VALLEY VIEW from page B1
kids or parents? My answer is likely a minority opinion nowadays.

Although playing stickball hour after hour kept us out of mischief for the most part, we weren't what you'd call perfect little angels. We stretched the rules a little, and practiced individual sovereignty, to gather stray tennis balls off the roofs above. Tennis balls broke down when thrown against brick walls and clubbed with bats. Once their fabric cover started to split, balls did little tricks when thrown, and it was only a matter of time before the ball itself split in half. But we had the perfect remedy for maintaining an ample supply.

You see, stickball wasn't the only summer activity practiced against the high school's back wall. Tennis players practiced their stroke against the tall gym that met our stickball court on the left, and somehow wild mis-hits put many a brand-new ball atop the 40-foot roof. To collect them when no one was looking, we'd shimmy up the drain spout onto the lower roof on the other side of the gym and climb a sturdy, stationary, metal ladder anchored into the gym roof. We'd gather the balls and throw them down before descending the ladder and circling around the front to gather stray balls from the shop-building roof directly above the stickball court.

Someone could have been hurt badly or killed by a fall from that tall roof, or even that of the lower shop building. But we were careful and no one ever got hurt, not even

when we had to run and jump off a lower roof to avoid authorities passing through. In fact, the only roof-related injury I recall occurred after we were in high school, and it had nothing to do with being on the roof. The victim was late friend Franny Redmond.

I can't remember exactly what we were doing, probably just horsing around after school. Franny had jumped up to hang from his hands on a cross beam out front by the eight doors leading into the gym area. When he released his grip to fall down, his class ring got caught on the crimped lower edge of protective copper sheathing and left him dangling in pain. With his full weight on the ring finger, the skin peeled back into an ugly, bloody mess. We helped lift him up as he used his free arm to pull up and release the snag. Once free, he dropped to his feet, wrapped the wound in a t-shirt, and went to the hospital for repair. I think doctors had to cut off the ring before stitching the wound.

Other than that, never a serious problem we couldn't escape with aplomb. Small-town devils we were. We knew the routine, not to mention every dark corner in the neighborhood, and stayed on high-alert for "heat" whenever bending the rules.

It was kids' stuff, not crime. At least that's how it was viewed when I was young. I'm not sure cops know the difference anymore. Sad indeed. I sincerely doubt we would have "benefited" from being run through the system and punished.



Cooperation Makes It Happen



At left: Marcus Sanders (20) cuts around Franklin Tech's Nathaniel Fness (28) as the Green Wave co-op team completes its "Fall II" season with a 46-0 win over Tech last Friday.


Below: Hats off to an outstanding season!

The coop team, which included players from the Greenfield, Mohawk Trail Regional, Pioneer Valley Regional, and Turners Falls high schools, proved invincible during the four-game "Fall II" season. The final score? Greenfield 130, Opponents 0.



DAVE HOITTI PHOTOS

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